

A CRITIQUE ON PIERRE SCHAEFFER'S PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACHES : BASED ON THE ACOUSMATIC AND REDUCED LISTENING

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ABSTRACT

Aiming at examining Schaefferian phenomenology from the viewpoint of phenomenology proper, and in particular, critically observing how successfully Schaeffer understood the workings of key phenomenology concepts and applied them to his research on sound objects and listening, this paper conducts a short survey on the relationship between natural and phenomenological attitudes as well as the concept and implications of phenomenological reduction understood by phenomenology proper as well as by Schaefferian phenomenology. The survey shows that, while Schaefferian phenomenology rightly—and timely—recognized the acousmatic situation, or more accurately, acousmatic attitude, as the phenomenological attitude under which our listening experience can be investigated phenomenologically, it misunderstood the workings of phenomenological reduction and employed only part of it. Consequently, as this essay argues, Schaefferian phenomenology limited the totality of listening phenomena to its part, thus endangering the phenomenological project that it set out to do.

Keywords: phenomenology; Pierre Schaeffer; acousmatic; reduced listening; listening phenomena; phenomenological reduction; epoché; natural and phenomenological attitudes

To philosophize, we may now say, is an extra-ordinary inquiry into the extra-ordinary.
Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*

INTRODUCTION

A quote from Schaeffer that researchers have used in arguing for Schaeffer's subscription to phenomenology reads as follows: "For years, we have been doing phenomenology without realizing it... It is only after the event that we recognized in Edmund Husserl's heroically rigorous definition the concept of the object postulated in our research," (Schaeffer, 1966: 262)¹ the first part of which is also introduced by Kane in his critical review of Schaeffer's sound object and phenomenological reduction (Kane, 2007)². Without

Schaeffer explicitly acknowledging the links between his attitude and that of phenomenology, a brief reading of his work reveals to us many terminologies, such as epoché, reduction, intentional object, intentionality, and description, among others, that undoubtedly connect his thinking to phenomenology not only because they are central to phenomenology, but more importantly, because Schaeffer employs them in a phenomenological sense in his "doing phenomenology".

But what exactly does "doing phenomenology" mean? How can one do phenomenology? In his Aquinas lecture given at Marquette University in 2004, Jacques Taminiaux, after having defining phenomenology as "an attempt to be the logos of all phenomena appearing within the scope of human experience, or to give those phenomena the opportunity to show as precisely as possible what characterizes them specifically," stated that Husserl contended that the only method of "doing philosophy that [Husserl] was proposing" was reduction (Taminiaux, 2004: 8). For the phenomenologist, accordingly, to do phenomenology is to attend to phenomena as they appear to him by reducing experienced phenomena. Or more specifically, it is to

¹ Guides des Objets Sonores by Michel Chion to which this essay makes reference is in an unpublished translation in 2009 by John Dack and Christine North.

² In his article, Kane raises two strong objections against Schaeffer's phenomenology with regard to sound object and reduced listening—they are ahistorical and teleological. It is neither the goal nor the scope

of this essay to discuss his arguments and conclusions, which requires another essay.

lead away or return³ from the phenomena experienced with various assumptions in his natural attitude back to phenomena themselves as experienced. Thus, as Taminaux asserts, every phenomenologist must exercise this reduction, also called phenomenological reduction, “as a methodological principle for any descriptive investigation” (Taminaux, 2004: 9). Viewed in this way, it can be said that Schaeffer realized that he was conducting, without him recognizing it being a phenomenological method, phenomenological reduction—as he understood it—to his musical research.

This paper aims at examining the relation between the reduction in phenomenology proper and the reduction Schaeffer may have exercised in his research, and in so doing, discovering possibilities of phenomenological practice in understanding electroacoustic music listening. Applying phenomenological attitudes to understanding the experience of electroacoustic music listening inevitably prompts a question to many readers: to whose phenomenology does this paper subscribe? Certainly, there has been much debate about differences, or even contradictions, among major phenomenologists, namely, Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre with regard to their own phenomenology. On the one hand, Merleau-Ponty famously asserted, “the whole of *Sein und Zeit* [Being and Time] springs from an indication given by Husserl and amounts to no more than an explicit account of the ‘natürlicher Weltbegriff [natural concept of world]’ or the ‘Lebenswelt [lifeworld],’” Husserl’s central themes in his latter years, although he immediately recognizes that these concepts are at odds with the early theory of the founder of phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: viii). Similarly, Taminaux explicated Heidegger’s captivation on Husserl’s *Logical Investigations*, particularly, categorial intuition in the Sixth Investigation, on which Heidegger admits his magnum opus *Being and Time* was founded (Taminaux, 1977). On the other hand, Schacht argued that considering the radical differences between Husserlian phenomenology, an epistemological enterprise that is eidetic, transcendental and egological, and Heideggerian phenomenology, which for him is the method for his ontological enterprise that is hermeneutic and “rather” existential, that they “have virtually nothing to do with each other” (Schacht, 1972: 294). It appears that it is due to the recognition of these debated differences in phenomenology that Chion had to qualify Schaeffer’s phenomenology as having adopted the principle of Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology (Chion, 1983) although Schaeffer’s phenomenology rings more true to Husserlian phenomenology as Kane rightly observed (Kane, 2007). Recently, however, Crowell posited that the differences in Husserlian and

