

Intimate Exteriorities

Inventing Religion through Music

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The question of the arts would not merit attention (artists having taken it well in hand) if it did not hide the stakes of a beyond-religion which is now ineluctable—but of a beyond that owes nothing to the (bourgeois, as no one dares to say anymore) cult of Art.

—Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Muses*

It is not a rare phenomenon today to find a concert hall—that bourgeois temple of the cult of Art—filled with religious music. This may not seem surprising, since soon after its invention in the eighteenth century the concert hall became a location for the performance of religious repertoires. The times have changed, however, and the position of religion today can hardly be compared with the one it occupied centuries ago. The presence of religion in classical music performances today is mostly historical in character, such as, for instance, when Handel's oratorios are played, or Mozart's *Requiem*.

Much less frequently, but all the more significantly, one hears new works of religious or "spiritual" music, composed by composers of our own time. On these occasions, there is an important change in the concert situation. Rather than relating ourselves, as listeners, to a historical expression of faith from times when we imagine religious experience to have been less complicated (which, of course, it never was), we now have to face an expression of religion from a contemporary, perhaps even a compatriot. From the Western European perspective from which I am writing, anything seems more attractive than this. As the music critic Elmer Schoenberger once said, we seem more ready to accept the faith of a Russian composer who was born and raised in wholly different circumstances than ours than that of an equal composer from our own cultural time zone.¹

The credibility of religious expressions in the domain of Western contemporary art music is in a state of crisis. This seems as much related to the collapse of the cult of Art that we are presently witnessing as to the problematic status of religious expressions in the public domain in general. The first will of these motives be my main concern. If composed (i.e., “classical,” “literate”) music has been based on ideological premises that are losing their dominance, the question arises of how religious music will change accordingly. On the one hand, the retreat of Romantic notions that construed music as a quasi-religious phenomenon seems to give music back to those who have been reluctant to accept art as revelation. On the other hand, however, it appears that the values and artistic norms that guided the development of music in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, have been rediscovered by institutional religion. In his 2003 appraisal of an important papal text about music from the early twentieth century, Pope John Paul II reaffirmed the importance of artistic qualities in the music of the Catholic Church.² As I will discuss below, this belated attempt to save church music from some of the effects of the 1960s *aggiornamento* will have to face the significant changes in values such as musical “substance.”

In order to understand the present situation of religious “new music for the concert hall,” it will be valuable to discuss the conceptual strategies employed by composers who work in this area. I have chosen to focus on a small number of composers whose music gained popularity in the early 1990s, at a time when religious and spiritual themes became more explicit. Since then, the music of these composers, among whom figure most prominently John Tavener, Henryk Górecki, and Arvo Pärt, has become widely accepted by the public. Although there is no personal link between them, their work is collectively referred to as “new spiritual music,” or, less neutrally so, “Holy Minimalism” or “New Simplicity.”³ The tone of these critical labels reflects the debate this music has engendered among specialists. In contrast to their popularity with the wider audience (Górecki’s Third Symphony even topped the Billboard charts), there has been great critical resistance to the alleged “insubstantiality” of the music. The debate has focused on issues that reflect the difficulties and paradoxes that surround the composition, production, and appraisal of religious art music at the turn of the millennium.⁴

What might seem a confrontation between modernism and its religiously inspired critics in fact reveals structural tensions. The musical “turn to religion” has been more than an empirical-historical trend; it refers to the *possibility* of conceiving and practicing a form of religious art at the present moment. Given the secularized status of art music, this practice often appears as an attempt to leap over its own paradoxes and impossibilities. As I will argue, the key to understanding the situation of contemporary religious music is to understand this music as the production of a *situation*. The first step will be to see how critical evaluation of the “New Simplicity” is guided by the concept of substance. The case of John Tavener suggests that, unless the role of music’s technicity is

taken in to account, strategic options for assessment remain limited to the onto-theological and apophatic. The second step will be to listen carefully to Jean-Luc Nancy's reinterpretation of the notion of *technē* in his engagement with Hegel's religious aesthetics. This will strike the chord for a discussion of the topography of insides and outsides (surface, depth, inwardness, and the figure of musical touch) that determines the criteria for religious music in the Platonic-Christian tradition. After reinterpreting music's quasi-religious inward "touch" in terms of subjective trembling, the final section will deal with the way in which music (Xenakis, this time) may produce, through its excessive production of trembling, a situation of near-transcendence.

Music Without Substance

The reason why the New Simplicity has become such an item for discussion is partly to be found in the proclamations made by its composers. John Tavener is the most talkative representative of this informal group. His readiness to explain the ins and outs of his approach to composition belongs to that modern tradition of *intellectualité musicale* according to which composers not only write music, but also produce ample reflections on their own work.⁵ This gesture further complicates the structure of the phenomenon of contemporary religious music.

Tavener, who converted to Greek Orthodoxy in 1977 and ever since has made his faith central to his creative work, presents a number of his ideas on a DVD that is mainly devoted to the performance of his *Fall and Resurrection*, a piece from 2000 for four vocal soloists, orchestra, and choir. In an interview entitled "The Eye of the Heart," Tavener responds to the by then habitual criticism that his work lacks something called "musical substance." His response to this criticism is telling, with regard both to Tavener's own viewpoint and to that of his critics. It touches upon one of the most profound issues in the ontology of music. For this reason I shall quote it in full:

It doesn't surprise me that certain critics say there is no substance in my music, because, well, probably the last thing I want to have in it, is substance. . . . I love the initial ideas of Beethoven perhaps, for instance—is it the barcarolles he wrote for piano all his life?—particularly the last ones, when he was very near death. Not so much the quartets, because he still has this need to develop. Who wants to know what Beethoven thinks of the material that I believe comes . . . maybe the initial idea is a spontaneous idea that comes from, let's say, the Holy Spirit, call it what you will. Or comes from God if you like, or that he picks up in the music of the spheres, or whatever it is. But once he starts developing, I lose him completely, because it becomes what Beethoven thinks about God. And in the *Missa Solemnis*, you have this passage in the *Agnus Dei* where he *rails* against God, and that's the beginning of a

whole load of composers, like Mahler, who does the same thing. It's touching, but it's not much more than that.⁶

Given his religious and theological engagement, Tavener could be expected here to be referring to the onto-theological notion of substance. His apparent indifference to this notion could then point toward apophatic views of God as being beyond essence. This would also be supported by his general critique of the Aristotelian tradition, which, according to Tavener, caused theology to enter into “a ruinous epoch of abstraction and theory.”⁷ Despite these plausible resonances, however, there is no reason to believe that he is referring here to theology; the discussion takes place on a technical musical level.

