

## INTERSUBJECTIVITY, TIME AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP IN ALFRED SCHUTZ'S PHILOSOPHY OF MUSIC

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ABSTRACT. Alfred Schutz's (Vienna 1899 – New York 1959) research into the philosophy of music certainly cannot be regarded as the most notable aspect of this writer, born and educated in Vienna, later a naturalized American citizen. Nor can it legitimately be maintained that Schutz's writings on the subject form a systematic corpus in his work. Schutz was above all a social scientist, strongly attracted, as were many writers of the first half of this century, to the project of a *philosophical foundation* within his field of expertise. In this project, where phenomenology is encountered, the question of *intersubjectivity* together with that of *communication* among individuals, plays a crucial role. It is, therefore, undoubtedly correct to consider Schutz's theoretical interests in music within this framework; thus music tends to assume a paradigmatic value, in the sense that the musical piece in its concrete temporal development, in the presence of performers and listeners, demonstrates in a truly exemplary manner, how the process of social relationship actually functions.

Although mindful of this frame of reference, nonetheless we feel it can be asserted that the works of Schutz which we are about to examine are in themselves interesting stimuli, independently of any organic connection with the author's general project. These stimuli have furthermore provoked a theoretical debate that is still going on in the USA.

1. Schutz's<sup>1</sup> research on the subject in question is contained in three works written in English: the first, the most notable philosophically speaking, was published in 1976 with the title of *Fragments of Phenomenology of Music*, from an original manuscript of 1944 not intended for publication.<sup>2</sup> Much of the contents of *Fragments* is to be found in the second essay, *Making Music Together* from 1951; the third, *Mozart and the Philosophers*, was written in 1956. The two latter essays are contained in *Collected Papers*.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> We have adopted the American transliteration from the original 'Schütz'.

<sup>2</sup> The title of the manuscript and its division into 25 sections are those of Schutz. The editor, F. Kersten, has added section titles.

<sup>3</sup> There is a fourth writing, actually first in chronological order. But it is "a rough draft of an investigation of drama and opera written sometime before the Second World War" [Skarka 1989].

The opening statement of *Making Music Together*, paraphrased from the first of *Fragments*, gives a definition of music and, at the same time, marks out the area in which Schutz means to conduct his investigation:

Music is a meaningful context which is not bound to a conceptual scheme. Yet this meaningful context can be communicated. The process of communication between composer and listener normally requires an intermediary, an individual performer or a group of coperformers. Among all these participants there prevail social relationships of a highly complicated structure.<sup>4</sup>

From this quotation two crucial points in Schutz's philosophy of music emerge: a) music is "meaningful", nevertheless, it cannot be bound to a conceptual scheme; b) however this irreducibility does not prevent its communicability within a structure made up of the composer, the performer and the listener. At this point the social science theoretician states to have set himself the following task: "to analyze certain elements of this structure". *Making Music Together*, not by chance subtitled *A Study on Social Relationship*, is dedicated exactly to this end. However, if we wish to know more about the statement according to which, music is "not bound to a conceptual scheme", we should perhaps address ourselves to *Fragments* where the philosophical themes, despite the unsystematic character of their exposition, are dealt with according to a wider perspective.

In *Fragments*, the sphere within which a philosophy of music inspired by phenomenology should develop is identified, but initially the approach is negative:

A phenomenological approach to music may safely disregard the physical qualities of the sound as well as the rationalization of these sounds which leads to the musical scale... In listening to music we do not perceive sound waves emanating from oscillation of the sound producing matter.<sup>5</sup>

Both the physicist's or the physiologist's explanations of the auditory apparatus are "immaterial to the experience of the listener. He responds neither to sound waves, nor does he perceive sounds; he just listens to music". Therefore the starting point of a phenomenology of music, according to Schutz, coincides with the moment of listening and not with theoretical devices introduced at a second stage with a scientific-explicative intent. Other elements are, at least at this initial phase, equally negligible. Among these, is the listener's specific cultural baggage: as we will see later, for a phenomenology of music it is impor-

<sup>4</sup> [Schutz 1951], 159. See also in [Schutz 1976], 23: "A piece of music is a meaningful context. It is meaningful to the composer; it can be understood as meaningful by the listener, and it is the task of the interpreter to bring about the correct meaning".

