

Noise as the Real.

Let us explore the implications of the idea of noise as noise music being of the same epistemic value as noise as in noise pollution, noise as in failed communication, or signal without data. This pushes the context of such noise works out of the realm of certain music theory and into something quite different, regarding music, noise, rationality and The Real.

The ontological framework in regarding noise music and the Real as being similar to one another, if not one and the same, is the *lack* of meaning or inability to establish a meaning. Reality is not a rational construct, or is cognition able to grasp it fully, noise is likewise arbitrary, and its meaning and use is unlimited and indefinable. By the comodification of reality, reality becomes meaningful and useful, but meaningful and useful 'for us'. Noise can also be manipulated for us, as music. The alternative idea of noise as non-meaningful sound, despite its intentional and deliberate manufacture, I have elsewhere called 'noise qua noise', which is to distinguish it from having some essential quality or use. No particular signification exists in noise qua noise. The idea of noise as the non-meaningful can also be more immediately noticed, and often is by detractors, as arriving from the simple, trivial and obvious subjective idea of noise as being unwanted, as disrupting thinking and communication. Noise qua noise singles out noise from the many other interpretations of noise, such as noise as experiment, noise as politics, gesture, Dadaism etc. where its disruptiveness is championed and used towards some purpose. Noise qua noise is unlike noise put to a purpose, a telos, it is neutral stuff in the world, to be allowed or prevented. And if allowed, the possibility exists of exploiting noise in a variety of ways. Noise becomes the raw material for production, the productions of comment, entertainment, discussion and event. Noise qua noise is essentially valueless, however its use as 'raw material' turns noise into a commodity which has a value, for which ethical and political discussions regarding such noise, such art, become no different to those regarding any other 'natural' resource which we can and do exploit. The problematics which occur are no different in its exploitation and use than any other 'raw material', and noise becomes another site of ecological exploitation and degradation. Such objects are no longer real in themselves, but only real, for us. They become 'capital'.

There is a perceived problem in philosophy of how to gain access to a reality via thought which is rational and causal, when that reality, "The Real", is in itself not rational, reasonable or causal. A problem which began at least with Hume's scepticism, where reality and causal relationships are more a psychological fiction than anything other. This motivated Kant into producing a more definitive solution to the problem of knowledge where he posited the a priori necessity of the categories, with which we know reality. This a priori necessity though objective came at the cost of removing the objects that these categories 'know' from our significant or certain knowledge. This effective limiting of thought as metaphysics has now been identified by some as a very bad solution to the problem of knowledge, and something which since Kant has poisoned much of philosophy. Found in the work of Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Lacan, Derrida amongst many other post Kantian thinkers, as denial of access to The Real, and the prohibition of metaphysical

thought, by denying imaginative speculation about reality 'in itself', in philosophy. Perhaps the most infamous expression of this, and the application of the term 'correlationism' to such philosophies which deny or limit metaphysics, has been made by Quentin Meillassoux, who states, "... the central notion of modern philosophy since Kant seems to be that of correlation. By "correlation" we mean the idea according to which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other." The recent philosophical interest in 'objects' lies in the attempt to know objects outside of the Kantian prohibition of direct access to the world. In particular, Object Oriented Ontology proposes a 'flat ontology' where the subject is no more differently privileged than the object. In OOO the relations between humans and trees are equal ontologically to relations between trees and spiders or tea cups and galaxies. However of course one object is immediately privileged here, that of OOO itself, as it apparently claims a superior reality of its ontology to the exclusion of any other. The fall into contradiction of this new metaphysics at the first hurdle was foreseen in Wittgenstein's final proposition in the Tractatus, but his solution, 'silence', is insufficient. Insufficient for a number of reasons, firstly in positivist terms we have the choice to simply sit around silently, do science, or spout nonsense. Though we have said the consequences of formal logic have no special claim on reality and so on our approaches to reality. And despite appearances, the privileging of 'science' is also open to similar objections. Science is provisional and makes generalized conceptualizations which at least is no life for us as individuals, and its reductionism though an unpleasant nihilism is not 'true' but pragmatic. For example in science, animals are generalized into species, yet no such things physically exist, it is individual living entities that exist as physical objects. Science assumes a universe with which rationality can have access too, but whose grounds are pragmatic, and objects are generalizations and mathematics.

