

THE UNDISTINGUISHED

*"The rustling of the oak comes closest
to the undistinguished, to what is
most reminiscent of the sea on land"
(Roberto Calasso)¹*

I

Intro

SEEING BLIND. We are not blind to what is happening right now. Or in other words: we use blindness to see, we are seeing blind. Less differentiation, a clouding of the hierarchies of the important and unimportant, can lead to more attention, bring us closer to a 'now' or 'here' than sharply distinguishing, selective perception. Although thinking usually means making distinctions, there are also other forms which, if we do not want to call them forms of thinking, are nevertheless forms of attention, experienced presence. Benjamin's pausing (*Innehalten*) perhaps belongs here. Thinking - in the usual sense - is always organized in a language-like way, even if it is not explicitly thinking in words and sentences. And linguistic organization is always the organization of a selection and thus of evaluation. For example, the evaluation of what appears important or unimportant to us at this very moment. At the top of these hierarchies, there is not only a view into the distance but also a constitutive blindness. The act in which language singles out and emphasizes something is always also an act of concealment and repression. On the other hand, the leveling of these mountains, the elimination of hierarchies, not making a selection, is by no means an unconscious act, nor is it limited to Buddhist unintentionality or mystical equanimity. Rather, a variety of forms of non-distinction can be identified both in everyday life and in more sublime experiences. They thus surround the field of linguistic differentiation, or frame it, closing it off on two sides: towards the preconscious (I say "towards", and not that it is limited to the preconscious or even the unconscious) and - symmetrically - towards a postconscious, a kind of attention that has, as it were, passed through the differentiation, the words, left them behind, or perhaps only suspended/repealed them for a few moments.

¹ Roberto Calasso, *Die Hochzeit von Kadmos und Harmonia*, Insel Verlag 1991, p.342

THIS TEXT develops its observations in a pendulum motion that meanders mainly between systems theory and psychoanalytically influenced philosophy.² Systems theory, which is occasionally also called distinction theory, naturally offers the greatest challenge to indistinction - but also the most pronounced vocabulary. Derrida's 'différance', among other things, also plays a role: at the point where the difference no longer makes a difference or comes close to indistinguishability.³

UNHELPE. Unhelped is the one who is not helped. In this sense, this text may also be heard as the unhelped outcry of a musician who does not feel represented in the usual (in the broadest sense) philosophical discourses, and who therefore attempts to grasp his practice, his doing beyond - or rather on this side of - the decision forced upon him by the term, on this side of his logic of distinction, which is necessarily inherent in the use of words, but does not include and open up his (the musician's) way of dealing with logics that are far removed from meaning - but still logics! - and therefore logics without distinction. One could say that it is precisely about logics on this side of meaning. In particular, perhaps all or many logics, if they are constructed strictly enough, offer that meaningless quality that is close to game or speculation. The problem lies rather in the inevitable interpretations of such logics, originally designed as meaningless. For while these are designed 'as' or 'like' abstract arithmetical formulae or geometrical 'games', the common hermeneutic cannot help but reduce them to the necessarily transcendental effect of the differentiated conceptuality.

THE BARRIER OF THE TRANSCENDENTAL. For Dirk Baecker, the transcendental dialectic is that "with the help of which reason shows itself its own limits."⁴ The question is whether there is really nothing left for us but to submit to this instruction, whether we might not succeed in winking out of the barrier by tracing the structure of this barrier more precisely, at least in the form of an oscillation, a swinging

² Sociological system theory is also committed to reflecting philosophy in the narrower sense, which is not always the case the other way round. For me, this is a good reason to give it a greater role in this text.

³ The nucleus of the text was a freely given lecture on 'Undistinguishability' at Northwestern University Chicago in January 2020. Furthermore, it is a collage of mostly chronological notebook entries from 2019/2020, supplemented in mid-2021 mainly by the introduction and a few paragraphs in Part V. It can possibly be read as a continuation of other texts, e.g.: "Unsinn", Neue Zeitschrift für Musik, 2018/06; "Musik und Negativität", MusikTexte, 2021, Heft168; however, this remains - almost - the only reference to his own products. In keeping with the nature of the notes, it is rather sketchy and often only suggestive, which hopefully makes it less tedious, and instead perhaps stimulating for individual completion.

⁴ Dirk Baecker, Beobachter unter sich, Surkamp 2013, p.103

back and forth, a both-and as well as a being-on-both-sides-simultaneously.⁵

BLEAK. Admittedly, it is comparatively bleak to delve theoretically into the world of indistinguishability, because words inevitably only ever lead to the entanglements of the distinguished. Words are therefore not exactly the best friend of the indistinguished. Nevertheless, an attempt is made to find out 'how far words go' in a few random samples. During this undertaking, however, it must never be forgotten that outside of words, in practice, the situation is quite different. Practice, doing, is the better friend of the undistinguished. Nevertheless, this text refrains from (overly) strategically bringing it into the field; practice is never really analyzed, described in detail, or even consulted in a broader sense. Occasional references that serve to remind us of this state of affairs must suffice, as the aim here is rather to get in touch with some existing, known and elaborated theoretical offers in order to mark the indistinction in a way that should make it more difficult to reduce it to 'mysticism' alone.