<sup>5</sup> [Schutz 1976], 26.

tant that the listener possesses “*some* frame of reference” to be able to give meaning to what he hears, but “*what* the *peculiar* features of this frame of reference are is immaterial for a general theory of musical experience”.<sup>6</sup> We can also gloss over all those aspects which vary from one performance to another and, more generally, from one music culture to another. Leaving aside all these elements, only those which are genuinely essential to music should emerge:

All the Gregorian antiphons, the Gothic music, the music Masters of the Flemish school, the Arabian, Chinese and primitive music must show certain features which are essential for the experience of music *as a phenomenon of our conscious life*, and it is exactly these elements which have to be investigated by a phenomenological description.<sup>7</sup>

Once we have thus circumscribed the sphere of the phenomenological investigation, we can answer a question implicit in the previous quotation: what is a musical piece and in what sense is it a “phenomenon of our conscious life”? A work of music, Schutz replies, neither coincides with its score nor with its performance, just as a mathematical theory neither coincides with the book containing it nor with the lesson explaining it. The score and the performance – the book and the lesson – represent material means of communicating the musical (mathematical) thought, but they are not the thought itself: “A work of music or a mathematical theorem has the character of an ideal object”.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, a work of music and a theorem share this status of *ideal object*; however they differ as regards their *constitution*. Taking a Husserlian idea,<sup>9</sup> Schutz distinguishes between a *polythetic* constitution and a *monothetic* constitution and he exemplifies by saying that the ideal object “Pythagoras’s theorem” during the demonstration is built up in our mind step by step, starting from certain assumptions and employing established rules: this is what Husserl calls a polythetic grasp of the object. At the end of the demonstration, I am able to grasp at a glance, that is to say monothetically, the final result, that is the meaning of the proposition “ $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$ ”, as often as I wish, without going through each stage of the demonstration again.

Like the mathematical demonstration, the musical work is also constituted polythetically but, contrary to the theorem, the ideal object “musical work” is not susceptible to a monothetic grasp. Once the listening is finished, I can only remember, through a single act of grasping, the particular emotional mood of the work or its formal structure (saying for example that it was a passacaglia); but if I really wanted to remember the whole work, then I would have to re-establish the polythetic steps “in which it has been built up, by reproducing

<sup>6</sup> [Schutz 1976], 45-46.

<sup>7</sup> [Schutz 1976], 44.

<sup>8</sup> [Schutz 1976], 28.

<sup>9</sup> [Husserl 1931], § 137

mentally or actually its development from the first to the last bar as it goes on in time... And it will take as much time to reconstitute the work of music in recollection as it will to experience originally in its unfolding, polythetic constitution while listening to it for the first time”.

To sum up: “The specific existence of the ideal object *work of music* is its extension in time; its specific way of constitution is a polythetic one”.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, the impossibility of monothetically grasping the musical work, Schutz observes, is but the corollary of the statement quoted at the beginning, according to which “music is a meaningful context *which is not bound to a conceptual scheme*”.

2. The final statements of the previous paragraph definitively highlight the link between the *polytheticity* of the musical piece and its *temporality* and place Schutz’s reflections on a level diametrically opposed to that of certain structuralistic tendencies of this century. For example, Lévi-Strauss’s statement that music would just need time only to deny it is well-known; from this point of view in fact, the meaning of a musical work would lie entirely in configurations which need time in order to reveal themselves to the listener’s consciousness but which, in themselves, would not be of a temporal nature. In the opposition between *temporality* and *structure* Schutz, on the contrary, favours the temporal moment whereas, as we shall see later, he seems to consider the structural moment as the result of an analysis carried out a posteriori, after reflection.

A reference point in this investigation into musical temporality is, without doubt, Bergson, an important author according to Schutz, and not only as regards these musical-philosophical writings. From Bergson Schutz draws above all the theme of the *durée*, meant as “the inner time of our stream of consciousness”: in the uninterrupted flowing of life, time is not a sequence of separate instants but a *continuum* in which the ego lives in an immediate and non-reflected way. It is exactly in this dimension of inner time that the musical work unfolds in the actual moment of listening, which is also – as we have just seen – its true real moment. Consistently with Bergson’s approach, Schutz sets inner time against *outer* or *spatialized time*. The latter is endowed with the possibility of dividing the temporal flux into segments, then of measuring it; this is the conventional clock time, the “standard social time”, useful for practical purposes and, through further abstraction, to science. Even without making a specific reference to musical experience, we know that the two temporal dimensions are mutually incommensurable. A typical case in which this incongruity appears is the phenomenon of waiting, where, for instance, the duration of outer time may seem interminable to us if we are waiting for the

