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BEYOND REDUCED LISTENING: UNDERSTANDING THE
PHENOMENOLOGY OF PIERRE SCHAEFFER

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ABSTRACT

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Pierre Schaeffer has produced a large body of work that consists of both music and a wide-ranging theory for the aesthetics of *Musique Concrète*. In his *Traité Des Objets Musicaux* (1966), he lays out a philosophical framework for the genre, where he theorizes the notion of sound object as the primary element of the genre's aesthetical foundation and proposes various ways of describing and categorizing sound objects based on their sole perceptual qualities. His theorization of the sound object is prominently based on phenomenological thinking, which suggests the significance of phenomenology in his compositions as well.

The primary objective of this thesis will be to understand Pierre Schaeffer's conception and implementation of phenomenology through the examination of his music, theory, and the relationship between them. Therefore, the inherent relation between reduced listening and phenomenological reduction, and the significance of intentionality in this relationship; the notion of sound object with respect to the notion of object in phenomenology; and the primary role of composition in

the transcendence of musical experience of *Musique Concrète* is discussed. This study intends to capture the role of phenomenology in the sole experience of *Musique Concrète*, which, hopefully, transcends a structural analysis of Schaeffer's music or a phenomenological analysis of Schaeffer's theory.

Keywords: Pierre Schaeffer, Phenomenology, Acousmatics, Sound Object, Transcendental.



ÖZET

İNDİRGENMİŞ DİNLEMENİN ÖTESİNDE: PIERRE SCHAEFFER'İN FENOMENOLOJİSİNİ ANLAMAK

Aslan, Deniz

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Pierre Schaeffer, *Musique Concrète* estetiği için hem müzikten hem de kapsamlı bir teoriden oluşan, geniş çaplı bir üretim gerçekleştirmiştir. *Traité Des Objets Musicaux* (1966) adlı çalışmasında, türün estetik temelini birincil ögesi olarak ses nesnesi kavramını kuramsallaştırdığı ve ses nesnelerini, tamamen algısal niteliklerine dayalı olarak tanımlamanın ve sınıflandırmanın çeşitli yollarını önerdiği felsefi bir çerçeve ortaya koyar. Ses nesnesini kuramsallaştırması, belirgin bir şekilde fenomenolojik düşünceye dayanmaktadır ve bu durum, fenomenolojinin kompozisyonlarındaki önemine de işaret etmektedir.

Bu tezin temel amacı, Pierre Schaeffer'in müziğini, teorisini ve ikisinin arasındaki ilişkiyi inceleyerek, onun fenomenoloji anlayışını ve pratiğini anlamak olacaktır. Dolayısıyla, indirgenmiş dinleme (reduced listening) ile fenomenolojik indirgeme (phenomenological reduction) arasındaki doğal ilişki ve bu ilişkide yönelimselliğin önemi; fenomenolojide nesne kavramına göre ses nesnesi kavramı; ve kompozisyonun *Musique Concrète* müzik deneyiminin aşkınlığındaki birincil rolü tartışılacaktır. Bu çalışma, umarız, Schaeffer'in müziğinin herhangi bir yapısal analizini veya Schaeffer'in teorisinin fenomenolojik bir analizini aşan, fenomeno-

lojinin, *Musique Concrète*'in has deneyimindeki rolünü yakalamayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Pierre Schaeffer, Fenomenoloji, Akusmatik, Ses Nesnesi, Aşkın.



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As acknowledged by most as one of the pioneers of electroacoustic music, Pierre Schaeffer produced a body of work that not only consists of music but an extensive and essential work pertaining to musical and acousmatic aesthetics. His *Traité Des Objets Musicaux* (1966)¹ has been one of the most influential aesthetic references to innumerable electroacoustic music composers, if not the most. In TOM, Schaeffer lays out a broad philosophical, theoretical, and technical framework for the music for which he and his colleagues laid the foundation, *Musique Concrète*, the style of music he had been practicing for the last two decades.² One of the most prominent philosophical methods proposed concerning the aesthetics of *Musique Concrète* in TOM is phenomenology which he claims to have been practicing “without realizing it” for some time (Schaeffer, 2017: 206). His most fundamental aesthetical method for both practicing and listening to *Musique Concrète* is the notion of ‘reduced listening.’

Pierre Schaeffer arrived at the term *Musique Concrète*, for his music, in 1948,

¹Treatise on Musical Objects (2017), translated by Christine North and John Dack (hereafter, TOM).

²His first *Musique Concrète* works are five etudes which were compiled under the name of *Etudes de Bruits* in 1948.

after several months of intense experiments with sounds (Schaeffer, 2012). The term was conceived as a direct contrast to the ordinary notion of musical composition, "as a reversal of the way musical work is done" (Schaeffer, 2017: 7), which was inherently an abstract process, starting in one's mind to be realized later. The perceptual side of his experiments, even though he much later adopted the term *acousmatics*, seems to have been primarily dependent on the exclusion of the source of the sound. Through this exclusion, he adopted a mode of listening dependent on the perceptual qualities of the sound, and the internal processes of its experience, which laid the foundation of reduced listening.

Several studies have investigated the phenomenology proposed and discussed in TOM, most of which have been published recently, in relation to potent practitioners and theoreticians of phenomenology such as Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre (Kim, 2010; Kane, 2014; Solomos, 1999). Although these studies have shed a fair amount of light on Schaeffer's phenomenological thinking, none of them have examined the actual musical approach of Schaeffer in relation to the theory and philosophy he proposed in TOM. Such inquiries are inherently problematic since Schaeffer is a composer as much as a theoretician, if not more. Therefore, this study aims to examine Pierre Schaeffer's phenomenology through the relationship between his music and his theory to achieve the ultimate understanding of his approach.

1.1 Methodology

As stated above, TOM is a comprehensive study of the primary aesthetical concerns and principles of *Musique Concrète*, examining the concept of acousmatics and sound objects with respect to their technical and theoretical aspects. It is a product of a 15-year-long work prior to its first publication in 1966, during which its first draft was rewritten four times (Kane, 2014: 17). The treatise is divided into several chapters, each of which is focused on a

fundamental subject circumfusing *Musique Concrète*. Some of them are much more abstract in their theorization as they might function in a dialectical manner to *Musique Concrète*, such as a proposition of an analysis or a critique of the conventional musical defaults through the eyes of an anthropologist. Some of them are strictly technical since they explain the sonic properties of various sounds through various analysis techniques. Nevertheless, through all the descriptions and categorizations Schaeffer offers for sound objects, one can always sense the underlying suggestive power of the subjective aspect of their perception. It not only underlines the theoretical discussions but also serves as the basis for the conceptualization of technical analyses. Schaeffer is always most concerned with the perception of sound rather than its physical or acoustical qualities. Furthermore, he bases even his most technical discussions on the perceptual quality of the sound object as he argues that the sound object, even if it is analyzable and discussible objectively, is created and situated in its perception.

Although engaging with various thoughts and movements of philosophy, the philosophical discussions in TOM appear to be grounded primarily on phenomenology. As stated, he himself claims to have been practicing it for some time without realizing it and dedicates a chapter to a phenomenological discussion of the notion of object. It does not end there: One of his main discussions is the necessary distinction between the contemporary scientific analysis of sounds and the emphasis on the perception of such sounds, which, he claims, changes the very nature of our understanding of sounds and is itself impossible to analyze with acoustical methods (Schaeffer, 2017: 100). Chion exemplifies such distinction as “experiments on time and duration lead to the contention that musical duration as heard is not the same as “objective” duration. Even when the “chronometric” duration is the same, a sound which is rich in information will be perceived as longer than a sound which is “poorer” and more predictable” (Chion, 2009: 18-19).

Schaeffer goes on to propose a suitable methodology for understanding the sounds through these perceptive qualities: The hearing intention. By entering the realm of intention, he steps into phenomenology. He discusses the conditioned listening modes of those who practice music or acoustics and proposes that every practitioner hears something different in the same objective sound precisely because their hearing intention is different (Schaeffer, 2017: 103). Moreover, he argues the necessity to take the path of a philosophical approach to continue with the study of sound objects as he refers to Merleau-Ponty, stating “that the classical antinomies—soul-body, external-internal, mentalism-materialism—are out of date in modern philosophy” (Schaeffer, 2017: 104). Therefore, we shall accept Schaeffer’s proposition and examine his music and discussions through phenomenology, ideally even to a further extent than he did.

Phenomenology, as we understand it today, is “a philosophy of consciousness concerned with the truth or rationale of immediate experience” (Bunnin & Yu, 2004: 516). It translates to *a theory of phenomena*, or appearances, as they are experienced; therefore, it studies the experience *itself* in relation to the external world. Although its doctrines can be traced back to Hegel, Kant, and even Aristotle (Bunnin & Yu, 2004: 516), it was coined and formed in the early twentieth century by Edmund Husserl as a new and necessary approach to philosophy; “the first philosophy, which could describe the region of pure experience in which all sciences are rooted and provide a unified theory of science and knowledge” (Bunnin & Yu, 2004: 517). Therefore, the primary distinction of phenomenology lies in its radical and critical approach to not only our interaction with the external world; but also our understanding of such interaction. It is more than a theory; it is a method of philosophizing. It requires an intentional way of investigating one’s ordinary experiences and usual routines. Schaeffer’s musical understanding is, therefore, inherently related to phenomenology, not only because the vocabulary of his musical language

consists of the entirety of sounds we encounter in our lives and implements them as musical materials, but he has theorized a way to work with and listen to these sounds as mere musical materials.

The methodology of this study, therefore, will be based on the investigation of Schaeffer's both theoretical and artistic implementations of phenomenological thinking. His music (*Musique Concrète*) and writings in TOM will be analyzed through mainly Husserl's, but also other phenomenologists', theories to achieve a phenomenological understanding of his implementation of notions such as acousmatics, reduced listening, and sound object. The examination of his music will be limited to his relatively early pieces, composed before the publication of TOM, in order to grasp the relationship of his music and theory in its most primal state; *through the eyes of* Pierre Schaeffer. Therefore, this study is not concerned with recent developments in cognition or semiotics. It is merely limited to and focused on the phenomenology of Pierre Schaeffer. Firstly, the primary relationship between reduced listening and phenomenological reduction will be investigated. Then, the notion of sound object will be discussed in detail with respect to the notion of object in phenomenology. Lastly, the compositional and analytical methods Schaeffer laid out will be discussed to examine the transcendental quality inherited or attributed to sound objects. That way, it is aimed to comprehend the phenomenology of Pierre Schaeffer beyond its preliminary stage of the implementation of reduced listening.

It is crucial for the reader to understand that, even if Schaeffer's understanding of phenomenology is not entirely coherent or even at times misleading, we do not attempt to make a phenomenological reading of Schaeffer's intentions but to understand his music and musical thinking from a phenomenological perspective. His musical understanding yields significant, phenomenologically valuable aspects to be studied. Therefore, this study aims to examine the music and the musical thinking of Pierre Schaeffer and discuss his essential outlook on

musical objects that, one way or another, proposed and theorized in TOM as a phenomenological datum. Phenomenology, Moran argues, “in general (...) never developed a set of dogmas or sedimented into a system. It claims, first and foremost, to be a radical way of doing philosophy, a practice rather than a system” (Moran, 2000: 4). Therefore, we will not subject his writings to a critical analysis through any particular school of phenomenology (such study would aim to accept him as another practitioner of phenomenology and situate him in a particular school of thought which would prove no usefulness at all) but to understand his vision with the help of various phenomenological perspectives, some of which may be contradictory to one another, even.

Through Schaeffer’s music and writings, we aim to achieve an understanding of the core aesthetics of *Musique Concrète*, which ultimately evolved into many branches of electronic music that we have encountered throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Therefore, by understanding the very core, we can hopefully have a better understanding of the artistic quality of many other electronic genres and, most importantly, electroacoustic and acousmatic music as well. In this sense, we aim to comprehend – therefore, complement and interpret – instead of critique the phenomenology of Pierre Schaeffer: We are not interested in his shortcomings as a philosopher unless it is directly related to his music itself. Otherwise, this study would be a superficial, and not to say a vein, attempt to understand the work of a great musician and an idea-person.