Heideggerian phenomenology were more complex and nuanced than as clear-cut as they had been taken to be (Crowell, 2001), and Overgaard believes that the relation between the two phenomenologies was less destructive than as had been previously considered, and that even “Heidegger’s sometimes very severe critique” against Husserl’s phenomenology “must be understood as an internal critique” (Overgaard, 2003: 157).

It is of critical importance for us to investigate to what degree and in what respects the phenomenologies of Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty differ with regard to Schaeffer’s adoption of phenomenology, an investigation which we shall attempt to tackle—at least, in part—later in this paper. For now, however, it is sufficient to say that what all these phenomenologists seem to have in common is that they understood phenomenology not as a theory or a technique, but either a method as Heidegger asserted; “Rightly conceived, phenomenology is the concept of a method” (Heidegger, 1982: 20), or as a style of thinking as Merleau-Ponty argued; “phenomenology can be practised and identified as a manner or style of thinking, that it existed as a movement before arriving at complete awareness of itself as a philosophy” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: viii). Perhaps, thus, it is no coincidence that Husserl’s phenomenological exercise in *Logical Investigations* preceded his attempts at theorizing it as phenomenology proper (Taminaux, 2004), and that Schaeffer practiced phenomenology in his research “without realizing it”.

Some may argue that it is more likely that Schaeffer’s acknowledgment of “doing phenomenology without realizing it” serves to slip the mythic prestige or the fashionable origin of phenomenology in his research. But it is important to realize the true implication that Schaeffer wanted to make with the acknowledgment. Considering that phenomenology is a method or a style of thinking, the realization that he had been doing phenomenology all along opened up a horizon of questioning before him. As Heidegger understood, “[I]f the act of questioning is really carried out, the content and the object of the question react inevitably on the act of questioning. Accordingly this questioning is not just any occurrence but a privileged happening that we call an event” (Heidegger, 1959: 4). Can we not say that it must have been something similar that Schaeffer recognized in Husserl’s phenomenology, something that resulted in positing anew the content and the object of his musical research? Can we also not say that the horizon of questioning that emerged before Schaeffer consisted therefore in “determining and expressing in concrete form this phenomenology for [himself]” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: viii), and that the phenomenology for himself in concrete form resulted in the postulation of the concept of the object—that is to say, the concept of sound object? If so, it is critical that we need to examine how Schaeffer understood phenomenology and

³ The word “reduce” has its Latin root *re-ducere*, which means lead back, restore, withhold or withdrawal (Sokolowski, 2000).

its concepts, and particularly, how successfully he grasped the workings of phenomenological reduction as a way of accessing phenomenology and how he applied it to his research on sound objects and listening.

In this paper I shall argue that Schaeffer did not employ a complete implementation of phenomenological attitude and reduction in his research, and I shall also discuss its consequences. To this end, this paper will comprise a brief survey of the reductive process and subsequent phenomenological approaches made by Pierre Schaeffer. The focus of this survey is twofold: first, it will compare phenomenological concepts to those of Pierre Schaeffer and examine specifically how phenomenological reduction and key issues of phenomenology were applied to Schaeffer's thinking. In doing so, special attention is given to those phenomenological concepts that are either missing, modified or reworked for the sake of Schaeffer's research; and second, following the arguments above, I will examine the consequents of such omissions, modifications or reworkings in Schaeffer's thinking, and revisit phenomenological reduction and some of the key issues in phenomenology that are relevant to electroacoustic music and need to be brought to light to help us gain a better understanding of the phenomena in electroacoustic music listening.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACHES IN PIERRE SCHAEFFER'S MUSICAL RESEARCH

It does not take too much effort for us to link the problems inherent in Schaeffer's musical research to those of phenomenological research by Husserl, Heidegger or Merleau-Ponty. As has been mentioned, many key terms introduced by Schaeffer in the *Traité des Objets Musicaux* (Schaeffer, 1966) in developing and furthering his musical research show the origin of phenomenological thinking, whose terms succinctly explained later in Chion's *Guide des Objets Sonores* (Chion, 1983) with Chion's careful synthesis of both content and structure of Schaeffer's magnum opus. Despite such a close connection between Schaefferian thought and phenomenology, however, few writers have critically examined the link⁴. Furthermore, it seems that this lack of interest in viewing Schaeffer's research from a phenomenological approach has also prevailed in research into the aesthetics of electroacoustic music; much of the literature, if it recognizes the link, gives it a simple, cursory nod.