This difficulty of grounding a thought without contradiction, in thinking the unthinkable is circumvented in the non-philosophy of Francois Laruelle by establishing a being, or rather the 'One', in the world prior to thought and so prior to philosophy, prior to the decision to philosophize. From this One is access to thought allowed. From this the philosophical decision can occur without the circular argument of philosophy's being outside of its subject, at the same time as being its subject. The 'One' is a given, Gnostic like object, removed from, or foreclosed to thought. Contradiction, or Harman's "weirdness" is replaced with the possibility to fabricate or clone a philosophy. All these philosophies share a metaphysics of desire to know the "Real", and a complexity of thinking which ranges from the bizarre to the obscure. Such gymnastics are brave attempts at moving from the mundane silence of Wittgenstein and into a relation via thought with the world qua world. The methods proposed should not be criticised for the complexities and even the absurdities produced, as Laruelle demonstrates, they are no more strange and absurd than those of science and mathematics, for example quantum theory and imaginary numbers. What these philosophers muster in their attempt to grasp the real more than their formidable knowledge and skill, which is found in other philosophies, is 'imagination', or speculation, so long lacking in certain dry branches of philosophy, which sort to limit thought, and stop metaphysical thinking altogether.

Noise, I have argued also has an access to the Real as a non-human, non commodity object. Unlike philosophy, primarily noise is not a human phenomena, noise exists elsewhere in nature, and non human communication. Noise, unlike logic has no subject, object, decisional dilemmas. Where philosophy has structures or de-structuring, noise has chaos. Noise is not an image of the real, it appears as it does, it is simple, accidental, 'easy', lacking skill, made by nature or human intervention. It is noise pollution of industry and construction, destruction, war, or an intentional feedback and glitch, from detuning a FM radio, via distorting signals until any significance is destroyed, or even the recording of the sound of a contact microphone pulled across gravel. With this completely simple and skill less access to noise, noise acquires a primary flatness in terms of creativity, means of production and skill, and is open to all, anyone, anything, even the final noise of particles at the extinction of the universe. Unlike OOO's flatness, noise's shares a commonality with already known non human sources of noise. Extreme deliberate noise of Harsh Noise and Harsh Noise Wall, is subjectively indistinguishable from other sources, harsh white noise, waterfalls, tornados, shuttle launches. Noise is by its nature objectively indistinguishable, though both subjectively, and objectively distinguishable from music. Noise in these extremes of Harsh Noise and Harsh Noise Wall, lacks signification by virtue of its form, or formlessness.

As a consequence this noise is also therefore supremely boring. The difficulty of avoiding boredom and maintaining excitement via innovation requires great skill and is difficult to achieve. And excitement, interest, amusement presupposes a subject, in music's case a human subject, which is a focus of the activity. Art in the achievements in western culture was one of ever creating 'The New'. Most modernist histories of culture follow such a teleology, music is one example of 'development' into ever more complexity. The problem within Harsh Noise , Harsh Noise Wall is the reverse, the problem is the *toleration* of such works which have no content which is significant, the problem is one of boredom. The creation of an interesting universe, of gods, myths, quests, and knowledge, is an anthropomorphic illusion. Reality is boring. Reality in its reality is insignificant, and a significant feature of reality for humans due to it being meaningless is that it too is boring. This is a general feature of the universe, more than the excitements of life on earth. Although stars are violent and noisy, they 'burn' for billions of years, Nova may seem exciting but are brief interludes in a cosmos of aeons of little or nothing occurring. If we ignore the science fiction pictures and the computer enhanced Hubble photographs, reality is mostly empty space, we live in a relatively densely populated galaxy, but galaxies are only faint smudges in a universe of mostly empty space, in a universe predominantly dark and unrecognizable. And this universe's existence even if measured in trillions of years is nothing to the infinity outside of any finite existence, and is itself probably one universe of an infinity. If we wanted to typify the universe by Monte Carlo methods, taking random samples at random times, then our results would be dull and empty for 99.99 and more, % of the samples. This universe's history, reality, is one which runs forward for trillions of years, where the second law of thermodynamics runs everything down to a final heat death, which if turned into sound would be Harsh Noise Wall. Despite all our efforts reality is boring,

for us, and despite all the efforts of 'musicians', Harsh Noise, Harsh Noise Wall, is also extremely boring.

What follows: Noise is not a genre (of music).

