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Composing a Self: Musical Listening as Subjectivation and Technologies of the Self

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**Composing a Self:
Musical Listening as Subjectivation and Technologies of
the Self**

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Introduction

It is true that musical listening can represent an activity that is extremely meaningful in one's lives; music touches us, moves us, operates in us, and possibly inspires changes in ourselves. I wonder, then, about the power of music. If this activity represents a way in which one can be intensely transformed, could we also say that it can represent a way in which a subject comes to shape and understand itself? I pose this question because music is something that has been extremely present in my life, having allowed me to navigate and understand myself and my surroundings. Indeed, I think I can say that music has taught me how to live.

Since this represents both a question of the power of music, as well as a question of subjectivity, what I propose as the aim of this essay, then, is to show how musical listening can play a part in the processes of subjectivation and technologies of the self. To do this, I will turn to Jean-Luc Nancy's book entitled "Listening" and Peter Szendy's book "Listen: a history of our ears", as well provide an interpretation of Foucault's "Technologies of the Self" text in terms of listening, which he does not do. A question that must be asked, however, is why did I choose these authors in specific? The answer is that these are important thinkers of the subject that conceive such thinking in a way that is differentiated from the one present in classical philosophy, especially from Descartes to Husserl. Indeed, when thinking about experience, classical philosophy tends to centralize the subject; to conceive it as the transcendental subject that is united in thinking, rationality and logos.

Both Nancy and Szendy, as well as Foucault provide an understanding of the subject in the form of becoming. By means of such becoming, the departure point for the analysis in question is in the thematization of one's experience as relating to oneself, which allows for a conception of a subject that is differentiated by the processes that it undergoes or submits to; this is precisely what subjectivation pertains to. In short, instead of the focusing on a subject that undergoes experiences, the departure point is precisely in the activities or practices that an individual undergoes and how it relates to such practices so that it can emerge as a subject. It is, then, in this manner that the question of music will be articulated, since the transformative experiences that are present in musical listening represent ones in which subjects become differentiated because a contact with the sonorous becomes "mine and no one else's". Not only that, but I believe that by conceiving the question of the subjectivation in terms of music, this will enrich the understanding of the conception of a subject in a very special manner, that being one that is not focused on reason but precisely in what underlies it. After all, a transformative

musical experience touches us “below” reason. But how is the question of music to be articulated in this way?

In his book entitled “Listening”, Nancy accounts for how an experience of musical listening can represent a meaningful encounter with the sonorous in terms of *sense*, which allows for the conception of such happening as a transformative experience of self. Indeed, such *sense* is articulated as a meaning that is not merely understood in terms of rationality but as a very delicate meaning that touches us and moves us before any possibility of conceptualization takes place; it is a meaning that is to be found in sound itself. In fact, precisely because of this, an experience of musical listening is to be understood (according to Nancy) as embodied since it concerns a meaning that operates in us; one can say that it resonates in us and this is why it can represent a transformative act. Not only that, but such transformative experience that is present in musical listening becomes a true activity that differentiates the individuals that undergo such activity. It is, then, that in such experience “I” become differentiated precisely because a *sense* pertains to me and no one else; it touches me in my ownmost interiority. It is important to note, however, that this conception of musical listening implies that an understanding of the subject is not to pose such subject as the center, but as the result of such experience of musical listening and the different *senses* that characterize it; that is how musical listening is to be connected to an understanding of the subject. But if Nancy shows us how the meaning that is present in musical listening is able to inhabit and operate in us in a transformative manner, Szendy highlights the fact that such meaning (*sense*) does not consist in one that is predetermined but developed by such subject. In this way, listening is to be seen as an active practice (*praxis*) in which a subject not only takes-in the *sense* that is present in sound but produces or *composes* its own *sense*; this is how a subject is to emerge as differentiated. Not only that, but Szendy also points out that a listener can learn *what* and *how* to listen, which means that an individual is able to select and shape the outcome of such transformative act of listening. But why, then, bring Foucault into a question of music?

It is true that Foucault’s work is known for being focused on the questioning of subjectivity that is articulated in terms of power. Indeed, the mention of power is extremely present in his works in the sense that a subject’s understanding is characterized by the practices that an individual submits itself to. In this way, such practices represent a power since they delimit the emergence, as well as the understanding of such subject. However, it is not that, according to Foucault, such subjects become always fully determined by such practices but are

able to *use* them so that they can emerge and shape themselves in a desired manner. Indeed, in the text “Technologies of the Self”, he articulates how a subject can become both the object, as well as the director of the transformations it goes through, which is to be understood as self-technics. It is in this way, then, that I propose to analyze the power of musical listening as being able to create a space in which subjects are able to understand, as well as determine themselves according to the different *senses* that arise.

This essay will then be articulated in this manner. In the first chapter, I will explain how subjectivation and technologies of the self are to be understood, while justifying their pertinence for a reading of an activity such as musical listening. Then, in the second chapter, I will inquire about the nature of an experience of (musical) listening while also explaining how the meaning that is attached to such experiences can result in an intense and transformative act (which will open its analysis in terms of subjectivation and self-technics). After that, precisely because musical listening will be possible to be read as a process of subjectivation, in the third chapter, I will investigate about the result of such activity, which is nothing more than the musical subject. In this manner, a way of comprehending how a subject is to emerge and understand itself through musical listening will be articulated. Finally, in the last chapter, I will elucidate how the reading of musical listening in terms of subjectivation will be connected to technologies of the self, while providing more concrete examples of how a subject is to be able to shape and determine itself through such a powerful and transformative activity.

1. Subjectivation: a framework for the understanding of the subject

It is the task of the first part of this essay to promote an understanding of the processes of subjectivation and self-technics, as well as explain how technologies of the self enable subjectivation while providing a framing of how musical listening can be understood through these concepts. Here, I will explore the concepts of self-technics and subjectivation as conceptualized by Foucault in terms of the processes through which individuals are made subjects. It is important to note that, for now, these concepts won't be fully articulated in terms of musical listening, however, it will be through them that the question of musical listening will be investigated. This represents an important step for the aim of this essay since it will provide a foundation for the analysis of musical listening as representative of a process of subjectivation and self-technics.

I wonder, then, about music. If the activity of musical listening can entail intense experiences, including ones that transform individuals, could we also say that it plays a role into how we shape and build ourselves? In other words, could we say that musical listening can represent a framework through which subjects come to be and to understand themselves? To answer this question means to inquire about the possible ways in which individuals undergo such transformations, which represents a question of the subject in terms of subjectivation. But how are we to understand this?

1.1 Subjectivation: subjection, power and technologies

The process of subjectivation promotes an understanding of the subject that is different from the one that is traditionally found in philosophy, especially from that concerning the period between Descartes and Husserl. What this means is that, instead of posing the departure point as a (transcendental) subject, that being, one that becomes the center and grounding of experience in terms of, reason, reflection, and universality, it shifts the focus towards the *practices* to which individuals *submit* themselves to, so that they can, indeed, *emerge* as subjects, which means that the *subject* is to be understood in difference and singularity. In short, the subject becomes not the preceding ground, but the result of the processes it goes through. Accordingly, when speaking of subjectivation,

“the subject is constructed through practices of subjection, or, in a more autonomous way, through practices of liberation, of liberty, as in Antiquity, on the basis, of course, of a number of rules, styles, inventions to be found in the cultural environment.”
(Foucault, 2013, pp.50-51)

As we can see from this passage, the departure point for the understanding of the formation of subjects become the “rules, styles and inventions to be found in the cultural environment”. In this way, to speak about the subject means not to think about an activity that is performed by a subject, but precisely the processes through which an individual can be characterized, and, therefore, made a subject; it concerns a becoming-subject. But what does it mean exactly for a subject to be determined by the practices it subjects itself to?

Foucault articulates the practices that individuals submit themselves to in terms of technologies and power. In fact, in the text “Technologies of the Self”, Foucault mentions four types of technologies, namely, technologies of production (of objects), technologies of sign systems, technologies of power, and technologies of the self, which concern different types of domination. The first two types of technologies concern the fields of science and linguistics since they focus on the manipulation and production of materials and to the manipulation of meanings, symbols and signification. The last two types of technologies both pertain to a domination or manipulation of subjects but differ in the sense that the technologies of power concern the domination of individuals and submission of those individuals to certain ends, whereas the technologies of the self concern individual domination (Foucault, 1988, p.225). This aspect of domination is extremely important since the technologies mentioned above are not only connected to a manipulation of materials and meaning, but also to the transformation of subjects. Accordingly, when speaking of technologies, Foucault stresses that

“each implies certain modes of training and modification of individuals, not only in the obvious sense of acquiring certain skills but also in the sense of acquiring certain attitudes.” (Foucault, 1988, p.225)

What this means is that domination is associated to the process of the formation (or emergence) of subjects in the sense that these technologies enforce an intense transformation since they change (in a revolutionary way) how one interacts with the world and how one shapes and understands oneself. It is important to note, then, that although these different types of technologies concern different types of domination since the objectives are different (manipulation of materiality, and meaning, for example), they have an impact on the subjects themselves in this transformative manner that also pertains to a change in attitudes.

“For instance, the relation between manipulating things and domination appears clearly in Karl Marx's Capital, where every technique of production requires modification of individual conduct not only skills but also attitudes.” (Foucault, 1988, p.225)

In here it is possible to see how the aspect of domination that is present in the different technologies becomes two-fold in the sense that it does not only concern the domination of that to which such technology pertains, but that the changes that it creates also promote a certain domination of individuals in the sense that it shapes their way of being; one can say that they produce ways of human existence. It is then, in this manner that one can understand how the process of subjectivation is understood in terms of subjection to power (that is to be found in the cultural environment). In other words, the technologies that Foucault talks about are connected to subjectivation in the sense that they do not concern a mere acquisition of skill, but a change in attitudes and disposition and, therefore, a real transformation that represents a power; the individual is submitted to the power of the technologies present in the environment.

As it has been demonstrated above, the practices and technologies that are to be found in the cultural environment represent transformations not only in terms of their object of focus (that being materiality, sign systems, or legislation, for example), but also in the way in which individuals can be understood, and, therefore, made subjects. In this way, when talking about subjectivation, this process implies a certain submission to power in the sense that the practices present in an individual's environment represent also a transformation of the individual itself; they have that power. Not only that but, since such practices promote a transformation in the individual itself, they become the framework through which the subject comes to understand itself since it is delimited by such practices it submits itself to.