That is just where the problems begin. As Tavener suggests in the remarks quoted above, the category of substance is subsumed in the order of technics. It refers to something that is *produced* by developing an original, god-given “material” or “idea.” In Tavener’s view, therefore, to want more “substance,” that is, more technics, is to want less “God”; the touch of human hands can only spoil the material (qua *idea*).⁸ Distancing himself, for this very reason, from the problem he refers to as “Beethoven,” Tavener equally distances himself from a good number of his musical peers:

If they [the critics in America and England] are looking for the kind of thing they find in Harrison Birtwistle they won't find it in me. They write the usual sort of things, lack of substance and so on. I take comfort from the fact that they are the kind of people who praise Harrison Birtwistle and do I want to be praised by the kind of people who praise Harrison Birtwistle? But the audience reaction [in San Francisco, to *Lamentations and Praises*] was quite extraordinary, people coming up to me and hanging on my hand, talking to me for maybe five minutes at a time and saying they won't wash their hand for a week.⁹

Tavener is not just a playing around with the notion of substance. Having been an avant-garde composer in his early years, he is well aware that his music lacks something—the “thing” critics tend to find in “Birtwistle” (or, for that matter, “Beethoven”), which he agrees to call “substance.” By contrast to these critics, however, he regards it as something to be avoided, as though he were programming some kind of musical—that is, technical-substantial—apophasis.

Now, exactly, what is musical “substance,” and why is it considered important by so many critics? According to Josiah Fisk, who has been one of the foremost critics of what he calls “The New Simplicity,” the issue is rather serious. “Musical substance,” we learn from Fisk, is a notion comprising all that Western music positively stands for. “Like the best examples of any art form, the best works of Western music seem actually to be alive, richly animated with a sentience that responds to a hundred different probings of the ear and the intellect.”¹⁰ Fisk relates this “live” aspect to a conservative notion of human

subjectivity, based on the expressionist balance between inside and outside, as well as a certain internal structuring of each. He continues, “These works carry meanings within themselves, presenting them to us in all their cross-grained complexity as their stories unfold. They do that most human of things: they approach you, greet you, and proceed to engage you in dialogue.” Music’s “inner life”—a notion central to Fisk’s argument—is said to be produced by the ambiguity of musical structure, by the work’s play with the listener’s expectations, by the element of dialogue (“between ideas, between form and content, between composer and history”) and interplay, by the logic of linearity and narrativity, along with, and supported by, “values” such as “highest respect” for the past, musical skill, and “traditional expertise,” the sound morality of hard labor, a preference for density of content, and a stable relation between structure and emotion. All this in view of a music that is “solidly intellectual and at the same time seductively playful, [that] engages the ear and the mind, but always with the purpose of speaking to the heart.”¹¹

Fisk’s implicit emphasis on inward dimensions (the “heart,” the “inner life,” the content of form, musical ideas, honest intentions) leads him to dismiss the New Simplicity as offering nothing but “surface.” “And so we have,” he writes in his conclusion, “a music that, for the listener who seeks more than the token of classical music, offers no dialogue, no ambiguity, and no inner life. What we are left with is *a surface that speaks of depth, and a depth that speaks of nothing.*”¹² The music of Tavener, like that of Pärt and Górecki, is “a form of substance and depth” that, on close inspection, turns out to be based merely on a “tide of undifferentiated emotionalism.” What we are offered here is hardly more than musical “raw materials,” which are passed “along to us with only minimal craftsmanship—commodities still partly in their original wrappers.”¹³ The listener’s attention is diverted by the “rich and enveloping sound” of the recordings and the general “aural-emotional experience” it offers as a substitute for compositional structure. Rather than becoming engaged in a play of interpretation, she or he is “sent away empty” and more often than not misguided by the “protective coating of extraneous ideas,” which are “sent to do the heavy lifting that the music can’t do itself.” As far as Fisk is concerned, the New Simplicity drapes itself in the gestures and materials of the Western classical tradition only to underline its infinite distance from this tradition. “The sounds that at first blush tell us this is classical music give way to a center that is classical music’s opposite—more completely so than any other type of music. What we gain in this bargain is a way of asserting faith in simplicity. What we give up is faith in music as an art.”¹⁴

Fisk’s conclusion is interesting for a number of reasons. First, it suggests a dialectical tension between “substantial” classical music and the specter of classical music that comes to occupy its very center. The New Simplicity does not simply propose an alternative practice, projected elsewhere or elsewhen. Rather, it inscribes itself, as Fisk rightly notes, in the most “classical” of musical gestures, instruments, performance spaces, and so on. As he also underlines, the “emptiness” of this music is heir to John Cage’s reductionist

approach to the internal structuring of works. In other words, the New Simplicity's apparently most offending feature does not originate from outside the classical tradition, but belongs to the very core of its recent modernist history. There is no easy way to avoid this piece of history; nor is it easy to ignore the questions this movement has posed itself qua tradition.

Second, throughout his discussion Fisk construes the substance that defines music as art in terms of *technics*. The art of music, insofar as it is art, appears to be dependent upon the technical production of its own essence. It does not possess a substance of its own, by force of ontological necessity. Rather, as one may gather from the polemic against the New Simplicity, music is forced to combat its apparent lack of given substance by producing it. This task of producing "inherent" meaning, according to Fisk, is the responsibility of the composer, who "toils" and "labors." Interestingly, this state of affairs points toward a rupture within the concept of musical art. The musical need for self-grounding severs the element of technics from the essence that is to be produced. In order to produce the substantiality that saves it for the category of art, music needs to sacrifice its conceptual unity. This disengagement between substance and technics, that is to say, the conceptualization of substantial music outside of its technicality, which Fisk criticized so fiercely in the New Simplicity, is unavoidable if music is to belong to the concept of art.

Third, since for its substance music cannot count on a given ontology, it operates in a curious ontological space. The substance that lends music its status as art is not given, and in those instances when music's substance appears to be naturalized, it remains subjected to the instabilities of its virtuality. Since it is a product of technics, music's substance remains a promise, a horizon against which it may be projected as an object of faith. Fisk acknowledges the fiduciary character of our relation to the concept of music as art. As we have been aware since the late eighteenth century, music may hold promises of plenitude, revelation, immediacy, and truth. Fisk's portrayal of the "Western tradition" and what it stands for partakes in the specific temporality that supports it as an object of faith. Pitting one faith against the other, his polemic in the name of secular principles becomes itself religious. On either side of the divide, there is virtuality and faith.