Why is there such a lack of interest? One might say that it is due to the language barrier. The *Traité des*

Objets Musicaux has only been available in French (as of 2010), making it very difficult for scholars in other languages to access to Schaeffer's research. But this does not really explain the lack of interest in phenomenological approaches to electroacoustic music. Another possible reason for the lack would be that as with any cross-disciplinary project, examining the link between Schaeffer or electroacoustic music and phenomenology inevitably requires one to problematize phenomenology, which is not an easy task to undertake. But apparently the difficulty of conducting cross-disciplinary projects has not stopped many researchers from dealing with problems of linguistics, semiotics, psychoacoustics or ecology, let alone those that require considerable challenges in computer or software engineering.

There is, perhaps, yet another reason why we find little enthusiasm in electroacoustic music research for phenomenological thinking, namely, distrust of phenomenological approaches to the problematics of electroacoustic music. This distrust seems to be far-reaching and deep-rooted, often taking one of two forms resulting from two different attitudes: one from the misunderstanding of what phenomenology is, and the other from doubt cast upon what phenomenology promises to bring.

Those who harbor distrust due to a misunderstanding of what phenomenology is usually raise objections to phenomenology as it appears to limit its investigative target within the subject's psychical endeavors—that is to say, they “mistakenly regards phenomenology as a form of psychologism,” which is “the claim that things like logic, truth, verification, evidence, and reasoning are simply empirical activities of our psyche” (Sokolowski, 2000: 123). This misunderstanding is not without causes. Many phenomenological terms, and ways in which they are used, may give a phenomenological project an air of psychologism. Admittedly, in the first edition of *Logical Investigations*, Husserl in fact postulated phenomenology as a descriptive psychology, which he conceded, in its second edition, was a serious mistake (Zahavi, 2007) and refuted this later by stressing, “We abandon once and for all the basis of psychology—even descriptive psychology” (Husserl, 1999: 64). It is paradoxical that phenomenology is often misunderstood as a form of psychologism because from the beginning, Husserl was a vehement critic of psychologism as he believed, being a more sophisticated form of reductionism, psychologism reduces “ideality to psychical processes” (Zahavi, 2007: 12), and this critical distance from psychologism, and biologism, eventually led him to postulate the “return of things themselves” (Zahavi, 2007: 11), a headword in Husserlian phenomenology.

The second form of distrust of phenomenology, on the other hand, poses a more serious problem. Those

⁴ A renewed effort to bring phenomenological approaches to Schaeffer's research has developed in recent years, most notably in a series of articles published by Augoyard in 1999 (Jean-François Augoyard, 1999) as well as Kane (Kane, 2007).

who have this kind of distrust of phenomenology may argue as in the following: if listening is considered a form of a mental activity, a correctly pursued account of perception and cognitive sciences based on empirical data will be adequately able to explain its workings, and that while we should not ignore the contents of our conscious experience, these contents of our experience are misleading or distorted, making it scientifically untenable to use them in explaining the workings of listening. Viewed in this way, they believe that phenomenological approaches to listening may “contaminate” scientific research as they allow “subjective experience to guide or constrain scientific theories of the mind” (Thompson, 2007: 141). It is difficult to refute this objection; it is often true that the content of our experiences in listening are misleading. But this objection can and should be refuted based on two points: firstly, it is founded on the blind belief that scientific empirical findings will eventually yield full descriptions of mental workings of human beings, a belief whose origin is that of biologism which had long been debunked by Husserl; secondly it fails to recognize what it is that which phenomenology aims to thematize. By referencing phenomenological approaches, at least to the listening experience of electroacoustic music, our aim is “not that we turn away from the outer and ignore it in favor of the inner, but rather that we make explicit or manifest features that are usually implicit or latent” (Thompson, 2007: 150). Considered in this way, even listening experiences that appear misled or distorted become targets of a phenomenological enterprise because, reflected phenomenologically, such appearances can shed light on “conditions of the possibility for appearance” (Zahavi, 2007: 54), or the possibility for phenomena, where the term phenomenon or appearance is understood not as that which is “in the contrast phenomenon-essence or appearance-reality” in ordinary language, but as “the immediate givenness of the object” or “how it apparently is” (Zahavi, 2007: 55).