II

The difference that makes no difference

INDISTINGUISHABILITY(S). Distinctions are "indispensable" for observation.⁶ Such or similar apodictic statements, which are frequently encountered in systems theory, have it all: they provoke the question of the extent to which there could be indistinguishabilities that are indispensable for (other) observations. But systems theory is also available to answer this question to a certain extent with its "insight that not-knowing can also be communicated"⁷.

A DISTINCTION THAT DOES NOT DISTINGUISH. At a certain point in hearing, I discovered a form of perception that can be distinguished from everyday perception. Since then, I have distinguished between distinguishing and non-distinguishing perception. The latter still recognizes differences and discovers details on the level of phenomena, on which it can presumably even pay significantly more attention to gradations

⁵ Simultaneity is, in turn, something that systems theory declares impossible when it speaks of "oscillation": "The prerequisite (...) is (...) that one side and not the other is designated (...)." (Niklas Luhmann, Die Kontrolle von Intransparenz, ed.: Dirk Baecker, Suhrkamp, 2018, p.110)

⁶ Dirk Baecker, 4.0 oder Die Lücke die der Rechner lässt, Merve 2018, p.25

⁷ Baecker on Luhmann, in: Niklas Luhmann, Die Kontrolle von Intransparenz, 125

and nuances than everyday hearing. But it does not differentiate at the level of evaluation: no phenomenon, no event is preferred to another. Without this evaluation, however, there is no selection, no decision in favor of a phenomenon singled out from the whole (e.g. pursuing language), which inevitably suppresses the other phenomena or pushes them into the background.

BEYOND GNOSIS. (Beyond the beyond). For me, this hearing has become a concentrate, a distillation of what music or art is capable of achieving. But its underlying experience is by no means limited to art or music. But art and music can help us to discover it. We can use art and music like an etude to practise something in them that we can then also find outside of them, in "real life": Art or music as a school for 'more reality'. Of course, everything looks the other way around from "real life". From this perspective, it is art or music that constitute an outside. Perhaps music/art is the practice that creates an outside that cannot be called gnostic because it is not an outside of the world. It is an outside within. An outside, not to the world, but to the conception of the world, to language about the world - ultimately to language.⁸

FUNDAMENTALLY GNOSTIC, on the other hand, is Western philosophy. This applies not only to its ontology, its concept of being. It begins with language, with the irreconcilable division into the signified and the signifier. It begins (to paraphrase Nietzsche) with grammar, which, like a gigantic automaton demon, constantly produces metaphysical constraints of thought from which we can only free ourselves with difficulty - if at all. In contrast, art - at least some works of art and music - presents us with a way of thinking that is entirely immanent, insofar as it is capable of acting without referring, insofar as what it presents, or rather 'gives', is not a substitute for something else.

THINKING AND LISTENING IN SYSTEMS THEORY. Systems theory sees things quite differently. According to Peter Fuchs, the thinking system is "blind to what is going on now"⁹. And Fuchs would also like to attribute this blindness to music, to listening, when he says of feelings that they "become conceptual when they are observed and are then precisely no longer". Which leads him to the pointed paradox: "You can't hear music when you listen to it"¹⁰. He cannot conceive of listening that does not first and foremost conceptualize. Consequently, for him there can also be no 'now' in listening. Interestingly, however, he speaks of the "unobservability of music"¹¹. This seems to concede something to music: a realm

⁸ see Dirk Baecker: "Kunst verdoppelt die Wirklichkeit in sie selbst", Musiktexte 161, 2019

⁹ Peter Fuchs, Vom Zeitzauber der Musik, 224

¹⁰ ibid. 226

¹¹ ibid. 227

that cannot be reached by distinction. For the systems theorist, observing means making distinctions. A non-distinguishing perception 'is not possible': "Difference-free observation is a contradictio in adjecto" says Peter Fuchs¹². He is not talking about music here, but about mysticism, and goes on to say "that mystical experience cannot be represented communicatively". I am thinking of the Zen master who can lead his students to sudden enlightenment through paradoxical actions. Of course, this is not 'representation' - it is much better: it is presentation.

The non-representability of mysticism corresponds to the unobservability of music. It is the same chain of reasoning that leads to both: Non-representability and unobservability are the same thing. And where the Zen master can trigger satori through paradoxical actions or even just words, we can imagine - without any paradox - a musical person who, moved by the music, begins to sing himself and thus acts in a very communicative way. Again, what happens here is presentation rather than representation, but in this case, insofar as the singing is a reaction to the music that began earlier, the beginning of the singing is also partly a response and is, to a certain extent, music about music, it is also representation.

DIFFERENTIATION TAKES PLACE LONG BEFORE VERBALIZATION.

Kierkegaard mentions a "lyrical thinking" and thus approaches a kind of pre-conceptual differentiation, a thinking before all concepts¹³. Could it be that systems theory remains ambiguous with regard to a pre-conceptual distinction? A sentence such as "Differenceless observation is a contradictio in adjecto" does not yet exclude non-conceptual differentiation. However, the further argumentation and proof of the effectiveness of the difference always runs via the concept. Only through the concept does it become clear what the distinction accomplishes, enables and conceals. Non-conceptual operations such as feeling, sensing, being in pain, listening to music or meditating are discussed, but always with the aim of emphasizing their "incommunicability" and thereby discrediting pre-conceptual differentiation. What is hastily discarded in this way is the possibility of making distinctions without using labels.