1.2 Literature Review

1.2.1 Phenomenology in Music Theory

The phenomenological approach in musical analysis has been fairly widely used, particularly after the first half of the twentieth century. However, very little of these works deal with the philosophy of phenomenology rather than an examination of human consciousness in the process of listening to music. As Philip Batstone (1969: 94) states, it is mainly the “musician-analysts and not

philosophers” who are conducting these analyses. More importantly, very few of these works have to do with electroacoustic music, let alone *Musique Concrète*. There is also a wide body of literature that deals with the aesthetics of electroacoustic music without any reference to phenomenology. Some of these works are inherently suggestive of a phenomenological understanding of the material and its relationship to time and space. This literature review will therefore consist of two parts: the phenomenological analyses of music and the implicitly phenomenological analyses of electroacoustic music.

The phenomenological analysis of musical experience begins with Husserl himself (1991: 40) as he describes the phenomenological perception of a sustained tone. He describes the perceptual structures which enable one to experience the tone as sustained, uniform sound. David Lewin (1986) implements this approach in his analyses of different music, expanding Husserl’s ideas with varying perspectives of tonality, melody, and motifs. Helgeson (2013) goes on to implement the same way of analysis to Sciarrino’s music but this time, referring to sounds and gestures in a more generic sense; instead of abstract motifs and syntactic relations, the actual sonic qualities of different instruments are put into consideration here. Alfred Pike (1974) describes his own experience of perception of a musical work by making phenomenological reductions on different levels and proposes a state where one can be aware of every aural quality of music, from sole physical qualities to contextual relationships. Wayne Slawson (2005) takes this a little further by proposing a phenomenological distinction between how one perceives pitch and color over his own compositional work, although the study is intended for the classification of different color classes in relation to pitch.

Batstone is one of the first scholars to point out the relationship between non-tonal music and phenomenological understanding (1969: 103). He proposes the necessity of an awareness of a multi-layered analysis of appearances as in

Husserlian definition of a multi-layered perception. He also separates the listening experience of tonal music, which is concerned with the structure, hence with understanding what lies beneath the appearance of compositional decisions, and the listening experience of a non-tonal work which is derived from the relationship of appearances. Lawrence Ferrara (1984: 359) extends this understanding by proposing the necessity of one's breaking out of formal training for listening to the music, particularly in the case of non-tonal or electroacoustic music. He then goes on to analyze Varese's *Poeme Electronique* through a phenomenological approach. He is particularly concerned with 'reduced listening' where a syntax inherited from the work is unraveled through listening to the sounds purely as sounds (Ferrara, 1984: 360). Judy Lochhead (2022) brings forth a crucial point about the perception of new music¹: the significance of the integration of the visual aspects of the music. She discusses the importance of seeing the physical action which produces the sound. This is particularly important for this study because she investigates the perceptual quality of an aural experience through the presence of its visual representation, which is directly the opposite of the acousmatic approach.

Quantitative approaches that target the musical experience of different individuals and then compile the data to see how different pieces of music are perceived by different individuals and how these perceptions suggest a phenomenological understanding of generic categorizations (e.g., joyous, sad, restful, etc.) such as that of Alfred Pike (1972) and Peter de Vries (2012) also do not correspond to what is aimed at in this thesis. The methodology in this study is inherently qualitative as it is explicitly focused on Schaeffer and the aesthetics of *Musique Concrète*.

Most of these analyses do not seem to step outside the boundaries set by a

¹She uses the term "New Music" for classical music composed after 1945 in this particular paper.

conventional understanding of the macro form (although Ferrara suggest to the necessity of different listening sessions of the same work with different intentions: after syntactic analysis, a semantic and an ontological analysis is suggested; however, the complementary function of different approaches still points to a creation of an overall context for understanding the work). This means the role any sound or moment undertakes is anticipatively or retrospectively defined by what precedes and follows it. Contextuality still appears as the dominant factor in how one perceives music.

These analyses also seem much closer to the realm of psychology than phenomenology. As Husserl also states as he talks about Brentano's psychological experiences with the perception of time (1991: 16), these inquiries of temporality are "objectivated" and do not belong in the phenomenological datum. Phenomenology is not a psychological tool to understand our perception of the objective world but an investigation of time and space through our understanding of them. Alfred Pike also points out phenomenology's relation to psychology through its origin in Gestalt psychology as he claims that even though "the phenomenological method has developed within the framework of Gestalt (and Existential) Psychology, Gestaltists have failed to provide a simple phenomenological account of musical perception" (1966: 247). In all of these works, a *learned* understanding of musical experience, that is, the awareness of dealing with a musical piece, is present. One of the most fundamental contributions of Pierre Schaeffer is the cancellation of such awareness; i.e., the musical consciousness. Therefore, what is aimed in this thesis is an analysis of Schaeffer's philosophical intentions, inherited in the creation of *Musique Concrète*.

1.2.2 Phenomenology and *Musique Concrète*

Schaeffer's engagement with phenomenology (although not with full awareness) starts with his first experimentations with recorded sounds. In his journals from

the day (Schaeffer, 2012), the major shift in his perception when he started to work directly on the recorded sound is emphasized as a turning point for his experiments. Brian Kane, in his book *The Sound Unseen*, gives significance to Schaeffer's relation with Husserlian phenomenology and claims that his work cannot be fully grasped without understanding his "Husserlian preoccupations" (2014: 17). Kane also talks about the importance of the word 'object' in Schaeffer's especially early studies. He points out the gradual change in his referent to the word object over time (2012: 15). Through this understanding of an 'object,' he argues that Schaeffer's phenomenological approach is most in line with Husserl. This is a majorly important topic for this thesis, and a chapter will be devoted to the discussion of his use of the word object in relation to phenomenology. Although Kane's contribution to the literature on the phenomenological understanding of Pierre Schaeffer is more than significant, he hardly focuses on the actual musical outcome and how Schaeffer's phenomenological approach is implemented as a musical factor.

Then we shall turn to Don Ihde's writings on sound and phenomenology. In his book *Listening and Voice*, Ihde points out the relation of our perception of phenomena with the technology (2007). The technological advancements allowed for many possibilities for us to observe what was not possible before (Ihde, 2007: 5):

Whether by historical accident or a long-held and traditional preoccupation with vision, the new scientific view of the world began with equally new instrumental contexts made possible by the emerging technologies of lens grinding and a concern with optics. Galileo's moons, never before seen, are experienced through the embodying and extending instrument of the telescope. The universe comes into view, is observed in its ever-extending macrocosm, through the instrument.

This perspective is absolutely essential in Pierre Schaeffer's method: reproduction of sound through recordings, manipulations, and loops; all these techniques allowed us to perceive everyday sounds in a completely new manner.

Idhe goes on to explain the relationship between musical approaches and their amplification – both literally and perceptually – and argues that our phenomenological understanding is now different than its initial conception as we live in a world where we are accustomed to practicing phenomenology one way or another to some extent. Dodd argues a similar understanding, as he points out that the recurrence of sound events entitles them to have ‘identities’ which enables us to perceive them as separate entities (2007). This is also crucial in our understanding of sound objects as independent phenomena in their contexts which goes against the doctrine of Gestalt. Dodd’s emphasis on the process of abstraction as a part of our perception of musical events (or objects) is very important as well since it is also a major topic in this thesis.

Meaning is another major discussion for us. Merleau-Ponty connects our perception through phenomenological reduction to ‘meanings’ which are rendered as distinct entities in our perception and merely what is remained in our mind of the perceived object (2002). This point also relates to the questions of transcendence and familiarity, which will be discussed further in this work. For Meyer, the meaning is also essential in the sense that what is transcended in the process of musical perception is the sole meaning synthesized in our minds (1956). He argues against the structuralist understanding of musical phenomena as he states that the meaning created could also be not inherent to the piece’s internal structure but also what is transcended through the perception of the structure.

Casey’s contribution to the literature must also be touched upon. He emphasizes the significance of intention in phenomenological understanding and argues that the act of imagining is inherently related to the act of perception (Casey, 1971). As we see in Husserl’s description of synthesis as a process internal to Epoché²,

²A key term in Husserlian phenomenology. It will be explained and discussed in Chapter 2.2.

Casey also connects the internal mechanisms of imagination as an integral part of perception as what is reduced is what is reconstructed in our brains. He joins his argument with the concepts of continuity and discontinuity in the perception process with respect to our intention, which is directly related to Husserlian understanding of consciousness as recurrent mental acts.

Suk-Jun Kim's critique of Schaeffer's phenomenological attitude is also very important (2010). He offers a critical examination of TOM in relation to phenomenology proper, where he points out fundamental contradictions in Schaeffer's phenomenological understanding. He argues that Schaeffer's research, which he claims to be based on phenomenology, is only partially grounded on the doctrines of phenomenology proper and essentially misunderstood most of the concepts on which it relies its arguments. While this conclusion appears to be correct in its understanding of Schaefferian phenomenological descriptions and arguments, it misses the point that Schaeffer is first and foremost a composer, and TOM as a study of *Musique Concrète* is not a single-layered inquiry of its underlying philosophical attitude but the philosophical groundwork for acousmatic and reduced listening experience. TOM does not strive to propose a method for listening to *Musique Concrète*; it is meant to investigate sound objects through different philosophical and physical analyses, which, in the end, function as gateways to establishing one's own understanding of *Musique Concrète*.

Lastly, one of the most profound and extensive studies of TOM is Michel Chion's *Guide to Sound Objects*, where Chion offers direct and comprehensive explanations for the concepts and the terminology of TOM in the style of a dictionary (Chion, 2009). His conclusive but detailed approach is of utmost value since "the breadth and complexity of [TOM's] architecture, the diffuseness of [its] style and presentation, and the lack of an index at the end of the book makes it difficult to use" (Chion, 2009: 6). We will refer to *Guide to Sound*

Objects frequently in this study.



CHAPTER 2

THE ACOUSMATIC EXPERIENCE

2.1 Acousmatics as the Phenomenological Prerequisite

Pierre Schaeffer's initially unintentional (Schaeffer, 2017: 206) attempts at phenomenological thinking in his early musical explorations appear to be based first and foremost on long-term experiments with the sound. The very starting point, according to his diary, seems to be his search for a music 'that does not tell a story' to remain "mysterious"; a music that "does not mean anything" (Schaeffer, 2012: 3). The notion of a "truth" existing in a musical piece was destroying its expressive and narrative possibilities. He was to come up with a type of music that had the quality of encouraging each listener to create their own relationships with it: A listening mode in which one finds the internal musical quality of the piece in one's own experience. In order to do that, an alteration of the ordinary listening mode was to be made using unorthodox sounds together to create a musical language that exceeds the customary conditioning of musical listening.

The answer he found was going after ready-made sounds, sounds from everyday experiences put together in such a way that they left behind their daily contextualities and appeared as mere sonic objects. At the very beginning of his

attempts at creating a sound world that was to be based on ‘non-musical’ sounds, he decided to write a “Symphony of Noises” (Schaeffer, 2012: 4).

His first attempts were to use instruments for various sound effects from the radio service, such as “clappers, coconut shells, bicycle horns (...), an alarm clock”, among others. After spending some time trying to make music using such objects, he concluded that they were of no use for his musical purposes because “they [were] too explicit.” Given that his first solution to this problem was to combine such sound effects with noise in order to present sounds that appeared uniform but contained multiple layers, one may argue that his aim was to alienate these everyday sounds to a further extent to present them as mere sound objects.

The milestone in his experiments seems to be the awareness of listening to the sounds with which he experimented in the studio booth through a microphone. Seeing the perceptual power of replaying the recorded sounds over and over again and listening to them with a different perceptive consciousness each time, he eventually arrived at the conclusion that the possibilities electronic music offers are beyond a mere duplication of an acoustic situation but the exploration of what said situation might be perceived differently at each instance. He quickly realized the infinite possibilities a sound may suggest in the listener’s mind each time it was played back with various alterations; that it becomes a different entity with each conscious experience. These alterations were only possible with the electronic reproduction as, after recording the sounds, he was cutting the attacks of the sounds, changing their intensities, and playing them one after another as he pleased. Thanks to these opportunities, he was able to create a musical language that was entirely alien to the ordinary listener since it was different from both an abstractive recreation of a daily sonic experience and the, one way or another, single-faceted narrativity of ordinary musical listening.