It is extremely important to understand, however, that the power that is present in the technologies that compose an individual's environment does not mean that one is completely subjected to the practices; after all, Foucault talks about subjectivation as a practice of liberation. Truly, to speak about the role of power in the process of subjectivation means, thus, that the subject does not determine itself *ex nihilo*, but through a process united in creation and subjection to the practices that are present in the cultural environment. In this way, power represents something without essence and that is simply operational (Deleuze, 2006, p. 27). Accordingly, power is then to be understood as a dynamic of power relations since the individual still determines itself (it has that power), but that it cannot do that without such existing technologies and practices (there is power in the sense that they delimit the existence, as well as the understanding of the subject; they become the framing of the subject). But how does this relate to the question of music?

It is true that musical listening can constitute a meaningful experience to an individual. In fact, it is plausible to say that this activity is connected to personal and intimate experiences, ones that touch us in our ownmost interiority and possibly inspire changes in ourselves. It is, then, that I propose to analyze music as *power* since the meaningful experiences that might be involved in here can represent acts of transformation of a self. Not only that, but these personal and intimate experiences reveal the capacity of the understanding of the subjects that emerge from such practice in terms of singularity because the experience that constitutes musical listening is precisely what differentiates a subject from all the others; that is how a subject becomes distinct. Later in this essay, it will be explained how the meaning that is associated with musical listening that represents a transformative experience is characterized in terms of *sense*, which will allow the analysis of subjectivation to take place in a new manner. However, what is to be understood for now, is to pose the possibility of the analysis of musical listening as a practice present in the cultural environment that constitutes a *power*; one that can become the departure point for the analysis of the process of subjectivation. But if musical listening represents a powerful practice that is present in one's environment, it certainly can be differentiated from a manipulation of materiality, sign systems, or power and this is why I analyze it in terms of technologies of the self.

1.2 Subjectivation: technologies of the self

If the other three types of technologies mentioned previously in this essay pertain to either manipulation of materiality, sign systems, or power, technologies of the self assume a certain particularity since the object and the director of the transformations is the subject itself. It is true that technologies of power also concern the domination of individuals, but only in terms of creation of rules of conduct. In fact, if one is to speak about domination, technologies of the self consist in acts of self-domination, which means that the process of subjectivation turns inwards since the subject becomes both the object as well as the director of the transformations in question. In this way, technologies of the self are processes

“which permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality. (Foucault, 1988, p.225)

As we can see from this passage, like the other technologies mentioned previously, technologies of the self also consist not only in the acquisition of a skill, but in transformative

practices on the way of being of individuals; in this case with the goal of achieving a state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality. As a matter of fact, if one is to think about the power of such technologies, one would say that the power present in technologies of the self consists in a *self-imposed power* in the sense that individuals effect operations *on themselves* so that they can be transformed or, in this case, made subjects and this is how subjectivation is present in technologies of the self; one can say that self-technics enables subjectivation. But as we've seen before, the power that is present in the technologies that are described by Foucault consists in one that is relational and operational since it is expressed in a relationship between the power of the practices as well as the power that represents the possibility of the individual to determine itself. The way in which the subject determines itself, which represents a *power*, is extremely important in the practices of self-technics since the direction in which such power is operationalized is done in an aesthetic manner. But what does this mean, exactly? As Foucault states, technologies of the self are

“those intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life into an *oeuvre* that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria.” (Foucault, 1985, pp.10-11)

When speaking about aesthetics it means that the way in which subjects shape themselves is directed in the way which they find their transformation to be meaningful. In this way, to say that a subject fashions himself or herself aesthetically means not only that there is a self-imposition of a set of rules or practices, but that such self-imposition regards the specific or singular goal of the transformation that is self-imposed. Indeed, as it is possible to understand from this passage, the transformations that individuals set for themselves concern their singular being, which means that the direction of such transformations is done according to what individuals find meaningful for themselves. Thus, the question of style becomes central to these practices because each act becomes one that pertains to each singular individual. In “The Use of Pleasure”, Foucault explains how the aesthetic aspect of self-technics can be present in the practice of fidelity in a marital setting, for example. As he states,

“one can relate the crucial aspects of the practice of fidelity to the strict observance of interdictions and obligations in the very acts one accomplishes. But one can also make the essence of fidelity consist in the mastery of desires, in the fervent combat one directs against them, in the strength with which one is able to resist temptations: what makes

up the content of fidelity in this case is that vigilance and that struggle. In these conditions, the contradictory movements of the soul - much more than the carrying out of the acts themselves - will be the prime material of moral practice. Alternatively, one can have it consist in the intensity, continuity, and reciprocity of feelings that are experienced vis-a-vis the partner, and in the quality of the relationship that permanently binds the two spouses.” (Foucault, 1985, p.26)

As we can see, the practice of fidelity, which already pertains to the practice of rule of conduct in a marital setting can be taken in two completely different ways that are to be determined by the individual. In both cases there is a submission to the same practice, that being fidelity in the marital setting, however, the way in which each different individual submits to this same practice differs according to the desired transformation that one sets for himself; to whatever is found to be aesthetically and stylistically relevant.

One could say, then, that individuals *use* the practices present in the environment so that they can transform themselves according to what is found to be relevant for them. In fact, when describing self-technics, the aspect of *use* is what best describes the relationship between the power relations that are inherent to this process. Indeed, in this case one could say that there is a subjection to a power since the individuals submit themselves to a practice that promotes a change in their attitudes, however, this subjection only takes place so that such individuals come to realize and understand themselves in the way that they set to be aesthetically valuable for them (in this case, either as someone who is disciplined and self-controlled, or as someone who caring and dedicated). But how does this relate to the question of musical listening?

As it has been shown previously, there is a possibility of analyzing music as a *power* in the sense that it can represent meaningful and transformative experiences that distinguish subjects. I believe, however, that individuals seem to be extremely aware of the power that is present in musical listening since they *use* such power so that they can build and understand themselves. After all, why do people select different songs or genres of music to listen to depending on their mood? But also, why is it that people remain so faithful to certain songs or music genres? It is, then, that an analysis of musical listening in terms of self-technics seems plausible since it concerns a practice that represents a power that promotes transformations on individuals. However, this activity can, indeed be directed by such individuals so that they are able to effect transformations on *themselves* in the way that they find pleasurable; one can say that individuals *use* the power of musical listening so that they can be made subjects. Later in

this essay it will be articulated how the *use* of the power inherent to musical listening does in fact take place, however, what is important to understand for now is that there is an opening of a possibility of analyzing musical listening in terms of self-technics because it is an activity in which individuals seek to effect transformations on themselves (from something as simple as their mood, for example) that are directed according to that which they find meaningful; truly, there are multiple ways in which one can submit oneself to the power of music.

In this first chapter, the question of subjectivation and self-technics has been articulated. Firstly, it has been demonstrated how subjectivation represents an analysis of the subject that focuses on the practices that oneself submits to. In this way, the subjects that derive from this way of understanding emerge as differentiated and singular, according to the different practices they submit themselves to. Furthermore, it has been articulated how such practices and the relations that individuals establish with them can be understood in terms of power in the sense that such practices become the framework for the understanding of subjects, as well as what is *used* by them so that they can, indeed, emerge. Secondly, it has been demonstrated how these practices that individuals submit themselves to can be characterized in terms of technologies that promote intense transformation in individuals; one can say that it subjectivates them. In addition, the special case of technologies of the self has been articulated as a technology in which individuals become both what directs, as well as what is transformed in such practices. In this way, self-technics is characterized by operations that individuals effect *on themselves* so that they can be transformed *aesthetically*, which means that individuals *use* the practices that are to be found in the cultural environment (and their power) so that they can emerge in the specific way that they find to be valuable. But how is the question of music to be exactly understood? It is, then, the task of the following parts of this essay to provide an account on how can musical listening represent a process of subjectivation, as well as self-technics.

2. Listening: an inquiry about sound

In the previous the chapter the questioning regarding subjectivation and technologies of the self has been initiated. However, if one is to question about musical listening and whether such activity can be understood in this manner, one must inquire about the nature of listening, and most specifically, musical listening. It is, then, the task of this chapter to provide an understanding of the nature of an experience of (musical) listening. This step is of extreme importance for the inquiry of this essay since it will help to develop a better understanding of how musical listening can promote transformative experiences, as well as how can such experiences be understood in terms of subjectivation.

Both Roland Barthes and Jean-Luc Nancy were interested in the study of meaning in several ways. It is true that both authors do not only focus on music and its relation to meaning, which is evident through the former's background in semiology and the latter's works such as "The sense of the world", however, it is precisely their common interest in the question of the meaning of sound that drew me to their works. Indeed, in their approach to the study of sound and music, both understand something that is absolutely central to listening, that being, that the meaning present in sound is not to be strictly conceived in terms of rationality, but, in fact, sensed. It is in this way, then, that the possibility of the taking place of a transformative experience that concerns musical listening is to be articulated. But firstly, how is this connection between sound and meaning to be understood?

2.1 Listening: sound and meaning

The connection that can be established between meaning and sound is present in the simplest moments of our daily lives. One way that we can understand this is the connection that the sonorous has with the evaluation of the spatio-temporal. In fact,

“for the human being—and this is a phenomenon often underestimated—the appropriation of space is also a matter of sound: domestic space, that of the house, the apartment—the approximate equivalent of animal territory—is a space of familiar, recognized noises whose ensemble forms a kind of household symphony:” (Barthes, 1991, p.246)

What is meant by this is that the contact that is established with the sonorous assumes a central role in how we navigate in our lives since it permits us to establish meaningful connections with our environment that allow a certain stability to be developed. In fact, Roland Barthes

states that listening takes place by means of a selection against an auditive background. In this manner, if one is to take the example of being inside one's house, in the "household symphony" that is composed in the sonorous environment, one is able to differentiate or to index the different sounds that are present in here (one hears the doors closing or the water from the tap running, for example) and this selection is what allows us to establish different meanings in the environment that are strained in the sonorous, as well as associating them to a certain place, that being the household environment. In this way, listening concerns a certain metamorphosis in which the elements of sonorous landscape are *strained* in order to develop a determined meaning.