"THE BEGINNING OF HEAVEN AND EARTH IS NAMELESS" - this is written in 6 Chinese characters at the beginning of the first chapter of G. Spencer Brown's "Laws of Form"¹⁴. No other book has brought the idea of differentiation to the center of system theory as much as this one. And right on page 1 we find

¹² Niklas Luhmann, Peter Fuchs: Reden und Schweigen, Suhrkamp 1992, p.86

¹³ Kierkegaard refers here to Mendelsohn (Sören Kierkegaard, Gesammelte Werke vol.10, Düsseldorf 1962ff, p.116; or vol.27, p.137ff

¹⁴ George Spencer Brown: Laws of Form

the famous: "We cannot make an indication without drawing a distinction". But what we don't find: We CAN make a distinction without drawing an indication: we CAN make distinctions without applying labels.

DRAW A DESTINCTION. This is the beginning of everything for Spencer Brown, and the Gospel of John for Luhmann. In fact, this leads Luhmann into a theological digression¹⁵, and he does not forget to mention God himself as the exception to the distinction paradigm. What seems to me to be underexposed in all these primordial beginnings is that many of the best-known cosmologies do not begin with differentiation (heaven and earth) but with the undifferentiated, the Tohuwabohu. But let the great theologian of the undifferentiated, Nicolaus Cusanus, whom Luhmann himself likes to mention, speak on this: "Just as there is 'not much' before the many, so there is 'not being' before the existing, and 'not understanding' before understanding, and in general 'inexpressible' before everything expressible. Negation is therefore the origin of all affirmations. For the origin is nothing of the things that have originated."¹⁶ For Luhmann, however, the consequences of this are always already clear. The invoked namelessness of the beginning is actually not granted any right to a beginning at all; it is only the negative foil against which the 'real' beginning can stand out, the 'first' distinction: Let there be light!

LOGIC OF PROGRESS... The axiom of difference is recognized as being committed to a logic of progress, and this is certainly part of the self-understanding of systems theory¹⁷. Making a distinction is justified by the very fact that this distinction leads to progress, because an older state is replaced by a newer one. The conceptual tools of systems theory seem to slip away from what remains and is preserved. Conversely, it seems to be specialized in progress and the accelerating categories of modernity: differentiation, complexity, speed, communication.¹⁸ It has little to offer on 'tradition' and equates it with "superstition".¹⁹ Something

¹⁵ Niklas Luhmann, Einführung in die Systemtheorie, p.73.

¹⁶ Nikolaus von Kues, Über den Ursprung, Felix Meiner Verlag, 1967, p.61. It is a long time ago and yet quite probable that I was first led to Cusanus by Luhmann.

¹⁷ Luhmann calls for the "renunciation of a positive evaluation of temporal constancy", in: Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft, FfM 1997, p.117, and Dirk Baecker sees it as already completed for "sociological systems theory", Intelligenz, 119

¹⁸ "In fact, the truth of systems theory is the truth of evolutionary theory. For the reality of systems is that of evolutionary products" writes Günther Schulte in: Der blinde Fleck der Systemtheorie, 2013, where he denounces the conformity of systems theory to capitalism. This is undoubtedly a vehement criticism of systems theory, but it does not detract from the fact that in most cases, what is criticized here provides the more productive theoretical proposals than his criticism.

¹⁹ Dirk Baecker, Beobachter unter sich, p.65

similar applies to 'religion', because the outcome of communication is always already determined. Not only is differentiation the beginning of systems theory, even better is much and more differentiation, the increase and intensification of connectivity options and communications.

Systems theory has little to offer a society determined by tradition and religion - let's say 'Taliban', so as not to glorify anything. Because in such a society, everything tends to have already been said. Nothing of what is done or what is to be done in the future is left solely to the freedom of will and responsibility of the individual.

NEGATIVE SYSTEMS. But apart from the Taliban: do we really want to commit ourselves to the idea that the further acceleration of communication and consumption is our only horizon? How about a 'negative' systems theory, a de-systemization? Systems theory itself seems to offer a keyword for this, for example: Complexity reduction. However, so far this has served to dissolve communication blockades, i.e. to keep the acceleration going. But perhaps it could also be used to slow things down. Art at least demonstrates how such a benefit could be derived from the reduction of complexity (cf. the music of the 'Wandelweiser' group).

But could we even imagine - except perhaps in art and when sitting still at a concert²⁰ - giving up responsibility and freedom of will 'at free will', being unfree at free will? Perhaps television, which replaces the mythological order, and social media, which equalizes the tribal bond, is such an exercise in voluntary lack of freedom insofar as we delegate freedom of will to our serial heroes and responsibility to our virtual village.

...VERSUS TRADITION. In a sense, tradition precedes thinking, especially if we want to use the term thinking to refer to the individual, philosophical thinking that emerged in Greece from the 6th century BC onwards. In this sense, individuation would be the first of all distinctions, which entails all others. The door has thus been slammed shut once and for all on a tradition in the style of classical Indian music, which was transmitted from teacher to pupil and changed only insignificantly over millennia; or for that of the Vedic texts, which were passed on exclusively orally before they were written down from the 19th century onwards. And although invariant transmission to the next generation does not generate any time, so to speak, namely no readable change, it nevertheless takes place in time. Nevertheless, differentiation is ineffective here. The qualities of preservation and conservation in contrast to the motor of unconditional renewal are far removed from the paradigm of

²⁰ see further below

differentiation. Variationless transmission is essentially unobservable to the "draw-a-distinction" principle.