And finally, Fisk draws attention to the particular temporalization involved in the project of the New Simplicity. Rather than presenting a new form of religious art available for contemplation here and now, the New Simplicity takes place in a unique temporal space. While intending to answer the contemporary crisis of musical culture by turning toward religious models, that is to say, models based on a metaphysical model of presence, this music slides its listener into a kind of fold. Through the use of historically informed methods of composition and references to Byzantine and Medieval sources, this music leads the listener into a space in between the present and a past that—as Fisk is right to point out—is a wholly imaginary one.¹⁵ The temporal mode of the musico-religious requires a twisting of the ear in order to hear a holy music arriving from the space that opens in between the dystopian present and the imaginary past.¹⁶

Much of this debate echoes the thesis on the end of art. In his study of Hegel's aesthetics, Jean-Luc Nancy summarizes this thesis by noticing that "It is now well established that what has been imputed to Hegel as the declaration of an "end of art" is but the declaration of an end of what he called "aesthetic religion," that is, of art as the place where the divine appears."¹⁷ With regard to religious music, this thesis seems to be multiplied by Hegel's struggle with, and eventual dismissal of, purely instrumental music. If art is no longer the "place" where the divine appears, this will always already have been an impossibility for music, because, according to Hegel, music never actually possessed the capacity to express any definite substance. Music is merely a vehicle for the expression of "pure inwardness," mimicking the tidal movements of the inner life of feeling. Thus, from the Hegelian perspective, the notion of a contemporary religious music runs into a double impossibility. First, qua art it can no longer be expected to express the ideal by force of the historical dialectic of the Spirit; second, qua music, it has never even come close to being a candidate for such expression, because it structurally lacks that specific capacity (for Hegel, classical Greek sculpture fulfills that purpose). With regard to the first point, Nancy shows how the notion of Christian art, which dominates the scene of the New Simplicity, posed a problem for Hegel. In the *Phenomenology*, Christian art is not even mentioned as a possibility, and remarks on that point in the *Phenomenology of Religion* only affirm that, for Hegel, Christian art contradicts itself as a concept because it aspires to overcome the (Greek) art of "beautiful ideality" by absorbing, through death or transfiguration, the moment of exteriority into pure interiority.¹⁸ According to Nancy, this dialectical movement is impossible in a pure sense; any attempt to surpass art's exteriority by means of sublation is doomed.

The moment of art in religion cannot . . . remain a moment. Irresistibly it autonomizes itself, and it does so, perhaps, because it is precisely the moment of the thorough autonomy of manifestation—of an autonomy that no longer retains anything of interiority or of spirituality as such. Art would thus behave like a sort of "sublation in exteriority" of religion—but since religion has its truth only in the return of the spirit to itself, art is also the definitive alienation of the religious, which also might be expressed thus: the technics of the beautiful, or better still, the beautiful as technics in (the) place of divine presence.¹⁹

With regard to the second point (i.e., music's structural insufficiency as a medium for religion), these remarks are important. Nancy stresses the exterior aspect of art, which he construes as a remainder that will forever resist the spiraling sublation of art into religion and philosophy. As an alternative to the Hegelian reduction of art's exterior moment to the inward immediacy of the spirit (a movement that both culminates and breaks down in Hegel's analysis of poetry), Nancy proposes a radical autonomization of purely formal

exteriority. Art's singularity resides in the presentation as such of "*entirely exposed interiority*, but at the point at which it no longer even refers to itself as to some content or some latent presence, having become on the contrary the *patency of its very latency* and thus irreconcilable with any interiority (with any divinity)."²⁰

Criticizing the primacy of interiority that informs and orients the aesthetics of Hegel so profoundly, Nancy seems to traverse the distance between Fisk and the New Simplicity. Fisk criticizes Tavener and his colleagues for presenting the listener a mere "surface" and blames the misleading suggestion of "depth" on the deliberate absence of technically produced "ambiguity," "dialogue," and "inner life." Nancy, on the contrary, affirms the patent, superficial character of art. He does not subscribe, however, to the Tavenerian rejection of technique as an interference with the original divine idea. Rather, Nancy points toward the centrality of technique to all questions concerning grounds, origins, and ends:

Technique is the obsolescence of the origin and the end: the exposition to a lack of ground and foundation, or that which ends up presenting itself as its only "sufficient reason," experiencing itself as radically insufficient and as a devastation of the ground, the "natural," and the origin. Technique extends a withdrawal of the "ground," and the most visible part of our history consists in this extension. Technique as such, in the common sense of the word, at the same time extends and recovers this *Grundlosigkeit* or *Abgründigkeit*. This is why there is not "technique" but "techniques" and why the plural here bears the "essence" itself. It might be that art, the arts, is nothing other than the second-degree exposition of technique itself, or perhaps the technique *of the ground* itself. How to produce the ground that does not produce itself: that would be the question of art, and that would be its plurality of origin.²¹

This plurality will be the immanence, the pure patency, of "color, nuance, grain, line, timbre, echo, cadence."²² That is to say: of a quasi-topological surface without reverse side, a Möbius strip of sorts, which will only ever produce immanences and transimmanences.²³ Does this eventually converge with the vacuity of Tavener's music without substance? Yes and no. On the one hand, Tavener's music does indeed avoid the grand gestures of traditional religious art music since the nineteenth century, leaving ample room for disappointment with regard to the image of the sacred he evokes. Those drawn toward his music by a desire to be fulfilled by gestures of plenitude will probably encounter a strange lack of, indeed, *religious* substance.²⁴ The apparent emptiness of his music unwillingly refers to the exodus of the religion of sublimity typically found from Haydn all the way to Messiaen—an exodus that leaves a vacant space, opening a kind of sonorous desert within sound itself. To the topology of this desert, as well as its technical aspect, we shall return.

Yet Tavener tries hard to restrain the kind of immanence described by Nancy by speculating, in a very traditional gesture of religious music, on a contemplative attitude that would be willing to Platonize the mere “surface” of his music, that is, to understand its vacuity by relating it to a plenitude elsewhere or elsewhen, of which the enigmatic place of the “heart” is, according to Tavener, focus, origin, and destiny. Again, as Burcht Pranger has demonstrated so convincingly, this kind of contemplation too would require a refined use of technics.²⁵ It would seem, then, that technics is where the question of religious art begins and ends—that is to say, *virtually*:

The technicity of art dislodges art from its “poetic” assurance, of one understands by that the production of a revelation, or art conceived as a *phusis* unveiled in its truth. Technicity *itself* is also the out-of-workness [*désœuvrement*] of the work, what puts it outside itself, touching the infinite. Their technical out-of-workness incessantly forces the fine arts, dislodges them endlessly from aestheticizing repose. This is why art is always *coming to its end*. The “end of art” is always the beginning of its plurality. *It could also be the beginning of another sense of and for “technics” in general* [my emphasis].²⁶

