

Freedom through self-constraint: some musical applications

"Whatever diminishes constraint diminishes strength. The more constraints one imposes, the more one frees oneself of the chains that shackle the spirit."

Stravinsky (1940)

Whilst travelling in South Africa a couple of years ago, I was introduced by family friends to a late middle aged woman, the mother of a musician and a bit of a hippy with a deep interest in jazz, with whom it was assumed I would have much in common, and in the ensuing conversation she breathlessly proclaimed that there were an infinite number of chords. Of course, I immediately disagreed and told her that there were in fact exactly 222 prime form pitch class sets¹ or, by another method of calculation, 8178 possible chords within one octave² (not discounting transpositionally equivalent chords), and that even if one were to follow through this method for all eight octaves of a piano, before taking into account the aural imperceptibility of the difference between many of these chords, there was most certainly a finite number of them. That she found my response objectionable is not surprising; she saw the confines of the musical world I described as literally confining. On the other hand, as a composer, I find it particularly appealing that there are a limited number of notes and chords to work with; it's precisely what allows me to compose with them. The confusion comes, I think, from the equation of finite parametric limitations with the expressive power of music or more broadly speaking, the equation of freedom with infinite choice.

Of course, the idea that limited contexts are beneficial for the creation of music is hardly a new one. Western musical history is littered with examples of works created within formal and technological bounds. In fact it would be difficult, logically speaking, to define any particular compositional context as unlimited. Nevertheless, there still remains within the avant-garde the notion that formal and technological limitations confine the expressive subject and need to be broken down, that so-called free composition is somehow freer than formal composition. It's hard to trace the origins of the idea precisely. A notable epoch is Schoenberg's dissolution of tonality, from which point music became increasingly self-reflexive, gradually revealing its parameters, hitherto considered natural and self-evident, to be of a second, socially constructed, nature and therefore transitory. A second would be the advent of Integral Serialism, in which paradoxically the expressive subject itself was supposedly banished in the name of freedom, and its numerous counter reactions. One is tempted to quote Adorno's call for a *musique informelle*, although it should also be noted that his idea of a music which "should be completely free of anything irreducibly alien to itself or superimposed on it" (Adorno 1992: 272) also encapsulated the very antinomy between freedom and form. It seems however that, despite Adorno's dialectical caution, the general egregious assumption remains that we are somehow freer, musically speaking, than in previous times. As Boulez observed;

"It does seem to me that choice of action, decision in the face of a multitude of possibilities has become more and more confused with a licentious attitude toward the musical material; libertinage is not liberty, and it often leads to monotony." (Boulez, 1971 p. 24)

It would seem from all this that I am advocating a retrogressive employment of past forms, but far from it. Although, some composers have managed the employment of historical and popular musical

¹ See (Forte, 1973 p. 179)

² As derived in Tom Johnson's *Chord Catalogue*

forms well, utilising them as objects in a stylised fashion - as examples Zorn and Oswald spring to mind - many more have spuriously employed misunderstood postmodern sentiments, with claims such as "we don't break down barriers in music... we don't see any" to justify a form of eclectic orientalism, much akin to that of the late nineteenth century, all in the name of freedom. Rather than embody Kramer's eighth characteristic of postmodernism of considering "music not as autonomous but as relevant to cultural, social, and political contexts," (Kramer:)this form of composition expounds the belief that music can be decontextualised without the destruction of meaning, just as the CD revolution offered unprecedented choice but with the reduction of all musical meaning to that of commodity. Similarly, I'm not arguing that there are certain technological bounds within which music must remain. However, it would seem to me that much of that music which is concerned with the technocratic advancement of the discipline has mistaken the fetishisation of music's physical extension for an aesthetic position with the result that meaning is left unattended. Such music unconsciously repeats Romantic aesthetics under a veil of modernity and, unable to function within the market economy, whilst lacking the will to find any other solution, it finds itself forced into compliance with universities and funding institutions, legitimising the very power structures it originally sought to overturn. As Attali states;