UNOBSERVABILITY, however, is not a limit. Or: the limit of observability is precisely that which can be observed.

BREAKS WITH TRADITION have long since become a tradition in certain respects - and not only in art. However, we still have much less practice in grasping the constant in the different, the repetition in the variation, the affirmation in the opposition than in endlessly enumerating inventions, records, revolutions, innovations and paradigm shifts.

AMBIGUITY. For Dirk Baecker, "ambiguity" is the "calculation" of the aesthetic²¹. This seems to come quite close to indistinguishability. If art is capable of producing ambiguity, this means that ambiguity can be articulated. It not only means that ambiguity can be distinguished from unambiguity, but also that ambiguity itself forms a quality of its own.

But ambiguity is not enough to describe art. It is a description from the outside, it does not affect the artist. For the musician, on the contrary, it is quite clear what constitutes an appropriate or clear interpretation, for the painter how the brushstroke must be applied. In this respect, ambiguity is not produced by art, it is only left behind by the philosopher. At first glance, ambiguity seems to relieve the artist. She doesn't have to justify herself, she can do what she wants. But that is fundamentally wrong. The problem lies in the interpretation, in wanting or having to interpret. The will to interpret is the obsessive reflex of every (?) kind of philosophy, every kind of thinking in terms and distinctions. But art does not think in terms and distinctions. It thinks in non-concepts and non-distinctions. In other words: in precise concretizations, which develop logics and formalizations that do not evade unambiguous verbalization so much as REPLACE it through uninterpretable but definite and comprehensible articulations: The pure fifth, for example, allows no ambiguity at all, but also not the definite beat patterns of a microtonal deviation from it. The pure fifth, by which the musician measures her precision of intonation, with its Pythagorean proportion of the vibration numbers of 2:3 - in its non-contingency - is to a certain extent an absolute, to a degree that no interpretation could ever become absolute.

FASTER THAN TALKING. "According to everything we know," writes Baecker, "consciousness is faster than verbal communication"²². We can build on this difference: On the one hand, we infer

²¹ Dirk Baecker, 4.0 oder Die Lücke die der Rechner lässt, Merve 2018, p.38

²² ibid. 224

differences in speed, and on the other, a consciousness beyond verbal communication. This could go in the direction of 'conceptless differentiation'. We want to see if we can 'flush out' something like this.

THE REAL. What happens there: I trip on the stairs. A moment of cognitive dysfunction, but corporeal response. A suspension of awareness, of the 'stream of consciousness'. But the body takes over and reacts (faster than consciousness). I can catch myself. Is this - the intervention of the body - supposed to be the Lacanian "real"?

THE PIANO PLAYER. The fact that practicing the piano is a thinking process is directly demonstrated empirically in neurological research: there is no one else on whom plastic changes in the brain can be traced and observed so directly, virtually in real time, as in the pianist. In piano playing, the highest level of perfection is achieved precisely because any conceptual, discriminating, comparative thinking must be scrupulously avoided: a single 'thought' and I'm out. So there is a degree of concentration that takes place, so to speak, 'floating' above discriminating thought: The increase in the intensity of thought is the non-conceptual, non-distinctive concentration of the pianist.

UNDIFFERENTIATEDNESS AS WELL AS INDISTINGUISHABILITY is one of the basic features of musical experience, and ranges from the idle moments of a composition and the listener's absences to the highest levels of concentration - both of the performer and the recipient. However, it also includes states or practices in which neither mental absences nor presence play the leading role, but the body carries us: as in dancing.

THE ASS DOES NOT SPEAK. Music is not (only) language. When the rhythm kicks in, our ass starts to move. An observer may (mis)understand the movements of the body as body "language". The dance that continues may also want to invite others to dance. But the initial impulse cannot be understood in terms of language and communication. (The assumption of communication intentions is a kind of social automatism. The insinuation may lack any basis, but it occurs nonetheless: "Why are you looking at me like that?" "I was just looking at myself like that...!")

SITTING STILL. But we can also discover forms of differentiated indifference in mental and physical inactivity. The bourgeois concert setting includes not only absences, but also sitting still, the ritual of communal stillness in order to give space to another, to music, with all its redundancies and idle sequences, in order to celebrate redundancy and idleness at the highest social level (philharmonic orchestra,

opera)²³. There is hardly an institution - at least since we stopped going to church - where these things not only have their place, but are cultivated, nurtured and celebrated to the point of excess: Indistinguishability, sitting still, empty time.

THE WAITING. A form of empty time and indifference that seems to have become historical. All it takes is a smartphone to banish it forever.

INDIFFERENCE. As chosen indifference. The choice of non-choice. The reluctance to make a distinction. The refusal to make a choice. And sometimes even: the wisdom associated with this refusal. Indifference as a perception of a higher order, insofar as it does not abbreviate and close prematurely by replacing the beginning (the thing) with the end (concept), by reducing the world to binary alternatives and dividing what is perceived into important and unimportant, but by enduring to keep things equally and indistinguishably present. The "higher order" would be tantamount to an escape from the decision that thwarts the hierarchization and selection of a particular object, and thus perhaps leads to a perception in which the perceived and the perceptual process are no longer located on two mutually opaque levels, where the individual does not appear in opposition to his environment, where both can appear simultaneously, where - in older terminology - subject and object share 'one' space. There are perceptions that depend precisely on NOT making a distinction.