To quote Theodor Adorno in *Negative Dialectics*, "The matters of true philosophical interest at this point in history are those which Hegel, agreeing with tradition, expressed his disinterest. They are nonconceptuality, individuality, and particularity things which ever since Plato used to be dismissed as transitory and insignificant, and which Hegel labeled 'Lazy Existenz.'" And again, "the concept does not exhaust the thing conceived... Dialectics is the ontology of the wrong state of things. The right state of things would be free of it; neither a system nor a contradiction.....Theory and mental experience need to interact".

Such a negative dialectic runs counter to the dialectics of an evolution of a meaningful universe, towards an absolute spirit, runs counter to 'an understanding'.

Kafka's Castle:

Rudy Rucker writes in *Infinity and the Mind*; "The Kafkaesque aspect of Gödel's work and character is expressed in his famous Incompleteness Theorem... Scientists are thus left in a position somewhat like Kafka in *The Castle*. Endlessly, we hurry up and down corridors, meeting people, knocking on doors, conducting our investigations. But the ultimate success will never be ours. Nowhere in the castle of science is there a final exit to the absolute truth."

Within OOO, object oriented ontology, the object is strangely withdrawn. It withdraws both from us, and even itself. A simple instance of this, an analogy, is we can never fix a meaning or use on an object. A hammer can be used to make furniture and to break it, to wedge open a door, as a paper weight, or part of a sculpture depicting communism. A definitive list cannot be drawn up, which poses the problem for anyone wishing of a definitive definition. Similar problems are well known, for instance Gödel's incompleteness theory, through to the impossibility of definitive readings in literature or definitive critiques, interpretation etc. in the arts including music. However, clearly there are structures of meanings, and science being pragmatic both makes and breaks these. The question of meaning is big! But in simple terms a message has a meaning? A simple sign like "Keep off the grass". In music a piece can have a meaning intended to communicate an emotion, an idea or something about music itself, its form or possibilities... etc. In many religions the universe has a meaning, it was created for a reason. So it might follow that in principle by thinking, reasoning, we can come to know what it means and what we should do. Only this is to propose to know the mind of the creator of the universe, the first cause, in order to access reality via thinking. If on the other hand the universe is random, chaotic and accidental, it has no meaning, it has no reason. If so then the problem philosophically is how can we know, reason, about that which has no reason. There have been many ideas as solutions to this problem, one in particular is that we can not know things as they are, but only as we perceive or know them. Reality escapes our rationality...

This is somewhat a gross over simplification, another approach is to think of “purpose”, what is the purpose of life? Again in religion we can discover that the universe has purpose, for instance, God made the universe for us to live in.... It has an essence, and we have an essence, just as a tea pot’s essence is to pour tea, so humanities essence is to follow the constraints of his maker likewise. So the tea pot’s essence comes first, the potter has the idea of something which can pour tea, then creates the object to serve this purpose. Essence preceded existence. Once made, the tea pot has a clear role, tea pouring, and a clear set of criteria as to how well it accomplishes its role. The difficulty with humans and the idea of our creator, is where to place the responsibility when the performance of our role is unsatisfactory. This idea which gives us a certain purpose may initially appear to be a very good solution to the problem of life’s purpose, for it gives us a set of guaranteed flawless rules. Unfortunately there exists more than one set of such rules and this shifts the problem of ‘what should be done’, to the problem of which set of rules should we follow. The problem now becomes one of deciding which is the genuine set of rules, which are divinely given and absolutely guaranteed . Just as much argument and therefore uncertainty is generated by competing certainties than the original uncertainty, which reduces the problem of truth to the same status as the nihilist atheist. Alternatively if the universe and humankind were not created by a God, but by accident, it, and we have no essence preceding our creation. No solution to the reason for the universe and its and our purpose in it exists, we just exist, we have no pre-given role, we may create one, but it is an illusion, like the Existentialist’s ‘Bad Faith’. Our structures are simply that, man made, and though made from The Real we are not able to see the Real by using them, all we see are the structures themselves, in Kantian terms we see via the structures of the a priori Categories which are not ‘out there’ but necessarily a priori to our perceiving the world. We cannot perceive it as it is, only as our structures allow. From within the human built structures of meaning noise can be chaos, and this is the Real outside of experience. It is even the Real for those religious, who do not claim to know God but can perceive God only in a cloud of Unknowing.