"The musician, once outside the rules of harmony, tries to understand and master the laws of acoustics in order to make them the mode of production of a new sound matter. Liberated from the constraints of the old codes, his discourse becomes nonlocalizable. Pulverizer of the past, he displays all the characteristics of the technocracy managing the great machines of the repetitive economy. He is under the regime of nonsense and shares all of its attributes." (Attali, 1977 p. 113)

It would seem appropriate at this point to note the unavoidable reductiveness of the above examples; the situations I describe represent extreme poles within a range of practice. Nevertheless, one could conclude that, given that all musical contexts are necessarily constrained, the expressive needs of the musician who strives for freedom from the material of music production, or worse assumes he is already free, will merely succumb to hitherto unconsidered forces. It's a dilemma that Adorno also noted;

"Up to now every composer who has insisted on his own integrity and refused to compose in any way other than that suggested by his own spontaneous reactions, or who has rebelled against the constraints of the principles of construction, has failed miserably in his attempt to break fresh ground. Instead, without suspecting it, he simply repeats the attitudes of those contemporaries of free atonality who proudly claimed not to be snobs, but who only succeeded in producing rubbish instead of works that were unmistakably their own." (Adorno, 1992 pp. 277 - 278)

Such an observation, despite its glibness, is necessary in posing the essentially optimistic question of where, given this double-bind, the expressive subject can locate his freedom. The answer, it seems to me, involves a distinction between *negative* versus *positive* freedom.³ The problem I have described occurs as a result of the pursuit of the former, *freedom from* all constraints, whereas the solution lies in the latter, *freedom to* define one's own constraints.⁴ Of course, such self-defined

³ As defined by Isaiah Berlin in his essay "Two Concepts of Freedom" (Berlin, 2002)

⁴ It should be noted that Berlin believed that the pursuit of *positive freedom* would lead inevitably to political totalitarianism, but I would argue that this need not be the case given the technologically driven emergence of non-linear, non-hierarchical, multiplicitous organisational structures. Also see Adam Curtis's BBC documentary series, "The Trap."

constraints cannot be arbitrarily decided upon but must come as a result of a dialectical engagement with the material itself which I refer to in the widest possible sense.

A practical example of one such dialectical engagement is the debate over the function of the score, the origins of which can be traced back at least as far as the emergence of indeterminate composition. Such practices implicitly questioned the socio-political status of the composer and ultimately the necessity of the score itself. Works such as Earle Brown's *December 52*, and Cornelius Cardew's *Treatise* which, via the ambiguity of their notation, necessitated a conceptual mobility in terms of interpretation, thus allowing for the performer to take an active part in the compositional process, are of particular interest as such attempts at the liberation of the performer from his hierarchical subjugation to the composer refer directly to the concept of freedom. Despite these works' importance in drawing the socio-political structure of music into the sphere of composition, I would argue that they failed in their efforts to democratise musical production and re-engage the performer. Indeed, I have always found the performance of such pieces to be quite unsatisfying experiences, both as a participant and observer, and their contemporary lack of popularity within the avant-garde would seem to indicate that this is a commonly held opinion, although there are a multitude of reasons that could also be given for this. Nevertheless, I would contend that the failings of these works arise largely from their pursuit of *negative* freedom.