III

they say, it's 'psychotic' to resist meaning ...
i say, it's not psychotic, it's music

COGITO. The dream that the 'cogito' could guarantee the 'ego' has finally been ruined by psychoanalysis. Or: The most that thinking can guarantee is an ego in severe distress. An ego that cannot - ever - find itself. The one who thinks is never me. On the other hand, the one who suspects this (that thinking is not the thinking of the ego) is perhaps the ego, or comes closer to the ego. So much for Freud/Lacan/Žižek. But for the artist, this experience (that thinking is not the thinking of the ego) is something else. But what, please?

MAN WITHOUT A GAP. Philosophy as a whole is perforated with holes, fissures, cracks, chasms ... We have become accustomed

²³ see also Dirk Baecker, who reproduces one of Luhmann's observations about "sitting still and keeping still", Musiktexte 161)

to recognizing the individual in conflict and division with himself. We have nested ourselves in the difference from ourselves. Impossible identification has become identification. Alternatives to the two-souls-in-my-breast are so lacking that they, like the 'unio mystica', are considered unenlightened. François Jullien, on the other hand, has tirelessly invoked Chinese thought in order to wrest from it a mirror function for philosophical thought (see for example: *Der Umweg über China*, Merve 2002). But the division persists, even though or precisely because it is a "grammatological" one, arising from our use of words. Man without a gap is dropped by philosophy. The undifferentiated human being has been removed from its agenda. It does not seem possible to think of an alternative in the use of words because "out they could not". What arises here, however, is the minimal demand to think the not being able to get out, to observe the blindness that "inexorably" perpetuates and stabilizes this not being able.²⁴

ADDITION. Where psychoanalysis only recognizes a gap, a difference, a lack of something, the artist does not avert his gaze. He looks at the gap, indeed he creates the gap as 'something', as something given. He adds something to the world that the completeness of the world should not actually allow. He does it anyway, and suddenly something is added to completeness that 'mathematically' should not be possible. But it is added anyway. And that is irritating. Surprisingly, however, society welcomes the irritation. It builds temples to irritation. Celebrates it. Celebrates itself in its ability to welcome the irritation. The welcome and the temples probably stand for a guilty conscience. They are a kind of apology for the 'normal', for what prevails. But you can obviously only endure the normal if there are these "Sunday" niches, museums and concert halls etc., which show that the normal is not EVERYTHING. You can only endure EVERYTHING if it is not EVERYTHING.

BECKETT, OR: WHY THERE CAN BE NO PHILOSOPHY OF LITERATURE. Beckett, once, once and never again, regarded as philosophy, shows precisely why it is not philosophy. The philosopher who fathoms the reason for existence and perhaps ends up in the "torture of the cogito"²⁵ is forced to identify with his thinking. He adheres to certain logics and philosophical conventions and thus thinks he means what he is saying. Beckett, on the other hand, and not only in the formalizations and musicalizations of the later works, but even in the three novels, where it perhaps gives the strongest impression that the narrator and Beckett are very close, almost identical. But

²⁴ "An image held us captive. And we could not get out, for it was in our language, and it only seemed to repeat it to us relentlessly." Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen* §115

²⁵ Alain Badiou, *Beckett, Diaphanes* 2006

it's the 'almost' that counts. It is a constant game with the unknown, with not being able to know how far the identity really goes. The 'game' is what matters. The hopelessness, the torture is constantly at risk. Torture is constantly on the precipice of comedy. The danger is that nothing dangerous could be going on, that the tears are tears of acting, just as contrived as everything else - but that's where it starts all over again ... These pirouettes of endangered seriousness are precisely how the writer transcends philosophy, brackets it in a sense, makes it a character in his comedy.

DIFFERENTIATIONS AND REDUNDANCIES. What philosophy understands is writing, the written and the writable. Like historiography, it begins where the written begins - even if Derrida uses the term 'trace' to penetrate into prehistory, into the archeology of traces left behind. Related to Duchamp's "infra-thin", the trace is that which precedes the distinction. Only the repeated, retraced trace becomes an engraving, a groove, an indentation and a demarcation. In another direction, the trace refers to the trace of the trace, as the smallest possible and ultimately the difference that can no longer be written down. What eludes the writing hand of philosophy, history and archeology, however, are the differentiations and infinite redundancies beyond writing or trace. We find these differentiations and redundancies not only in art, as they characterize the most elementary areas of our lives: Food, sex, enjoyment, but also work, mechanical work - or more precisely: the mechanical aspect of all work, and also such basic things as breathing, the heartbeat, digestion or simply walking. All of this is usually left out of history and philosophy, remains external to the linguistic approach, even suspect, if not suspected of transcendence, or marginalized as subjectivist relativization.

REDUNDANCIES/THE SEA. Describing the indescribable of an afternoon by the ocean. Not being able to stop watching the glitter on the waves and surrendering to the sound. Hundreds of photos of waves ... as if I could capture what cannot be captured - photos that you never look at again because they contain nothing of what we would have liked to capture ...