Schaeffer, later on, identified the underlying aesthetical approach in his

experiments as the Acousmatics, going back centuries to Pythagoras, for whose disciples the term is first used “who, for five years, listened to his lessons hidden behind a curtain, without seeing him, and observing the strictest silence” (Schaeffer, 2017: 64). The word was proposed to Schaeffer by Jérôme Peignot, a French writer who collaborated with Schaeffer in the 1950s (Kane, 2014: 4). Schaeffer refers to the original definition of the word in order to explain its more general and widely adopted meaning as (Schaeffer, 2017: 64):

From this initiatory experience we will take the concept of acousmatic in the sense we wish to use it. The Larousse continues: *Acousmatic, adjective: a noise that is heard without the causes from which it comes being seen.* (...) [T]his term, in fact, emphasizes the perceptual reality of sound, as such, by distinguishing it from its methods of production and transmission: the new phenomenon of telecommunications and mass broadcasting of messages can only take place *with reference to* and *in accordance with* a fact that has been rooted in human experience forever: natural sound communication. This is why, without being anachronistic, we can go back to an ancient tradition that, no differently and no less than radio and recording today, gave back to the ear alone the entire responsibility for a mode of perception normally backed up by other sensory evidence.

This explanation proves that the acousmatics served as the basis for Schaeffer’s aesthetical findings, which went on to establish the *Musique Concrète* as we recognize today. Without the omission of the causal source of the sound, “the perceptual reality of sound” was not possible for Schaeffer to acknowledge. His experiments were entirely based on the acousmatic experience, which eventually shaped the musical language of *Musique Concrète*.

Considering the fact that he, in his experiments, always put himself, the listener, in the center of the experience, and his listening experience always functioned as the main point of reference for any necessary changes or alterations in the experiments, we can argue that Schaeffer’s understanding was inherently personal-experience based. With each attempt at changing the sound in a unique way and focusing on the perceptual repercussions while listening to it, he was experimenting with the alterations in his perception of the sound.

Therefore, with each attempt, by disregarding the manipulations he performed on the external sound and intentionally focusing on its internal perceptive qualities, he was essentially practicing *epoché*.

2.2 Phenomenological Reduction and Reduced Listening

Epoché, a substantial notion and a primary philosophizing method in Husserlian phenomenology, originates from Greek Sceptics and translates to *the suspension of judgment or belief*. It is a mental practice in which one suspends or ‘brackets’ one’s ordinary attitude towards the external world and leaves aside one’s natural judgment and conceptualization of one’s perception in an ordinary experience. “It is an attitude of indifference to the nature of a thing” (Bunnin & Yu, 2004: 672) which also requires a suspension of “our natural attitudes towards the objects in the world and towards our psychological acts, suspending all our theories about these matters, and leading back our attention to these pure essences of consciousness” (Moran, 2000: 136). It is the basis for practicing Husserlian phenomenology as it is the method by way of which one returns to the phenomena as they appear without regard to one’s previous experiences of them. Therefore, it is also the suspension of judgment regarding the experience of the phenomena itself: Through *epoché*, one is able to relate to one’s own experience, purified from one’s conditional reaction to it. *Epoché* is the suspension of “explanation” regarding an experience, leaving the mere “description” of the experience itself, as Ihde ingeniously explains: “*Epoché* establishes the ‘phenomenological attitude’ or the perspective from which experience is to be taken” (Ihde, 2007: 29). Considering Ihde’s remarks, one’s initial need to ‘explain’, upon one’s perception of sound, might concern one’s more obvious relationship with it: the act of listening itself. However, the same approach might be applicable to a much more abstract relationship as well: The customary conditioning of musical listening, which consisted of the “truth” Schaeffer intended to avoid.

Schaeffer, therefore, practices *epoché* with regard to both the *a priori* of listening and the socially established *a posteriori* of musical listening. *A priori*, a Latin term, meaning “from what is earlier; [in opposition to] *a posteriori*, from what comes after” (Bunnin, 2004; 42). *A priori* is an epistemological term most commonly associated with its application to notions such as knowledge and truth. “For Kant, knowledge is *a priori* if it is independent of experience and does not require experience to establish its truth, and is *a posteriori* if it is based on experience” (Bunnin & Yu, 2004: 42). Husserl refers to the internal structures of experience as the purest form of *a priori*. Therefore, in Husserlian phenomenological terms, the distinction between the intentional act of listening and the intentional act of musical listening is not of substantial importance. Nevertheless, we might still talk about the *a priori* of listening while we investigate one’s mere aural experience in relation to one’s intention of musical listening. Then the main concern would be the anomaly of the acousmatic situation; the reproduction of sound, which then transcends into a musical experience that is now altered.

From said phenomenological perspective, the aesthetics of *Musique Concrète* are grounded on antitheses of one’s relationships with both the musical convention and sounds from everyday life. As mentioned above, Schaeffer’s experiments with sound do not only regard one’s relation with the external world through the act of listening. That is, his phenomenology is not solely an investigation of one’s relation with the external world, since he is still concerned with the experience of listening to music, but it is directed towards the conditioned musical expectations, which construct the *a posteriori* of musical listening, as well. In this sense, the driving force of Schaeffer’s *Musique Concrète* comes from the direct opposition to our customary understanding of the distinction between an ordinary sound and a musical one.

Ordinarily, when one hears a sound, one immediately draws a causal relation

with its source (i.e., the sound of a door closing, the sound of a dog barking etc.). Similarly, when one listens to a musical performance, one makes a distinction between the sound of an instrument from that of another. A clarinet sound is a clarinet sound; the player blows into the instrument, and the sound appears as a result. This almost directly transfers to one's listening experience of music coming from the radio. Even when the source is not visible, it is still a clarinet sound that a musician plays and is recorded and broadcasted. *Musique Concrète* aims to extinguish this relationship by doing precisely two things: to encourage the listener to perceive a 'musical' sound as nothing more than it is, a sound; and to perceive any sound as potentially a 'musical' sound.

What does that mean? If these two perceptive notions are the exact opposite of each other, what can be achieved by interchanging them? Or more importantly, if they are the opposite of each other, what is the difference between them, and what can one achieve from this realization? The answer to these questions lies in the perceptive act itself that allows one to make these distinctions possible: The intention of the listener to perceive the importance, and the essence, of the experience of perception. This is made possible by phenomenological reduction.

The same principle, in *Musique Concrète*, lies in Reduced Listening, the term coined by Schaeffer to explain the phenomenological reduction of customary musical listening habits. Schaeffer explains it as "the listening intention (...) directed toward *the sound itself*, (...) indicators and values are surpassed, forgotten, redefined, for a unique, unusual, but nevertheless irrefutable, perception: *having ignored the source and the meaning, we perceive the sound object*" (Schaeffer, 2017: 115). In reduced listening, we refuse the suggested causality of the relationship between the sound source and the sound in order to achieve the conscious experience of listening to the sonic result itself: the sound object. Therefore, reduced listening is the *intention to achieve said conscious state* (Schaeffer, 2017: 211).

Phenomenologically, the intentional act itself, of making a phenomenological reduction of musical experience, creates a domain of abstraction of what is perceived and how it is perceived. Although they are two different things, phenomenologically, the external object and its internal image, they still belong to the same intentional act. The mental process bounds the two approaches from seemingly opposite directions, leaving the listener as the sole creator of their own experience. The perception of the perception itself creates the fundamental aesthetic principle of *Musique Concrète*. Before delving further into a phenomenological analysis of *Musique Concrète*, we must analyze the two sides of the coin to clarify our understanding.

2.2.1 Relation with the External World

Don Ihde (2007), in his book *Listening and Voice*, talks about “a purposeful naïveté” in relation to phenomenological experience. He states that the naïveté is found in the reexamination of an experience (Ihde, 2007: 17):

[T]hat naïveté is not a first or easy one. It is a second naïveté that arises out of a critical and controlled discipline of investigation. The first task of phenomenology is to replace the easy naïveté of ordinary reflection with the difficult second naïveté of phenomenology proper.

The word “replace” is very crucial in reference to the phenomenological perception of the external world. It is used in the very sense of replacing the illusion of direct apprehension of the external, with the understanding that it is an image one creates, as one intends to perceive the external, and synthesizes a reproduction of the external image that is not the external itself but the synthesis, or the reflection of it. It is thus the first step of phenomenology to go beyond one’s “ordinary reflection,” which is what is learned and practiced all one’s life and so internalized that its existence is not something one is aware of.

Here, it is in order to talk about the process itself of going beyond the ordinary reflection. The reflection where one presupposes the rational relationships that

belong to the external as the basis of understanding the world is the ordinary reflection. It is how one normally interacts with the external world. The reflection phenomenology aims at is the awareness of the experience itself: Experiencing the experience of perception and the reproduction of the external image that is not in any way directly related to the external. In other words, it is the awareness of the ordinary reflection and the intention to seize the unintentional and surpass it.

Another point to be made here is the question regarding one's awareness of the relation between the external world and the world of appearance, but more importantly for us, the fundamental distinction between them. First and foremost, Husserlian phenomenology suggests that whatever external things that exist are ones that are perceived to exist. One does not account for the existence of what is beyond perceivable; therefore, "it is evident that (...) perception and perceived things are (...), essentially interrelated but, as a matter of essential necessity, are not really inherently and essentially one and combined" (Husserl, 1983: 86). Our perception of an external object constantly changes in flux as time passes, and at each point in time, our perception of that instance is renewed. The external object does not change; however, it is presupposed to stay the same, but through each instance of time, it is perceived differently. Then, what constitutes its appearance is not its physical qualities but the synthesis of it in our consciousness. As we focus on our perception of the physical thing itself, its appearance changes through our intentional act of its reproduction. Therefore, it is the intention that creates the object as an objective unity.

Schaeffer's notion of "concrete music" directly stems from these relationships between the perceiver and the perceived. The aesthetics grounding the genre is the emphasis on the listener as the main subject of the music. This means several things: As the subject is the listener, the subjective force of music comes

from the mental process of the listener; hence the term *Musique Concrète*; the musical – or the artistic – quality of the work is heavily based on the perception of the material rather than the material itself; and the suggestive force of the music is to encourage the listener to engage with their relation to what they hear, rather than a presupposed transmission of what is already abstracted by the composer.

As the main subject, the listener creates the music through the act of becoming aware of their mental activities in regard to their perception of what they hear. It is a unique relationship between the sound and the listener: The musical activity becomes the act of realization of one's own phenomenological relationship with the external world.

2.2.2 Relation with the Musical Convention

The same principles apply to *Musique Concrète*'s stance in opposition to the musical convention. There are a couple of factors to be considered in examining this relation: We first need to define what we mean by musical convention.

Although Schaeffer repeatedly refers to the sounds he uses as 'non-musical,' further examination must be conducted. Surely, the main difference comes from Western Music's use of harmonic and formal conventions that have functioned as the driving force of a musical piece approximately until the second half of the 20th century. As Schaeffer tried to create a musical language that is based on non-musical sounds, it could be argued that he initially based his sound world on musical approaches that had been around for a couple of decades which implemented noise as the main element of the music. As he directed his search toward recording and playing back sounds, however, the underlying aesthetic qualities of his discoveries turned into something entirely different.

Therefore, *Musique Concrète*'s essential difference is not the use of 'non-musical' sounds as materials. This would, of course, also completely alter the perception

that is to be musical because of the expectation of the listener; a ‘musical’ listening of an everyday sound is an utterly different experience. However, the acousmatic situation also disregards the suggestive experiential quality of the notion of ‘performance.’ In acousmatic listening, the sounds themselves become the protagonist to whom the listener directs their attention. As discussed above, they are not the sonic results of physical actions. But, more importantly, they are also not the sonic representations of the ideas or emotions of a musician. Therefore, they do not function as mere messengers for a higher level of communicative degree. They are the message, and the messenger.

