

Noise is a weapon and music, primordially, is the formation, domestication, and ritualization of that weapon as a simulacrum of ritual murder.

Before exchange, we see that music fulfills a very precise function in social organization, according to a code I shall call *sacrificial*. Codification of this kind

gives music a meaning, an operability beyond its own syntax, because it inscribes music within the very power that produces society.

All music can be defined as noise given form according to a code (in other words, according to rules of arrangement and laws of succession, in a limited space, a space of sounds) that is theoretically knowable by the listener. Listening to music is to receive a message. Nevertheless, music cannot be equated with a language. Quite unlike the words of a language—which refer to a signified—music, though it has a precise operability, never has a stable reference to a code of the linguistic type. It is not “a myth coded in sounds instead of words,” but rather a “language without meaning.”²⁸ It has neither meaning nor finality.

The operability of music precedes its entry into the market economy, its transformation into use-value—the appropriation of “the materials of nature in a form adapted to [man’s] needs.”³⁰ Its primary function does not depend on the quantity of labor expended on it, but on its mysterious appositeness to a code of power, the way in which it participates in the crystallization of social organization in an order. I would like to show that this function is ritual in nature, in other words that music, prior to all commercial exchange, *creates political order because it is a minor form of sacrifice*. In the space of noise, it symbolically signifies the channeling of violence and the imaginary, the ritualization of a murder

substituted for the general violence, the affirmation that a society is possible if the imaginary of individuals is sublimated.

In order to show that, before the commodity, music was a simulacrum of the sacrifice of the Scapegoat, and that it shared the same function, we must establish two things:

First, that *noise is violence*: it disturbs. To make noise is to interrupt a transmission, to disconnect, to kill. It is a simulacrum of murder.

Second, that *music is a channelization of noise*, and therefore a simulacrum of the sacrifice. It is thus a sublimation, an exacerbation of the imaginary, at the same time as the creation of social order and political integration.

A noise is a resonance that interferes with the audition of a message in the process of emission. A resonance is a set of simultaneous, pure sounds of determined frequency and differing intensity. Noise, then, does not exist in itself, but only in relation to the system within which it is inscribed: emitter, transmitter, receiver.

Jacques Attali - Noise - Sacrificing

Since it is a threat of death, noise is a concern of power; when power founds its legitimacy on the fear it inspires, on its capacity to create social order, on its univocal monopoly of violence, it monopolizes noise. Thus in most cultures, the theme of noise, its audition and endowment with form, lies at the origin of the religious idea. Before the world there was Chaos, the void and background noise. In the Old Testament, man does not hear noise until after the original sin, and the first noises he hears are the footsteps of God.

The hypotheses of noise as murder and music as sacrifice are not easy to accept. They imply that music *functions* like sacrifice; that listening to noise is a little like being killed; that listening to music is to attend a ritual murder, with all the danger, guilt, but also reassurance that goes along with that; that applauding is a confirmation, after the channelization of the violence, that the spectators of the sacrifice could potentially resume practicing the essential violence.

This relates to the idea of rupture/rearrangement in the space of value: "In history as in nature, decomposition is the laboratory of life."³⁸

In other words, catastrophe is inscribed in order, just as crisis is inscribed in development. There is no order that does not contain disorder within itself, and undoubtedly there is no disorder incapable of creating order. This covers the dynamic of codes. There remains the question of the succession of noises and orders, and their interferences.

Subversion in musical production opposes a new syntax to the existing syntax, from the point of view of which it is noise. Transitions of this kind have been occurring in music since antiquity and have led to the creation of new codes within changing networks.

Just as what is essential in a philosophy is not in what it says, but in what it does not say, the future of an organization is not in its existence, but in its opposite, which reveals its mutation. Today, the future is in our lacks, our suffering, and our troubles: repetition expresses the negative image of this absence of meaning, in which the crisis now in process will crystallize through a multiplication of simultaneous moments, the independent and exacerbated presence of the past, present, and future. To write history and fashion political economy is then to describe this cascade, to describe its instability and movement, more profound than the logic of each code, where a meaning beyond nonsense may be reborn, a sound beyond noise.