<sup>10</sup> [Schutz 1976], 29.

result of a loved one's operation, or very short if we are enjoying a chat with a friend.<sup>11</sup>

In the philosophical field, this improper confusion between the two temporal dimensions has produced some paradoxes, notable among which is Zeno's arrow: an arrow moving through space would trace a path paradoxically made up of an infinite number of static positions. Actually, the flight of the arrow "as an ongoing movement... is a unit from the instant it was shot from the bow until it reaches its goal. Following this movement with your eyes, you experienced one single event in inner time".<sup>12</sup> At the next moment, that of the analysis carried out at the completion of things, the experience of the flying arrow is spatialized in a trajectory and then, only then, can we "stop" the arrow, break down its motion and ask ourselves what spatial point the arrow occupied at a precise instant; if, however, we erroneously superimpose the two moments – "*ongoing movement* as a unity, *accomplished movement* as divisible into parts" – the paradox arises according to which the arrow does not move at all.

Similarly, the musical theme is perceived by the listener "as an indivisible unit, a single impulse, as long as he lives within the flux of the ongoing music". The reference to the polythetic constitution of the musical piece should not make us think of an additional construction, step by step, during the listening. It is to be taken as directed towards the inexorable temporality of the musical piece and the fact that it cannot be reduced to a monothetically graspable conceptual content. Nevertheless, if the listener wants to extract the internal articulations (the themes, or *Gestalten*, as we shall soon see) which make the piece of music "meaningful", he must necessarily leave the immediacy of real life in order to adopt a reflective attitude.<sup>13</sup> By making the act of listening the object of his reflection, the listener will be able to grasp "the interplay of retentional and protentional mechanism of his conscious life".<sup>14</sup> This reference to the retentional and protentional acts of conscious life enables us to see the presence of another great author in these writings: Husserl, explicitly acknowledged by Schutz as his master.

The Bergsonian concept of *durée* enabled Schutz to reject the image of the present as "knife-edge", an abstraction not in keeping with our experience of inner time which is a flow. The reference to Husserlian analyses on time allows Schutz to endow the whole treatise with a greater richness and analytical precision. The phenomenological present, according to Husserl, derives from a tension between the direction of the past and that of the future: towards the

<sup>11</sup> [Schutz 1976], 37.

<sup>12</sup> [Schutz 1976], 30.

<sup>13</sup> The attribution of meaning – which is a general principle according to Schutz – "is not a quality inherent in certain experiences emerging within our stream of consciousness, but the result of an interpretation of a past experience looked at from the present Now with a reflective attitude" [Schutz 1964/I], 210).

<sup>14</sup> [Schutz 1976], 60.

past, then, we will have bot *retention*, which keeps the just-happened Now at the borders of consciousness and seamlessly joins it to the present Now, and *reproduction* which is to do with remoter experiences which have already escaped from the horizon of the present Now, which however can always be recalled by an act of memory. Symmetrically, yet towards the future, we will have *protention*, which immediately links itself to the present experience, and *anticipation* which postpones an event to a more distant future. “It is quite clear – Schutz states – that although both protentions and anticipations are empty, the former are more likely to be fulfilled by actuality than the latter, especially if a protention attaches itself to an actual experience which itself contains a retention of the same object”.<sup>15</sup> Following Schutz’s example: I can assume that the continuous sound I am perceiving will have the same pitch as the following fraction of time.

In general, “retentions and reproductions, protentions and anticipations are constitutive for the interconnectedness of the stream of consciousness. They are equally constitutive for the experience of music”.<sup>16</sup>

We can now take up again the subject of the thematic units (*Gestalten*) which emerge from inside the temporal network made up of retentions and reproductions, protentions and anticipations. It represents an extremely important topic for a phenomenology of music, since it is by means of these units that the musical piece becomes “meaningful” to the listener. According to the author’s words:

The basic elements of all music is a unique configuration called theme. It is itself extended in inner time. It is apperceived as a unit (*Gestalt*), or as a combination of those units. It may be itself structurized, it may have parts and ‘moments’, these parts or ‘moments’ may be dissected afterwards. But it is experienced as a whole.<sup>17</sup>