Naturally, the “ordinary reflection” of musical listening that stems from the customary intention to listen to a piece of music becomes obsolete in *Musique Concrète*. A completely different experience is introduced: The already abstracted elements such as pitch, rhythm, and harmony do not function as the main driving force of the music; the sounds contain their unique timbral qualities and individual temporalities, which mostly do not carry the conventionally idealistic sonic qualities. Indeed, according to Schaeffer, such sounds were preferred more often than not: “(…) [I]nteresting sounds, we observed, did not necessarily come from the most highly developed sound bodies; the opposite was very often true: anything that reminded us of the traditional instrument disrupted our quest, as did noises that were too characteristic (Schaeffer, 2017: 311-12).”

Pierre Schaeffer’s structurization of the aesthetics of *Musique Concrète* is based on the critical examination of the musical convention in two ways. The first is the above-mentioned anti-thesis of our conception of music as a presupposed notion of abstract relationships. The second is the breaking down of what comprises our musical understanding through the very basic core of the structure through which listening to a range of sounds unifies as a coherent aural experience. He suggests that the act of ‘making music’ appears as the first

inherent quality of what is perceived as ‘musical’. In TOM, he argues that the intention of making something else out of producing sounds with sticks, for instance, settles into the very core of making music in pre-historic societies (Schaeffer, 2017: 25). As the sound is gradually perceived as the object itself, other than a sonic result of physical activity, it becomes what we understand as music.

He continues with the proposition that for sound-making to be perceived as music, a conceptual side needs to be introduced to the process. He argues that this conceptual side comprises two notions: repetition and variation. He argues that repetition is the perceptive factor that transforms the sound into a musical object: As the sound is repeated over and over again, it breaks out of its causal relationship with its source. Variation, on the other hand, per Schaeffer, is what makes possible one’s phenomenologically conscious return to the sound as it suggests the sonic-aware correlation between the sound and its source (Schaeffer, 2017: 25):

The variation of something perceptible within the causal repetition accentuates the disinterested nature of the activity in relation to the instrument itself and gives it a new interest by creating a different kind of event, an event that we have to call musical. (2019, p. 25)

Repetition and variation eventually become the two essential techniques of *Musique Concrète*: the closed groove technique and the cut bell technique, which are discussed in Chapter 3.

What Schaeffer ultimately proposes as the foundation of the aesthetics of *Musique Concrète* is the separation of the conceptual side of such musical inquiries from the physical act of making sounds. This is not solely a separation of the physical act from its directly resultant conceptualization, but it is an abstraction of musical intention from the source-result relationship of sonic phenomena into a sense-perception relationship. Through this separation, the

perception of music becomes the *intention of perceiving music*, and furthermore, *the intention to perceive the music in (or of) anything*. Schaeffer, therefore, makes use of *intentionality* in *Musique Concrète* and aims to initiate this intentional act in the listener. In order to do that, he uses technology to present the above-mentioned conceptual side of music to its full potential.

2.3 Intentionality in Acousmatic Experience

At this point, it is necessary to discuss the notion of intention in relation to its substantial place in Reduced Listening. In order to do that, we must differentiate the word from its general use and what it signifies in the mental process of intending. As Searle explains in a summarizing manner, intentionality only exists as inherited in the act of intending towards something. We, therefore, can talk about intentionality only in relation to its “directedness” (Searle, 1983: 1):

If, for example, I have a belief, it must be a belief that such and such is the case; if I have a fear, it must be a fear of something or that something will occur; if I have a desire, it must be a desire to do something or that something should happen or be the case; if I have an intention, it must be an intention to do something.

Although intentionality is described and discussed in various ways by different schools of thought, the phenomenological understanding of intentionality seems to be the most grounded since it seeks its directedness in the mental act of intending itself. As Husserl points out, the intention, phenomenologically, is the intention of the act of intending. It can only be observed and applied as an intentional act. We do not intend to perform any mental task unless we intend to intend in the first place. The actual intentional act starts at that exact stage. Therefore, intention can be defined as the act of intending something rather than a state of mind. Furthermore, as perception only exists as one is aware that one is perceiving, intentionality is to be found at the core of perception.

All of the mental processes mentioned above regarding the difference of *Musique Concrète* in relation to both reality and conventional musical understanding can only be made possible with intentionality. It must be stated, then, that *Musique Concrète* draws its aesthetical principles from the core, intentional act of the listener. During the acousmatic experience, one, firstly, intends to listen, to listen to sounds without seeing their source. One then intends to listen to sounds for their own sake as they leave behind their source-result relation. This is the first step of reduced listening. The next step is one's intention to seek a musical experience. That is to say that it is firstly an experience with or without its musical connotations since one might define it as musical or not. Then comes the intention to experience the experience one intends to seek in the previous step: the seeking of experience becomes the experience itself as one intends on it. Through these relationships, we might observe the phenomenological nature of intentionality as a part of the perceptual structure and thus, understand that reduced listening is only possible through intentionality.

Musique Concrète, therefore, is not merely dependent on sounds as musical materials and their internal relationships, but on how the listener perceives them and how their composition alters and manipulates their perception. Schaeffer states that our relationship with any sound we hear, as the listeners, becomes a direct relationship with the phenomenon of sound itself in *Musique Concrète*; an utterly objective relationship through its physicality (2017). What this implies is that the intention first takes us away from the ordinary reflection of our perception of sounds to the phenomenologically reduced stage of recognizing the sounds as they are; sounds produced through loudspeakers. This is crucial at this very moment: We can draw the conclusion that the mode of reduced listening is achieved through the encouraged phenomenological reduction.

The second stage of intentionality starts when we perceive the sounds as physical objects. That is when Husserlian understanding of intention as the

intentional act comes into play. In mere phenomenological words, Husserl states that intentionality plays a crucial role every time a phenomenon is reproduced. In the constant flow of one's perception of nows, one opens a space in one's perception of time in which what is relentlessly perceived is fixed. When perceiving a sustained tone, for example, through every point in time in which one perceives the new instance of the tone, one stores those seemingly identical instances as a unity in a continuum of retention. This continuum is where a phenomenon is essentially structured and stored. It is inherently dependent on time by its nature, yet it is not a part of it. It is not simply what follows the constant flow of nows as Husserl argues (Husserl, 1991: 31):

But when the consciousness of the tone-now, the primal impression, passes over into retention, this retention itself is a now in turn, something actually existing. While it is actually present itself (but not an actually present tone), it is retention of the tone that has been. A ray of meaning can be directed towards the now: towards the retention; but it can also be directed towards what is retentionally intended: towards the past tone. (..)
Accordingly, a fixed continuum of retention arises in such a way that each later point is retention for every earlier point.

These words suggest the indirect relation of retention to a linear time. It is an intended point in time, therefore, where it relates to both the objective nows and the past nows. The phenomenon stored in retention is fed by the flux of input but is not shaped by it. What shapes it is our intentional act of perception. According to Husserl, intention comes into play in retention as what is "primarily remembered" (Husserl, 1991: 34). In one's perception of phenomena, what is fixed in retention, and therefore what is synthesized as the primary phenomenon, is characterized by one's intentionally selective process. The second important point is the difference between retention and reproduction. The process of reproduction occurs when one intentionally "produces" what is not in objective now but in one's memory (Husserl, 1991: 48). This explicitly differentiates the reproduction of a phenomenon from what is perceived as now, i.e., what is in retention. To take it further, a contextual

connection happens when the perceived now is disregarded and a reproduced now is present. Through this process, one creates an object. In *Musique Concrète*, therefore, the intentionality first makes possible the phenomenological reduction of what is heard and, simultaneously, the reproduction of it as sound objects in the listener's mind. This two-fold process inherently corresponds to a single uniform act as the realization of the perceptive experience itself takes place by the listener. At this point, it is necessary to examine the phenomenological nature of sound objects as we attempt to understand the phenomenology of the aesthetics of *Musique Concrète*.



CHAPTER 3

THE SOUND OBJECT

3.1 What is a Sound Object?

In TOM, notwithstanding all the implicit references to the notion of a ‘sound object’ throughout the treatise, Pierre Schaeffer does not propose a lucid definition of a sound object. In all the attempts he makes to describe the sound object, he seems to strive to paint a picture to make the sound object internalized by the reader, rather than trying to dictate it through a clear explanation of what it is (which, in this case, seems as an utterly superfluous, if not an impossible, attempt). He clearly states, however, that the sound object may very well be understood as a phenomenological datum. He does that in several ways. Firstly, he states that a sound object is not an external thing, such as its original sound source or the medium in which it is heard. It is conceptual and can only be identified in its perception. This is surely something of which the reader is aware by now. The second argument he makes is that once it is identified by the listener, it could be followed through various manipulations it undergoes: The listener’s awareness of the object, who might as well be assumed as a cultivated listener in some cases as they potentially might be aware of some of the technical manipulations made on the sound, makes it explicitly identifiable in various scenarios. Therefore, the sound object

is heavily dependent on its context.

Schaeffer then points out the possibility of a contrary situation where the listener might perceive sounds that come from the same original source as different sound objects, as they may not be aware of the manipulation techniques used. Of course, this is a simplified explanation that he offers to point out different possibilities since a cultivated listener might choose to perceive such sounds as different objects through their interrelations according to the composition. Nevertheless, the listener's personal experience defines their understanding of different sound objects, and through their relationship with them, the listening experiences can vary drastically. Referring to the same possibility, Schaeffer states, "Coming from a world in which we can intervene, the sound object is nonetheless *entirely contained within our perceptual consciousness*" (Schaeffer, 2017: 67). The sound object 'comes' from a world in which we can intervene: This statement implies that the sound object originates in the listener's mind. It is utterly a product of one's perceptual activity.

On the other hand, Schaeffer then immediately states that the sound objects, "far from being subjective, in the sense of individual, incommunicable, and practically ungraspable (...), can be described and analyzed quite easily. We can gain knowledge of them. We can, we hope, transmit this knowledge" (Schaeffer, 2017: 68). Furthermore, he states (Schaeffer, 2017: 68):

The ambiguity revealed by our brief consideration of the sound object—objectivity bound to subjectivity—will surprise us only if we persist in seeing "the workings of the mind" and "external realities" as opposites. Theories of knowledge have not needed the sound object to perceive the contradiction to which we refer, and which does not derive from the acousmatic situation as such.

What does this contradiction tell us? Are we the ones who misinterpreted the former statements? At this very point, it is crucial to critically discuss his language. Instead of using the sound object as singular, as he does in the former

stages, he prefers the plural version, ‘sound objects’, when he mentions that they are describable and analyzable. This difference points to two very crucial things: The sound objects can take the plural form *only after* they are identified, and that there are infinite numbers of *potential* sound objects which could be perceived as one or not. They *may* be sound objects just as well, but it is only possible in the listener’s mind – or the composer’s mind, for that matter – as one only directs one’s attention intentionally to a particular object while listening. Schaeffer’s disagreement with the *internal-external* dichotomy comes from this consideration of the world of appearances as an extension of one’s perceptual activity. The object’s inherent qualities do not suggest that it is impossible for every listener to perceive the same sound objects: It is perfectly possible. However, in the end, what is analyzed or described is what is identified to be real.

Moreover, Schaeffer is well aware of the ambiguous nature of perceiving objects as he points out to the impossibility of classifying objects according to absolute, universal criteria and continues (Schaeffer, 2017: 343):

If I suggest a sheaf of corn as a material object, my intention may indeed be to “summarize,” simplify, or, on the contrary, analyze or break it down. At a given moment it will seem to me to be the right object, that is, the right “middle term” between what would break it down and what would make it into a whole: it is at the right distance from my eye or within easy reach of my intention. If people insist or the person next to me quibbles over it, I will have to admit that it is a collection of objects: ears of corn. Furthermore, these ears of corn are themselves structures of grains. But on the contrary, perhaps this sheaf is part of a shock, or I have picked it out from a structure of rows of sheaves, or as a detail in a surface studded with similar points, a simple granulation in the midst of vast harvested fields?