Touching Music

The bifurcation Nancy discerns between art and religion originates in his reinterpretation of the notion of *technē*. This notion, rather than rendering the substance (i.e., essence) of “Art,” refers to “the naked presentation of the singular plural of obviousness.”²⁷ What Nancy foresees *technē* doing is participating in the production of those “*other formations than religion*” that Hegel programmed, as the latter puts it, “ones which must be more satisfying for the human spirit than those that religion offers him.”²⁸ Religion cannot easily be discarded, however. With the intention of showing that, starting from the Hegelian analysis, religion has nothing that is truly proper to it, Nancy notes in passing that “art is the truth of religion from the side of exteriority as nonrevealed exteriority in interiority (and philosophy is the symmetrical truth from the side of interiority).”²⁹ Hence he contends that religion “tends to be nothing other than the untenable, undecidable line of cleavage between art and philosophy.”³⁰

Precisely *as* such a line of cleavage, However, religion is neither without importance nor without phenomenology. Religion turns out to be a kind of chiasmic *point de capiton*, a turning point (a point “with no dimension,” as Nancy often likes to say) around which philosophy and art revolve, keeping their distance with respect to one another, but also holding onto their alliance. Religion is like the tain of the mirror or the *khōra*, which has no proper place but without which there would be no reciprocal play of outsides and

insides, of places and mirrorlike heterotopias, of sensing senses and thought sense. “Religion” is, one might provisionally say, the very fact that art and thinking touch, each highlighting its respective, irreducible *remainders*. It is where the nakedness of art’s patency touches on itself *as thinking*, where *technē*—that is, the relation to the “endless ends” of art—gains its other sense. Religion is where the one-sided surface (Massumi) of artistic experience receives the torsion (a technics of sorts) that will turn it into a kind of Möbius strip: the continuous and continual transition between insides and outsides, without ever exiting the logic of pure patency.³¹ This view of “religion”—a term that should now be kept in suspension in accordance with the quasi-spectral status of religion after the “end of art”—as a buffer zone, a line of both contact and separation between art and reflection, underlines the close relation between religion and the topos of *touch*. Religion may even be touch as such, the enigma of *ça touche*, which, according to Nancy, remains untouchable.³²

The topos of touch brushes up against music’s most traditional affinity with metaphysics and religion. An ability to touch the soul profoundly and with great force has always been a key figure in metaphysical speculation on music. It also has been central to the acceptance—however equivocal—of music in theology and in religious practice. Music often appears to be the medium of touch par excellence, associated with notions of emotion, penetration, the touching of one’s heart, and so on. Music seems to live through the many ways it produces senses of contact—without any form of contact whatsoever. In this sense it intensifies an aspect that seems to belong to the aural in general. As Roland Barthes notes, “The injunction to listen is the total interpellation of one subject by another: it places above everything else the quasi-physical contact of these subjects (by voice and ear): it creates transference: ‘listen to me’ means ‘touch me, know that I exist.’”³³ What remains to be understood, however, is the *situation*, even more concretely, the *locality*, of this touching. What does music touch when it appears to be touching? What notion of space does this concept of musical affection presuppose? What does it mean to be penetrated by that into which at the same time—something seemingly impossible—I am drawn?

In music, the spatiality connected with the notion of touching has a particular history. The key figure of touching already appears in classical Greece. According to Plato in the *Timaeus*, music (i.e., “*mousikē* insofar as it uses audible sound”) is capable of influencing the soul if it is endowed with a *harmonia* “akin to the revolutions of the Soul within us.”³⁴ Music, he contends, may be used to restore the soul to “order and concord with itself” whenever it has lost its harmony. Since *harmonia* is a gift of the divine Muses, this attunement of the soul by means of music necessarily has a religious aspect.³⁵ In addition, it may be called metaphysical in that the content of this gift involves the eternal Pythagorean numbers, though to be constitutive of all being. In other words, attunement offers, musically, a harmonious order that underlies all good and beautiful being. Music’s

ability to “take strongest hold upon [the soul],” however, to “touch [it] strongly” (*errōmenestata haptetai*), is not primarily based on the qualities of the *harmoniai* as such.³⁶ Rather, it is based on the “kinship” (*syngeneis echousa*) between musical *harmoniai* and the *harmoniai* of the soul.³⁷ This “kinship,” Plato suggests, produces in the soul both virtuous harmony, understood as the orderly balance between the various parts of the soul (*nous*, *thumos* and *epithumia*), and intellectual delight (*euphrosunē*, literally “good movement”) in the recognition of “divine harmony manifested in mortal motions.”³⁸

In Plato’s account, three important factors contribute to the production of a specifically Platonic context for the idea of music’s immediate effects. First, in the context of the *Timaeus*, as well as in earlier dialogues, the soul that is touched by music’s penetration should be understood as not possessing a comprehensive unity. The soul is threefold and consists in a heterogeneous constellation of functions, powers, and faculties. It is not a subject in the sense of a unifying substrate or in the sense of a constitutive “I.” Second, the soul is immaterial. Insofar as it is a harmony, it is not—as is defended by Simmias in the famous passage in *Phaedo*—a Pythagorean harmony of physical components, which is destroyed once these components perish; rather, according to Plato, it is a principle that exists above and beyond the physical, and that may inhere in the physical.³⁹ Third, the soul does not have a phenomenological locality; although Plato speaks in terms of “penetration” and “inmost soul,” a phenomenology of inwardness is not yet involved in this use of topographical imagery. The Platonic soul is like an eye that looks outward, above and beyond the visual world into the world of intelligible Forms, and that is incapable of looking within its own self.⁴⁰ These three contextual precautions may indicate that, on the one hand, Plato’s account of “touching” cannot be understood in terms of contemporary subjective selfhood; on the other hand, they also indicate that the scene he describes is remarkably close to what many today still experience as the power of music. It should be noted that Plato specifies neither the type nor the types of music that have this ability to penetrate and touch.⁴¹ Nor does he—here or elsewhere in his dialogues—differentiate among them with respect to their “haptonomic” power.