Continuing with the explanation. Schutz specifies that a theme may recur, be modified according to specified procedures of composition (inversion, enlargement, etc.) and still be recognized as the “same” theme, though modified. But what we are now interested in finding out is why that configuration of notes, and not another one, emerges as a theme. At a first level, specified articulations of the musical flow already emerge during the listening, through the play of retentions and protentions already highlighted by Husserl and briefly gone over again by Schutz through the elaboration of a simple musical example.<sup>18</sup> But, as we have said, a more exhaustive investigation into the emergence of the

<sup>15</sup> [Schutz 1976], 41.

<sup>16</sup> [Schutz 1976], 41.

<sup>17</sup> [Schutz 1976], 46.

<sup>18</sup> It is a simple sequence of six notes (C D E C D D) without determination of duration. The example is intentionally unspecified as regards tonal indication and other historical and cultural characterization.

musical theme requires the abandonment of the musical flow and the assumption of a reflective attitude. It will then be possible to discover that what we have called “articulation” (which may be the theme or one of its subunits) is something which “implies, certainly, a feeling of virtual finality”.<sup>19</sup> This sensation of “virtual finality” is, we might also say, what allows us to distinguish – in principle even at the first listening – whether a sequence of notes is *concluded* or merely *interrupted*. The concept of “virtual” is clarified by Schutz with reference to what James called the “resting places” of thought. According to James, in fact, our conscious life is characterized by a succession of phases of activity and phases of rest, similarly to the alternation of flight and rest in a bird’s life. These resting places are particularly important because (they) “articulate the totality of the bird’s movement, they bring the initial phases to an end and a new phase starts thereafter”.<sup>20</sup> In music, this element of caesura between two phases of activity typically takes place exemplarily in the phenomenon of phrasing:

The art of musical phrasing consists in making each unit and sub-unit discernible by bringing together into one single phrase what belongs together, and to separate it from the next phrase by a very short interruption of the flux of music – so short, sometimes, that even no sign of notation is required in order to mark the short pause between the end of the first and the beginning of the next phrase.<sup>21</sup>

These tiny interruptions (e.g. the singers’ breathing, the wind instrument players’ breathing or the string instrument players’ changing the stroke of the bow) are true resting places during which the musical flux reaches a stop. They are also tacit invitations on the part of the composer to the listener so that he will “reflect” on the music just heard. At this point the treatise on the subject is ready to consider a new aspect, that concerning the listener’s cultural background. In this connection it is necessary to follow Schutz in distinguishing, within what we call *memory*, between *recollection* and *remembrance*; the former includes retention and reproduction and it seems to keep us, so to speak, always within a given context of experience (e.g. a piece of music), whereas remembrance should be taken to refer to “the stock of our past experiences, itself organized, which we have permanently at hand in the form of knowledge”.<sup>22</sup> Memory as remembrance comes into play in the effort of accomplishment of a meaning (e.g. during the first hearing of a work) when the listener makes *anticipations*, based on his “stock of musical knowledge at hand”. If, for instance Schutz says, I am listening to the Minuet of a Haydn symphony, my knowledge about this author and Viennese classics in general, will lead me to expect a piece divided into two parts, somehow related to each

<sup>19</sup> [Schutz 1976], 61.

<sup>20</sup> [Schutz 1976], 61.

<sup>21</sup> [Schutz 1976], 66.

<sup>22</sup> [Schutz 1976], 64.

other, and each bound to be repeated; and I will also expect the Minuet to be followed by a Trio bipartite as well, at the end of which the Minuet will be repeated and so on. The stock of experiences acquired in the past and now organized in the form of knowledge contributes noticeably to the selection, in the flux of experience, of elements considered important and to the creation of a frame of reference which makes the Work of music a “meaningful context”. Here we come close to one of the main themes of Schutz’s philosophical commitment, that concerning the selective criteria which lead our attention in the selection of important experiential data.<sup>23</sup>