In seeking the answers to these questions, it is necessary to strive to understand the notion of object in phenomenology – and partially, philosophy in general – to a further extent, for the object itself, through all its perceptive qualities, is what we are after, and it is only possible to understand what a sound object is by investigating the mental processes through which the object comes to

existence. In order to do that, we will approach the sound object from two different stages of its existence: The external object and the internal object.

3.2 The External Object

Before delving into the structures of perception, which play a primary role in identifying sound objects, Schaeffer compares the physical signal (acoustic signal) with the perceptual sound object to clearly distinguish the latter from the former. He argues that the physical measuring devices of sound do not directly correspond to our perception of sound. Even though the frequency of a signal can be perfectly measured with the appropriate device, our perception of pitch is inherently different. This distinction does not only concern one's conditioning to perceive a frequency as a pitch – therefore, approximating any physical data to a plane that is socially familiar to them – but it concerns the seemingly natural sense of hearing which is independent of social or subjective perception. For instance, even when the fundamental frequency of a periodic waveform is omitted, we still perceive the fundamental frequency, which is made possible by the automatic compensation done by the ear. Schaeffer puts special emphasis on this situation as he argues that the error of an acoustician is studying the external signal and relating their findings to their perception of the signal, whereas “IT IS THE SOUND OBJECT ITSELF, WHICH IS GIVEN IN THE PROCESS OF PERCEPTION, THAT DETERMINES THE SIGNAL TO BE STUDIED, and that therefore it cannot possibly be reconstructed from the signal” (Chion, 2009: 16). We can infer that, therefore, as it is one's intention that makes it possible to perceive the external object, it is also one's intention that defines how one perceives the external object, even before any conscious mental process kicks in. In this sense, in *Musique Concrète*, we study utterly and entirely perceptual phenomena, which must not be confused to be a study of mere mental processes regarding the perception of music. We deal with the appearance of the external, which we perceive as the external itself, through our

perception of it.

At this point, let us continue our inquiry by examining the internalization process of the external object. Merleau-Ponty, in his classic book, *The Phenomenology of Perception* (2002), discusses the external quality of what is perceived, which is synthesized only after the act of perception. Any quality of an external object, after it is perceived, becomes an entity itself in the perceiver's mind; it ceases to be a part of the object but an image solely of distinctive quality. This image is inherently connected to our conscious experience of the external object as it is reconstructed through the process of the intentional act of perception. Our perceptual structure becomes the main actor in constructing the internal image that is our grasp of the external object itself. It may be argued, then, that the perception becomes the object itself and is projected to re-synthesis.

This approach is what is observed in Schaeffer's essential treatments of recorded sounds. By cutting the attack of a bell sound, for example, he discards most of the sonic attributes that make it instantly recognizable; more importantly, the recognizability of the sound itself. What then remains is a sonic entity that is abstracted from its external meaning. The resonance itself becomes the sound object. Schaeffer states that this method makes it impossible to classify a sound in a conventional way (e.g., a piano sound) and forces the listener to recognize it in a different way (Schaeffer, 2017: 533-34). Again, the phenomenologically reduced perception becomes the main entity. Here, a crucial point is to be made: the moment one differentiates the perception, it becomes a *temporal object*. It is apparent as it is in the present and continues to renew itself in the constant flux of presents; hence, we perceive its magnitude in the temporal domain. Then what exactly constitutes the object here and how are we to understand the musical object that is presented by the composer? At this point, we must turn to Ihde's explanation of epoché (2007: 219):

(...) [T]he phenomena do not just “speak out” themselves—they “speak to” a question addressed them. One’s project sets the context and is already a preselection concerning what may occur within the context. In this sense and to this degree epoché is also interpretation (...).

This point is crucial to us as it frames the perception of an object through phenomenological reduction not as a result but as a constantly updated interpretation of phenomena. This is exactly what happens in the music of Schaeffer: What we hear is constantly changing and presented as something else. Image after image appears in the Husserlian recurrent renewal of *nows* (Husserl, 1991: 26-28), as we are forced to focus on what is reduced in every instance. Intentionality then becomes the main factor in the reduction process. As much as the listener is presented with a *reduced* object through various forms of sound manipulations, how much the retention span of the perceiver widens is up to the act of listening. At this moment, the continuity in the music is separated from the objective time in which it is heard; the mental connection of each instance of *nows* creates the temporality of the sound object. This means that temporality is something the listener constructs in their brain through infinite times of associations of what is now heard and what is stored in their retention. Reduced listening is merely a way of constructing meaning as to how a sound object is perceived and stored in the brain.

3.3 The Internal Object: *Noema*

Even though it is entirely a perceptual notion, the external object still relates to our interpretation of the external. On the other hand, our inquiry of the sound object compels us to investigate the structures of the mental object itself:

noema. *Noema* is a word that is derived “from Greek *noema*, what is thought about; in contrast to a correlative term, *noesis*, the act of thinking. The terms are related to *nous*, reason” (Bunnin & Yu, 2004: 473). The notion of *noema* and *noesis* are fundamental aspects of Husserlian phenomenology. Their importance comes from Husserl’s essential distinction of the process of

perceiving an object as (i) the sensory experience of the external and (ii) the mental act of synthesizing it internally. Surely, the latter is of importance to Husserl – and us, for that matter – as the internal structure of perception depends on the relationship between *noema* and *noesis*. According to Husserl, the intentional act upon receiving a sensory experience of an object is *noesis*, and the intended object is *noema*; but *noema* is not the direct representation of the external object in the mind since it is a production of the intentional act itself and the structure in which it is synthesized. In that sense, it is the *structure itself* as it is the structure that defines the intentional act regarding the perception of the object.

Husserl's inquiries regarding the manifold nature of the appearance of an object in the perception as an intentional act led to the establishment of the term *noema* as a core concept in his studies, stemming from the essential differentiation between “the *object which is intended* and the *object as it is intended*” (Moran, 2000: 156-57). According to this distinction, when referring to an object, we are already talking about multiple different objects as it is perceived through the intentional act. The mere presence of our intention already creates the possibility of different objects even though we might refer to the same external object. As Moran argues (2000: 156):

Husserl's interest in the *noema* came through a reconsideration of the relation between the individual experiential act and its acts of grasping a meaning and referring to an object. Husserl is rethinking the nature of the intentional object, now under the bracketing of existence. He is in a sense meditating on the kind of relation between sense and reference (...), but, with the epoché, all questions regarding the true referent of an expression are excluded. He is interested, then, not in actual reference but only in the act of referring and the intended reference of the act.

According to Husserl, “each *noema* has a ‘content’, that is to say, its ‘sense,’ and is related through it to ‘its’ object (Husserl, 1983: 309). This relation, in the context of *Musique Concrète*, suggests the mental processes in which an

external object is taken apart upon the act of perception in order to discover its internal qualities, which, then, are to be used in the reproduction of the object. As the external object is to be presumed as the object of the *noema*, and *noema* is the mental process itself, its content becomes the nature of one's relationship with the external object. It is one's subjective perceptual structure that defines one's relationship with the external. This process, of course, is inherently linked to the intention itself as the parent sound is reduced into a mere sonic space from which the mental object is deduced. What is intended here is both the sonic entities that are intended to be perceived individually and the construction of one's own perceptive process through which it is possible to perceive the individual entities. In this sense, sound object *is* the mental structure of the perception (i.e., the *object as it is intended*), as it is the perceived external object (the *object which is intended*).

The *noema* is of essential importance in Schaeffer's music. The closed groove technique, which is one of the fundamental techniques in his music, is in itself an investigative tool for the noematic core of a sound object. As the intentional conscious listening experience appears as the medium for a reduced perceptive structure in the listener's mind, a repeated chunk of sounds that becomes an entity over each repetition suggests a necessity of a search for the essence of what is selected to be repeated by the composer. It, then, becomes a space, a halted flow of time, to investigate deeper into the core of what is evidently the *noema*. The composition of sound objects pertains to a suggested direction of phenomenological investigation: Since the intended object is fixed, the object as it is intended becomes more and more apparent. This is a remarkable structure in which the listener surpasses what is objectively present only to return to it again through a self-constrained perceptual experience. As Schaeffer states (2017: 310-11):

(...) [U]sing the closed groove in the early stages of our work with the

gramophone (without the closed groove our method would doubtless have never come into being), we made ourselves extract “something” out of the most disparate sound continuum. Thus this surrealist violation, so far removed from the earnestness of our colleagues in electronic music, obliged us to cut up sound and face up to what was most ill-assorted, most resistant to organization. (...) [The sound fragments], torn from their context, both deprived and yet full of meaning, they imprisoned us within their closed, captivating and absurd universe. Probably all deconditioning processes must go through this: violation, destruction, meaninglessness.

For whatever our will to succeed, it has to be admitted that it was unlikely that we would discover a fragment of speech or symphony as a pure sound event, but this failed translation urged us toward prose composition.

3.4 The Transcendental Nature of Object

In the preceding discussions, the sound object is discussed and described at times, implicitly, as *transcendental* object, but its transcendental quality is never explained in a detailed manner even though the notion is of fundamental significance in Schaeffer’s discussion of objects. The reason for that is to avoid potential confusion in our assessment of Schaefferian understanding of objects. At this point, however, since we laid out a general phenomenological examination of Schaeffer’s sound object, we must pursue after its transcendence.

Schaeffer gives significant weight to the notion of transcendental, particularly the transcendental quality of objects with regard to our perception of them. For him, the object’s transcendental nature is as substantial as, and distinct from, our personal perception of it (2017: 207-8). He puts particular emphasis on the object’s transcendental existence that is essentially outside of our perception and recollection of it. He gives the example of a mountain to which two different people approach, and their perception of the mountain is not only different in a specific now-point, but the mountain exists outside of their personal experience of it (2017: 208). Here, Schaeffer is interested in “the transcendence of the object (...) in its being beyond consciousness, that is, in its not being a really (reell) inherent part of consciousness” (Drummond, 2007: 202).

Kantian understanding of transcendental, which Husserl, “by and large, takes over (...), but [he] also modifies it[s meaning] in important ways” (Drummond, 2007: 203),

(...) refers to the “subjective” conditions that belong to the possibility of experiencing any object whatsoever, and transcendental philosophy is the a priori knowledge of those conditions. (...) [F]or Kant the transcendental is the set of a priori (necessary and universal) conditions for the subject’s experiencing an object at all. The subject in whom these conditions are realized is not the empirical or psychological subject as existing in the world; rather, the subject is the transcendental subject who experiences the world and its objects as always already there before the worldly subject thinks and acts. Kant’s transcendental philosophy in its identification of those “transcendental” categories of the understanding that govern all objective experience is, then, a critique of the possibility of experience as such.

For Husserl, on the other hand, the transcendental does not refer to the “subjective conditions” but “the universal structures of any possible experience” (Drummond, 2007: 204). Husserl finds the transcendental in the intentional act of the subject, which *transcends* the subjective to become a necessary part of the relation between the subjective and the objective. Thus, transcendental is, in a way, the intentional act that is independent of, but inherently related to, the object and the subject. It belongs to the consciousness and, therefore, it is to be sought in the attitude towards an object, instead of the object’s external transcendental quality. Schaeffer’s approach to this issue, therefore, appears to be different (and arguably more superficial) than that of Husserl’s.

Nevertheless, we will focus on the transcendental quality of objects in his music, as well as the inherent implications of his understanding of transcendence in his other statements, rather than his definition of transcendence itself.

Here, we identify the main problem with regard to the transcendence of the sound object as the dichotomy between the intentional act of the composer and that of the listener. Each individual has their own subjective relation with the sound objects, i.e., their own perception of them. The transcendental nature of

perception suggests a potential variety in the identification process of sound objects. For instance, there could be an endless discovery of smaller objects within what can be perceived initially as the object itself. The suggestive transcendental quality internal to the object's perceptual attributes informs the perceiver that there is an endless process of what can be singled out as an object within a structure which also offers another structure within itself.