Plato occasionally uses the language of inwardness in order to describe the intelligible world of ideas—“the intelligible place”—as being above and beyond the world of the senses. But not until Plotinus was this world thought of as possessing a proper space within the soul. In order to construct this new space, Plotinus combined two preexisting views of the soul. First, he used the Platonic notion of the soul as “akin to [*syngenes*: of common origin] what is pure and everlasting, immortal and always the same,” that is, the eternal Forms. Second, he drew upon the groundbreaking Stoic notions of inwardness, outwardness, and the call to turn to the source of goodness, which they thought to reside “within.” Since the Stoics had a materialist view of the soul, they did not need to posit an inwardness as opposed to the material world of the senses. By contrast, Plotinus did experience this need. He combined the idea of an “inward turn” with the notion of the soul being an “intelligible world,” ending up with a new space: an inner world within

the soul.⁴² Turning inward (*epistrophē, conversio*), the contemplating soul immediately looks into the metaphysical realm of the divine. Phillip Cary, synthesizing a number of passages from the *Enneads*, draws the following picture:

Plotinus' talk of the soul turning "into the inside" belongs to a set of images he uses to give a memorable picture of the relations between the three divine levels of being. He likens the incorporeal universe to a set of concentric circles. At the center is the One, like an infinitesimal point, simple, without internal structure, parts, or boundaries—but like the center of a circle it is the source of all around it. Radiating from it like a sphere of light is the divine Mind, which contains all the Platonic Forms with their mutual distinctions, complex interrelations, and fundamental unity. Revolving around this central sphere is Soul, which can either look outward to the dim world of bodies or turn "into the inside" and behold the divine Mind and the One. When the soul does turn inward, therefore, it gazes not at a private space, but at the one intelligible world that is common to all; and likewise the soul is united to the core and center of its own being, it is united to the one core and center of all things.⁴³

Discussing the topic of music, Plotinus mentions the musician among the select group of those involved in the higher dialectics that leads up to this insight. The path leading to "the topmost peak of the Intellectual realm" starts with conversion. Alongside the metaphysician and the lover, the musician starts his journey by performing this conversion, which in his case begins with an outer stimulus. Many Platonic motifs surface in this description. "The musician we may think of as being exceedingly quick to beauty, drawn in a very rapture to it: somewhat slow to stir of his own impulse, he answers at once to the outer stimulus: as the timid are sensitive to noise so he to tones and the beauty they convey; all that offends against unison or harmony in melodies or rhythms repels him; he longs for measure and shapely pattern."⁴⁴ Next, the musician "must be led to the Beauty that manifests itself through these forms; he must be shown that *what ravished him was no other than the Harmony of the Intellectual world and the Beauty in that sphere*, not some shape of beauty but the All-Beauty, the Absolute Beauty."⁴⁵ This is to say that the ravishing moment of his soul being touched by music must lead the musician toward an "inward turn" through which he may immediately contemplate the source of his state, that is the realm of the Mind. The general scheme of this event is clearly Platonic, but the topography has gained a new dimension—a inner *world* into which music penetrates (a world, however, which, given the singularity of Soul, is in no way a *private* world).

Adding another dimension to this topography of inwardness, Augustine invented the inner self. By contrast to Plotinus, the inner world Augustine conceives is not one with the Divine Mind, but retains a difference with respect to "the unchangeable light" of

intelligible Truth. Admonished by “the books of the Platonists,” Augustine recounts what he found when he turned inward:

These books served to remind me *to return to my own self*. Under your the guidance *I entered into the depths of my soul*, and this I was able to do because your aid befriended me. I entered, and *with the eye of my soul*, such as it was, I saw the Light that never changes casting its rays *over the same eye of my soul, over my mind*. It was not the common light of day that is seen by the eye of very living thing of flesh and blood, nor was it some more spacious light of the same sort, as if the light of day were to shine far, far brighter than it does and fill all space with vast brilliance. What I saw was something quite, quite different from any light we know on earth. It shone *above my mind*, but not in the way that oil floats above water or the sky hangs over the earth. *It was above me* because it was itself the Light that made me, and I was below because I was made by it. All who know the truth know this Light, and all who know this Light know eternity. It is the Light that charity knows.⁴⁶

Cary renders the movements in this passage from the *Confessions* as follows:

Augustine’s inward turn requires a double movement: first *in* then *up*. In contrast to Plotinus, the inner space of the Augustinian soul is not divine but is beneath God, so that turning into the inside is not all there is to finding God. We must not only turn inward but also look upward, because God is not only within the soul but also above it. In the interval between the turning in and looking up one finds oneself in a new place, never before conceived: an inner space proper to the soul, different from the intelligible world in the Mind of God. The soul becomes, as it were, its own dimension—a whole realm of being waiting to be entered and explored.⁴⁷

In contrast to Plotinus, this inner realm is a *private* space, belonging to a particular individual soul. It results from the soul’s estrangement from the divine source of Truth and Wisdom common to all; that is, it results from its sinful turning away from God. In and through this movement the soul loses the plenitude and perfection of its being. “The soul has its own kind of being, distinct from the immutable being of God above and from the spatial being of bodies below it.”⁴⁸ And while being separated from its divine source, it is also separated from other souls living in the same predicament. According to Augustine, the privacy of the soul is neither natural nor good (as we tend to think today), even though it remains an eschatologically temporary condition.⁴⁹

The concept of “inner space” relates to a variety of notions that further articulate this inwardness in religious terms. In Augustine, these notions—such as the inner eye—often refer to the Pauline *topos* of the “inner man,” who is imagined to have subtle

versions of bodily sense organs. An other important, and still older, notion is the “heart,” which has particular value for understanding Augustine’s discussion of musical experience. The heart, as Cary reminds us, is a Hebrew notion referring to the faculty of understanding and thought as well as feeling, and it tends to be connected more with hearing and understanding than with seeing and examination.⁵⁰ In the Christian tradition, it is one of the most vital figures for the economy of devotion, repentance, and the return to the inward source of eternal Life. The heart is at once the meeting place with one’s mutable self and the meeting place with the immutable divine other, who dwells in this place. According to Augustine, the soul is mutable because it is now wise, now foolish; now willing, now unwilling. It “lives in misery when inclined toward the lowest, in happiness when turned toward the highest.” Being mutable “not at all in space, but only in time,” the Augustinian notion of the soul suggests a natural kinship with music.⁵¹ In the *Confessions*, Augustine affirms that “all the affections of the soul, by their own diversity, have their proper measure in voice and song, which are stimulated *by I know not what secret correspondence*.”⁵² Music, he confesses, has always been able to move him deeply, to hold him firmly, and to bring him to tears.⁵³ Augustine refers to the place where this touching and holding and moving takes place as “my heart,” and he adds that the “sweet and skilled voice” that is responsible for all this is hard to assign its proper place in this heart. Sometimes, it seems as though it is granted more respect than is fitting, in particular when the voice takes the lead over the words sung. The Platonic figure of music’s touching has by now received a completely different context. The “secret correspondence” between music and the state of the soul, as well as music’s power to penetrate its depths and grab it firmly, now occur in (and to) an inner space that, being a private space, has an *owner*. Augustine speaks of *his* heart being touched as an event that happens not to “Soul” (as in Plotinus), but to his own proper self. He is addressed by this experience in a personal way; the “sweet voice” penetrates the solitude of his inner seclusion.