The core problem it seems is that, in attempting to simultaneously liberate themselves and the performers from the restrictions of traditional notation, Brown and Cardew failed to realise the score's functionality as an organisational tool. For example, Brown's serenely floating solid blocks in *December 52*, despite their beauty and perceptual ambiguity, are of little practical help to a group of musical interpreters. It is in fact precisely this ambiguity that renders the score musically inadequate. The non-linearity of the score combined with the slightness of variation between blocks and their evenly sparse distribution consigns all interpretative rules to the arbitrary. Thus the score, at best a vague instruction to play some sounds spaced quite far apart which may or may not have some psychological influence on its interpreter, is barely able to justify its presence, let alone necessity, within a performance situation. Had Brown varied the density of distribution of the blocks, for example, then the score would have offered a greater amount of structural potential for varied interpretations. Instead, the group of performers, diligently attempting to follow the score, find themselves consigned to a rather generalised interpretation, often resulting in the regurgitation of a stale and undefined pointillism – hardly a free situation. Brown assumed that an ambiguity within his notation would increase the expressive field of the performer when in fact it had the opposite effect.⁵

Treatise, despite its linearity, massive detail, and motivic qualities, repeats the same mistake. The sheer density of material, the inclusion of events contradicting a linear interpretation, and the score's multiplicity and length prevents any other person, observer or participant, from knowing a performer's place in the score, what they are interpreting, or from giving such matters any importance. That the score is so logically precise and exhaustive in terms of its development of visual motives, is of little consequence to the interpreter who finds themselves faced with an insurmountable amount of ambiguities. Cardew, it seems, assumed the automatic translation of the

⁵ *December 52* appears to me much more as a visual interpretation of pointillism. I have a sneaking suspicion that Brown, contrary to his claims of conceptual mobility, already had a good idea of what *December 52* was supposed to sound like.

visual stimulation of the performer into his musical stimulation. A statement from the Treatise handbook is telling;

"A composer who hears sounds will try to find a notation for sounds. One who has ideas will find one that expresses his ideas, leaving their interpretation free, in confidence that his ideas have been accurately and concisely notated." (Cardew, 1971 p. ii)

My experience of performing both Cardew's and Brown's scores runs contrary to such an idea. One is constantly torn between the aural demands of the music and one's responsibility to follow the score. In the final case one finds the two to be incompatible and the former to be more imperative. Thus, the score becomes a hindrance, and one ends up abandoning interpretation altogether and merely improvising with the score as a general stimulus. Such cases result in the onerous situation whereby the composer, who has after all provided the more concrete artifact, receives the lion's share of the credit (and sometimes money) whilst the performers find themselves in an even more downtrodden position than previously.⁶ In failing to recognise the composer /performer negotiation as a zero-sum game, and in attempting to extend their own expressive freedom, both Brown and Cardew unwittingly ended up subjugating the performer even further. For a further example of performer subjugation to an indeterminate score, one only need look as far as Stockhausen's recording of *Aus Dem Seiben Tagen*, the ensuing battle with the musicians over copyright, and his famed reply to one earnest musician's question "But Herr Stockhausen, how will I know I'm playing a vibration in tune with the rhythm of the Universe?"⁷

A second, but by no means less significant, problem with much of the early indeterminacy was that, largely due to pretensions of inclusivity and negation of technocracy, it was conceived outside of any performance tradition. It has always seemed strange to me that composers, who professed a concern for the needs of the performer, had no idea of or interest in the identities of their prospective performers, their history, or aesthetic position. Such negligence is indicative of that underlying Platonic arrogance; music has to do with sound and ideas, and people are a necessary evil, but generally a nuisance. In practice most of these scores are performed either by free improvisers or contemporary classical performers, two groups whose needs are quite at odds. In the first place the notion of liberating the free improviser from the score, completely alien to his tradition, is nonsensical. If the score has any function for the free improviser, it is as an organisational tool, and as has already been discussed, purposefully vague scores such as Treatise fail in this regard. The notion of freeing the classical performer is equally problematic. It seems a fundamental misunderstanding of classical music to believe that within the classical performer lies some undiscovered history to be set free. The aesthetic of the tradition, in all its varieties, is one of standardisation and repetition, which is instilled into performers through various institutions that surround the music from their earliest years. In this sense the history of the classical musician is very much on the surface. The juxtaposition of this with the improviser, who defines himself by his struggle for freedom through a life-long dialectic with his instrument, technique, and history, makes clear the superficiality of the notion that liberation can occur simply by changing ones etchings. The reasons behind Cardew's despondency about his own scores become apparent;

"...Just as you find your sounds are too alien, 'intended for a different culture,' you make the same discovery about your beautiful notation: no-one is willing to understand it. No-one moves." (Cardew, 1971 p. iii)

⁶ This perhaps accounts for why Treatise received Cardew's harshest criticism following his Marxist conversion.