Schaeffer approaches this issue in relation to his discussion of how to define an object (2017: 220-21). He gives the example of a melody in which the individual notes can be singled out as objects within the structure of the melody. The melody itself is an object and has a structure that comprises the individual notes. Similarly, "in its turn it will serve as an object to explain a larger form, phrase, or strophe, a movement from a work, a piece of music, as they say" (Schaeffer, 2017: 221). This attribute is one of the most important elements in Schaeffer's music. A seemingly prominent object – such as a train whistle in the case of the beginning of *Étude aux chemins de fer* (1948) – making an assertive beginning for a musical piece might turn out to be a clever way of signaling a larger structure of an object which is the trains. In this case, the first couple of seconds of the piece, characterized by a whistle, perhaps a train whistle, but perhaps a sonic gesture made by hands and the mouth, or a very low-pitched whistle, can suggest a pitch-based and gestural vocabulary to follow. Instead, after a few seconds, it is to be understood as a literal signal of what is to be the main actor; the train sounds. Then, the perception of the listener completely changes into a much more concrete way of interacting with the musical material. This is the first moment where the listener realizes that this utter change of perception is what characterizes the overall listening experience of the piece. Multiple structures are introduced: The way the sounds are introduced and used in the piece and the relationship between the listener and the piece comprises multiple perceptual layers. The multiplicity of different perceptual layers is emphasized in the continuation of the piece. The closed-loop technique

is introduced where the piece invites the listener into the inner structure of the presented sound object, and the internal sound objects appear in the repetition of the parent object.

This ‘from larger to smaller’ approach to phenomenological reduction imposed by the composer is accompanied by the sense of continuity, synthesized by the listener’s perception: A parent object is what Husserl defines as an “inseparable unity”, which is “inseparable into extended sections that could exist by themselves and inseparable into phases that could exist by themselves, into points of the continuity. The parts that we single out by abstraction can exist only in the whole running-off; and this is equally true of the phases, the points that belong to the running-off continuity” (Husserl, 1991: 29). This explanation suggests that these objects are inseparable points and phases, and their transcendental nature is attributed to them by our perception. As Schaeffer states (2017: 344):

As soon as we focus on an object (and this is arbitrary), we have no choice but to accept that it will break down into components and be part of a whole. As long as we safeguard its coherence, its oneness, it will belong in one box in the diagram. If we happen to pick out its microstructure, it will change place, and very likely end up in a box for less-simple objects. If it forms part of a macrostructure, then it is no longer the isolated object of the earlier classification, and in relation to that macrostructure it becomes a simpler component: its individuality is dissolved; it is the macrostructure that tends to impose itself as the object to be classified.

Another layer to the issue at hand is the issue of familiarity. The vocabulary of *Musique Concrète* consists of everyday sounds, which carry a potential personal relationship with the listener. This quality brings with it some questions substantial to the experience of *Musique Concrète*: When talking about the phenomenology of *Musique Concrète*, how can one assume a shared conscious experience by different listeners? How much *a priori* plays a role in transcendence, and how is it evoked in a musical piece? At this point, one might wonder about the role of memory. Merleau-Ponty points out that perception of

any quality is the remembrance of a pre-familiarized conception of it (2002: xii):

(...) [M]y sensation of redness is *perceived* as the manifestation of a certain redness experienced (...) that is the apprehension of a certain hylé, as indicating of a phenomenon of a higher degree, the *Sinngebung*, or active meaning-giving operation which may be said to define consciousness, so that the world is nothing but ‘world-as-meaning’, and the phenomenological reduction is idealistic, in the sense that there is here a transcendental idealism which treats the world as an indivisible unity of value shared by Peter and Paul, in which their perspectives blend.

Indeed, it is essential to distinguish between Husserlian and Merleau-Pontian views on the perception of any phenomena in relation to memory. Before discussing Schaeffer, one might find the common denominators in both viewpoints and the ground on which the musical investigation can be based. In Husserlian understanding, intuition plays a significant role in the process of reproduction. He claims that “the consciousness of having-been-perceived”, creates a “reproductive intuition” of an external event that is perceived (Husserl, 1991: 59). This posits the question regarding the relationship of the external event with one’s reproduction of it “by means of reproduction of something internal”. One might argue, then, that what is experienced is the reproduction of the external event based on one’s memory of perceiving it before, or a similar event. However, Husserl emphasizes that memory is not the memory of perception. The memory constitutes the having-been: it is the reproduction (or the re-perception) of what was perceived earlier. This also means that it is a “modified re-presentation” of the earlier perception but not pregnant with the perception of an earlier perception since it is the reproduction of the perceived rather than the perception itself.

This argument is majorly significant to our inquiry. The phenomenology of Schaeffer’s *Musique Concrète* draws its strength from its distinction between the *memory as what has been perceived* and the perception of the *memory of what has been perceived*. That is, it is not concerned with the listener’s earlier

experience of the external, but it is concerned with the internal processes of the listener's experience. The aesthetics of *Musique Concrète*, therefore, is not concerned with sound itself. It does not seek to create an experience based on the listener's subjective experience with respect to the sonic material. It seeks to alter the perception of the listener through the relationship between sound objects. Therefore, we argue that external memory does not play any significant role in *Musique Concrète*, but the internal structures of 'having-been perceived' is at the core of the aesthetics. This is where reduced listening fails to *entirely* explain the phenomenology of Schaeffer's *Musique Concrète*. This is where we need to look at the composition.



CHAPTER 4

COMPOSITION AND THE TRANSCENDENCE OF OBJECT

4.1 Object in the Temporal Domain

Until now, the individual ‘nows’ are discussed in relation to the perception of a sound object. The intention is posed as a halting power of perceptual time which allows one to direct one’s consciousness towards a specific point in the temporal domain. It is not to be forgotten, however, that the selective fixation on a specific now is only possible in retention, as it is not permanent in the objective flow of nows. Therefore, it is held in retention and perceived as uniform in its relation to recollection and expectation. Per a particular object’s unbreakable connection to primary memory that renders these temporal relationships possible, its perception is inherently an intuitive process.

Moreover, according to Husserl, the perception of an objective now must precede the retention as it retrospectively attaches itself to the primarily remembered content of retention (1991: 35). It must be understood, then, that there is the necessity for a recollective action to take place in the primary memory as one expands one’s retention in order to attach it to the objective now.

Husserl even goes further to propose that one can have a primary memory of a

transcendent object, even a perception of it, when it is not occurring in reality at all. This is, of course, made possible by memory. The memory consists of what has been, and it is represented in the primary memory to be perceived as an organic phase of perception. At this point, it is clear that the primary memory, or retention, is an organ of perception that serves as a container of both the just-now-perceived and the has-been-perceived *as* the just-now-remembered. Husserl summarizes this, as ingenious as he is, as “[t]he past is given in primary memory, and givenness of the past is memory” (1991: 36).

This posits a question regarding the relation of the sound objects with one another. How does a sound object appear in our consciousness with reference to another – particularly to the one(s) before it? That is to say, how does a sound object appear as a transcendent object? The answer lies in the composition.

As discussed above, the listener’s momentary relationship with the sound object is of primary significance in *Musique Concrète*. Schaeffer, in TOM, lays out an extensive methodology for identifying and classifying sound objects to provide a way of composing and analyzing their perceptual attributes. He, therefore, arguably theorizes various methods for steering the intentional act of the listener through composition. Let us discuss these methods in order to understand the phenomenology behind their theorization.

Schaeffer introduces a chain of descriptive analyses for theorizing sound objects’ perceptual qualities to propose a way of dealing with their transcendental nature, i.e., implementing them in composition. In Schaefferian analysis, the sound objects, as they appear in a uniform state in their very first perceptive stage, are divided into three main morphological stages: attack, continuation, and decay (Schaeffer, 2017: 312). This methodology allows one to discern different types of sounds that might contain an infinite number of data to be distinguished from one another. Therefore, the first stage of reducing sounds into an abstract state is done by the mere description of their temporality in

relation to their amplitude.

The second stage is to investigate their spectral qualities with regard to their micro-scale attitudes. The first method Schaeffer proposes is to analyze their overall spectral periodicity, which he defines as “their greater or lesser fixedness in the tessitura, whether or not they are pure sounds or noises” (2017: 313). In other words, their variation in the spectral domain is taken into consideration. The second method is to look into their articulative nature within the temporal domain: By this method, the perceivable and distinguishable articulations in their continuation are taken into consideration and used to distinguish them from one another. Schaeffer exemplifies this with the analogy of “the syllables of language articulat[ing] vowels by means of consonants” (2017: 313). These methods are surely within the temporal domain as well; the only difference is that they are concerned with different scales of investigation of temporality.

Such investigations fall directly into the field of Husserlian understanding of time-consciousness. Firstly, through the dismantlement of objects with respect to their morphological behaviors, one’s experience of time is divided into smaller structural phases: When one directs one’s attention towards different ‘nows’ in the constant flux of sonic continuity, one divides one’s perception of time with respect to one’s experience of objective time. The intended conscious experience, then, becomes the main structure in which the sonic attributes are perceived and through which one becomes aware of one’s perception of time. At that point, the memory comes into play as the eidetic reflections are sorted internally, to be reproduced as the consciousness creates a continuous flux of now-relevant phenomena. This continuous flux is made possible by the intuitive memory that “offers [one] the living reproduction of the elapsing duration of an event, and only the intentions that point back at what preceded the event and point ahead up to the living now remain nonintuitive” (Husserl, 1991: 57).

Schaeffer goes on to exemplify various articulations the sound of speech might

contain, where consonants are used together with vowels to form perceptually uniform sounds, which become phonetic objects. The transcendental nature of objects again comes into play in this categorization: As possibly a word might be perceived as an object – not because of its semantic quality but because of its overt morphology – the articulations themselves, which gain the word itself an articulative quality, might also be perceived as individual objects. Moreover, they can also be taken apart into smaller objects in the event of a deceleration of the speech sound, where all the individual instances of sound would take space in the temporal domain. This is, of course, one of the techniques most used in *Musique Concrète*. The crucial point here is that the perceptual qualities of sound objects, as we intend to perceive, therefore attribute to them in the process of reproduction, can attach themselves to smaller sound objects, and since they are the embodiments of various instances of our perceptual structure, they are fully transferable in a uniform manner, thus, transcendent objects.

4.2 Composition of Perception

As mentioned above, Schaeffer argues that the sound objects are describable, analyzable, therefore, essentially objective. This points to a transcendental quality made possible by their contextual attributes in the composition in which they are presented. Schaeffer lays out an extensive categorization of different sound types, to which he refers as ‘Sound Typology’. It is an essential part of Schaeffer’s theorization of the contextual relationships of sound objects.

In explaining the proposed classification of sounds, he, once again, states that the process of identifying sound objects is both “‘psychological’ and pragmatic, based on more subtle ideas directly involved with musical or musicianly perception” (Schaeffer, 2017: 343). Furthermore, he states that the principle behind the process of classification allows one to assign various attributes to the same object, “depending on the listening intention. [Therefore, t]he search for an ‘absolute’ typology is an illusion”. The inference to be made according to

this statement is that, again, the sound object is a phenomenological datum which is originated internally and is dependent on the perceptive intentions. The classification of the *potential* sound object is merely a proposition that points the listener to listen and apprehend the sounds in a particular direction which in turn equips the listener with the right tools to identify the subjectively synthesized sound objects. Ultimately, the duality of the objective-subjective objects comes from intentionality. The transcendental intentional act, pertaining to the notion of object, plays a crucial role in the process since the listener may choose to “‘summarize,’ simplify, or, on the contrary, analyze or break down” the object (Schaeffer, 2017: 343).

In Schaeffer’s music, the compositional act is significantly prominent. The manipulative techniques he uses are almost at all times in the foreground. The repetitions, introduction of new sounds, the formal procedures, and the ever-present juxtapositions are so powerful that they dominate the listening experience. The sound objects do not take much contextual space as their individual attributes do not appear to play an important role in the creation of the larger form. This quality of his compositional approach stems from his reduction of sounds into mere sound types which may or may not share the same external qualities. Their perceptive qualities, therefore, are the main protagonists in the contextualization of different sound objects. There is no more a piano sound: it is an object with a periodic waveform and a fast attack and no sustain. In this sense, it is exactly the same as a vibraphone sound in its classification. Their pitch contents are not even significant anymore.