This poses all kinds of problems for audiences and practitioners, but in dogmatic thinking they all really boil down to the idea of either colonizing this territory, of noise, putting it to some use or purpose, or simply leaving it or enduring it. Thus dogmatic ideas of ‘progress’ and direction will either de-noise noise or not be effectuated. The decision, even for the religious, is that human knowledge is paramount, or there is and always will be the unknown which represents a territory outside of dogma. If this is true it marks one of the famous dead ends of dogmatic thinking. We are by dogmatic thought estranged from reality, and the organized structures which estrange us are not just philosophical but can be identified elsewhere in human creativity.

In any wider, contingent reality, much of this reality is meaningless noise, and we utilize certain parts of this contingent reality as no longer objects in themselves but as signifiers which enable symbolizing structures and meaning, language, mathematics, culture, music etc. The reason for this is likely to do with its obvious benefits for survival, and so within that context, such objects gain “value” and become meaningful. The source of this value is

neither absolutely outside or inside the object, its source is in the power of privilege and selection. Knowledge becomes more about species survival than any universal, absolute truths, and its aloofness from human domestic survival is only a mirage. Our Truths in this case are only local, like town plans, useful only within the accident of the actual town in which we are, and in the time period that it remains accurate as a map. It is incorrect and so useless in any other town, useless if the town is altered in the future. To think from ones own local map is in our case human understanding and cognition. Even supposing some objective truth was possible, given the infinite universe or universes of recent cosmological thought, no such definitive truth which includes as much as it excludes, which must in order to affirm, negate, can exist. For in an infinity of universes all potentialities are actualized, if not definitively as realities then as virtualities.

Given a finite universe our culture, in which the ideas of truth and knowledge are embedded, makes a very very small difference, however in an infinite universe it makes no difference at all.

Infinity minus anything is infinity.

The ultra contingency of an infinite universe may undermine scientific thought, any thought, in its claim to be anything other than just one species of noise. If we have a denial of access to the real by such thinking on ontological or on epistemological grounds, then even that thinking of a denial of access becomes contradictory. Such thinking devalidates access to the real just as Kant's thinking did, if this real is seen to be a privileging of thought. A privileged ontology or epistemology is a nonhyperinstanced event, just as music is a nonhyperinstanced structuring, filtering and organizing of noise.

The removal of skill and representation for noise is the anti-correlationist move that is ontology flattening, similarly the removal of correlationist constraints in logic, epistemology and ontology can free thought and produce a flattening of ontologies in thinking. If music is *for us*, if thinking is *for us*, the bounds are tied to the biological, mythic, local logics of anthropomorphism in a universe which is, and can be heard and thought as, not anthropomorphic.

I have shown that noise is a flat ontology of access, noise is a multiplicity of accesses to the real via the human, non human, deliberate, accident, without any hierarchical systems, and an effacement of any. Noise hyperinstanciates itself as infinite events of larger, not higher, infinities than finite events, music, theories, cultures. If noise escapes thought, meaning, music, signification then it validates itself as noise, as noise qua noise. It is validated as a multiplicity of individualities. It can be so defined, and immediately escapes definition, yet remains noise. A similar trope to thought itself is that it too as a hyperinstanciated object is defined, immediately escapes definition whilst still remaining a thought, whilst still remaining thinking. Noise qua noise is itself noise, thought qua thought is thought and is the legitimation of thinking, thinking is speculation, or better thinking is speculations. Thought is non-contradictory hyperinstanciates of thinking thought.

The delimitization of thinking by thinking hyperinstancially prevents a hierarchical access to the truth, but not to definitive accesses to reality in principle. Accesses, a plurality of access to thinking reality, not only for philosophy and science but also for you and I.

Certainly science's access to the real might well be beyond my full understanding, or certain philosophies may escape my thought, but the hyperinstanciated thinking of plural accesses to the world and its objects does give both myself and anyone else an access of thinking in a world, in a universe, to a world and to a universe. Theory does not constrain noise, so also does it not constrain thought, either philosophical or any other.

The accessibility of noise is an access for anyone, anything, to the world.

If noise is left qua noise it becomes as such The Real in the scenario above, a real which we can have access too, via logics, speculations and metaphysics. The multiplicities of individual accesses achieves a democracy of thinking, or a flat ontology, which is the very thing that the speculative realists also seem to want to think. This is a new environment, of an ecology which also is democratic in that any use of any object as a privileging mechanism is destroyed, or rendered into noise itself, its currency and capital is debased until it becomes itself the "Ding an sich", is presented, and now presented no longer in, or as, an alienating system.