⁷ Find citation or some reference

The ongoing performance and near cult status of Zorn's game pieces provide a more positive example of indeterminate composition.⁸ The success of Zorn in contrast to the previous generation of indeterminate composers can be attributed to a couple of key differences. In the first place, the pieces were conceived within the context of the New York improvisation scene of which Zorn himself had been a participant for many years. The importance which Zorn attaches to this aspect is perhaps demonstrated by his refusal to publish scores of the pieces and his reluctance to let the rules be widely known. The compositions combine Zorn's conception of rapidly changing blocks of sound with the eclectic range of styles and techniques of his fellow improvisers. By confining himself solely to the composition of relations between performers as opposed to the sounds that they produce, Zorn is able to allow the performers a wide range of expressive freedom whilst simultaneously prescribing a structural identity which is clearly his own. The inclusion of rules which encourage performers to dominate each other adds a psycho-dramatic quality to performances of these works, which Zorn describes as a sort of "scream-therapy" in which performers "blossom and become the arse-holes they really are" (Marr, 1992). The results are high octane, imbued with an anarchic sense of fun, and it's clear from listening to recordings of the game pieces that they are particularly suited to the frenetic style of the New York improvisation scene.⁹ The success of a particular performance is highly dependent on the skills and imaginations of the various improvisers and as such the pieces represent a more equal partnership between performer and composer. The consequent reduction of the scope and status of composer pays the dividend of fully engaged performers and allows for the score to have a pragmatic rather than arbitrary justification.

My own work within the field of indeterminacy, for which the junk improvisation ensemble *Halal Kebab Hut* is the sole performance vehicle, closely follows this model of delineation between composed instructions and the material of improvisation. However, rather than seek to exploit aspects of a particular performance tradition, my compositions use found objects (i.e. junk) as a means of separating musicians from an often fetishistic attachment to instrumental technique and generic language. Using junk to create this tabula rasa allows for a new set of prejudices and fetishes to emerge around the instruments and compositions thus creating a unique and integral performance tradition in which the balance between performance and composition can be renegotiated. Whilst the musicians may at first sight appear more constrained by the composition than in Zorn's work, the potential for specificity and homogeneity that junk provides allows the rules of the pieces to interface with the performers via a set of commonly held points of reference – i.e. types of junk, specific techniques, or gestures – leaving the performers in total control of how those aspects are performed and how they relate to other performers. Just as the standard harmonic, rhythmic notation system allows for the synchronisation and organisation of performers, so does *Halal Kebab Hut's* junk, but in a context where rhythm and pitch are secondary parameters to timbre, texture, and gesture. In contrast to Zorn's focus on soloistic opposition, my compositions are more concerned with the continual regrouping of elements in homogenous and heterogeneous configurations which is mirrored by the more texturally orientated improvisatory style of *The Hut*.

⁸ These works are, in the main, named after sports, and include *Pool*, *Archery*, and *Lacrosse*. His most enduring game piece is *Cobra* which Zorn first released in 1987. Zorn discusses his history and the musical philosophy behind these pieces in *Talking Music* by William Duckworth (Duckworth, 1995)

⁹ Some great footage of a rehearsal of *Cobra* and interview can be found in episode 1 of Derek Bailey's Channel Four documentary "On the Edge" (Marr, 1992) available at <http://www.ubu.com/film/bailey.html>

Like Zorn's game pieces, the musical practice of *Halal Kebab Hut* represents the settlement of a zero-sum negotiation for expressive freedom between composer and performer in which both parties have accepted constraints in order to gain the advantages offered by collaborating with the other.