Nancy would pose this way of listening as *hearing*. In French, hearing [*entendre*] means to understand or comprehend what is heard, which points to the fact that the contact with sound is focused on meaning in terms of its understandable content. It is, then, that this way of engaging with sound is to be taken as *hearing* because one is able to concretely establish a relation between sound and its cause. It is important to note that hearing is not restricted to a way of understanding sonorous stimuli that concerns the sounds of the environment, but also a way in which one is to understand speech. In this degree, one hears what the other says in the sense that the focus is on the *logos* or the "determinate" content of speech. But to listen is not merely to engage in an indexing activity, or to comprehend logos. In fact, Barthes only describes listening as a way of indexing the sonorous to describe a "first layer" of listening. What is interesting about listening, then, is how it assumes a particular way of contacting with meaning. As Nancy states,

"The sonorous, on the other hand, outweighs form. It does not dissolve it, but rather enlarges it; it gives it an amplitude, a density, and a vibration or an undulation whose outline never does anything but approach." Nancy, 2007, p.2)

What this means is that the truth or the "making evident" that is present in the sonorous is not reducible to the apprehension of something that is expressed at the outset, but that it also concerns something that underlies such outset; that gives it depth, or color, and, therefore, enlarges it. To be more precise, for example, the meaning that is to be found in the sonorous does not merely pertain to what is "concrete" in speech, but also of the way in which such speech is articulated, or to its timbre. It is important to understand that what is being talked about in here is not a matter of semantics and syntax, but of precisely what underlies their articulation. After all, the sonorous is not reducible to speech, but pertains to the whole of sound

itself. It is, then, that a distinction between the contact with the sound by means of listening, which is differentiated from what has been described as hearing can be made.

Listening is the way in which one is directed towards the sonorous that allows the uncovering of a meaning that is not taken as immediately present to take place. In a way, one could say that “there is hearing, and in hearing itself, at the very bottom of it, a listening” (Nancy, 2007, p.6). What this means is that in listening, what one comes in contact with is precisely what enlarges and gives an amplitude or density of what is taken as concrete. If one is to take the example of listening to someone’s speech, what is at stake here is not the words that are signified, but the intensity, the tonality, and the color of the discourse for these are, in fact, what *enlarge* such discourse. In short, it is not about what is concretely meant by someone, but what underlies such thing, and this is why it is taken as being a meaning that is not immediately present. In this way,

“Listening is henceforth linked (in a thousand varied, indirect forms) to a hermeneutics: to listen is to adopt an attitude of decoding what is obscure, blurred, or mute, in order to make available to consciousness the “underside” of meaning (what is experienced, postulated, intentionalized as hidden).” (Barthes, 1991, p.249)

Indeed, listening is connected to a decoding of the sonorous, but this decoding regards precisely what underlies what is meant, which is therefore taken as hidden. In fact, Nancy draws the attention to the fact that in Italian, the general term that describes sensibility or sensoriality [*sentire*] also means to listen (Nancy, 2009, p.ix). In this way, the decoding that pertains to listening is best portrayed as tasting, or getting a feel of what is in fact listened to, to its color and its timbre. In fact, to listen is to be in tune with what is to be found in the sonorous and with what *resonates* in us.

We’ve seen, then, that the contact that is to be established with the sonorous is always linked to a hermeneutics that can be expressed by means of hearing and listening. What is to be taken from here is the fact that the signification that is to be present in sound is not complete if one is to consider it as strictly being present in the logos or in the analysis of the sonorous by means of what causes a sound (indexing), but in an analysis of sound itself and how it resonates. In short, to find meaning in sound cannot be reduced to a synthesis that is to be understood in terms of rationality, but also to feel sound and how it resonates (in us). But what about the case of musical listening? Can we say that musical listening is comparable to the contact with sound that has been described above? And if so, how?

2.2 Listening: music, sense and resonance

Musical listening represents a special contact with the sonorous precisely because it is where meaning is best understood in terms of *sense* and *resonance*. In fact, as Nancy states,

“the sound that is musically listened to, that is gathered and scrutinized for itself, not, however, as an acoustic phenomenon (or not merely as one) but as a resonant meaning, a meaning whose *sense* is supposed to be found in resonance, and only in resonance.”

(Nancy, 2007, p.7)

What this means is that what normally underlies sound or what is taken as being hidden in listening becomes precisely what “comes to the fore” in musical listening. Thus, the meaningful encounter that is to come up in what is musically listened to does not consist in the understanding of what is articulated (in identifying what notes are being played and how they relate to each other, or understanding the meaning of “narrative” that one is exposed to, for example), but in how what is listened to is indeed *sensed*. By speaking of *sense*, then, one is not merely talking about a making sense, or of something that is immediately comprehensible, but a very delicate kind of meaning. Precisely, *sense* is distinguishable from logical signification due to its unintelligibility; it pertains to a meaning that is embodied, rather than rational which means that there is the inability (or at least difficulty) to directly translate it. When conceiving meaning in terms of *sense*, then, we’re talking about a meaning that touches us below reason, one that affects us before the possibility of conceptualization takes place.

It is important to also understand that when speaking of *sense*, one is not merely referring to the five senses, or to a meaning that is heard. Accordingly, if one would be referring to sense in this manner, the distinction between hearing and listening wouldn’t seem relevant. In fact, it is such distinction that makes the meaning in terms of *sense* possible to be articulated since, if one is talking about the sonorous, one can say that the ear “hears” but listening *senses*; it captures what is not understood. But what about the case of resonance? Resonance becomes probably the most important concept if one is to speak about musical listening and the meaning that is present in it. In fact, this concept is complementary to the analysis of the meaning in musical listening in terms of *sense* and is what allows the analysis of musical listening in terms of subjectivation to take place.

As it is possible to observe in the passage above, Nancy states that the meaning that is found in musical listening is a “meaning whose *sense* is supposed to be found in resonance, and only in resonance”. The first implication to be drawn from this is that the meaning that is

to be found in musical listening represents one that is to be found in sound itself. Truly, this is what the analysis of the meaning that is present in musical listening in terms of *sense* showed us. Not only that but by speaking of resonance in this passage, we're talking about how sound touches us, or about a meaning that resonates *in us*; one that concerns "being in tune with". In fact, when speaking about the meaning of musical listening as embodied, we're talking about a meaning that inhabits and operates in us (one can even say that it constitutes us). But how do we arrive here? To better understand this, we must understand how resonance can be used to describe the connection between meaning and sound.

According to Nancy, meaning takes place in the form of a referencing. "In fact, it is made of a totality of referrals: from sign to a thing, from a state of things to a quality, from a subject to another subjects, or to itself, all simultaneously." (Nancy, 2007, p.7). But a form of referencing is also present in the sonorous, according to Nancy. As he states,

"Sound is also made of referrals: it spreads in space, where it resounds while still resounding "in me," as we say." (Nancy, 2007, p.7)

What Nancy talks about in here can be exemplified by the echoing of a sound, for example. In such echoing one can say that there is a return before the first (sound) emission ceases to exist, and, therefore, since it re-sounds, consists in a referral back to itself. What is important to retain from this is that there is a certain permanence of sound that pertains to a referral *to itself* since sound is not simply emitted, but *resounds*, that being, it is reflected through space by *referring to itself*. But when talking about this resounding, what is interesting for the question that this essay is attempting to answer, is not that sound is to be merely understood by the terms of physics. In this manner,

"To sound is to vibrate in itself or by itself: it is not only, for the sonorous body, to emit a sound, but it is also to stretch out, to carry itself and be resolved into vibrations that both return it to itself and place it outside itself. Indeed, as we have known since Aristotle, sensing [*sen-tir*] (*aisthesis*) is always a perception [*ressentir*], that is, a feeling-oneself-feel [*se-sentir-sentir*]: or, if you prefer, sensing is a subject, or it does not sense." (Nancy, 2007, p.8)

In this very rich quote it is possible to understand how meaning and sound are to be understood as sharing a space of referral. As it has been stated before, meaning pertains to a referral in the sense that it always points to something (it refers to it). But sound also assumes this space of referral since in the way that it carries itself, it refers back to itself; that is how sound inhabits

space. What is interesting, however, is how this space of referral that is shared by meaning and sound is conceived as a space of a subject or a space of self (Nancy, 2007, p.8). This is because a self is something that relates back *to itself*, and therefore assumes a movement of referral that is characterized by a *return-to-self* and not some other thing; this is what it means to say that to feel is always to feel-oneself-feel. But how is this space of self that is to be found in listening to actually be understood?

The presence that is to be attributed to this self that is to be found in musical listening cannot be understood in the traditional way that a self is conceived. It is true that Nancy poses it as a space of self because of the movement (of referral) that it assumes, which means that it consists in a referring *back to itself*. In musical listening, then, when it is said that engaging with the sonorous represents a space of self, the relationship that is established is

“neither to a proper self (I), nor to the self of an other, but to the form or structure of *self* as such, that is to say, to the form, structure, and movement of an infinite referral [*renvoi*], since it refers to something (itself) that is nothing outside of the referral.” (Nancy, 2007, p.9)

The self that one is speaking of, then, is to be seen as structure of self. In fact, as we’ve seen before, this space is characterized as being shared by meaning and sound that operate in the form of a referral. Thus, to say that this *self* is represented by the structure of a self, means that it is nothing but that referral (to itself) in terms of *resonance*; the structure of self is to be found in sound itself. But how can this be articulated in terms of resonance, exactly? As Nancy states,

““pure resonance” (as Bernard Baas calls it) is still a sonority—or, if you prefer, an arch-sonority: thus it is not only, according to its “purity” (taken in a Kantian sense), a non perceptible transcendental of signifying sonority but also, according to its “resonance” (which makes its nature), a “sonorous materiality, vibration that animates the auditory apparatus as much as the phonatory apparatus, or rather: that seizes all somatic locations where the phenomenal voice resonates (rhythmic pulsation, muscular contraction or relaxation, respiratory amplification, epidermal shiver . . . or everything we used to call, more or less confusedly, the manifestations of the ‘speaking body [*corps parlant*].” Thus, transcendental resonance is also incorporated—even, strictly speaking, it is nothing but that incorporation (which it would be better to call: the opening up of a body). The possibility of sense is identified with the possibility of

resonance, or of sonority itself. More precisely, the perceived possibility of sense (or, if you like, the transcendental condition of significance, without which it would have no meaning) is overlaid with the resonant possibility of sound: that is, when all is said and done, with the possibility of an echo or a return of sound to self in self.” (Nancy, 2007, pp.29-30)