Although his conception is still different from the modern notion of the self, the break with the Platonic view is significant. First, the Augustinian listening self is relatively united. The loose variety of functions, powers, and faculties that could be predicated of the Platonic soul are here kept together within a coherent notion of an inner space belonging to a particular soul.⁵⁴ To a certain extent one could speak of a synthesizing phenomenology of the soul. Despite this relative unity, however, Augustine leaves plenty of room for further determination. His use, for instance, of the distinction between, on the one hand, the notion of the soul as *anima* (referring to the living aspect of plants, animals, and human beings, as well as to the soul as the source of sensation and appetition) and, on the other hand, the soul as *animus* (referring to the rational aspect of the human soul only: mind or *mens*), is not very consistent. This leaves room for debate about the question which of these two levels music acts and how these levels interrelate.⁵⁵ Second, Augustine’s language of inwardness should not hide the fact that he regards the soul as

immaterial. The centeredness of the self is contradicted by the notion that the soul has no physical location—neither somewhere “in there” in the space of inwardness nor somewhere in the body (as the popular notion of the heart suggests). Music may be said to penetrate the soul, but this penetration does not seem to take place in any space other than the space of which *the soul itself* consists. This spaceless space does not necessarily coincide with the spatiality of the body. Augustine even tends to locate the soul outside of the body, when he speaks of the perception of things at a distance, or of the awareness of things absent, or, again, of the remembrance of things past. The Augustinian soul is a location unto itself, a nonspatial dimension that nevertheless serves as the focal point of selfhood. In addition—both anticipating and contradicting the contemporary debate on musical emotion—it serves as the *terminus a quo* for any notion of inner content and (self-)expression.

The recontextualization of music’s touching in this Platonic and early Christian tradition shows how the spatiality connected to this key figure transforms according to the changing conceptualizations of human individuality. As Cary argues, this history is not just a progression toward an ever more monadic subjectivity. Rather old conceptual strata remain present under newer ones, and, indeed, it remains a “live option” in modernity to dig beneath the concept of Augustinian inwardness to uncover the ruins of the ancient Plotinian, and perhaps Pythagorean, view of the soul.⁵⁶ As has already been noted, this view was often described in musical terms, the soul being likened to a musical harmony or even a musical instrument. The musical aspect of the soul here referred to differences that were primarily conceived in terms of spatial distances, such as distances on the instrument, distances between the sites of tone production or between surfaces and volumes of resonance, or distances within and between the soul’s constituent spheres. In contrast to later philosophies of the subject, which tended to adopt a pointilist and inwardized view closely related to the experience of subjectivity as temporality, the individual’s individuality was here primarily conceived in terms of spatiality. An archeological excavation that aims to reach underneath the Augustinian concept of inwardness will accordingly need to prepare for a turn toward a “spacious” conception of music’s metaphysical-religious touching.⁵⁷ The locus of contact will have to be sought in a variety of archeological strata (and, for that matter, a variety of temporalities) rather than somewhere “in there,” in the full intimacy and immediacy of a singular musico-emotive presence.

The archeological metaphor, in other words, intensifies the delocalizing movement, the “plasticity,” already present in the Augustinian notion of the soul. It suggests a sliding movement from the topography of inwardness toward an outside that knows no inwardness whatsoever but that remains a possible site of contact—that is to say, of “presence”—nevertheless. Now, what does this view of presence as a *situation*, as an intimate exteriority, mean for the theoretical understanding of contemporary religious music?

Here and There

If, according to Fisk, the New Simplicity is the very opposite of classical music, it may well be understood to be the very end of music qua art, marking the extreme limit of where the art of music can go without losing its substance. The impression that this should be the end of music is strengthened by a number of phenomena that, according to Gianni Vattimo, belong to the constellation of the “death of art.” Vattimo argues that this death, rather than being a notion “which could be said to correspond (or fail to correspond) to a certain state of things,” is in stead “an event that constitutes the historical and ontological constellation in which we move.”⁵⁸ According to Vattimo, the end of art appears under the guise of three figures, each of which seems important for the analysis of the New Simplicity. First, the end of art signifies a general aestheticization of culture, which is inspired and determined by the advent of new technologies, in particular those empowering the mass media. According to Vattimo, this cultural trend leads to the loss of art “as a specific fact,” but, one should add, it is also closely related to the becoming-*Kitsch* of the search for authenticity. In Tavener, this double movement surfaces in the seemingly impossible attempt to mediate his critique of (musical) modernity and his aspiration to religious authenticity through the gestures of mass media communication. An excellent example of these can be found in the finely tuned photographic portraits of Tavener that are disseminated through the covers of CDs, books, and DVDs. These often show him in the posture of a glamorous and self-conscious visionary, with eyes searching invisible horizons, long hair referring to a tradition of male “spiritual” looks, and a suit that seems slightly too mundane for religious occasions.⁵⁹ These conscious mediatizations of the turn to religion seem to acknowledge the contemporary inevitability of mass media engagement for any successful artist, and at same time they seem to demonstrate the paradox inherent in any mediatized construction of religious authenticity. In addition, the double bind that lies at the heart of the credibility crisis from which the New Simplicity continues to suffer is only intensified by the spectacular sales figures of its major composers.⁶⁰

Vattimo contends, second, that the death of art is expressed by the “suicidal gesture of protest” that some contemporary artists make in the face of *Kitsch* and mass media manipulation: “in a world where consensus is produced by manipulation,” he writes, “authentic art speaks only by lapsing into silence.” As already discussed, Tavener consciously chooses to silence his art qua art (defined, as he very well realizes, in terms of substance) and intends to open this space—that is to say, the empty space left behind by this particular response to the death of art—to a religiously inspired compositional practice. It remains a question whether this space is newly occupied by some artistic act of, to quote Tavener’s tellingly loose phrase, “let’s say, the Holy Spirit, call it what you will,”

or whether, as Fisk seems to argue, it is preserved at the heart of Tavener's "classical" gestures.

Vattimo's third and final point is connected to this question in that he regards the utopianism of Adorno and others to be a temporalizing response to the immediate threat of both *Kitsch* and radical negativity. Tavener's project merely seems to be related to this temporalizing shift by its quasi-historical retrojection of his art's moment of truth. The imaginary "ikon in sound" on which he intends to model his compositional practice not only receives its truth from some eternal archetype, but, as the use of the image of the icon also suggests, it may have had a historical point or scene of origin.⁶¹ As we have noted, one of the key words for this virtual scene is *Byzantium*.