Such negotiations occur in every musical situation involving multiple players irrespective of whether a composer is involved, and whilst freely improvised music differs from composed music in that this negotiation is ongoing during the performance, I take argument with the idea that free-improvisers are actually free. The dominant aesthetic of democratic equality that pervades the genre places its own constraints on the musician via the implicit outlawing of certain gestures and decisions as a result of their unsuitability for the pursuit of this goal. Paradoxically, the very situation of a group of musicians performing together without predetermination of any kind predicates its own structural envelope and rate of change, rendering some situations extremely unlikely. Thus, it seems that the absence of preconceived architecture has been overstated within the field, probably accounting for the knee-jerk opposition to coherent structure, accompanied by an almost mystical worship of the moment, both of which so often serve to ossify the music. These observations, coupled with the emergence of various schools of free-improvisation, have largely discredited the genre's earlier pretensions to being non-idiomatic. Indeed I have severe reservations about the late Derek Bailey's aesthetic of non-idiom through the social atomisation of the musician, despite my admiration for the acetic rigour with which he applied his ideas to his own practice. At their core, idioms are value systems held by groups of people and have their basis in a socio-economic reality; Whilst I agree that in a world of rapid change for those values to become beyond question is undesirable, I find the view that such a socially constructed practice as music should seek to extricate itself from all socio-historical elements, to be a nonsense, a further misapplication of *negative freedom*. Bailey's proclamations that his non-idiomatic playing style allowed him "to play with anyone" (Marr, 1992) were probably true, but the effect on the musics subject to his interactions was to sublimate their aesthetics into his seemingly more objective one.

Trevor Wishart's criticism of Boulez's ranking of pitch and duration above intensity and timbre provides an entry into a contrasting area of dialectical engagement with the material. Wishart rightly attributes Boulez's observation that "The history of universal musical practice bears witness to this scale of decreasing importance, as is confirmed by the different stages of notational development" (Boulez, 1971 p. 37) to the assumptions that arise from the priorities of the western, lattice-based notational system and further traces the predominance of the former to scribe-oriented hegemony within society. The assumption is certainly characteristic of Modernism's arrogant Eurocentric aspect and is even more exasperating given Boulez's quotation of Rougier:

"there is a limitless number of equivalent systems of concepts and propositions which can be used as starting points, without any one of them imposing itself by natural right." (Boulez, 1971 p. 31)

Wishart goes on to demonstrate how the quantifying nature of notation is responsible for an abstract and formalist approach to music making and furthermore has led to "a reorientation of our conception of music" away from the aural towards the visual product of the score (Wishart, 1985 p. 21). Such observations raise the question of whether it's possible to escape the "Ideal/Experiential dichotomy" (Wishart, 1985 p. 24) without the abandonment of traditional notation or principles of formal construction.

The concentration of perception offered by the extreme repetition of American Minimalism gives some indication of a solution to the problem. Works such as Steve Reich's *violin phase* break the link between the technical complexity of the score and the perceptual complexity of the music. The parameters of pitch and rhythm operate at a lower structural level than the textural interplay between parts which forms the main argument of the work. That this happens, despite Reich's use of conventional notation with its harmonic rhythmic orientation, is a result of the constrained nature of Reich's material with regards to these elements. Such a composition reasserts the function of performance over the score which, in describing the necessary actions as opposed to the aural result, reverts to the status of tablature.