It is perhaps with the relentless concern of the immediate givenness or appearance of the object in listening, which Schaeffer had discovered and cultivated his experiments and research on sound recording technology since the 1940s, that the so-called Schaefferian phenomenology—though he then was not aware of it—emerged. What is of particular importance to the emergence of Schaefferian phenomenology is that it was technology that set it in motion. As Schaeffer had observed in the evolution of radio and cinema through technology (Palombini, 1998), listening—in relation to musical research—was informed by technology that played a decisive role in the establishment of Schaefferian phenomenology.

Now we will consider key concepts of Schaefferian phenomenology in more detail by comparing them with those of phenomenology proper, concentrating

particularly on how Schaeffer understood and applied them to his own phenomenological approaches to his research.

Acousmatic Situation As A Phenomenological Attitude In Listening

A phenomenological project, whose aim is to question “the being and nature of reality,” starts with the premise that one cannot simply presuppose and accept “the metaphysical and epistemological assumptions that characterize our daily life, which is implicitly and unquestionably accepted by all of the positive sciences” (Zahavi, 2007: 44). In order to break away from a world laden with implicit and unquestioned assumptions, Husserl identifies and describes two different attitudes toward experience and knowledge: the natural attitude and the phenomenological attitude.

The natural attitude is based on “our implicit belief in the existence of a mind-, experience-, and theory-independent reality,” a belief “so fundamental and deeply rooted that it is not only accepted by the positive sciences, it even permeates our daily pretheoretical life” (Zahavi, 2007: 44). Husserl asserts that this belief in experience and knowledge needs to be critically tested without any dogmatic, metaphysical and scientific prejudices, and that in order to do that, one should turn “toward the givenness or appearance of reality,” that is, one should “not let preconceived theories form our experience, but let our experience determine our theories” (Zahavi, 2007: 45). The goal, in so doing, is to assume a new kind of attitude called the phenomenological attitude in which we “accept no object which is posited in the empirical attitude as reality” and do not allow ourselves “to be presented with any object given in the empirical attitude,” that is, one “no longer ‘realize[s]’ any empirical attitude” (Husserl et al., 2006: 39); rather, with phenomenological attitude one’s focus is turned toward the reflection “upon the natural attitude and all the intentionalities that occur within it” (Sokolowski, 2000: 42).

Similarly, Schaeffer, aiming to “grasp the experience of perception” (Chion, 1983: 31), takes a decisive turn away from ordinary listening, which includes both natural listening, the “main and primitive tendency to use sound for information about the event,” and cultural listening, which “turns away from the sound event and the circumstances [with regard to] its source, which [the sound event] reveals, and uses [the sound event] as a means to comprehend a message, a meaning, values” (Schaeffer, 1966: 120-121). Also just as Husserl refuted the reductionism of biologistic or psychologistic accounts of our experiences and knowledge, Schaeffer takes a critical distance against the attitude of the acoustician:

The acoustician is concerned with two things: the sound object which he listens to, and the signal which he measures. From his erroneous viewpoint, all he has to do is first put down the physical signal, consider what he listens to to be its result, and the sound object as a subjective manifestation.... He forgets that it is the sound object itself, which is given in the process of perception, that determines the signal to be studied and that therefore it cannot possibly be reconstructed from the signal. The proof of this is that there is no principle of physics which would enable him, not only to differentiate, but to have any notion of the three sounds C, E, G, contained (and mixed together) in a few centimetres of tape. (Schaeffer, 1966: 269)

Likewise, he finds fault in the attitude of the psycho-acoustician in the 1950s and 1960s in studying through simple examples of acoustic signals “the connection between variation in an elementary physical dimension of the object and variation in a sensory value” (Schaeffer, 1966: 170) because such an attitude based on the belief of “scientific” empirical data often neglects or disregards “the active role of the ear in constructing and defining the characteristics of perceived sound” (Chion, 1983: 22). Through these critical views, Schaeffer assumes a certain specialized kind of listening attitude, comparable to Husserl’s phenomenological attitude, where he is allowed to “realize that transcendence [of the object in relation to the changing flux of the different ways it is perceived] is formed in my experience” (Schaeffer, 1966: 267).

But the phenomenological attitude in Schaefferian phenomenology is characterized, and thus, should be distinguished, by its two peculiarities: one has to do with the emergence of Schaefferian phenomenology while the other with its resistance to the return to phenomena themselves. Termed the acousmatic situation, this phenomenological attitude by Schaeffer is initiated, and held, by technological intervention. Following the definition of acousmatic⁵ introduced by Chion, “adjective, indicating a [sound] which is heard without the causes from which it originates being seen” (Chion, 1983: 18), we can see that the acousmatic situation is not new; hearing sound without seeing its causes happens everyday. When taken up again by Schaeffer, together with Jérôme Peignot, however, this term has undergone a metamorphosis: from “acousmatic” as in indicating a sound heard in natural listening without its causes to “acousmatic” as in indicating a sound heard in phenomenological listening with an intention to remove its causes and concentrate on the sound for its own sake.