3. Having examined the relationship between subjectivity and temporality in music, we would like to mention some considerations, contained only in *Fragments*, which Schutz devotes to the presence of the *spatial element* in music. Taking his cue from Husserl once again, Schutz states that our experience of space is determined by the interaction of our various kinaesthetic, oculomotoric, tactile functions: while I am moving in space I come across the objects and these tend to be subject to tactile and visual exploration. Therefore, the constitution of the space has its own “kernel of optimal accessibility... the sphere of nearness with my own body in the center”.<sup>24</sup> All the acts I accomplish in the spatial sphere, and this is a decisive moment for Schutz, are characterized by repeatability and reversibility; furthermore, I can voluntarily interrupt in any moment my perception/exploration of the spatial object and in the same way voluntarily come back to it. These are actions commonly performed when dealing with any arts acting in space: to look at a painting, for example, there exists an optimal point of observation, starting from which the observer’s eye is led by lines of perspective, colours and so on, to explore the picture. As for sculptures and architectural works I can move even farther and catch the work from different viewpoints. The reversibility and repeatability of these operations is also what allows us to prove a given spatial element as the “same” already proved spatial element, that is, to build the “sameness” of such an object.

In examining the musical experience, Schutz, on the contrary, finds a completely different situation: above all, the organ of music, the ear, is deprived of kinaesthesia as well as of the possibility of spatially exploring its own object. I can direct my head in order to search for the sound source but this does not have any importance in music. Indeed, in general, Schutz believes that the capacity of locating a sound or of estimating its distance is not an original property of the acoustic field but rather derived from spatial experiences which are established in advance and extra-acoustic. Strictly speaking I cannot say, for example, that steps *are approaching* but only that their sound *is getting louder*:

<sup>23</sup> [Schutz 1970].

<sup>24</sup> [Schutz 1976], 33-34.

it is only by associating this impression with previous experiences – visual or tactile – related to the approaching of the sound source, that I am entitled to speak of the approach of a sound.<sup>25</sup> The ear, substantially, “is not able to build up the dimension of space”.<sup>26</sup> Another fundamental property of the acoustic field is the fact that we are unable to voluntarily interrupt an impression: unlike the hand and the eye, the ear is passive as regards its object. Sound, in its turn, as an object spreading into the “inner time”, is intimately connected with the irreversibility of the temporal flow. This even prevents us even from attributing to the “sameness” of sound the same meaning to that used for objects of space: “in the dimension of the inner time, or in the purely auditory sphere of music, the form of sameness is not that of numerical unity, but of recurrent likeness”.<sup>27</sup>

4. Many ideas elaborated in *Fragments* provide Schutz with the philosophical basis required to carry out research in *Making Music Together* on the social relationships taking place during the listening to a piece of music, when the composer, the performer and listener, according to different degrees of intimacy and anonymity, find themselves involved in a network of relationships. This essay, however, is not simply a study of “applied theory”, but, taking the act of listening to music as a model, it reveals the explicit philosophical aim to lay bare the structure of the social relationship as such.

The traditional approach to the problem of the social relationship is, according to Schutz, prejudiced by a sort of surreptitious identification between social relation and communication, where the latter is often intended in the strong meaning of the semantic system founded on the polarity between a sender and a receiver and on the existence of a shared code. According to Schutz, in a similar scheme, the pressure exerted by the model of the common language – a true paradigm of communication – is evident; and it is also evident in writers, such as Mead, who have tried hard to go back to the origin of the

<sup>25</sup> C.A. Skarda, in his previously quoted thorough essay maintains that the lack of a spatial structure in the auditive field is somehow regained at the level of the temporal structure: “There is structure in the acoustic field, but it is temporal not spatial. For example, if there is depth in acoustic experience then it is the experience of temporal depth, i. e., the past, that is meant” [Skarda 1989], 99, n. 29). This hypothesis, though interesting, is not confirmed in my view, in Schutz’s work, due to the lack of explicit remarks on the symbolic processes which come into play during listening. It is, indeed, clear that depth in the acoustic field becomes the image of temporal depth, taken to mean the past, just because it is adopted in a process of imaginative valorization. With regard to this, see also note 30 of the article “Musicologia e fenomenologia in F. Joseph Smith” in the current issue of *Axiomathes*.

<sup>26</sup> [Schutz 1976], 62.