A second notable aspect of Reich's work is the formal rigour provided by his application of gradually unfolding processes. However, despite Reich's insistence on the importance of the audibility of these processes¹⁰, I would argue that they operate at a structural level somewhat removed from the immediate aural experience, which, as already discussed, is by and large created via the textural interplay between parts. In most cases, the process itself is less important to the music than the variations it creates. For example, try performing *clapping music* having rearranged the figures in a random order leaving figures 1 and 13 at either end. I would contend that the integrity of the music still remains; what creates the interest is the tension between hearing/performing the second line as the original pattern out of phase with the upper line or as a set of new patterns conforming to the pulse suggested by the upper line. It's a tension that Reich seems to encourage through his retention of the original beamings throughout combined with the metrical ambiguity of the original material and the omission of accented beats. Furthermore, there is something incongruent about Reich's coupling of the teleological prescription of surface level processes with the sensually-oriented presentation of textural interplay and rhythmic ambiguity. This probably explains the banality of Reich's processes which offer a base upon which the psycho-acoustic experience can occur, providing just enough variation to prevent the music from slipping into the transcendental, whilst at the same time removing the need for improvisatory elements, distasteful to Reich's Zen-influenced sensibilities. Comparisons with the work of Reich's peers La Monte Young and Terry Riley would seem to support this explanation. One could identify Reich and other's failure to recognise the formal function of process within American Minimalism as accounting for the later paucity of ideas within the movement which in turn has led to it adopting increasingly Romantic modes of expression and neglecting all but the most superficial aspects of the original aesthetic.

My own scored music is similar to Minimalism in that it uses rhythmic and harmonic parametric constraints to achieve a reorientation of the lattice of traditional notation away from those parameters whilst avoiding their negation. However, in contrast to Minimalisms' use of non-developmental repetition to heighten perceptual awareness, my works allows for teleological development but via a limited number of parameters. For example, my series of perpetual motions use a compositional process involving the application of exhaustive investigations into ways of permuting and combining transpositions of a single four note motif. The resultant monochromatic quality of the harmonic content together with the limitation of all rhythmic values to semiquavers allows for other elements, such as range, dynamic, melodic contour, metre, attack, and gesture to play the main role in defining form. Pitch content nevertheless plays an essential function at a lower structural level, with the qualities of certain combinations of permutations often informing textural, metrical, and harmonic ideas. The tension between the sonic familiarity and the unconventional

¹⁰ See his essay 'Music as a Gradual Process' (Reich, 2002 pp. 34-38)

manner by which form is defined reinvigorates the material. In a similar manner to minimalism one finds that the balance between visual and experiential is somewhat redressed – the score is not representative of the aural experience, but merely provides a set of instructions on how to create it.

Of particular note, however, is how the relationship between formal process and aural experience differs from Reich's vision of a "compositional process and a sounding music that are one and the same thing" (Reich, 2002 p. 35). It's highly unlikely that any listener would be able to discern processes of pitch permutation from listening to my music – I might also add that they wouldn't find it any easier from surveying the score. Nevertheless, such a fact does not render these processes aurally irrelevant. The various cells generated via these processes act as the fundamental building blocks from which the work is constructed. As such they create a confined world of harmonic and motivic possibilities; linear combinations of cells allow only for certain intervals and define the gradient with which melodic lines can rise or fall; overlapping combinations of cells suggest metrical ideas; harmonic fields of varying numbers of notes can be created through the combination of transpositions; vertical combinations of cells can create various interlocking chords. In other words, even though the process is not at the audible surface, it's essential at a micro level of construction and thus shapes and informs the aural product. That the listener doesn't hear or know of the processes involved is of no semantic consequence to the piece, just as a computer user's lack of knowledge of the inner workings of a microprocessor doesn't prevent him from using the machine. Process acts as an integral compositional tool but not as a means unto itself.