From this extremely rich passage we can further understand how the meaning that is to be found in musical listening is expressed in terms of resonance, as well how it is connected to subjectivation. According to Nancy, resonance does not only represent a characteristic of sound, but can also be used to understand the expressions of the “speaking body”; of an understanding that encompasses how its biological manifestations take place. But if sound is also expressed in terms of *resonance* (since that is how it is manifested), the condition for meaning in musical listening becomes nothing more than incorporation; this is what it means when it is said that sense takes place as sounds resonates *in us*. It is here, then, that the opening of the analysis of resonance in terms of subjectivation can be better understood since *resonance* becomes what unites the manifestation of the body with the meaning of music. What this means is that the meaning that is to be present in sound, which is therefore expressed in terms of *sense*, is precisely what constitutes the subject; it becomes determined by the *resonance* that takes place *there*. In fact, as Nancy states, the condition of significance “is overlaid with the resonant possibility of sound: that is, when all is said and done, with the possibility of an echo or return of sound to self in self” which means that music constitutes a space of a subject precisely because the sonic resonance (which is therefore *sense*) coincides with the “bodily” resonances; this is how music inhabits and operates in us.

It is, then, by having articulated a meaning that is present in musical listening can be explained in terms of resonance that we can complete its analysis in terms of *sense*. Indeed, the conception of the meaning that is present in musical listening as “nothing more than incorporation” (and therefore, not immediately intelligible) that is to be present in how sound resonates *in us* leads us to assume that this meaning is one that takes place before the possibility any conceptualization. It is not by any chance, however, that *sense* has also been articulated in this way. What is important to understand in here is exactly in which manner can this meaning that is not immediately conceptualized be expressed in terms of the sonorous itself. In this way, one can say that *sense* can be understood in terms of *rhythm* and *timbre* (which are the non-codifiable characteristics of sound) as opposed to pitch, intensity, and duration. But how are we to understand this, then? As Nancy states,

“before sound per se, there is the friction of the thing beaten, between outside and inside, in the fold/unfold of the beginning of a dance: there is the release of a body, the spacing and mobile configuration of a subject, which comes down to saying, identically, the possibility and necessity of resonance. In other words, to the point where we now are: the timbre of the echo of the subject. Rhythm, dancing, opens up timbre, which resounds in the rhythmmed space.” (Nancy, 2007, p.39)

Rhythm is then to be understood as the directory aspect of sound itself. In fact, one can say that rhythm is precisely what directs the emerging of *timbre* (of how *resonance* is sound out). Rhythm is, then, to be understood “not only as scansion (imposing form on the continuous) but also as an impulse (revival of the pursuit)” (Nancy, 2007, p.39); one can even say that it concerns how the “attack” of sound comes to be and, therefore, representing the directory aspect of the release of sound (which is in this case the configuration of a subject).

I believe that it is important to stress, then, that the rhythm that Nancy mentions in here does not pertain to what is translated in the elements of a musical score (i.e. eight note, sixteen note...) but precisely this impulse, the attack, that pre-utterance that directs how sound is released. But if *rhythm* represents the “attack” of how sound comes to be, *timbre* represents the color, or the tonality of the *sense* that takes place. In this way,

“*Sense*, here, is the ricochet, the repercussion, the reverberation: the echo in a given body, even *as* this given body, or even as the gift to *self* of this given body. That is why Wittgenstein, after discussing the borderline, or imaginary, experience of hearing a sound separated from its timbre, comes to take timbre as a privileged image of what he calls “private experience,” consequently, experience that is not communicable.” (Nancy, 2007, pp. 40-41)

In a “private experience” what constitutes the subject is music itself, its tonality, its color, the intensity of the attack. But what is this if not the non-codifiable characteristics of sound? This is why the private experience of music (one that is not immediately translated in terms of rationality) is best understood in terms of timbre and rhythm, which are the elements that carry music’s *sense*, and *how* it resonates. In this manner, both rhythm and timbre become what Nancy calls the matrix-like characteristics of sound since these are the aspects that underlie and precede the articulation of a meaning that is rational; they represent the director aspects of sound, and therefore the *sense* present in it.

It is interesting that Nancy's articulation of an experience of musical listening focuses on sound itself. In fact, the peculiarity of such experience becomes the possibility of engaging with a specific kind of meaning that is not to be understood or comprehended only within the bounds of reason. In fact,

“Assuming that one estimated the *value* of a piece of music according to how much of it could be counted, calculated, and expressed in formulas: how absurd would such a “scientific” estimation of music be! What would one have comprehended, understood, grasped of it? Nothing, really nothing of what is "music" in it!” (Nietzsche, 1974, p.336)

As we can see from this beautiful passage, the peculiarity of music lies in the fact the grasping of what is truly musical cannot be calculable or expressed in formulas; it's a meaning that touches us unexpectedly but doesn't become less powerful because of it. Truly, if one is to speak about power, the way in which an experience of musical listening is conceived by Nancy (and perhaps supported by Nietzsche) highlights the fact that such meaning can constitute a power since it can become the departure point for the analysis of the constitution and understanding of a subject. Accordingly, when one is moved by music, can't one say that one becomes transformed and therefore characterized in such manner? It is then, that a transformative experience of listening characterizes a process of subjectivation because one's being is shaped by the *sense* that is present in music; music changes us because it inhabits us (it resonates *in us*); and therefore, constitutes us.

This way of articulating an experience of musical listening in which such experience can represent a process of subjectivation will be further developed in next chapter. For the moment, however, what is important to take-in is the fact that musical listening can represent a special contact with meaning, that being, one that is not expressed in terms of rationality. This is of extreme importance since the analysis of musical listening in philosophy was not always articulated in this way. In fact, this contrasts with the classical view of philosophy of music towards listening, especially that of structural listening that is found in Adorno's work. But how is Adorno's view of musical listening to be articulated, then?

2.3 Listening: against Adorno's structural listening

As Nancy, Adorno talks about musical listening as a disposition to apprehend the sonorous. But if in Nancy this is translated in an attempt to be affected by sound, in Adorno, the attempt is not to grasp the musical, but the work itself, or its structure. The reason for focusing on the musical work itself for Adorno comes from the fact that he believes that the

work itself comprises a totality. Indeed, Adorno's approach towards musical listening is characterized by the development of a typology of listeners in which different types of approaches towards the musical can be differentiated, from expert to a mere listener of music as entertainment. It is true that his goal was to provide an objective analysis of the meaning of listening in a way that acknowledges the different approaches to music. However, such differentiation discards the aspect of subjectivity that is present in musical listening (or at least interprets it in a different way) since Adorno believes that by focusing on this aspect, one is prone to develop a scattered analysis of what it means to listen (precisely due to the subjective character). As he states,

“Society is the totality of those who listen to music and those who do not, yet it is by objective structural features of the music that audience reactions are apt to be determined. Accordingly, the canon guiding the construction of the types does not - as in the case of purely subjectively directed empirical findings - refer exclusively to tastes, preferences, aversions, and habits of the audience. Rather, it rests upon the adequacy or inadequacy of the act of listening to that which is heard. A premise is that works are objectively structured things and meaningful in themselves, things that invite analysis and can be perceived and experienced with different degrees of accuracy.” (Adorno, 1976, p.3)

What is meant with this is that Adorno poses the work itself as being the departure point of analysis since, it is only by acknowledging such work as a totality, that we can objectively determine what is at stake in the meaning of music. It is understandable that with this way of conceiving what it means to listen to music, Adorno is trying to fight the idea that music can be reduced to mere entertainment, and, therefore, make it fall into the realm of mere subjectivity. Accordingly, the typology that is developed by Adorno comes to existence as an attempt to develop a “plausible grouping of the discontinuous reactions to music.” (Adorno, 1976, p.3). In this way,

“The work, the works: that seems to be for Adorno the only objective pole on which can be propped a sociology of musical listening that threatens otherwise to be lost in the elusive and infinite variety of subjective individual reactions.” (Szendy, 2009, p.101)

But in Adorno's view of music that poses the work as an objective totality there is a certain violence towards listening, and towards what is precisely musical. As it has been stated

previously, musical listening assumes a certain particularity since the contact with the meaning that is to be found in the sonorous cannot be reduced to an indexing, or in understanding the meaning that is to be found in the structural organization of sound (that correspond to the notes and the dynamics of the song, for example), but in the affection that is to be found in sound. It is true that Adorno still considers the possibility of a focus in the acoustic properties of sound, but the focus is still on a comprehension of the *structure* of the musical work, which can be evidenced in the way Adorno conceives what is considered to be a good listener.

“The good listener too hears beyond musical details, makes connections spontaneously, and judges for good reasons, not just by categories of prestige and by an arbitrary taste; but he is not, or not fully, aware of the technical and structural implications. Having unconsciously, mastered its immanent logic, he understands music about the way we understand our own language even though virtually or wholly ignorant of its grammar and syntax.” (Adorno, 1976, p.5)

In this way, Adorno does not deny a possibility of sense. However, not one that focuses on affection, but in an understanding in how the musical work and its inherent structural elements are coherent or understandable. What this means is that the possibility for sense is limited by the work itself. Accordingly,

“The constructor of the work is no more the subject. On the contrary, the work constructs and configures its listener in advance, because it dictates the musical grammar that the listener must understand, and the musical elements that the listener must remember in order to hear the piece correctly.” (Lindberg, 2024, p.7)

Indeed, in Adorno there is still a capacity for feeling the work, however, he emphasizes that the focus of musical listening should be in a deciphering of the work itself which means that subjectivity is neglected. But this aspect of subjectivity that is to be found in musical listening is something that is extremely central, and Peter Szendy is someone who reminds us of this.