Vattimo's notions of *kitsch*, silence, and utopia are figures that enable us to picture the deferred mode of presence of contemporary religious music. Their common denominator is the anachronism inherent in this phenomenon. Contemporary religious music cannot exist insofar as this existence is conceived in terms of presence—the *contemporaneity* of the musico-religious is virtualized by "the historical and ontological constellation in which we move." The apparent presence of this music, that is, the empirical fact that it is *still there* despite the "deaths" of both art and God, which should make its very concept tremble, can only be approached through the various notions of the anachronistic that seem to make it obsolete. As I have argued with reference to the allegedly metaphysical-religious power of music to touch, that is, to produce an intense inner sense of actuality, of presence, this temporal displacement can best be understood in terms of space. "*Zum Raum wird hier die Zeit*," as Nancy reminds us. These words, sung by Parsifal's companion Gurnemanz in the first scene of Wagner's most outspokenly "religious" music drama, accompany the miraculous turning inside out of the stage, representing the transformation of the transfigured forest into the sacred interior of the Grail castle.⁶² Similar and no less miraculous movements occur when a musico-religious turning-to-the-inside leads to the experience of an incomparable outside, as was exemplified by the sliding movement from Augustinian inwardness toward the ancient Soul's cosmic exteriority-without-inwardness. How can we account theoretically for the *kind of space* in which these movements take place? I will suggest that one possibility consists in a combination of an analytical engagement with topology, a reinterpretation of musical form, and the heuristic equation of tone and place.

According to Leonard Lawlor, the reading of time as a kind of space belongs to the most proper features of structuralist and poststructuralist theories and philosophies. Its most prominent figure is that of archeology—a figure that, as Lawlor demonstrates, is rooted primarily in Freud.⁶³ Indeed, the context in which Freud considers the psychoanalytic archive is a discussion about religious feeling, as he calls it, the "'oceanic' feeling." In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud responds to the idea of such a feeling, which, according to his friend Romain Rolland, is expressive of, in Freud's words, "something limitless" and of "an indissoluble bond, of being one with the external world as a

whole.”⁶⁴ Rather than considering it a feeling that reveals the actual entanglement of subject and world through the religious experience of originary unity, Freud construes this “oceanic feeling” as a remnant of some early stage in the subject’s psychological development. The feeling is like an old layer in the subject’s stratified structure that has not been replaced by more recent stages of development. Succeeded genealogically without being overwritten, it is “there” without being actual, without belonging to the present qua present. Freud suggests understanding this preservation of the past by shifting from a temporal to a spatial mode. The mature subject’s “mental life,” he contends, is more reminiscent of an age-old city than a mature organism in which early stages have disappeared without a trace. This calls for detailed attention to the distribution and layering of contiguous and overlapping sites, which are heterogeneous in a temporal respect, while simultaneously being “there.” Thus, the nonpathological experience of an “indissoluble bond” between ego and world, which to some extent parallels the simultaneously invasive and enveloping power of music, leads Freud to observe that “the boundaries of the ego are not constant” and that they seem to move through an archeological space.⁶⁵ Parts of this archeological space, such as “absolute memory,” may not even be positively identifiable by the subject as belonging to its proper mental life.⁶⁶ In short, as Derrida writes, “Freud’s contribution consists in saying that the psyche is structured in a way that there are many places in which traces are kept, which means that within the psyche there is an inside and an outside.”⁶⁷

Taking this methodological shift from genealogy to topology as a lead, the situation or locality of music’s touching becomes less a matter of looking for its presence than a search for the topology of its *touchés*, contacts, connections, contiguities, and foldings. Inevitably, this brings the experience of music closer to its cosmological past, that is, to the spatial relationality of its structures and resonances, and to the de-definition and plasticity of the listener’s individuality.⁶⁸

This particular spatiality, which has virtually nothing to do with the concrete spaces in which musical events are said to take place, reveals itself only if music is taken in its proper, that is, *formal*, sense. As Samuel Weber notes in his analysis of the concept of form in Kant, form, rather than being some quality belonging to the object, is an unstable, intermediary element, which posits itself in between the aesthetic judgment and what it is judging. “If form can be said to arise when a multiplicity of sensations are “connected” to one another, thus resulting in a perceptual, but not conceptual, unity, such a *perceptum* can not be attributed to the object itself but rather only to how that object *appears at a certain time and place*.”⁶⁹ The formal element of music should not be mistaken for the logical, procedural, or structural aspects of its ontology. Rather, it defines itself, as François Nicolas has amply shown, as the point of diffraction between music’s architectural and topological dimensions. On the one hand, viewed as a mereological entity, music can be described as a unity consisting of parts and wholes that intersect on a variety of levels. The totality of a piece of music qua object here results from the completeness

of its constitutive parts. Typically, music analysis aims to describe and account for the mereological structure of musical works, focusing on the definition of parts and wholes and their interrelations. On the other hand, there is an aspect of music that eludes this architectural dimension. On only rare occasions, but very significant ones, a piece of music produces, as a kind of excess, a *second coherence* that appears to be independent of its mereological completeness.⁷⁰ Nicolas refers to this coherence as “Form” and speaks of a *rupture de plan* between the formal level and the piece’s architecture. Introducing a topological distinction, he describes their difference as follows:

The Form of a given work is what grasps it in its entirety starting from its sonorous unfolding (rather than starting from the score). Thus, one distinguishes the Form from the work’s architecture (whether preestablished or not is of little importance) when one understands the work’s architecture to be the large-scale structuring of large parts that one discerns by looking at it frontally, that is, from an examinatory distance rather than along the endogenous line of (a) listening [*fil endogène d’une écoute*]. Accordingly, the privileged vehicle for such an architectural structuring is the score, because it lays out [*dispose*] this face-to-face in a sufficiently stable manner.⁷¹

Seen from the viewpoint of Form, music is no longer a architectural structure imagined to be located at a certain point in geometrical space and open for inspection from a distance, but is itself a kind of space or place.⁷² Perhaps this is the more profound reason why Tavener refers to the notion of *temenos*, of sacred place, in conjunction with his music: not just in referring to the concert spaces where his music is performed, which he obviously would like to sacralize, but more particularly in order to indicate the specific spatiality music can itself produce qua place or *temenos*.⁷³

To experience music as a place, or as a multiplicity of places, means to be engaged, in a wholly dependent way, in that *situation* called music on the level of participation (*methexis*).⁷⁴ Nancy describes the topological structure of this mode of being present (*le présent sonore*) when he analyzes the way in which sound inaugurates a space that simultaneously constitutes the sonorous “object” and the “listener.”