In this sense, the listener’s relationship with the sounds is not based on their individual taste or their past experiences with respect to the possibly recognizable source of the sounds. Rather, it is based on the presentation of the sounds in the reduced listening mode. How they appear and are put together in the piece is according to their morphologies and typologies. From the listener’s

perspective, the sound objects are the accumulation of the reduced attributes of the sounds in a now-point; in other words, the composer's choices in the compositional process.

4.2.1 Transcendence Through Contextuality: *Erotica*

The transcendental quality of the objects comes into existence through the intention toward the objects' perceptive qualities, which is achieved only by reduced listening. Schaeffer's compositional process ensures this necessity through various compositional tools, as mentioned above. By the implementation of these tools, the piece provides its own contextuality for the listener. Let us take a look at the movement of *Erotica*, from *Symphonie Pour un Homme Seul* (1950), a piece with rather strong external connotations.

The piece begins with three different sound objects: a woman's laugh, a humming voice repeated five times using the closed groove technique, and a glissando-like sound from the same woman's voice in the former object. These latter two are then instantly repeated in more or less the same manner, only to be followed by very similar but slightly different sounds presented in the same way. The continuation of the piece is marked by the relentless use of the loops and the fragmentations of the same or similar sounds. They continue to be fragmented in different ways to be presented in juxtaposed loops. As they are presented in a very persistent manner over and over again, they lose their external connotative qualities to be perceived as mere sonic attitudes.

Furthermore, we become accustomed to sound sources as we listen to them over and over again, and eventually, we are forced to implement reduced listening.

Not only do we disregard the external connotations of the sounds, but we also lose track of our initial internal time perception with respect to our listening experience of the piece since the repetitions and the juxtapositions of the sound objects are so abrupt that the inherent temporality of the sound objects dominates the linear flow of time. It is as if almost the time does not pass at all

since we repeatedly return to the same sounds, which appear as different objects at each time. Thus, each time, we observe the formation of the same sounds into different objects in our perception, witnessing our perceptual structures in this inherently phenomenological process.

This compositional attitude that is primarily based on the objects' perceptive qualities and their implementations in a specific way that provides distinct contextual networks for such unique perceptions of their modes of appearance is theorized by Schaeffer in a very detailed manner. That way, the suggestive phenomenological attitude of the music is established and secured as a compositional method. Let us take a look at this theorization.

4.2.2 Identification and Classification of Sound Objects

Schaefferian compositional approach is grounded on the primary distinction between the *identification* and the *classification* of sound objects. The first procedure of working with various sounds is identifying them as potential sound objects which enables us to manipulate and implement them as compositional materials. As Michel Chion states, "identification is a procedure which consists in isolating, cutting out sound objects from every possible sound context; classification is a procedure which consists of arranging them in families, in different types" (2009: 108). Schaeffer's reasoning behind the classification of sound objects is to implement a *musical intention* where one identifies the sound objects that are more suitable for one's musical purposes. This musical intention is inherently connected to the intentional act in a phenomenological sense since it attempts to perceive the sound object through its physical qualities without regard to its extra-musical connotations, therefore, intending to grasp the object itself as a sonic phenomenon. Moreover, it is an attempt to focus on the object's perceptual qualities, which are to be the main actors in the perception of the music, therefore, transcending the sound to be the solely perceptual acts of intention. Categorizing seemingly different sounds with

regard to their physical qualities establishes a global understanding of an object where the common physical qualities constitute an intentional act to grasp their perceptual similarities to experience them as one or a part of one.

The identification of sound objects starts with Schaeffer's proposition of the relationship between *form* and *matter*. Matter is defined as the prominent distinctive quality of the sound object. "In a sound, [it] is what persists almost unchanged throughout its duration, it is what could be isolated if it were immobilized, so that we could hear what it is at a given moment of listening" (Chion, 2009: 127). Form is the attitude of the matter over the course of time. Therefore, it might best be perceived as something external to matter since when it is fixed, the matter is emphasized; when it takes a temporal shape, the matter is changed. An appropriate example might be a bell sound: The dynamic envelope of the sound makes its matter unrecognizable since its attack and decay has very different timbral qualities. When the cut bell technique is applied (i.e., its attack is cut and only its resonance is left), however, its matter is emphasized since its form is fixed. Although both sound objects (the initial and its manipulated version) are from the same sound material, they have immensely different perceptive qualities. After the identification of an object, its classification is possible.

The first of the primary procedures for the classification of sound objects is *typology*. Typology examines the sound objects in three main category: *Mass/Facture, Duration/Variation, Balance/Originality* . Without going into much detail about these criteria (since it is not the objective of this study, and more importantly, it is done with utmost detail and perfectionism by Michel Chion), we shall summarize them respectively as the object's perceptive quality in terms of (i) its identifiable pitch content and rhythmic behavior; (ii) its duration in accordance with the variations it contains; and (iii) how original or redundant it appears with respect to preceding criteria.

These criteria for the typology of sound objects are most clearly directed towards a musicianly ear. Firstly, the pitch content is only categorized by looking at whether its pitch content is identifiable or not. It is of no interest to Schaeffer the actual pitch content of the object. This tells us that Schaeffer is only concerned about the object's suggestive musical perceptual quality: If this quality is prominent, it already has a perceptual characteristic that does not need to be analyzed further. Here, a phenomenological reduction is thus necessary: the musical convention is to be disregarded in the object's description. Secondly, the rhythmic quality of the object, just as its pitch content, is only a concern for the object's classification in terms of whether it is predictable or not. The potential tempo or the rhythm (depending on the perception) inherited in the sound object is of no significance. Therefore, this criterion is also characterized by the phenomenological reduction of musical convention. Thirdly, the criteria concerned with the temporal attributes of the object are entirely perception-based. The duration of an object may or may not be perceived as too short or too long according to its matter and variation. Therefore, different composers and listeners may perceive the sound objects' durations differently, but the transcendental quality of the intentional act they perform as they perceive the notion of duration is at play one way or another.

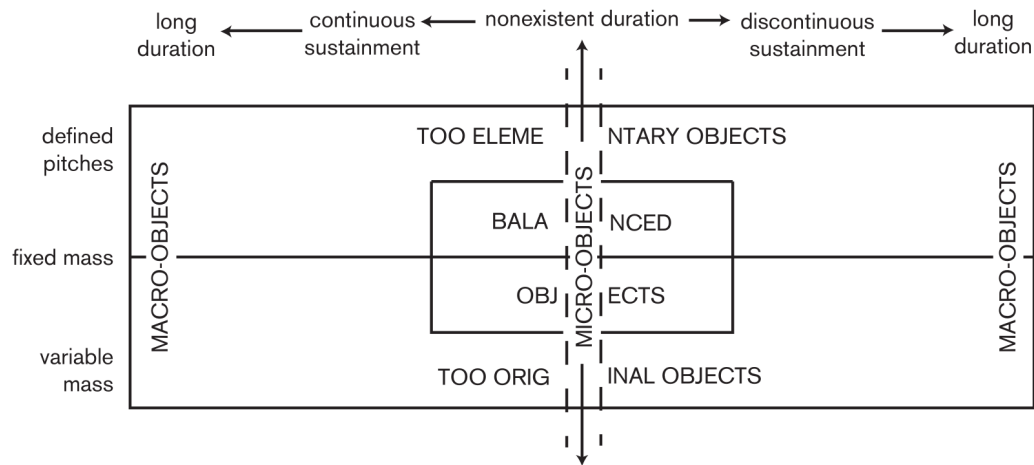


Figure 1: Table of the summary of typological criteria (Schaeffer, 2017)

As seen in Figure 1, all criteria pertaining to typology are inherently connected

to each other. The criterion of mass affects how original the object is perceived as, but at the same time, the persistence of its originality creates its continuous durational quality, which might be a very short (micro-object) or long (macro-object). For the object to be balanced, it must be “balanced” in terms of all of its perceptual qualities, at which point all of the criteria in question are perceivable at the same time.

Morphology is the second primary procedure of classifying sound objects after they are identified and classified by their typologies. Morphology is a more detailed, therefore, a more sophisticated type of classification as it takes the “contexture” of the sound objects into account as it describes them (Schaeffer, 2017: 292). “This description essentially consists in distinguishing features called criteria in the fine detail, the “contexture” of sound objects” (Chion, 2009: 110). There are seven morphological criteria: *mass*, *harmonic timbre*, *grain*, *dynamic*, *allure*, *melodic profile*, *mass profile*. These, again, in the same way, might be summarized respectively as (i) the identification of the pitch-field and whether it is identifiable as distinctive notes, chords, noises, or their combinations; (ii) the unique timbral quality when the mass is unidentifiable, therefore becomes a timbre in perception; (iii) the micro-particles of the object which make up the uniform texture of the sound but are still identifiable as themselves; (iv) “the profile of intensity” (Chion, 2009: 174) of the sound, describing the behavior of the sound in terms of its intensity; (v) the more or less periodic modulations of the sound, mainly its pitch or dynamic; (vi) the variation of the entire mass of the sound, a trajectory the mass follows as a whole; and (vii) “all the (perceived) intensities of the various components of the spectrum of a sound” (Schaeffer, 2017: 433).

With morphology, we delve into a much more subtle way of interacting with the perceptual qualities of the sound object. The criteria of morphology are much more interwoven and much more dependent on the perception of the individual.

Therefore, they are much more dependent on the context in which they are presented. This means that not only the morphology of the sound objects is subjective in its internal classifications, but it is also subjective in terms of its classifications being dependent on the context. Schaeffer explains this quality as (2017: 371):

From a morphological point of view we can never be quite sure that the object is definitively split up into its “isotopes.” A so-called thick sound may perhaps, after several months or years of training, appear to be reducible into constituent sounds. Other, composite, sounds will acquire unity when used in a particular way. Morphology, unsurprisingly, thus depends just as much on other surrounding sounds as on the listener’s conditioning. What is important is to agree on a quick way of naming objects, describing them and still leaving a way open for breaking them down or building them up again.

Accordingly, per Chion, morphology and typology are implemented one after another from more “elementary” – therefore more simplified – classifications to more sophisticated and detailed ones in a “sequence of approximations” as both of these classification criteria are potentially too hard to pinpoint on sound objects on their own. Therefore, a simplified approximation of a morphological classification may be followed by a little more detailed typological one, only to be followed by yet another morphological criteria to classify the object in a more idealistic way (Chion, 2009: 209). The same attribute is also true for the duality of identification and classification. As an object is identified in order to be classified, it is also projected to identification after its classification. What is constant is the intention toward the object, which might take the form of identification or classification as they are intentional acts of identification and classification.

Moreover, Chion reminds us that it is not always very easy to classify objects according to their typologies and morphologies as “we might be unsure whether to place a certain object in one box or another, depending on the context, the intention, the level of precision of listening etc.” (2009: 108). This

understanding gives these classification methods a relative quality: One's own perception of the sound object is the primary factor in the process of their classification. As one might perceive them differently from another, possibly with a significant difference, one's proceeding attempt of classifying them might be drastically different. What remains important in these processes is the intentional act itself which is transcendental since the main purpose is the attempt of classification itself rather than its results.

4.3 The Closed Groove Technique

Essentially, the closed groove technique serves as a tool to neutralize the preconceived anticipative nature of a phrase as it interrupts the perceptual continuity in order to emphasize an object as a time-irrelevant point that eventually becomes a *closed space* which contains its own temporality. Therefore, it is inherently a phenomenological technique where the listener is forced to acknowledge the object itself over and over again, through which the perception of time reconstructs itself based on the inherent temporality of the object. Its temporality then suggests a new *a priori* of time perception which needs to be broken again. This fragmental understanding of objective time gives the piece a unique character that transcends the inherent flow of anticipation in a musical listening. Chion describes the effect of the closed groove technique on the object's perceptual quality as (2009: 13):

Widely used in musique concrète (...), the closed groove led to an awareness of the sound object and reduced listening: how, indeed, could this sound fragment be described in itself, when the "causal" and anecdotal perception was soon over and when it presented itself to the listener as an "object", always identical yet always capable of revealing new characteristics when heard over and over again?