2.4 Listening: musical listening as *praxis*

It is interesting that Szendy also goes against the classical conceptions of the understanding of musical listening. Truly,

“For him, the musicologist is not what Boetius called a "musicus": "musician (*musicus*) is a person who has the capacity of judging in accordance with reason". Szendy does

not judge according to musical science; on the contrary, he wants to *unlearn* this science in order to learn to listen differently, distractedly, in such a way that "*a certain lack of attention* and a *floating* kind of listening becomes a valid way of auditive interpretation of a work". (Lindberg, 2024, pp.1-2)

Unlike Adorno, Szendy believes that musical listening does not only represent an act of understanding music that is done attentively. It is true that Adorno also poses musical listening as an activity, however, this is present as a skill that is not natural and, therefore, one must improve; one can learn how to better decipher the structure of the musical work. Szendy, on the other hand, believes that musical listening is connected to an apprehension of sense, but in a slightly different way than Nancy, which I believe to complete it. It is true that Nancy gave us something that is very important for musical listening, that being the fact that to listen is to take-in the meaning that is to be found in music in terms of *sense*. Indeed, one can say that he poses the opening of the understanding of musical listening as a space of subjectivation in the sense that a *self* is determined firstly by means of a meaning that is *sensed* and not merely comprehended rationally. But musical listening is not restricted to a simple taking-in of sounds, but, in contrast, understood as an activity or *practice*. Accordingly,

“Szendy does not need musical listening simply to understand the formation of sense: (...) Szendy's musical competence helps him notice something that these well-known philosophers have not paid attention to: namely, listening is not simply receiving sounds: it is a *practice of sounds*. Musical listening is not only attentive and obedient to sounds, it is an active practice that is actually very close to composition.” (Lindberg, 2024, p.2)

As it has been demonstrated previously, Barthes and Nancy understand that the meaning that is to be found in sound, and especially in music, doesn't have to do with intelligible signification, but with what is “inaudible” in sound, which is therefore, *sense*. Szendy highlights, however, that the way music is taken-in does not consist in passivity, but in an activity. So how can we understand this?

“For Szendy, listening is not a question of consciousness. (...) On the contrary, listening is a practice of the ear, more precisely, of the *ears*.” (Lindberg, 2024, p.3)

The answer to the question of who listens then is the *ear*, which does not refer to the anatomical organ, but as *instrument of sense*. In this way, the *ears* become what allows for such *practice* to take place. If we remember correctly, Barthes already showed us how listening is

connected to an uncovering of the invisible that is present in sound. Indeed, in all situations, however, listening is tied to a hermeneutics of the invisible, whether meaning that it consists in echolocation (recognition of space through sound) or the interpretation of meaning, of deciphering what is happening outside of our field of vision (ex: by hearing one can somehow understand what is happening in a room). In this way, “listening does not only "feel", it "thinks", in the sense that listening captures, interprets and produces sound concerning the spacing of the world.” (Lindberg, 2024, p.4). This is what the *ear* does, it deciphers the meaning. One can say that it hears (in Nancy’s terms), but, for Szendy, the *ear* (which is the one who listens to music) is different. In this direction,

“An anatomical ear has no eyelids and it is exposed to all sounds. But the ear-organ is selective: it does not hear the natural sounds but the sounds that mean something to it, because it has learned their language. It judges on the sense of sounds, and it cultivates itself in echo of all the sounds that have educated its ears.” (Lindberg, 2024, p.6)

The activity or the practical component (*praxis*) of listening is expressed here by Szendy. For him, there is a capacity of discerning *what* and *how* to hear. This *praxis*, then, comes as the process of cultivating and educating the ear to learn new sounds, to be affected in other ways, which is a similar process to that of developing a taste for food, of extending one’s palate. Indeed, in this sense, a “taste” of the ear as organon works in the same way as that of the mouth (or perhaps the *tongue*). We’ve then seen how musical listening concerns an activity, or a *praxis* of sense and, therefore, does not represent a mere taking-in of *sense*. But how does this activity take place more concretely?

If one conceives musical listening in this way, a good way of understanding this is by contrasting the meaning of a musical score with the one that is conceived by Adorno. A score is then not to be seen as representing an objective totality, but as something that reveals how such *praxis* that is present in musical listening can take place. A question that emerges is then,

“why should music be a work included in a score? Isn't it music the event that is heard? This idea comes to mind with jazz: it consists of innumerable repetitions of "standards", so that it is easy to think that the work lives in its repetitions, which are not simply reinterpretations of same scores by new performers, but much more fundamentally the acts of listening that *precede* and orient each new performance.” (Lindberg, 2024, p.9)

As we can see, different interpretations of jazz pieces don’t simply mean that they all took incomplete interpretations of the piece. There is no holy grail of interpretation, but each

performance implies an act of their own listening (the performances firstly imply a listening). One can say, then, that to listen is to compose (this is the activity that is inherent in listening). It does not consist in a mere taking-in of sense, but in a *composition* of sense. In this way, the musical score is characterized by an openness that shows the possibility of conceiving listening as practice of creation. Truly,

“In these arrangements one is not dealing with the presumed ideality of the work, but with an open series of new events of listening. Here music does not reside in the ideality of the work but in the plasticity of acts of listening”. (Lindberg, 2024, p.10)

In this way, musical arrangements reside in the plasticity of listening and become a *trace*. However, it is important to note that they do not represent something that is reduced to the listening subject, for it remains there *outside of who interprets*; there is never a totalizing appropriation. The work is then something independent from the subject who listens and what allows the sense to take place is a trace (we always and only have access to a trace). The inscription is to be seen, then, as the origin of the event of listening. In fact,

“It does not remain there in the form of an ideal work, but in the form of an *inscription* which – like the *trace* theorized by Derrida – on the one hand *does* carry the trace of an event of listening but, on the other hand, the event of listening is not the origin of the inscription, but the inscription *is* the origin of new events of listening. The inscription spectralizes and loosens the act of listening that it seems to conserve, and functions only insofar as it generates new events of listening.” (Lindberg, 2024, p.10)

As Derrida states, the trace “is not a presence but is rather the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates, displaces, and refers beyond itself.” (Derrida, 1973, p. 156). What this means is that the inscription is indeed to be seen as a departure point for new events of listening, meaning that it cannot be totalized by a listening experience (although it refers to it and, therefore becomes a trace), but precisely allows such multiplicity of listening experiences. In short, the musical work becomes a *simulacrum* of a listening experience that refers beyond itself because it becomes a departure point for new listening experiences.

In this chapter we have inquired about the nature of listening, while analyzing in more depth the case of musical listening. Firstly, it has been articulated how sound represents a specific relation with meaning, that being, that it does not only pertain to what is rationally understood, but indeed, sensed. Secondly, the development of sonic meaning in terms of *sense* and *resonance* allowed for the understanding of how intense and transformative experiences

can take place in musical listening which is due to the fact that, in such happenings, the resonant meaning that constitutes sound becomes overlaid with the resonant properties of a body. In this manner, the opening of musical listening in terms of subjectivation is made possible since the possibility of *sense* becomes the departure point for the formation and understanding of a subject. What is interesting about this way of conceiving musical listening is the fact that it defies classical ideas of listening, especially that of Adorno, precisely because of the way meaning is articulated in terms of *sense* and not a meaning that is merely rationally understood. However, this sensing that pertains to musical listening does not represent something that is static, or a mere taking-in of information as it has been shown with the works of Szendy. It is then, that a plasticity of musical listening is to be revealed as something that is central to our inquiry since this possibility of difference of sense that is to be found in the sonorous means that listening must pertain to something that differentiates musical subjects. The questions that arise, then, pertain to how this plasticity is to be understood, and to what the subject that is supposed to emerge from such an act of listening consists in, which will be the task of the next part of this essay.

3. Musical Subject: sound as primary condition

In the previous chapter it has been demonstrated how the meaning that pertains to musical listening can be understood as *sense*, that being, one that is not merely *heard* but *listened* to; a meaning that *resonates* in us instead of merely being comprehended or reflected. Furthermore, the space of sound has been defined as a space of *self*, which means that the space of analysis of music in terms of subjectivation is precisely opened in here since the subject that emerges is understood in terms of the musical *sense* that arises *there*. In this way, *sense* becomes the primary condition for the analysis of a subject. Not only that, but the conception of musical listening as *praxis* that pertains to Szendy allowed us to understand that the *sense* of musical listening doesn't derive from a mere taking-in of sound, but from a practice of the *ears* that produce such *sense*. Accordingly, the subject of musical listening is to be differentiated according to the different *senses* that arise *there*; this is what is meant when it is said that the subject of musical listening assumes a certain plasticity. But then, how are we to understand such musical subject that is represented by a space of sonic resonance, or, in this case, a space of sense? It is, thus, the task of this chapter to promote an understanding of the subject that is to be determined in musical listening, which is necessary for the main inquiry of this essay since it will allow us to better articulate what is the outcome of the *producing* of subjects that concerns musical listening. The expression "*as long as sound resounds there*" becomes an interesting departure point to describe such subject and this can be understood in two ways, namely, that this represents both a subject that senses, and that is characterized as acquiring a certain mobility and plasticity. But how does this exactly take place?

3.1 Musical Subject: space

To say that a subject emerges *as long as sound resounds there* implies that such subject of sound is one that firstly senses. In this way, such subject does not merely understand itself but firstly and most importantly *feels* itself. Indeed, as we've seen before, the conception of meaning that is to be found in musical listening led us to conclude that such meaning is not to be merely understood through rationality, but firstly, sensed. The aspect of resonance is extremely important to this because such resonating aspect implies that meaning is not merely understood in the sense that is comprehended, but that is in a way, embodied. Indeed, in a transformative experience of musical listening, the sonic resonance is overlaid with the one that concerns a body. It's important to understand, however, that such embodiment does not merely refer to the physical body, but to a body of *sense*; this is how musical listening is to be

analyzed in terms of *subjectivation* since a body becomes characterized by the process it submits itself to, which, in this case, is the power of music expressed in terms of sense. It is true that in the previous chapter, the articulation of music in terms of power has been made possible, which is precisely due to the aspect of embodiment of sense that has been just mentioned. In this manner, one can say that the emergence of a *subject* is characterized by a subjection to the sonorous in the sense that such subject is to be delimited by the *sense* that arises *there*.