To listen [*écouter*] is to enter that spatiality by which, *at the same time*, I am penetrated, for it opens up in me as well as around me, and from me as well as toward me: it opens inside me as well as outside, and it is through such a double, quadruple, or sextuple opening that a ‘self’ can take place. To be listening [*être à l’écoute*] is to be *at the same time* outside and inside, to be opened *from* without and *from* within, hence from one to other and from one in the other.⁷⁵

In other words, a topological view of music describes it as a *topophony* that articulates the local—that is to say, the inside and outside places involved in the sonorous event (“my

inwardness,” the “sound object”)—with the global, that is to say, the continuous “spatiality” that mediates the torsional relation between those places. It views music as a heterotopia that, on the aural-sensible level of musical Form, actualizes the seemingly impossible of being here *and* there, inside *and* outside, *at the same time*—a thing of which only the gods are said to be capable. “And that is,” the composer Iannis Xenakis once noted, “the mystery of space: what does that mean, being here *and* there?”⁷⁶

What is the meaning of being here *and* there at the same time? Of dwelling in a kind of archival space, being on the outside while remaining on the inside, traversing along this axis a temporal distance as well?⁷⁷ The question of contemporary religious music eventually leads to questions about the anachronisms and archival topologies involved in the peculiar, and to some extent unforeseen, “presences” that are brought to bear on this phenomenon—in particular, by those who have the strongest faith in this music. Up to this point in my argument, the case of Tavener has only served to explore the historical-theoretical *momentum* in which this kind of music is situated at present, having focused in particular on its relation to the deaths of art and God. A final example, taken from the opposite end of the musical spectrum, that is, from the domain of the high modernism that Tavener has attacked to vehemently, may elucidate the ways in which contemporary music traverses in this moment. As we have seen, it does so by sticking to the poietic rule that *tone is place*, creating in sound a desert, a heterotopia, a *temenos*, or, as we shall now see, a *khōra*-effect.

The music of Iannis Xenakis is generally associated with unparalleled forces and intensities. It refers to awesome sonorities that inspire what could be called a situation of trembling, that is, a situation in which sonic vibrations touch with such intensity that a new topological spatiality (a new Form) seems to emerge. As Nancy puts it, in a phrase that seems particularly apt for this Xenakian experience: “Trembling is the act of being-affected—a passive acting that merely makes the body vibrate, that unsettles substance. The self trembles at being touched, awakened, roused; it trembles as much at the feeling of its fragility as in the desire for its freedom.”⁷⁸ As biographer Nouritza Matossian recalled in an obituary, *freedom* was an important word for Xenakis. “Yes, every discussion, every conversation, ended with the words, ‘But you see, Nour, the most important thing in art, and in life, is to be free.’”⁷⁹ For Xenakis, this freedom seems to have been a desire to be touched by an ineluctable and violent force, an aural fate, of sorts. The touch of Xenakis’s music differs drastically from the touch of musical *Empfindsamkeit*. His is neither a touch in search of the plenitude of emotion nor one in search of tears over some matter of content. It is an affect, a *touché*, which aims at a merely *formal* contact, producing, on a quasi-physical level, a feeling of existence. Again, Nancy’s work offers phrases to describe what happens here: “‘I’ is a touch.”⁸⁰ To be, that is, to sense a self *in trembling*, is to be touched—which means, at the same time, to touch. Xenakis’s music seems to generalize this interconnection between contact and existence. The torrential force of his

music effectively produces a sense of “self,” but consistently without reference to subjective selfhood. It produces a new here (or there, which topologically amounts to the same) by means of its force simultaneously to shut and to open. The situation created by Xenakis’s music is a like a fold: it folds back the sonorous plane onto itself, creating a new situation—a sense of being irreducible to preexistent subjects and objects.⁸¹

Xenakis’s music exerts a power that, using the words of composer Jonathan Harvey, could be described in terms of the “*near-transcendent*.”⁸² Its relation to the transcendent (i.e., the divine or metaphysical *archē*) can only be approached in terms of nearness, contiguity, or connection, that is to say, topologically. Although Xenakis is not particularly known for his engagement with religion, his music seems to call for an engagement with the question of religion because of its archaic character. Asked about the religiosity of her father, Mákhi Xenakis once ironically remarked that he “believed in Zeus.”⁸³ As is well known, Xenakis adored the ancient Greeks, and he is said to have had a special preference for the Mycenaean period, “because we know little about it, being for that reason surrounded by mystery.”⁸⁴ Figuring often in his works for choir, the ancient texts related to this period, such as the *Oresteia* and *Oedipus in Colonus*, represent a theme that also pertains to the structure of his work in general. As François-Bernard Mâche remarks, there is in his music a singular “alliance between logical speculation and physical violence,” which virtually reactualizes the Mycenaean clash between, as Xenakis put it, “the archaic law and the new law.”⁸⁵ For Xenakis, this clash is obsessive; as the titles of his works indicate, there is a continual alternation in his musical thought between “the colours of death and those of life.”⁸⁶ This *rapprochement* between death and life often seems unmediated, like the beautiful but dead girl painted by John Everett Millais in his *Ophelia*.⁸⁷ Yet, I would suggest, there is a space here within which *toucher* takes place. This space is a distinct and singular *tone*, which can be heard in his works from *Metastaseis* onward. Perhaps one could call it the *tone of the archaic*.⁸⁸

Rather than simply reactualizing, in a quasi-theatrical manner, the conflict of *archai*, the tone of the archaic produces a region (*khōra*) in which constitutive touching can take place.⁸⁹ Music, according to Xenakis, is the domain of “a truth immediate, rare, enormous, and perfect,” “toward” which it draws by means of its “means of expression.” To the extent that it succeeds in doing so, music is “beyond music,” and can lead, Xenakis contends, “to realms (*régions*) that religion still occupies for some people.”⁹⁰ Rather than positing realms that exist separately from the act of music, however, I suggest reversing the schema by positing that it is music itself that creates the realms toward which it seems drawn. The nearness to which Xenakis refers is a topological figure, not some position on the map of finite immanence indicating its distance relative to the transcendent and immediate “truth” that lies beyond its edges. His music has the gift of producing the *khōra*-effect, the distinct sense of *temenos*, the holy region, by means of the affinity between *tone* and *place*. Its apparently naked disposition of raw sensibility and raw speculative reason actualizes the remainders of sense, which, as a kind of monument, refer to the outside of

their touching. As suggested above, “religion” is linked to the enigma of *ça touche*. Xenakis’s music gathers and situates that enigma under the guise of a sonic “here” (which, as indicated, is a “there”)—a “presence” that can only be linked, as Mâkhi Xenakis has rightly done, to the figure of the specter. *Laisser venir les fantômes* (*Let the Ghosts Come In*), including myself a listener. In the electronic work *Bohor* from 1962, the lines of cleavage between life and death take the shape of a manifold spectral hovering. The trembling produced by their “being there” may very well hint at the possibility of a religious music, after the end of art, the death of God, and the “Resurrection of Tedium” as registered by the critics of the New Simplicity.⁹¹