This stratified application of process affords the composer a much greater degree of control over the locus of his subjective decision making; A score can be rigidly process driven at a micro level and improvisatory at a macro level, contradicting Reich's view of process and improvisation as mutually exclusive concepts. A middle ground is created between Reich's processes which "determine all the note-to-note details and the overall form simultaneously" (Reich, 2002 p. 38) and Wishart's advocacy of "experientially verifiable criteria" for making music (Wishart, 1985 p. 7). Indeed, despite my sympathy for Wishart's criticism of rational formalism, I find his total replacement of formal criterion with experiential ones to be equally problematic. In doing so, Wishart assumes the latter to be universal, unchanging and unaffected by the formal structures which have surrounded music for hundreds of years, an obviously untenable supposition for self-reflexive music making. It is precisely the formal aspects of music, in whatever form they take, which allow for an ongoing dialectical engagement with the musical material. A view of music without form subjects the music maker solely to his socio-historically received wisdom, robbing him of his ability to adapt the material to his expressive needs. In other words, a pursuit of *negative freedom* from the formal aspects of the score results in a loss of *positive freedom* to manipulate the material. Wishart neglects the profitability of working out of the formal/experiential dialectic which indeed is also fundamental to our perception of reality.¹¹

The total rejection of formalism risks engendering the fetishisation of sound itself, or *Klangreiz* as Adorno refers to it (Adorno, 1992 p. 277). I would argue that such music, which is rife within the electro-acoustic departments of modern Universities, is as equally abstract and socially irrelevant as rational formalism. Adorno's postulate that "music consists not just of notes, but of the relations between them and that one cannot exist without the other," can easily be applied to all aspects of

¹¹ It's notable that Wishart cites Bach's Art of Fugue as an example which manages to escape rational formalism precisely through its self-confinement to the parameters of pitch and summative rhythm, leaving the performer free in his other decisions.

sound (Adorno, 1992 p. 299), and once one realises the multitude of possibilities for interrelation, the desire for infinite choices of sounds becomes redundant. Indeed, the revelation that the game of chess produces, from its handful of rules, a game tree that has a complexity of approximately 10^{123} , a significantly larger number than the estimated number of atoms in the observable universe¹², gives testament to the fact that, rather than the physical world of sound, it's the metaphysical world of relations that offers unbounded possibilities for the musician. The issue is one of strata; the musician, by limiting his physical material, enables the exploration of a multifaceted and perhaps limitless realm of relations – herein lies the true infinity. Consider John Conway's *Game of Life* which, despite consisting of just four rules, can be used to build a computer that is *Turing Complete* (i.e. as powerful as any computer with unlimited memory).

Nevertheless, just as the game of chess endures because of the emergence of familiar patterns, thus enabling the continuing exploration and improvement of game play, so the musician has a necessity to bring coherence to the relations with which he composes. Such an observation brings to mind Borges' description of the *Library of Babel*, which appears to contain all the possible combinations of the twenty odd orthographical symbols, and holds amongst its vast and perhaps infinite catalogues numerous books of a formless and chaotic nature such as one "made up of the letters MCV, perversely repeated from first line to last" and another which is "a mere labyrinth of letters, but the next-to-last page says *Oh time thy pyramids,*" and yet also contains such volumes as "the minutely detailed history of the future, the archangels' autobiographies, the faithful catalogue of the Library," and so on. Post modernity, in which the commonly held reference points of the past are discredited and sociological fragmentation prevents the formation of any new ones, requires music more than ever to create meaning in its interrelations at the level of individual work, something which I would argue can only happen via the conscious self-limitation of material. In our multiplicitous, technologically driven, increasingly complex, and noisy world, where freedom of speech quite obviously no longer equates with freedom to be heard, the task of the artist is not merely to confront his audience with noise, but to let that noise become coherent for that surely is the flame that ignites a shift in consciousness for us all. To surmise, in using the analogues of *negative* versus *positive* freedom, what I'm arguing for is the application of material dialectic, not in the name of achieving some utopian purity but in addressing ones' expressive needs in a particular space and time. Whilst one could complain that such action circumscribes arts' scope, reasserting its artifice, denying its universality and thus its claims to higher truths, such an earthly position also gives art permission to speak.

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¹² Estimated to be between 4×10^{79} and 10^{81}

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