⁵ For a revealing examination of acousmatic, and the myth of the Pythagorean veil which is often quoted to designate the implications of acousmatic in electroacoustic music practice, refer to Kane (Kane, 2008).

And this intentional act of removal and concentration would not have been possible without technological intervention. The listening situation that Schaeffer wanted to designate with this rarified, Greek-derived term was one that he had experienced during his experiments with sound recording technology, particularly, with two “inaugural” experiments “in interruption” of musique concrète, the closed groove and the cut bell. The closed groove experiment consisted of “closing a recorded fragment in on itself (as is done accidentally by a scratch [on supple discs]), thus creating a periodic phenomenon taken, either by chance or deliberately, from any sound continuum and able to be repeated indefinitely,” whereas the cut bell experiment aimed at “intervening in the progress of a recorded sound,” like the attack of the recorded bell sound, thus creating a flute-like sound (Chion, 1983: 20). Chion observes:

[By] isolating a sound from its context, manipulating it, and thus creating a new sound phenomenon which could no longer be traced directly to its cause, the experiment of the cut bell together with the closed groove encouraged people to practise “reduced listening” and draw out from it the notion of the sound object. (Chion, 1983: 20)

Note, and this is one of the reasons why the phenomenological attitude in Schaefferian phenomenology is a peculiar state, that in the acousmatic situation constituted by technologically intervening activities—sampling, isolating, manipulating, and repeated reproducing (replaying), etc.—one finds oneself not only situated acousmatically, but also situating ones listening attitude acousmatically. It is in this sense that that the acousmatic is “not just simply a situation” but also “a procedure” (Chion, 1983: 19), and that we can even say—even though it may sound awkward in the beginning—we assume the acousmatic attitude.

Understood that it is both situated and situating, the acousmatic attitude in Schaefferian phenomenology does not put the listener into a role of mere passivity; rather, the acousmatic attitude becomes a rigorous intending process through which the listener’s intention is directed wholly toward what the acousmatic attitude allows to emerge: what one is listening to and how this listening occurs. And in this sense, we can argue that by assuming the acousmatic attitude, the listener recognizes what he is listening to as well as how his listening occurs as phenomena, the objects of his intending acts, if and only if we correctly understand phenomena not in definition of ordinary language, such as the “appearance” of what is real, but as phenomenology understands:

[Phenomenologists'] descriptions of phenomena are not of what is distinct from the real, but simply of how one experiences things; and included here is how in some cases one in fact distinguishes between the experience of what is real and of what is only apparent. That is, any distinction between the real and the apparent is one that operates within the more general category of "the phenomena," all of which phenomenology is concerned to describe. (Hammond, 1991: 2)

Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that appropriately recognized and understood, the whole listening phenomena become the objects of the acousmatic attitude. But this is not the case with Schaefferian phenomenology:

[T]he acousmatic involves a reversal of the normal course of events.... It is no longer a question of knowing how a subjective listening interprets or distorts "reality" or of studying reactions to stimuli; the listening itself becomes the origin of the phenomenon to be studied, The question: "What am I hearing?.... What precisely are you hearing?" is turned back on to the subject, in the sense that he is being asked to describe, not the external references of the sound he perceives, but his perception itself. (Schaeffer, 1966: 92; my italics)

To the practitioner of phenomenology proper, this statement by Schaeffer is confusing to say the least. Schaeffer argues that the listener in the acousmatic attitude should limit the scope of his questioning from the whole phenomena of listening to the listening itself, which becomes the "origin" of phenomena. And furthermore, he stresses that the listener's description should not include everything; rather, it should stick to the perception itself. But this goes directly against the very goal of the phenomenological attitude in the acousmatic situation—that is, by assuming the acousmatic attitude, you make everything in your listening experience explicit.