3.2 Musical Subject: time

This way of conceiving the subject as characterized by the *sense* that is present in musical listening, however, does not only excite the analysis of the subject in terms of spatiality. Indeed, such subject also assumes a certain mobility, which opens up its analysis in terms of time. But how are we to understand this?

“The setting in motion of place is identically that of the present instant. What subtracts the sonorous present from the negative and chronometric punctuality of the pure and simple present (time not folded, not beaten out, not modulated), is that this time of the successive addition of presents is *at the same time* the reprise of a present that is (already) past and reopening [*relance*] of a present (still) to come. It is in this sense that one can say, for example, “There is no physical time in music.”” (Nancy, 2007, p.18)

For example, if one takes a melody, its apprehension in terms of a meaning that is sensed pertains to an apprehension of a “moment” that always refers to both a past impression of such moment and to a future impression that is still to come, but that also refers to such “moment”. In simpler words, if one is to pinpoint the sense that happens in musical listening, this is not possible (or easy) to do so with the way in which we conceive temporality. In fact, doesn’t the sense that is present in music consist in something that always seems to escape us as long as we try to “grab” it? In this way, musical *sense* happens in a *living present*. As Nancy states,

“the “living present” resounds, or that it is itself resonance and is only that: resonance of instances or stances of the instant, in each other.” (Nancy, 2007, p.19)

To put it in simpler terms, the different elements of sound all happen in relation to each other (maybe one can even say in resonance with each other). In this way, the moment of sense is not able to be exactly pinpointed in terms of negativity (as in real time), which means that the

sense at work is one that is impossible to hear (maybe only possible to listen to) precisely because it escapes us before we can conceptualize it (Nancy, 2007, p.19). In fact, the apprehension of sense in the sonorous does not happen in intention, but *in* tension as theorized by Nancy precisely because it arrives without one's expectation and this is why (due to its mobility) it becomes one which one can testify to, but not exactly point out.

I find this conception of the sonorous subject in terms of space and time quite interesting, especially if one is to consider the subject as an echo chamber that is composed in a meaning that is sensed. But if one is to think about the time in which sense takes place, it would be interesting to point out that a moment of sense might not only take place during the moment in which one apprehends sound but extends and comes back. What I am talking about in here is how sense is not only present in the moment of listening to a song, but also in a returning of such song. For example, how can listening to a song "transport" us to different moments in our life, or remind us of someone important to ourselves? Or even, how many times does a melody replay in our head, and makes us sense again? Maybe one can even say music puts sense at play.

It is interesting to think about the subject as a space of resonance which is delimited by a sense that operates in it and comes back without notice. Indeed, the conception of a subject as a space of resonance is an extremely interesting one since it allows for the conception of a certain plasticity of the subject that could not be articulated so well otherwise. In this way, firstly the musical subject is posed as a subject that, before having the possibility of engaging in conceptualization is one that engages with meaning in the form of a *sense*. Also, it shows a subject that is not determined as being fixed in space and time, but that acquires a certain mobility precisely because it shows up differentiated, according to the variation of how resonance takes place. In this way, such subject represents an opening of difference not only in the sense that it pertains to one's singularity, but also that by saying that it emerges *as long as sound resound there*, it allows to conceive the subject as one that is moving and changing according to the different affections that take place. Indeed, it allows for difference in the sense that such subject emerges (every time differently) according to the senses that happen in musical listening. Thus, instead of a subject that is united in its thinking, we have a subject that is *differentiated in terms of sense*. It is important to note that by conceiving the subject in terms of difference, this does not mean that such subject is to be seen as completely dispersed but that, through the sonorous, observes transformations in its *self* as well as becoming differentiated in its own singularity because sound resounds *there* in a unique manner. Indeed,

if one is to take the listening of a song that brings back a memory, this shows both the difference and unity of such subject because it shows that *sense* does not only take place at the exact moment of the taking-in of sound but returns and reveals a *sense* that resonates again. Accordingly, this *sense* that reoccurs reveals the specificity of how such resonance took place, which shows the singularity of how such self specifically sensed. What is being talked about in here pertains to one's interiority and private experience that is to be found in music, about how what is sensed reveals an interiority that is there but one cannot properly *hear*. But how are we to understand this? If one is to talk about the interiority of a musical subject, the logical reference is that of *voice*.

3.3 Musical subject: voice

Voice is usually taken to be associated to the way one speaks. Indeed, voice is usually associated with phonation, however, if one is to think about it in terms of what it means for the constitution of the musical subject, it is something that is, to a certain extent (but not totally) foreign to such speech. As Nancy states, "Voice has nothing to do with speech. Yes, there's no speech without voice, but there *is* such a thing as voice without speech." (Nancy, 2006, p.38). But if voice is to be taken as foreign to speech, how is to be understood? The voice of the musical subject is precisely what differentiates or opens up its difference. In this way,

"Voice is always shared; in a sense, it's sharing itself. A voice begins with the entrenchment of a singular being. Later, with its speech, that being will remake its ties to the world, give sense to its own entrenchment. But before anything else, with its voice, that being declaims a pure distancing, one that makes no sense at all." (Nancy, 2006, p.41)

As we can see from this very rich passage, voice is what determines and consolidates the singularity of a being; it is precisely what opens up such being as totally distinct. But, even though voice is what pertains to something that opens the differentiation of a being, it's not to be mistaken for a voice of a subject. In fact,

"voice comes before the subject. Voice precedes it, which means, of course, that they involve one another. I'll even grant you that voice paves the way for the subject. But it's still not the voice of the subject." (Nancy, 2006, p.44)

If a subject is then taken to be a space of resonance, or an echo chamber, voice is to be what precedes and directs such resonance. Indeed, it is not the voice of a subject because it is not

what is expressed in the moment of speech, but precisely what shapes *how* resonance takes place in such space, which means that it precedes it because it directs it. Precisely, voice is what opens the gap of resonance that characterizes such sonorous subject. But how are we to describe such a voice, then?

“It is difficult to *describe* a voice (by words or images) but it is quite possible to *recognize* one by its unique *grain*, described by Roland Barthes, or *timbre*, that intrigues Nancy, in which it is “tuned to self – without a known frequency.”” (Lindberg, 2024, April, p.7)

In this way, the difference of a subject becomes its singularity articulated in terms of sound. Voice is the director of the resonance of the musical subject; it is what gives such resonance its distinct character. It is characterized by its timbre because this is what pertains to a non-codifiable characteristic of sound (a difference that is sensed and not simply understood). Indeed, voice becomes how this subject becomes “tuned to self” precisely because such voice consists in one’s interiority (and therefore singularity). Not only that, but such attunement to itself is characterized as being without a known frequency because it is expressed in *sense* and not in understanding. It is then, that

“the motif of “voice” helps to articulate a deconstructed form of the subject: instead of a substance, it has a materiality consisting in trembling; instead of an identity, it is the opening of pure difference; its space is concretized as resonance; and its time is the resounding of a sound. What kind of a subject is this? It is a *subject of sense*, but not the one that reduces sense to either intellect or sensibility: it is the sense thought in their free unity which is best articulated in *art*.” (Lindberg, 2024, April, p.11)

From this very rich passage we can finalize the conception of the subject that emerges in musical listening. The sonorous subject is one that is not conceived in the same way as the thinking subject that is to be especially found in Descartes and Kant, and that influenced the tradition of phenomenology. Such conception of subject as sonorous is extremely important because it gives us access to a subject that does not only think, but firstly senses. Indeed, in musical listening, and therefore, in its subject, the meaning is to be found in *sense*, which means that before any conceptualization can take place, one is affected by sound.

It is true that in this essay, a lot of emphasis has been given to the sensing aspect of such subject. It is important to understand, however, that such conception does not aim to completely substitute the thinking subject, but to complete it. In this way, as the sonorous

enlarges form, which means that it cannot be reduced to understanding and logos, such subject that emerges in resonance cannot be reduced to understanding as well, but also acknowledged as sensing. The aspect of *resonance* is a key one if one must think about the understanding of the subject since, as it is possible to see in the passage, such subject is not to be reduced to either sensibility or intellect but represents how such aspects that compose such subject are to be seen *in resonance*; that is, they inform and refer to one another. In this manner, to be “in resonance” means to be “in tune with”, or to vibrate and contaminate each other. Furthermore, by saying that firstly there is a sensing, this serves only to recognize a certain order or an existence of a before and after on the formation of meaning in terms of sonic resonance; this is why such meaning is not described in terms of reflection. It is interesting, however, how the unity of these two opposed parts of the subject is articulated in art. But what does this mean, exactly?

“If we are to seek in one of the two activities, namely the conscious, for what is ordinarily called *art*, though it is only one part thereof, namely that aspect which is exercised with consciousness, thought and reflection, and can be taught and learnt and achieved through tradition and practice, we shall on the other hand, to seek in the unconscious factor which enters into art for that about it which cannot be learned or attained by practice, nor in any other way, but can only be inborn by nature; and this is what we may call, in a word, the element of *poetry* in art.” (Von Schelling, 1978, p. 254)

It is then, the unique element of *poetry* in art that allows the conception of what is rationally brought about and what is not to take place in such a way. Indeed, one can say that the *poetic* aspect that is present in art is that in which a meaning becomes communicable or articulated. And, although being one that it is possible to reflect (think) about, its existence is enlarged by such capacity of sense. Furthermore,

“every absolute concurrence of the two antithetical activities is utterly unaccountable being simply a *phenomenon* which although incomprehensible, yet cannot be denied; and art, therefore, is the one everlasting revelation which yields that concurrence, and the marvel which, had it existed but once only, would necessarily have convinced us of the absolute reality of that supreme event” (Von Schelling, 1978, p.254)

In truth, this is what is meant when it is said that an intense and meaningful experience’s existence is undeniable, although not being possible to express it in strictly rational or logical

terms. Thus, it does consist in a conscious presence of meaning, although, since it is something that strikes us before the possibility of any concrete conceptualization; one is left a *sense* that is not expressed in concrete determination but that is undeniably *there*. In this way, one can say that the possibility of a transformative act of self that is to be found in music is due to its capacity to create a *sense* that shows an interaction between the conscious (which is consciously brought about) and the unconscious (which is intuited). Indeed, one can still talk and think about a transformative experience, however, such happening cannot be comprehended strictly in rational terms since it exceeds such rationality; this is how these terms exist *in resonance*.