INTENTION AND DESIRE. How close are phenomenological 'intention' and Lacanian 'desire' actually? The latter is always strictly semiotically structured by Lacan - even though it revolves around a semiotically indeterminable void. If we state a subconscious, we can just as well state a subconscious of the subconscious, namely one that acts as if it desires the signifiable part of desire, while it 'secretly' knows that it is striving towards and paying homage to a zero, a nothing, a void; a knowledge lying beneath the subconscious that has long since recognized that it still has to attach a concept to nothingness in order to be able to read its infinite sliding away from it; a (non-)knowledge that recognizes the inexorable

interchangeability of every signifier and desires it, so to speak, or endows it with an intention - the intention of letting or letting happen, the intention of waiting and wanting to wait.

A DESIRE FOR DEFERRAL OF SIGNIFICATION: The individual, who experiences the erasure of the signified in the act of signifying, experiences the subsequent difference between the two, thus a distance, a space between the two. Expanding this space, keeping it open for a while before the signified is displaced by the signifier, this postponement is provided by art, celebrated by music, and surrounds this space with marble columns whose capitals glow with gold leaf.

TEXT AND MUSIC. Christof Windgätter criticizes Saussure's introduction of a hierarchical divide between 'langue' and 'parole', "the logical ontological primacy of language over speech."²⁶ Linguistics as such appears here as the artifact of precisely this operation: "Linguistics was not simply and always already given its specific object (...), but it arises as the effect of turning away from speaking".²⁷

ENDURE. Keeping something open takes strength. Holding something open means enduring it and not rashly and not rashly surrendering to the concept. It takes a similar (if not the same) strength to deal with an unresolved problem, to live with a contradiction. Living with the contradiction can - idealistically speaking - come closer to the truth than the reassuring acceptance of the concept. Hegel: "Something is therefore alive only insofar as it is (...) this power to grasp and endure the contradiction within itself."²⁸ Endurance is temporalized in deferral. Derrida's neologism "différance" marks the intertwining of identity and difference, or in the double meaning of "différer", on the one hand the otherness, the non-identity, the difference, and on the other hand the delaying of deferral as an operation that takes time for itself.

"ONLY AND ALONE THE WHAT."²⁹ Schopenhauer speaks of a higher knowledge that "abandons the ordinary way of looking at things, ceases to pursue only their relations to one another (...), thus no longer considers the where, the when, the why and the wherefore of things, but only the what; (...) and allows the whole consciousness to be filled by the quiet contemplation of the natural object present at the moment, be it a landscape, a tree, a rock, a building or whatever; by (...) 'losing' oneself completely in this object, i.e. that is, forgetting his individual, his will (...); so that it is

²⁶ Christof Windgätter, *Medienwechsel*, Kadmos 2006, 196

²⁷ *ibid.* 200

²⁸ Hegel 6.76

²⁹ Schopenhauer, *cit.* Abendroth: Schopenhauer, Rowohlt 1965, p.50

as if the object were there alone, without anyone to perceive it, and thus one can no longer separate the beholder from the contemplation, but both have become one (...)"

For Schopenhauer, this higher knowledge leads to the contemplation of the Platonic "ideas, the eternal form" - but this short-circuit into the metaphysical need not be followed; all we need is a temporally and spatially limited dispensation, a deferral, a picture gallery, a concert hall, an arcade, a colonnade of columns that is good for nothing other than wandering aimlessly along it.

Let us share another moment with Schopenhauer, for whom the world of ("ordinary") experience is the object of science, while higher knowledge is "the object of art"³⁰. The moment is short, because Schopenhauer's understanding of art is aimed solely at the metaphysical instances of eternal, unchanging truths. We can no longer gain anything from this understanding of art today - unless we ask whether desire, the object a, is not something like the last remnant (Žižek could say 'excrement') of the metaphysical, the immutable and eternal: the eternal as eternal absence.

BLINDNESS, as the artist's essential *modus operandi*: not seeing, or the (blind) independence of the painting hand³¹. In the painting/drawing, the artist's own amnesia, her own not-seeing, is made invisible by the painted/drawn. Wetzell/Derrida suggest the decisive impossibility of appropriating this blindness, insofar as what is painted would erase the original not-seeing. The artist must "blindly entrust herself to her medium of representation in order to produce visibility"³².

But what if the artist - contrary to all philosophical predictions - empowers herself to see and even depict her own blindness? Well, then ...

... the question remains as to where the blindness shifts to: what is not seen by not seeing?

The postulate of blindness remains rooted in an ancient conception of depiction in art, which states that 'something' would always be depicted in the image. It is easy - if not trivial - to parallelize the difference depicted/image with the linguistic difference referent/reference, and to use this parallel to illustrate once again the displacement of referent and depicted by reference and representation.

³⁰ das. 51

³¹ Derrida, "Aufzeichnungen eines Blinden"/"Memoires d'aveugle", cit. Wetzell: Derrida, Eine Einführung, Reclam 2019, p.96ff

³² *ibid.* 99

But what if I do not start from an object in an artistic work, from a referent or an 'idea', which can then only be reflected in the work as a dead image, as a death mask? What if I don't even know what I am doing, and at the same time I even know that I don't know? What if what I make is not a representation of something, but an exposure plate for something else - or a pit, a hole, a trap to catch an animal - or the stone circle of a Druid tale in which a ray of light is supposed to refract - or even if I don't really know what I am doing (I only know that I want to do it), and only afterwards am I instructed by the finished work as to its inherent possibilities - so what if the work shows me something that had no 'before' at all, that has not been replaced by anything, displaced by anything, made invisible, pushed aside, erased - none of that. What then?