One may argue that Schaeffer simply wants to stress on the listener's vigilance in the presence of lurking natural listening habits. But even this vigilance should be directed towards the assumption that everything in listening, even including "the external references of the sound" the listener believes to have perceived, be laid out for the phenomenological investigation. In other words, under the acousmatic attitude, the vigilance should be exercised not on discriminating from the description certain listening experiences, but on discerning them in the wholly described listening experience for their intentionalities in the natural attitude. Yet another may still contend that Schaeffer's resistance to the subjectivity of listening in the

acousmatic attitude is due to the firm basis of his research on Husserl's phenomenology, which made a decisive turn away from psychologistic descriptions of experiences of the world and advocated "the return to things themselves," and that in this view, allowing subjectivity in listening would mean to Schaeffer that we are hopelessly returning to the natural attitude. The issue at stake, however, is what it means for Schaeffer to return to "things themselves," and how he posits the relation between this return to things themselves and subjectivity. The rigorous concentration in Schaefferian phenomenology exerted on sound objects is, in part, the result of Schaeffer's repudiation of psychologistic accounts of sounds we hear. Such an attitude taken by Schaeffer is in line with that taken by Husserl, as Merleau-Ponty observes:

It is understandable, in view of this, that Husserl, having accused Kant of adopting a "faculty psychologism," should have urged, in place of a noetic analysis which bases the world on the synthesizing activity of the subject, his own "noematic reflection" which remains within the object and, instead of begetting it, brings to light its fundamental unity. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: x)

Let us briefly tease out what Merleau-Ponty says. Having renounced Kant's concept of phenomena, which appear to us instead of noumena, which do not appear to us and therefore we can never reach, Husserl posits that things do appear to our consciousness, and more importantly, that under the phenomenological attitude, which had derived from his analysis of Descartes' Cartesian method⁶ (Husserl, 1965), there are the two ways of describing them: the noetic descriptions, which describe our experiencing, and noematic descriptions, which describe what is experienced. But it should be noted the two descriptions are directed toward each other: "noetic description describes acts of consciousness, but in so doing will make reference to objects of consciousness; noematic description describes the objects of consciousness, but in so doing, will make reference to acts of consciousness" (Hammond, 1991: 49). Thus the return of things to themselves for Husserl is really the return to phenomena as they appear to our consciousness, which include both what (noema) and how (noesis). And considering that these descriptions are about phenomena appearing on our consciousness, the issue of subjectivity is not to be avoided, but becomes the core of the problematics of phenomenology. As

⁶ In Cartesian Meditations, Husserl adopts Descartes' "method of doubt" to formulate a process of bracketing or epoché but "does not accept the doctrine of 'Objective Nature' and 'the duality of finite substances,' which argues for the 'existence of subject-independent world, populated by two kinds of entities, minds and bodies'" (Hammond, 1991: 14-15).

Thompson asserts, in relation to the argument made by representationalism on mental imagery:

The phenomenal character of experience includes both the qualitative character of what we experience (for example, sensory qualities of the world and our body) and the subjective character of the mental acts whereby we experience (perceiving, remembering, imagining, and so on). Representationalism neglects the subjective character of experience. By contrast, phenomenological analysis focuses explicitly on the linkage between the qualitative character of what we experience and the subjective character of the mental activity whereby we experience it. (Thompson, 2007: 146-147)

As such, a proper phenomenological project targets the totality of phenomena that emerge through experience. However, with Schaefferian phenomenology, we feel something is amiss. With Schaefferian phenomenology, it is not the totality of the phenomenon given to our experience that is our investigative object; we are led to only part of it, and our investigation seems crippled.

I think that Schaeffer got part of phenomenology wrong. But which part of phenomenology is it that Schaefferian phenomenology missed? This paper will now attempt to answer this question by examining Schaeffer's concepts of reduced listening and epoché.

Reduced Listening As A Phenomenological Reduction

Let us return again to the quotation introduced at the beginning of this paper in which Schaeffer, elated, lets on that he has been doing phenomenology all along. This paper has argued that by doing phenomenology, he means that he has been exercising a type of phenomenological reduction while assuming the acousmatic attitude by means of technological intervention. Schaeffer terms this phenomenological reduction reduced listening. According to Chion, reduced listening is "the listening attitude which consists in listening to the sound for its own sake, as a sound object, by removing its real or supposed source and the meaning it may convey" (Chion, 1983: 33). Furthermore, he goes on to say, "the name reduced listening refers to the notion of phenomenological reduction (epoché), because, in a way, it consists of stripping the perception of sound of everything that is not 'in itself,' in order to hear only the sound, in its materiality, its substance, its perceivable dimensions" (Chion, 1983: 33). In this sense, it can be argued that in Schaefferian phenomenology, doing phenomenology lies in a kind of a negative move whereby the listener removes those which are not part of the sound in itself, "more precisely," the sound's causes and meaning. And

this negative move made by reduced listening is based not only on Schaeffer's discovery in his early experiments, but also on his understanding of phenomenological reduction, which to him, is not a "return to nature," since "we find nothing more natural than accepting indoctrination. It is an anti-natural effort to perceive what previously unconsciously determined consciousness" (Schaeffer, 1966: 270). Is this how the phenomenologist understands phenomenological reduction when he is doing phenomenology? Not exactly.