It is in this way that we can finalize the analysis of the musical subject, as well as its understanding in terms of subjectivation. Firstly, it has been articulated how such subject's "spatiality" is to be characterized in terms of sound. What this means is that a subject emerges as being constituted by the way in which sound resonates there, which pertains to the *sense*. In this way, if one is to think about this in terms of subjectivation, one can say that the emerging of such subject is characterized by a certain subjection to sound in the sense that it is precisely sound itself what delimits the existence, as well as the characteristics of the subject. Secondly, it has been shown how the musical subject is to be understood in terms of time and voice. What is possible to draw from this is the fact that to think about the musical subject in terms of time implies a certain mobility of such subject. Accordingly, this has been demonstrated with the way in which a *sense* can reappear when attached to a certain memory. In this way, the subject becomes both differentiated (by its voice) and united in its *own senses* due to the possibility of the re-emerging of a determinate *sense* that took once place *there*. Furthermore, the understanding of the musical subject in terms of voice becomes the factor that differentiates musical subjects, precisely because *sense* takes place *there* in a specific manner, which pertains to the singularity of the subject that takes place. It is also important to mention that, if one is to talk about a process of subjectivation, musical listening is representative of such a process since *sense* becomes the framework through which a subject not only comes to be, but also to understand itself. In this way, one can say that a subject comes to understand and feel itself (one can even say tune to itself) through the *senses* that take place in musical listening; it opens up a new way of relating to itself, and therefore understanding itself in a way that was deemed as obscure, or at least not possible to be articulated in the form of a subject that is only characterized in terms of thinking. But if music can represent something so powerful that has the capacity to transform and represent the departure point for the analysis of a self, how is the

articulation of musical listening in terms of self-technics to be explained? In other words, how is it that a subject that comes to presence in musical listening to be the both the object, as well as the director of this self-shaping activity? And what does this mean, exactly?

4. Musical listening as technology of the self: an introduction

The previous parts of this essay have helped to promote an understanding towards the way in which musical listening can represent a powerful practice that accounts for a change in an individual's being. In short, one could say that it has been demonstrated how the practice in question can represent a process of subjectivation since it can represent a framework through which subjects can emerge as differentiated in terms of the *senses* that arise. It is important to not forget, however, that by proposing that musical listening can be understood in terms of self-technics, I mean that the activity in question does not only represent a way of production of subjects, but also a way in which individuals can in fact become both the object *and* the director of the transformations that are set for themselves; one can say that individuals become a part in the directing of their own subjectivation. In this manner, it is the task of this last part of the essay to account for the ways in which musical listening can indeed be understood as a technology of the self. To do this, I will first rearticulate how musical listening can be understood in terms of self-technics so that the problematic in question can be better framed. Secondly, I will explain how is it that musical listening can be understood in terms of self-technics by providing more concrete examples of this way of reading the power of musical listening. Finally, I will give some concluding remarks while illustrating how this way of analyzing music represents a new way of reading Foucault.

4.1 Musical listening as technology of the self: (re)articulating the argument

Let us (re)start from the beginning. When thinking of technologies of the self, the articulation of the subject that comes to existence is shaped by the practices it submits itself to, without them ever fully determining such subject. Indeed, technologies of the self are inherently characterized by an aesthetical component in which the emergence of a subject implies a submission to a practice, while also revealing a certain freedom in the sense that an individual is capable of relating to such practices in its own way. Accordingly, the emergence of a subject consists in a power that is always relational or operational since such subject is not able to be determined without the practice(s) in question. However, it only departs from such practice(s) so that it can emerge as differentiated according to the aesthetical values imposed by such subject. One can say, then, that self-technics implies a subjection without full determination.

When considering the case of musical listening, the understanding of the emergence of a subject in terms of submission to a practice can be explained through Nancy. As it has been

stated before, his conception of the musical subject is one that reveals a subject that is not to be separated from its listening. As a matter of fact, the access to *sense* that is revealed as constituting the musical subject is present *as long as sound resounds there*, which means that sonic resonance becomes the condition, as well as what delimits the understanding of the subject that emerges in musical listening. Indeed, the musical subject that is articulated in Nancy's work is firstly defined by the meaning that takes place in the form of *sense*. But if he shows the possibility of relating to music in terms of submission, and to put ourselves in vulnerable state in which sound is to operate in such a way that it forms and promotes changes in a self, Szendy shows us that musical listening concerns, in fact, in an active practice that is very close to composition. By conceiving musical listening as praxis, Szendy explains how the sense here in question does not only represent a submission to sound, but a *practice* of sound. Indeed, this is visible through the way in which he treats musical inscriptions since, in here, the taking-in of sound does not merely mean that the sense in question is to be dictated by such inscriptions but composed by the subject itself; precisely because they represent a trace, it opens up musical listening, and consequently, the musical subject in terms of difference.

It is true that Nancy also considers the possibility of the existence of difference in the act of musical listening (through the articulation of the musical subject in terms of *voice*), but Szendy conceives it as an active practice in the sense that differentiation does not only mean that sound resonates according to one's interiority, but that it consists in an active practice in which one learns to select *how* and *what* to listen to, and to learn to sense in new ways; this is what is meant earlier by the development of a taste in sound that is similar to that of food. The implication that this has for the analysis of music in terms of technologies of the self is that the musical subject becomes able to select and shape the way that it is able to sense; it is in this way that musical listening becomes an activity in which the subject is not only able to be transformed, but to direct the transformations that take place in its self. The aesthetical component of musical listening is then to be revealed since there is the *possibility* that the *sense* that characterizes the subject becomes not predetermined, but one that is composed by the subject itself. But how does this take place exactly?

4.2 Musical listening as technology of the self: the self-shaping activity

When thinking about musical listening and technologies of the self, the first thought that comes to mind is how people use the power music to deflect or intensify their emotions, or their mood. Indeed, one can say that in this case, there is a turn to musical listening in the

form of submission to its power so that one can promote a change in oneself. It is extremely important to note how the aesthetical aspect of self-technics is present in here since there is a submission to the power of music but only as means to promote such transformations in a self. In fact, it is evident in here that an individual is able to submit to the practice of musical listening and use it to redirect itself in the way that they please. In this way, musical listening becomes not a mere development of a technique but a way through which one shapes and directs oneself in life. Indeed, it becomes a *practice* of listening in which one selects (and shapes) a listening experience so that one can be transformed in the desired manner. Accordingly, aesthetical preferences such as genres of music that are (selectively) listened to gain another dimension since these concern direct affection that influences one's attitudes; this is one of the ways in which self-technics represents a transformation of the self. Not only that but this aspect of selection that is present in musical listening could be understood in an even more meaningful way for a musical subject since there is the possibility of developing fidelity towards a certain song or musical genre, for example. Certainly, in this case, a selection becomes more than a momentarily decision, but a way in which a musical subject is able to consolidate its identity and its transformation of self. Fidelity to a musical genre or songs can, thus, represent an act of subjectivation in the sense that the changes that such individual goes through become stabilized and part of its character. Indeed, one can even say that the selection that is mentioned above is developed into a way of self-cultivation of one's subjectivity so that the desired *sense* becomes more stable. Furthermore, in speaking of a selection that takes place in musical listening, there is another practice that I find extremely interesting, namely, the act of making playlists.

If to listen is to compose, as it has been shown through Szendy, making playlists becomes not only a carving out of a determinate ambiance, but perhaps also a way of directing one's sense in the manner of a *keeping track of*. Accordingly, to save a musical track becomes an act of saving a *sense* so that one can possibly return to. Indeed, as it was shown previously, to listen to music does not only mean that one is subjected to sound, but that one engages in an active practice of sense. It is also true that such practice reveals musical listening acts as being differentiated from each other since listening becomes *my own and no one else's*. In this way, making playlists becomes an act through which an individual organizes and accesses its unique compositions of sense, and, therefore, opens up a possibility for shaping and understanding itself; one can even say *tuning to itself*. But an act of musical listening is not to be seen as an isolated act. According to Szendy,

“We are not a community of listeners listening to one single object that joins us together(...)We are an infinite addition of singularities that each wants to make itself heard hearing. Thus without any possible summing up. We do not listen like one single body: we are two, and (therefore) always one more.” (Szendy, 2009, p. 143)

It is true that musical listening is an experience that individualizes the listener in the sense that one’s listening becomes one’s own (tuned to self). But it is not that the total sum of musical listenings of a work gives access to the totality of such work. After all, my sensing is not completed, but only possibly enriched by someone else’s. In this way,

“to the extent that creation always includes some listening, at least active acts of listening do *produce* sense instead of only *receiving* it. I also understand that one does not make sense without making it also towards others: the very sense of sense is its sharing.” (Lindberg, 2024, p.13)

Indeed, how many times does one feel the urge to share a song, or in this case a listening of a song? To listen is to sense, or to *produce* such a sense. But what would be of such thing if there’s not at least the possibility of it being addressed to someone? To share a song becomes, then, to continue a chain of signification in which a sense takes place so that I could transmit it to others. As the composer creates music only so that they can transmit a sense to others, the listener becomes a practitioner of the same activity that *produces* its own sense by listening and that addresses its composition to someone. In this manner, it is not only that a subject is able to effect such transformations on its *self* in an isolated manner, but can influence as well as be shaped by other subjects’ listening experiences. Indeed, the way that self-technics is articulated by Foucault accounts for how the transformations of the subject can also take into consideration the presence (and help) of other people.

4.3 Musical listening as technology of the self: a new way of reading Foucault

It is in this way that we can finalize our analysis of how musical listening is connected to technologies of the self. Firstly, we have seen how the articulation of musical listening in terms of technologies of the self becomes possible through its conception in terms of *praxis*. If technologies of the self imply the existence of an activity in which an individual submits to a practice in order to effect transformations on itself, musical listening can be understood in this way in the since it allows for the emergence of subjects that are to be differentiated according to the different *senses* that arise there; one can say that musical listening enables subjectivation. Furthermore, musical listening can indeed be characterized in terms of self-technics precisely

because such act of listening represents an active practice in which individuals are able to learn *what* and *how* to listen. In other words, precisely because musical listening can be conceived in terms of *praxis*, the way in which a self is transformed can be directed by the subject itself. Secondly, it has been demonstrated in a more concrete manner the ways in which an individual can submit to the power of music in order to effect transformations on itself. Truly, the capacity of selection of *what* and *how* to listen allows for a subject to shape the way in which its way of being is manifested, which can be understood from simple changes in one's affection and/or mood to more stable one's that reflect a formation of identity. Not only that, but if analyzed in terms of making playlists or saving a certain musical inscription, musical selection can represent a way in which a subject comes to understand itself by saving and revisiting its *senses*. But how can this, represent a new reading of Foucault?