So again: if I depict something, let's say a person, let's say the Dibutades' lover, as in Derrida's example³³, then it is not yet a masterpiece to prove that the depicted lacks presence in relation to the representation. But if I paint a white monochrome with nothing but the intention of surpassing Malevich, but I notice afterwards how, in combination with certain lighting conditions, the illusion, an illusion of the eye, projects concrete figures and constellations onto the white surface, and I ultimately recognize these projections as much more exciting and far-reaching than my original Malevich succession ... How then are these illusions and projections to be determined in terms of their temporality? Are they past? future? present? - even now? - ohgodohgod! Are 100 years of linguistic mantra-praying supposed to have done nothing and been for nothing?

IT'S MORE ABOUT MAKING "SEEING than visible"³⁴, more about making hearing than audible. Whereby being audible is not just about hearing, no: being hearing in order to be hearing, in order to find ourselves or someone else connected to the world through hearing. So in a way, it is about taking on a certain role, the role or attitude of hearing, a role that does not come from an alien script: it is our role, only we usually forget this and suppress it through hearing 'something', or focused/attentive hearing, through that hearing which separates us from what we hear, confronts us with it, demotes what we hear to the object of our observation.

ILLUSION. Whenever I am 'in the illusion' - therefore involved in an idea, an argument, a theory, an intention, whatever - then I feel close to the truth. I feel full ('full speaking'). But when I'm outside of it, I'm depressed, mouthy, psychotic, listless, powerless. Truth (illusion) is linked to open-mindedness and willingness to talk, the need to communicate,

³³ *ibid.* 100

³⁴ *ibid.* 103

desire and energy. The non-truth, being outside the truth, depression, is not non-true. It is on the other side of truth/ on this side of truth. Not being in the truth means being closer to what is only so, to non/existence, to not/standing out, not/sticking out.

IF reality really existed, it would have something to do with non-existence. The refraining from oneself plays a role in it. In fact, reality is the outside and "depression" is the inside. Expressed wrongly, truth is the wrong and depression the true, or the immanence.

PSYCHOSIS/BECKETT. "that explains why I was so little talkative"³⁵

REDUNDANCIES/BECKETT. Redundancies in literature in general. Not only in Beckett or Thomas Bernhard. Distinctions that make no difference. Many words are said/written/read, but their multiplicity does not create a multiplicity of distinctions. It remains the same. But remaining the same requires "existential" processing - it needs to be read, time needs to pass - only then does it acquire its weight: the weight of the same, the indistinguishable. (After all, I hardly ever take notes when I read literature. But many when I read philosophy).

DEPRESSION AND TRUTH. So if there is 'truth' at all, then only as depression. As a loss of all moments of truth, as a renunciation of language; language that could guarantee the minimum of that in which truth could spread. As a loss of communication, as psychosis, as the abandonment of everything that could be "moments of truth". This loss, this abandonment is depression, is truth.

OBSERVABLE UNOBSERVABILITY. Read Beckett again. E.g.: 3 novels. The redundancy. The many of them that leave no memory, only let time pass: While we read, time passes and nothing happens. And yet something does happen: nothing good. We may become more and more depressed, taciturn, shy of people. The text does something, namely in the direction of a specific non-perception or increasing undifferentiation. And it transforms this non-perception into a state: depression. If the text creates a kind of unobservability, it simultaneously creates the difference between the unobservability on the textural side and that of its depressing effect on the mental side.
Complicated, complicated.

³⁵ Beckett, Molloy p.68

IV

Classes of observation

DISCRIMINATING THOUGHTS. "Where there is no discriminating thought, one is in accordance with the law" (Vimalakirti Sutra)³⁶.

LUHMANN ET AL. have indeed struggled honorably with the non-distinctive thought traditions of mysticism and Buddhism. They believe that they can neutralize (bracket) non-distinction by pointing out that this too must still be communicated. Justified? Non-differentiation is reintroduced into differentiation through the so-called "re-entry". And the difference establishes that two-sided form with an inside and an outside, which in other constellations is also called system and environment. I suspect that if differentiation and indifference were to be distributed across the two-sided form, the former would always be assigned to the inside and the latter to the outside. But I also suspect that the Buddhist - should he ever engage with systems theory concepts - would make exactly the opposite choice: for him, difference is the outside, the environment, that which we have no direct access to. I am neither a mystic nor a Buddhist, but as far as I can see, the call to non-difference is moreover a call, i.e. not something given (in language alone), but a call to move there (away from language). And that which one would then move towards is also that which can no longer be communicated - and which was not communicated in the request.

Can one say: there are areas beyond language? For a musician, that is not a question. And if one can say that, one can also think about non-communicable experiences that nevertheless produce effects.

MANY WORDS are needed to say the unspeakable³⁷.

SKY. Isn't it nice to just look up at the sky on a summer evening? It is. And what does the sky tell us? Nothing. Except that it is beautiful to look into it. If a difference must be effective for every observation, what is the effective difference of this observation? There is none. Or at most the difference between looking into the sky and not looking into the sky. Is that enough for the fact of the two-sided form?