Examining how phenomenological reduction has transformed over the course of the history of phenomenology, Taminiaux asserts right from the beginning that:

It is important to notice that the methodological rule of [phenomenological] reduction combines two moves: a negative one, and a positive one. The negative move consists in suspending what blocks the way to the phenomena. The positive move is a return—a reductio—to the specific mode of appearing of the phenomenon. (Taminiaux, 2004: 9)

For Husserl, for example as Taminiaux observes, the operation of the phenomenological reduction works in two moves: "In Husserl's language, the negative move of epoché suspends all transcendence, and the positive move that opens the way to phenomenology is a return to immanence" (Taminiaux, 2004: 22). Similarly, Zahavi asserts that Husserl distinguished between the epoché and the reduction: "The epoché is the term for our abrupt suspension of a naive metaphysical attitude," whereas "the reduction is the term for our thematization of the correlation between subjectivity and world" (Zahavi, 2007: 46). What this recognition by Husserl, as articulated by both Taminiaux and Zahavi, signifies is this:

To perform the epoché and the reduction is not to abstain from an investigation of the real world in order to focus on mental content and representations, as it has occasionally been claimed. The epoché and the reduction do not involve an exclusive turn toward inwardness, and they do not imply any loss. On the contrary, the fundamental change of attitude makes possible a decisive discovery and should consequently be understood as an expansion of our field of research. (Zahavi, 2007: 46)

For Heidegger, likewise, the phenomenological reduction is not the only component—not even the central one—of phenomenological method; rather the phenomenological method consists of three basic components. The first is this negative move, the

phenomenological reduction of the epoché, that is, “leading phenomenological vision back from the apprehension of a being, whatever may be the character of that apprehension, to the understanding of the being of this being.” The second, positive move is called the phenomenological construction, which is required for “us to be led toward being” from the epoché, which is “merely negative methodological measure.” And, finally, the third component of the phenomenological method is the phenomenological destruction whereby “the traditional concepts, which at first must necessarily be employed, are de-constructed down to the sources from which they were drawn.” Thus Heidegger stresses that these three components “belong together in their content and must receive grounding in their mutual pertinence” (Heidegger, 1982: 21-23).

On the other hand, phenomenological reduction to Merleau-Ponty is “to suspend the resultant activity, to refuse it our complicity, or yet again, to put it ‘out of play,’” but is not to “withdraw from the world towards the unity of consciousness as the world’s basis; it steps back to watch the forms of transcendence fly up like sparks from a fire; it slackens the intentional threads which attach us to the world and thus brings them to our notice... it reveals that world as strange and paradoxical” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: xiv-xv). As such, the goal of phenomenological reduction is not (even to attempt) to remove part of the phenomenon as it is deemed to be external to the essence of things perceived; rather, it is to lead back and to “watch” the totality of the phenomenon with “wonder”. He even goes further to admit that “[t]he most important lesson which the [Husserlian] reduction teaches us is the impossibility of a complete reduction” (Merleau-Ponty 1962: xv) because the practitioner of the reduction, Merleau-Ponty argues, is bound to come to term with the fact that he cannot “overcome radically ‘naive belief’ in the intersubjective world to which he belongs as an empirical man” (Taminiaux, 2004: 27-28).

To reiterate, the phenomenological reduction, rightly understood and executed, begins with the epoché, whose only goal is to suspend our commitment to our natural attitude towards the world. But then the reduction proceeds with its phenomenological investigation by returning to, but not assuming, the natural attitude because it is in this natural attitude that our experience to things in the world is situated, and also because only by returning to it can we examine things in the world and our intentionalities to them. In this regards, as Husserl stresses, in executing the epoché, nothing is lost:

Meanwhile the world experienced in this reflectively grasped life goes on being for me (in a certain manner) “experienced” as before, and with just the content it has at any particular time. It goes on appearing, as it appeared before; the only difference is that I, as reflecting philosophically, no

longer keep in effect (no longer accept) the natural believing in existence involved in experiencing the world—though that believing too is still there and grasped by my noticing regard. (Husserl, 1965: 19-20)

It is this returning to the world, experienced as it is, which is missing in Schaefferian phenomenology. Admittedly, Schaeffer did acknowledge that: “However reduced the listening to the sound object for itself is, we cannot detach its two sides one from the other, and the attachments it retains to the two aims which usually go beyond the object: ‘What’s going on?’ and ‘What does it mean?’” (Schaeffer, 1966: 271), and accordingly, Chion asserts, “Reduced listening still retains a link with ‘ordinary listening’ and is like ‘its other side’” (Chion, 1983: 33). But even this acknowledgment shows that Schaefferian phenomenology misses the point of reduction. From the phenomenological viewpoint, listening cannot be divided into reduced listening and ordinary listening; there is only one listening, and in order to assume the phenomenological attitude and to examine it as an intentional act in the natural attitude we apply, as a method or a way in, reduced listening. Furthermore, by placing reduced listening, which is only a method, on the other side of ordinary listening, which is a natural attitude, and by germinating from reduced listening the sound object, which, if it is understood as the “intentional object,” should instead have been established by the reduction of our experience in the natural attitude, Schaefferian phenomenology runs the risk of becoming the “Objective Thought” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 81-82).