<sup>27</sup> See A. Mazzoni, “Fenomenologia, coscienza del tempo e analisi musicale” (in particular § 1), in the current issue of *Axiomathes*.

pre-defined linguistic situation to identify (as far as Mead is concerned, through the “conversation of significant gestures”) the pre-linguistic condition preceding all possible communication. However, the hypothesis from which Schutz suggests to start is that according to which

all communication presupposes the existence of some kind of special interaction which, though is an indispensable condition of all possible communication, does not enter the communicative process and is not capable of being grasped by it.<sup>28</sup>

Therefore, it is within a sort of precommunicative sphere that we should look for the “a priori” of every possible communication, which certainly comes before the birth of language as semantic system; a sphere that Schutz tends to connect with the Sartrean idea of regard meant as “look at the Other and be looked at by the Other”.

The conclusions reached in *Fragments* showed the musical work as an intrinsically temporal object, meaningful but, at the same time, non-conceptualizable. However, the meaning was defined as communicable. All these features, together with the fact that the development in a temporal dimension refers, as we shall soon see, to an intersubjective situation, make the object “musical work”, a sort of privileged observation point for the theme of our investigation.

In the actual performance of a piece of music two communicative levels are involved: the first level is the more general, it is the foreground and it concerns the performer’s knowledge acquired through his musical background and his cultural baggage. This represents *socially derived* and *socially approved knowledge*, which, though organized according to type, enables the performer to perform the piece in its particularity, in the same way as the listener who – as mentioned in § 2 – is able to make *anticipations* thanks to his cultural knowledge. However, this is simply the setting against the background of which the main event, the interpretation, takes place. What else does the interpretation of a musical piece mean but to give life again to that “meaningful arrangement of tones in inner time”,<sup>29</sup> based on the play of protentions and retentions? Once again Schutz refers to the temporality of the musical piece as an essential condition of its actual existence and as specific characteristic of the possibility of conveying its meaning. Schutz himself returns again to the comparison between musical work and theorem to remind us that the latter, though transmissible through the centuries, in its conclusive formulation teaches us a meaning which is graspable in a single act and does not require a temporal flow. Thus the role of the performer is that of he who, through that event of the outer time which is the performance, restores the composer’s inner stream of consciousness and makes it available to the listener. The performance thus

<sup>28</sup> [Schutz 1951], 161.

<sup>29</sup> [Schutz 1951], 170.

becomes a sort of device to synchronize the inner time of the three subjects involved in the social relationship in music, a relationship of *simultaneity* between the performer and the listener and of *quasi-simultaneity* between these two and the composer. The more the composer's original meaning is respected in the performance the better the device will function. The quasi-simultaneity relationship is but "a derived form of the vivid present shared by the partners in a genuine face-to-face relation such as prevails between speaker and listener".<sup>30</sup>

Therefore, the primordial situation of all possible communication is that of an intersubjectivity in which each subject shares the other's flow of experiences in the inner time and the togetherness of this mutual tuning-in relationship is experienced as a "We".<sup>31</sup> That is, as Schutz maintains with an expression rich in literary charm, the situation in which listener and performer "grow older together".

5. In the previous pages we have tried to develop, around some themes, a series of reflections which is admittedly incomplete but which perhaps is not adverse to systematic treatment. On the other hand, many passages in *Fragments* let us think that Schutz had in mind a broad, articulate work on the philosophy of music. However, this work does not exist and now to attempt the editing of a work which is only a draft, increases the risk of misunderstanding certain approaches. Nor, certainly, is it easier to estimate from the historiographical viewpoint, the importance of Schutz's ideas on the successive writers: it is true that *Fragments*, the first and most "philosophical" of his writings on music, dates back to 1944, but it is also true that manuscript was only published in 1976, when the debate in the USA had already started and was philosophically oriented around specified problems. Nevertheless, in writers such as Clifton, Smith, Bartholomew, the recurrence of motives already present in Schutz is significant; this recurrence, though not founded on documented knowledge of the manuscript, gives us reason to imagine a cultural *milieu* linking the Austrian philosopher to the American authors and which, at least in ideal terms, makes Schutz a spiritual forefather of the debate we have set out in this issue of *Axiomathes*. To conclude our reflections on Schutz we feel it is only right, whenever possible, to attempt a comparison with some of the authors who came after him.<sup>32</sup>

One aspect which Schutz and these authors certainly have in common is the claim, mainly from a negative perspective, for the autonomy of the phenomenological attitude with respect to other approaches to music:

<sup>30</sup> [Schutz 1951], 170.

<sup>31</sup> [Schutz 1951], 177.