It is interesting that, in the original text, when articulating the different ways in which self-technics can take place, Foucault brings up the aspect of listening. It is true that, when speaking of technologies of the self, the transformations that individuals set for themselves imply a certain submission to a practice. When articulating the presence of listening in these practices, Foucault draws the example of how such transformations can take place in a pedagogical setting in which a student submits to a master's teachings by listening to his discourse. As he states, in this case,

“The art of listening is crucial so that you can tell what is true and what is dissimulation, what is rhetorical truth and what is falsehood in the discourse of the rhetoricians. Listening is linked to the fact that the disciple is not under the control of the masters but must listen to *logos*. One keeps silent at the lecture; one thinks about it afterward. This is the art of listening to the voice of the master and the voice of reason in the self.”
(Foucault, 1988, p.236)

What this means is that, in the act of transformation of oneself, the individual in question submits to the teachings of the master in order to promote changes in itself. In here, the aesthetic aspect is still present, however, to say that the subject fashions himself aesthetically means that there is a desire of subjection to the master because they know the truth. Accordingly, it is fair to say that, in here, listening is posed more as an act of obedience than an acoustic phenomenon and this is what makes it different from musical listening. Indeed, the focus is posed not in sound itself, but in the content of the discourse of the master. In fact, the acoustic part that is present in here is taken merely as something secondary, or as a mere vessel of the truth that is

to be found in the master's teachings. In this way, the focus of what is to be uncovered is to be found in a discourse that is to be articulated through the sonorous, instead of in a text.

It is true that Foucault did not, in fact, analyze musical listening in terms of self-technics. However, the way in which musical listening was conceived in this essay accounts for the possibility to articulate it in such a way. In this manner, musical listening can represent both a way in which individuals are to be transformed, as well as come to understand themselves in terms of *sense*. One can say, then, that,

The auditor will create a fourth space, that of his or her own representation of the musical phenomenon. The space of music resonates with the space of the auditor, suggests proposes, and prompts a listening in which the spatial imaginary plays a major role in musical reception and even musical pleasure. Music acts so as to activate the auditor's perception, to stimulate and enrich it: music teaches us to listen out for our own imaginary spaces" (Teruggi, 2019, p.90)

From this incredibly rich passage, we can finalize the analysis of musical listening in terms of self-technics. As we can see here, the way in which the space of the auditor and the space of sound *resonate* with each other, that is, they become overlaid with each other shows how it results in an activation and enrichment of the auditor's perception; how it unveils the subject's own imaginary spaces. As a matter of fact, this is what is meant with the conception of musical listening in terms of *praxis*. In this manner, the space of music becomes one in which a perception is enriched, and perhaps one in which one's imaginary space is accessed which is nothing more than a composition of *sense* that is directed according to one's *voice*. Furthermore, the conception of musical listening in terms of *praxis* allows for the subject to select *what* and *how* to listen, which means that it is able to direct the way in which it is to be transformed, as well as understand itself in those transformations. After all, the musical subject is united in the differentiated *senses* that take place *there*; that is how it becomes distinct in its singularity, as well as having the capability to *tune to itself*. Last but not least, it is important to remind ourselves that musical listening is not to be seen as an isolated act. Indeed, as it has been demonstrated in this chapter, precisely because musical listening consists in an active practice of composition of *sense*, one is able and feels the urge to share its own listening. In this way, a musical subject can affirm and understand itself in a community of *sense*. In conclusion, by saying that musical listening represents a technology of the self, it means that

such technologies become technologies of *voice*. But this *voice* only exists so that it can speak to others, since that is its nature.

Conclusion

In this essay it has been demonstrated how musical listening can be a way of understanding how individuals come to shape and understand themselves or, in other words, it has been demonstrated how the activity of musical listening can represent a process of subjectivation and self-technics. But how did this take place exactly?

Firstly, the concepts of subjectivation and self-technics were articulated so that one could have a basis for the understanding of musical listening in such manner. Accordingly, to think in terms of subjectivation means that the emergence of the subject, as well as its understanding, is to focus on the practices that such subject submits itself to. What this means is that a subject is not to be described in terms of universality of experience, but in how the submission to such processes allow for it to emerge as differentiated. Not only that, but the articulation of the emergence of the subject is to be understood in terms of power since the subject is not able to determine itself without such practices, however, it still has the power to determine itself in its desired manner. In fact, this power to determine itself becomes extremely visible when thinking about technologies of the self since, in these practices, the subject becomes both the object as well as the director of the way of the transformation in question; that is, it transforms itself aesthetically. The possibility of articulating musical listening in this way becomes, then, at least plausible. In fact, if music is often associated with meaningful and transformative experiences that touch us and move us in profound ways that therefore differentiate and singularize the one who undergoes through such processes, the possibility of analyzing it in terms of subjectivation becomes feasible. Also, precisely because musical listening is an activity that is directed by the subject (one is able to select *what* and *how* to listen), its conception in terms of self-technics becomes possible since the *power* of music is then *used* by the subject in order to effect a desired transformation in itself. The questions that came to be, then, were how this possibility of analyzing musical listening in terms of a transformative practice could be articulated, as well as in which manner it can represent a way in which a subject comes to shape and understand itself.

It is, then, that the second part of the essay focused on an inquire about the essence of (musical) listening to provide an account of how it can be characterized as such a transformative practice. In this manner, we were able to articulate that an act of listening represents a special contact with meaning that does not pertain to one that is merely rationally understood but can be articulated in terms *sense* and *resonance*. Moreover, this way of

understanding the meaning that is to be found in music allowed us to conceive the way in which musical listening can represent an intense and transformative experiences since sound itself becomes overlaid with the space of the subject. Accordingly, the articulation of musical listening in terms of subjectivation is made possible since a subject emerges as being delimited by the meaning that is present in the form of sound and differentiated in terms of the *senses* that arise *there*. Furthermore, we've seen that even though a transformative act of self in terms of musical listening is to be represented in a way that sonic *sense* inhabits a body, such activity does not only represent a passive taking-in of sound, but an active praxis in which the musical meaning is to be *composed* by the subject. Indeed, the analysis of the relation between acts of musical listening and musical inscriptions allowed for the articulation of musical listening as a real activity precisely because the musical inscriptions do not consist in a totality that fully determines a listening experience, but a departure point for such composition of *sense*. But if we were able to articulate how musical listening can account for such intense and transformative experiences, it was still needed to clarify the outcome of such activity, which represents the analysis of the musical subject.

The third chapter of this essay consisted in an analysis of the musical subject as well as how the activity of musical listening can represent a space in which such subject can come to understand itself in its different *senses*. In this way, a musical subject was conceived in terms of spatiality as being that space in which sound resonates, and therefore a *sense* takes place. Furthermore, the articulation of the musical subject was explained in terms of time and voice, which allowed us to understand that the possibility of conceiving the singularity of the musical subject did not only mean that sound resonates *there*, but that it does so in a specific manner, that being, according to its *voice*; one can say that a subject composes its *senses* according to its *voice*. Not only that, but the conception in terms of time allowed us to understand that a subject can become united in its own senses, which means that they do not only differentiate them from other musical subjects, but that they also represent the differentiated senses that one single subject can present. It is, then, that the understanding of the subject that is provided by musical listening is one that allows for a conception of a differentiated subject in terms of its compositions of *sense*, as well as one that is able to understand (or *tune* to) itself by accessing a seemingly obscure part of itself (because it consists not merely in thinking, but in *sense*).

Finally, we have seen that musical listening can represent an activity in which one is both the object and the director of such transformations. Indeed, the fact that musical listening can be conceived as an *active* practice does not only mean that an individual composes its

senses but can also learn *how* and *what* to listen to, which means that it can direct the ways in which it is to be transformed by music. In this way, one can say that the individual *uses* the *power* of music in order to effect transformations on its *self*, which can be characterized in the form of selection such as choosing what song or genre to listen to, as well as saving certain musical tracks. What this means, is that in this actions a subject is able to *use* music in order to (re)direct its way of being and its actions, as well as understand itself by revisiting and *keeping track of its senses*. It is extremely important to mention, however, that the aspect of *sharing* also becomes central to these practices, which means that the subject is not only able to build and understand itself in isolation, but as member of a community that is characterized in terms of *sense*.

These findings are extremely important since they promote a different understanding of the subject in the field of philosophy, as well as the meaning of music. Indeed, the conception of the subject present in this essay is articulated in terms of subjectivation, which means that the departure point for the analysis of the subject is not its understanding as a thinking being that grounds its experience, and, therefore expresses itself in terms of rationality and universality. Instead, the focus is shifted towards the practices to which one submits itself to so that a subject can, in fact, emerge (which is understood as subjectivation). To this extent, a subject becomes understood by means of its *senses* that are to arise in musical listening; that is how it is to emerge as differentiated. Furthermore, a new reading of Foucault is to be derived from this essay since an analysis of technologies of the self is made possible in terms of musical listening, and therefore, *sense*, which is not done by Foucault. Not only that, but by conceiving the meaning that is to be found in music in terms of *sense*, this represents a view that challenges an understanding of musical listening as conceived in classical philosophy of music, which includes Adorno's idea of structural listening.

It is important to note, however, that like every research, this one also presents certain limitations. In this regard, even though there is a clear privilege that is given to the specific case of musical listening, it might be interesting to further inquire about the nature of listening itself. This is because, even though musical listening offers a privileged way to analyze the affection and the *sense* that is present in sound, it is not that one only listens to music. In fact, the conception of listening in terms of *praxis* dictates that a subject is able to select *what* and *how* to listen, which can lead to ethical and political implications since this can reflect how one interacts with others, especially if such subject is to be conceived in terms of a community.

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