CONCLUSION

Aimed at examining Schaefferian phenomenology from the viewpoint of phenomenology proper, and in particular, critically observing how successfully Schaeffer understood the workings of key phenomenology concepts and applied them to his research on sound objects and listening, I have tried with this paper to conduct a short survey on the relationship between natural and phenomenological attitudes as well as the concept and implications of phenomenological reduction understood by phenomenology proper as well as by Schaefferian phenomenology. The survey has shown that, while Schaefferian phenomenology rightly—and timely—recognized the acousmatic situation, or acousmatic attitude, as the phenomenological attitude under which our listening experience can be investigated phenomenologically, it misunderstood the workings of phenomenological reduction and employed only part of it. Consequently, as this essay has argued, Schaefferian phenomenology limited the totality of listening phenomena to its part,

thus endangering the phenomenological project that it set out to do.

Schaeffer was right to admit that his research was “one side of the scales” in *In search of music itself*, a postscript in the third edition of *Traité des Objets Musicaux*:

The main fault of this work is indeed that it remains the only one. More than six hundred pages on objects weigh down one side of the scales.... The *Traité des Objets Musicaux* can, therefore, be interpreted in two ways: positively, as a bridgehead, from the point of view of materials and the faculties of hearing. Negatively, as having missed the point, since it seems to ignore the other bank, of combinations which give meaning to collections of objects. Between these two banks, a deep river: referential structures, that term vague or precise according to usage and users, describing the intermediate configurations by means of which the river can be crossed. (Chion, 1983: 166)

What he did not see, however, from the phenomenological viewpoint, is that his research was incomplete right from the beginning. And it seems that the damage has been done: many electroacoustic researchers continued to follow the framework of Schaefferian phenomenology, and while recognizing that something was missing, their objections to Schaefferian phenomenology seemed to have been tagged on to it as they merely nodded to the “other side”.

But the true implication of phenomenological reduction, or reduced listening understood as a true application of epoché, is not just giving a nod to the other side; rather, it is the return to the natural attitude, now understood as the world of noemata, noeses, and our intentionalities to them.⁷ Correctly assumed, the acousmatic attitude makes our whole listening experience in electroacoustic music explicit, and correctly exercised, reduced listening as a phenomenological reduction brings, and allows us to explore, this experience in totality onto a horizon of the “compresence of qualitative character and subjective character (for-me-ness)” (Thompson, 2007: 146). The acousmatic attitude and reduced listening should expand our field of investigation just as Husserl compared, as Zahavi asserts, “the performance of the epoché with the transition from a two-dimensional to a three-dimensional

⁷ It is out of this paper’s scope to discuss Schaeffer’s sound object and listening modes with regard to Husserl’s noetic-noematic structure and categorial intention, which needs another paper. However, it is interesting to note that this relation between Schaeffer’s research and this noetic-noematic structure in Husserl and categorial intentions, such as perceiving, imagining, remembering and anticipating, has already been recognized and investigated in Kim (2010a) and Kim (2010b), although these two papers did not conduct a thorough survey on Husserl’s phenomenology.

life,” in which “the perpetually functioning, but so far hidden, transcendental subjectivity is disclosed as the subjective condition of possibility for manifestation” (Zahavi, 2007: 46).

One may maintain that, after all, what this paper has argued for and the objections it has raised have little to do with what Schaeffer really aimed at with his research, and that phenomenological thinking is only part of Schaeffer’s project, in which his concern was more to do with categorizing and describing musical objects; in other words, it is this paper that misses the point. Probably. But one cannot argue against the fact that Schaeffer’s use of phenomenological thinking was essential in the development of his research. Thus it is absolutely required that our investigations on Schaeffer’s whole research be based on a correct understanding of Schaeffer’s use of phenomenological thinking and its consequences. Furthermore, we can readily witness that Schaefferian terms borrowed or modified from phenomenology proper are being widely used in educational settings where these terms are taught and applied to listening without critical observations, which results in inflicting wrong approaches to listening phenomena. As this paper has argued, Schaeffer’s phenomenological concepts need to be rectified and metamorphosed so as to allow us to inquire into the whole listening phenomena in electroacoustic music. It, thus, seems that the metamorphosis is necessary.

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