<sup>32</sup> Concerning these authors see, apart the already quoted articles by Mazzoni and Pedone, in this issue of *Axiomathes*, R. Miraglia "Il quadro generale di una fenomenologia americana della musica".

phenomenology of music *is not* a psychoacoustic theory of sound, nor does it derive from the comparative study of different musical cultures and systems. On the contrary, the *experience of listening* should be collocated from the very beginning as an object of philosophical reflection. In Schutz's work, in fact, there is an anti-positivistic aspiration which we meet later on, but without the polemical aspects that are to be found, for example, in Smith's works. This anti-positivism moreover, for obvious chronological reasons, comes nowhere near identifying interlocutors, not to mention adversaries, in modern musicology and musical analysis. Nevertheless, there is one first notable difference: authors as Smith and Bartholomew seem explicitly oriented towards a true phenomenology of sound – sound *comes before* music, for these authors. Schutz on the other hand is not attracted so much by the *raw sound* Smith mentions, but by the musical piece as a structured object. This piece, more than sound in itself, is *meaningful*, while the possibility that the sound in itself carries expressive latencies that merit phenomenological investigation does not seem to stimulate Schutz's attention. Thus, when Schutz speaks of the experience of listening, despite the reference to the general Husserlian theory of retentive/protentive present, we should think of that moment during the concert, when the listener suspends all form of attention towards the daily aspects of living (e.g. the concert hall with its innumerable sources of distraction) and concentrates on the work of music with the intent of grasping the *meaning* with which we may legitimately suppose the composer intended to endow the work. Given this approach, therefore, we should not be surprised by the fact that the definition of the ontological statute of a musical work is a crucial problem for a philosophy of music: what is Beethoven's Fifth Symphony? what does it have and what does it not have in common with other *ideal objects* such as Pythagoras's theorem or Dante's Divine Comedy? It is indeed significant that Schutz immediately feels obliged to commit himself to the solution of a problem which certainly does not start from the perceptual field but rather belongs to the whole of philosophically constructed questions legitimized by a specified culture (in our case, the musical civilization of the work around which the author-performer-listener relationship revolves).

To this field of thought may perhaps be connected the importance which Schutz gives to the musical theme, explicitly defined in terms of *Gestalt* and considered "the basic element of all music": a theme, though considered beyond a specific musical system, is already an articulated sequence of sounds: indeed, would it not be possible, for a philosophy of music referred to phenomenology, to retrace its steps from this level of articulation in order to discover an even more elementary layer of meaning?

Some of Schutz's insights are in my opinion difficult to reconcile with a phenomenological approach to sound. As far as the presence of the spatial element in music is concerned, we have seen how Schutz has assumed an empirical position which leads him to deny the spatiality of sound as its original

feature: it is not that the sound does not have a spatiality of its own, Schutz seems to say, but it is, on a perceptual level, derived from the tactile-visual sphere and, on an artistic level, meaningless. The last statement can easily be disproved by simply showing not only some results of contemporary music but also substantial examples of the past (take, for example, the Venetian School and its practice of the *double choir*, in which the spatial element plays a preponderant role in the artistic project); but, leaving aside these reflections as well as the aspect of the *symbolic spatiality* of music (see *supra*, note 25), once again one has the impression that Schutz, while favouring the temporal element, has prevented himself from grasping spatiality which also belongs to sound in an original and irreducible way.

Finally the problem of consonance and dissonance. Though Schutz only mentions them in passing and merely for exemplifications in *Fragments*, his opinions betray a precise cultural orientation. In fact, by saying that consonance and dissonance “are historical categories of the aesthetics of music prevailing during certain periods in certain cultures” and that “what one generation blames as dissonant is accepted by the following one as aesthetically consonant”,<sup>33</sup> he provides a solution in terms of cultural relativism to a question which might be susceptible to a phenomenological investigation tending towards the exploration of the relationship between consonance and dissonance as properties of the universe of sound.<sup>34</sup>

Schutz’s explicit reference to Husserl allows the existence of elements of a heterogeneous, cultural origin, perhaps not always compatible with a phenomenological approach. Nevertheless, the project merely sketched out by Schutz, is too rich in interest and stimuli to be neglected in the philosophical area of musical themes.

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<sup>33</sup> [Schutz 1976], 26-27.

<sup>34</sup> An example of phenomenologically oriented study on consonance and dissonance is provided by [Piana 1991], 213-221.

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