4.3.1 Loop as a Triggering Tool for the Intentional Act: *Etudes Instrumentales: Flute Mexicaine*

The closed groove technique also appears as an underlying idea for the repetitive nature of Schaeffer's musical thinking in the larger scope. Just as the momentary loops are prominent in the music, the larger ideas (which may or may not be perceived as sound objects) also recur several times in the music. These recurring ideas are sometimes the looped objects themselves, as the loops themselves also are repeated, or what is repeated are sometimes expanded versions of the sound objects. Thus, the form itself functions as a plane where there are different scales of repetitions and loops.

The transcendence of objects, therefore, expands to larger phrases, sections, and major formal areas. The continuity is broken: the objects repeat themselves at different times, consecutively or not. There is no linear motion to the music, but the linearity is compressed within the objects themselves as the listener is forced to listen to them repeatedly, thus, perceiving and yielding to the inherent temporality of the objects. In that sense, the form is not a causal continuum where the listener may follow the relationships between various materials but a time-independent showcase of the sound objects which are presented over and over again. The suggestive continuity of the music lies in the listener's consciousness which is defined by their perception of the objects at every instance.

This understanding surpasses the mere physical techniques of musical manipulation at times: in *Etudes Instrumentales: Flute Mexicaine* (1957), the same ideas are repeated in the flute over and over again until the music reaches the point where the electronics are indistinguishable from the acoustic sound. In the beginning, the flute plays an arpeggio-like passage upward and downward. Then the same passage is repeated with minor ornamentations. Then the electronics enter with the closed groove technique. After they are repeated four

times, the flute joins with the repetition of the beginning. Layered on top of it is the mildly manipulated loops of the electronic sounds. The electronics also have a repetitive nature on a larger scale, and with their addition, the flute exceeds being an acoustic sound to become a part of the electronic sounds in our perception. Together, they accumulate with increasing manipulations until they are perceived as mere sound objects, leaving behind the contexts they carried since the beginning. At this moment, they are one and the same: The dichotomy between the acoustic and the electronically produced sounds dissolves into a sound world where the only prominent phenomenon is the repetition itself. With the addition of the electronically manipulated sound of the flute, acousmatic listening is established without any compromises, and we listen to the sound objects presented recurrently in a persistent fashion.

The reduced listening is, therefore, forced upon the listener as they are confronted with the constant distortion of contextuality both between the source-sound relationship and the acoustic-electronic relationship. The perception of sounds' attitudes prevails over time to establish their own attitude-based contextuality, which in turn becomes the manifestation of the prominent attitude in the perception. The consciousness becomes fixated on the recurring objects, and a perceptual, phenomenological process is triggered in the listener's mind. As they re-synthesize an object with each repetition, the object becomes a little purer and a little more irrelevant to the original sound object.

4.4 The Cut Bell Technique

The other fundamental sound manipulation technique that Schaeffer made use of frequently is the cut bell technique. It is done by cutting off the attack (and the decay) of any sound to leave its sustain and release. With the implementation of this technique, a sound is achieved that has no distinctive transient, which omits its most prominent identifiable timbral quality, leaving

an entirely different sound object. Schaeffer's theorization of the classification of sound objects is heavily influenced by the implementation of this technique in his early experimentations, which led to his realization that the perception of the timbre of a sound "was not linked as much as was thought at the time to the presence of a distinctive harmonic spectrum, but also to other characteristics in the form of the sound" (Chion, 2009: 19). This realization is, therefore, to be seen as one of the main links to Schaeffer's phenomenological understanding: his discovery regards the conception that the reproduction of sound constructs the perception of timbre through its eidetic qualities that are stored in retention to be reproduced as an accumulation of its perceptually significant, therefore its intended, sonic qualities. The cut bell technique serves as a primary tool for the transcendence of intention to identify various sound objects by examining sounds with, incidentally, significantly passivized identities.

4.4.1 Cut Bell as a Constructive Tool for Perceptual Space: *L'oiseau Rai*

When the attack of a sound is removed, the remaining part of the sound becomes a formless sound object. It is a sustained continuity of resonances that does not suggest a direction since it does not have a beginning or an end. Therefore, it indicates an infinity that is inherent to itself. The sustained frequencies, hanging in the air, not indicative of the time passing through them, become *open spaces* in our perception of objective time. They stop the time in which we intend to listen to the movement of the sound particles, forcing us to perceive the undisruptive relation of our consciousness of the flux of time itself. Through these objects, we perceive the time itself, embodied as the sustained frequencies we hear. Thus, they introduce our perception to infinite possibilities of reproducing different sound objects. Through this process, they become those different sound objects.

The objects' transcendental quality of appearing as an infinite possibility of

different objects also suggests an intentional act of contextualizing them with respect to the composition in which they are presented. Thus, they have the capability to interchange and present themselves as manipulated versions of different sound sources. As Schaeffer observes (2017: 187):

(...) by cutting objects out of time, we create other objects, and their content, as well as their relationship to each other, may be fundamentally changed. Thus we can compare a piano chord and a rod rubbed with a bow and find certain relationships between them, and then we can compare fragments of these same objects and discover surprising relationships between these also (...).

A very striking example of the perceptual effect of the cut bell technique is its use in *L'oiseau Rai* (1951). The piece is composed of various bird sounds. Their use, in the beginning, is quite straightforward: After an initial introduction of one of the birdcalls, it is immediately looped using the closed groove technique. Through the repetition of the birdcall emerges other birdcalls to enrich the texture and to break our attention to the initial birdcall by creating a mass of several different sounds layered together. What follows is a long, single birdcall that redirects our attention to its primary state by making us remember our initial experience at the beginning of the piece. That way, our primary memory contains both our perception of the sonic content of the objective now and our memory of what has been perceived before. They are unified in their contexture through the single birdcall's perceptual significance. As the piece continues, we become more and more aware of our perceptual activity as the music unfolds in along the same line. Then comes the slowed-down version of a birdcall. It is naturally lower in the register, which contributes to its alien sonic quality. It is repeated several times, and the cut bell technique is applied. The resultant sound object is in direct contrast to the initial sound world of the piece. It, therefore, alters our perception substantially: As we listen to it, we become aware of its sound itself. It is no more a bird sound as it has no distinct form – it becomes a recurrent sine-like tone within the overall texture. The cut bell

technique has eliminated all its identity. Thus, it has become a perceptual space for the listener to investigate their perception of objective time through the introduction of multiple temporalities. These alterations in the perceptual activity are made possible by the composition, which practically becomes a composition of perception.



CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Pierre Schaeffer's theoretical and musical contributions to electroacoustic music aesthetics are more than significant in all aspects. He is the founder of *Musique Concrète*, a primary genre of electroacoustic music, which introduced a revolutionary way of working with sound and resulted in a paradigm shift in Western Classical Music. Almost 16 years after he first released *Cinq études de bruits* in 1948, he published *Traité Des Objets Musicaux*, a comprehensive study on the aesthetics of *Musique Concrète*, more precisely, a study of sound objects. Schaeffer proposed methods for identifying and classifying sound objects, discussing their perceptual characteristics, and contextualizing them in relation to various philosophical approaches. His philosophical arguments and discussions in TOM are mainly based on and understood as a part of phenomenology. In this study, his phenomenology is investigated and discussed with respect to both his theoretical and musical output. Furthermore, the inherent relationship between his theory and music is analyzed through phenomenology and exemplified with commentaries and discussions on several pieces by Schaeffer.

In Chapter 1, the notion of acousmatics is discussed and argued to have been a substantial realization for Pierre Schaeffer in his conceptualization of *Musique*

Concrète even though he came to its realization rather late. Then the relationship between acousmatics, reduced listening, and phenomenological reduction is analyzed and thoroughly discussed. It is argued that reduced listening is substantially a method for practicing phenomenological reduction in a musical setting and is mainly directed towards a musicianly ear and that acousmatics is a prerequisite, as a listening condition, for understanding and practicing reduced listening. Moreover, the essential aspects of phenomenological reduction are discussed through one's relationship with the external world and the musical convention. Lastly, intentionality, the inherent structure of perception in phenomenology, is introduced and discussed in order to explain the structural processes in a conscious experience. It is argued that the intentionality, both intuitively and as encouraged by the composer, is what makes possible a musical experience of *Musique Concrète*. The suggested acousmatic listening mode triggers intentionality inherited in a phenomenological understanding of the musical experience, resulting in a phenomenologically reduced approach to the sonic material, actualized as reduced listening. The experience of listening becomes the experience of music; hence, the music itself.

In Chapter 2, the phenomenological nature of the sound object, the main point of discussion in *Traité Des Objets Musicaux* is discussed in relation to mainly Husserlian understanding. Schaeffer's descriptions and explanations of sound objects are discussed, and the problematic aspects of his discussions are laid out before the notion of object is tackled as a phenomenological datum. The sound object, then, is approached both as an external and internal object, examining its internalization process in its perception and the internal structures inherited in its (mental) reproduction. Schaeffer's philosophical approach to sound object, and his musical attitudes towards it, are discussed with respect to mentioned notions. It is argued that the sound object is entirely a perceptual object synthesized within the consciousness of the listener; therefore, it not only

belongs to the realm of phenomenology, but its conception is only possible through a phenomenological approach. The external object is only external as it is perceived as external, and through its internalization, the perceptual structures inherent to its experience define the external object itself. Therefore, the internal and external processes are to be understood as extensions of each other as parts of perception. Schaeffer's musical implementations are dependent on this understanding and directly concerned with their effect on the listener's perception. Lastly, the transcendental nature of sound object is discussed concerning potential problems inherited in its experience within *Musique Concrète*. It is argued that the transcendence of the object, phenomenologically, is the transcendence of its perception through the intentional act and is located in the core aesthetics of *Musique Concrète*. Thus, the external memory is disregarded in the experience of *Musique Concrète*; the primary memory and the perception itself play the primary role in the establishment of its experience.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to the aspect of compositional decision-making in *Musique Concrète* and its major role in the transcendence of its musical experience. After the sound object's perceptual qualities in the temporal domain in relation to other sound objects are examined, the phenomenological nature of the identification and the classification of sound objects proposed by Schaeffer are discussed. It is argued that the objective qualities attributed to the sound objects become the core elements in the transcendence of the musical experience, even though the sound object, as a notion, remains subjective. The two main manipulative tools for sound objects, the closed groove technique, and the cut bell technique, are examined according to their implementation as tools for manipulating the perception of the listener. The proposed arguments are exemplified by commentaries on *Erotica*, from *Symphony Pour un Homme Seul* (1949-50), *Etudes Instrumentales: Flute Mexicaine* (1957), and *L'oiseau Rai* (1951) with respect to their phenomenological attributes. The insistence on the sound object when the closed groove technique is implemented creates a

perceptual space where the recurring sound object remains the same; therefore, its perception becomes the main aspect that changes with each repetition. This process suggestively change the sound object itself in the domain of consciousness. A similar process happens when the cut bell technique is implemented, where the external quality of the presented material is disregarded, as its suggestive temporality is omitted. This results in an alteration of the perception of objective time and creates a subjective temporality attributed to the sound object by the listener.

Hopefully, this study provides a way of understanding the phenomenology of Pierre Schaeffer through a phenomenological examination of his writings and his music. Furthermore, it is hoped that it offers a perspective not only on Pierre Schaeffer and *Musique Concrète* but also on various other genres, musical pieces, and theories provided in electroacoustic music subsequent to his work, which might serve as a gateway to approach them with a phenomenological awareness. Today's electroacoustic music, particularly the genre of acousmatic music as it is a subsequently renamed continuation of *Musique Concrète*, is more than suitable to approach with a similar method of analysis proposed in this thesis. Thus, the potent analysis methods for the genre could very well be studied in line with a phenomenological understanding. Moreover, spatiality in electroacoustic music, as it is now inherently a fundamental aspect of the genre, could be considered and investigated as a primarily phenomenological tool for the perception of sound objects. As proven in this study, any acousmatic situation suggests the consideration of phenomenology as a philosophy to understand the experience inherent to it. Therefore, while only Pierre Schaeffer's phenomenology is investigated in this thesis, it is to be understood that any electroacoustic work following his footsteps, however different it may be in its nature, carries at least a bit of phenomenological understanding in its aesthetical core.

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