RE-ENTRY: Who exactly has entered into whom. Or what into what. How do I distinguish an indistinguishability that enters into a distinguishability from a distinguishability that

³⁶ The Vimalakirti Sutra, Angkor Publishing House, 2005, p.61

³⁷ Notebook entry 2020, presumably a quote from: Vladimir Jankelevitch, The Music and the Unspeakable

enters into an indistinguishability? Who can tell me whether I am only dealing with a blank spot on an otherwise mapped globe, or with the 'raft of knowledge on an ocean of ignorance'?

TWO SIDES WITHOUT ME. The challenge of Spencer Brown's two-sided form³⁸ is that no matter what distinction the observer makes, he cannot find himself in it. In order to include oneself in the observation, something other than 'this' kind of observation is needed. Can art achieve this? Or has been doing it for the longest time anyway?

The question that arises is that of a differenceless observation. Or perhaps more modestly: the question of a differenceless perception. Let's assume I'm alone in the forest and it's at night. Then there is a cracking sound not too far away. My hair stands on end, I freeze and listen. Not a thought stirs in my head, just the absolute presence and tense attention that is needed to capture another sound as precisely as possible. Isn't this a clear case of differentiationless perception, a form of lucidity that never can be reached by directed, selective perception?

Or let's take the infamous toothache³⁹ again. Can we simply dismiss them just because they cannot be communicated? Just ask someone who has them about their reality⁴⁰.

So if saying "I" has no place, we could try to think of a differenceless observation that gets by without an "I". So also without the distinction between 'I' and other observers. That is probably the biggest hurdle. Where can we feel - whatever - a pain that does not belong to us alone, that does not distinguish us from others?

But: do I say "I" when I freeze in listening, in the moment of shock? Doesn't the "I" already belong entirely to the secondary level of observation, to subsequent external observation?

³⁸ beautifully described in Luhmann, *Weltkunst*, in: *Unbeobachtbare Welt*, p.14 and before that

³⁹ s. Wittgenstein, notes for lectures on "private experience" and "sense data", in Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Vortrag über Ethik und andere kleine Schriften*, FfM 1989, p.93

⁴⁰ Dirk Baeker ties art to the "(impossible) communication of perception" (in: 4.0, 123). Of course, it is true that art does nothing other than communicate this impossibility. But it would be wrong to think that this is a specific feature of art; to think, for example, that a linguistic communication, a simple proposition, is free of impossibilities, to think that there are fundamental differences between the modes of operation of art and linguistic communication in this respect. The intransparency of what reaches the recipient of a linguistic message or the visitor of an art exhibition is structurally the same. Nevertheless, we emphasize the impossibility in the one case and the logicity in the other.

From the outside, many things remain forever indistinguishable, but "inside" they make a difference, which in turn has consequences that can be observed from the outside. In this respect, toothache is no different from self-reference - or rather, toothache IS a kind of self-reference, a reference to one's own bodily state, which can bring about an action (dentist's appointment).

HEARING, AND HEARING HEARING AT THE SAME TIME. Luhmann describes the possibilities of second-order observation exclusively as a temporal aftermath, as an afterthought to first-order observation. In art, on the other hand, it seems to me that there is indeed and often enough a simultaneity of both order classes. It is, one could say, about the simultaneity of the what and the how. Only when I try to describe it am I dependent on sequential processing. I cannot describe the what and the how at the same time, but only one after the other. But it's no problem at all for perception to follow what the actor says at the same time as how he says it; or to follow the compositional decisions and their interpretation at the same time in a musical performance. And, of course, we are also able to do this in our everyday lives: to follow the text of a message at the same time as the unintentional subtexts that are expressed in the tone of voice and body language and, under certain circumstances, may contradict the text. It all happens at the same time. Only language has difficulty with simultaneity.

And isn't lucid dreaming, in which the dreamer knows that she is dreaming, almost the paradigm of a simultaneity of one side and the other, as an observation that also includes itself?

A DIFFERENCE THAT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE. Composing seems to me to be (partly) something like that. The many distinctions that make no difference - or 'do' make something, but no difference? Or clouds ... or car traffic ... or raindrops falling into a puddle - everything never stays the same, everything is an incessant variation of itself, but that which is always different makes no difference. It makes no difference and yet it can captivate us and become important.

That which makes no difference and yet is important (to us) is that which is different from language. In contrast, that which makes a difference is organized in a language-like way. The distinction paradigm applies to language and to language-like operating media. However, it cannot grasp what goes beyond this or what is important to us. But there is still a lot that goes beyond this and is only noticed by the differentiation paradigm when it produces observable effects. It is often the things that seem to have no function and therefore do not need to be prepared linguistically. They fall through the cracks of description. But not for perception.

OR it is not about a differenceless observation but about differences that make no difference. Unlike Luhmann⁴¹, we are therefore looking for an observer who can accommodate himself in the distinction that he himself uses. Of course, this is not possible if Mrs. Karl is lying by the sea, watching the waves (differences that make no difference) and imagining that her neighbor at home could now see her like this and envy her. But perhaps it is possible if she then takes a courageous leap into the water and for a moment, when the fresh water envelops her heated body like a pleasurable choc, forgets her neighbor and her own external view and there is no longer a "categorical" (subject/object, observer/observed, system/environment) difference between her and the wave that captures her.

COUPLED WITH THE UNDIFFERENTIATED. The undistinguished and redundant is our daily bread. We do not pay attention to it. But we reckon with it. If so much of an ordinary day were not redundancy and repetition, we would be overwhelmed. Both our cerebral abilities and our physical capacity are structurally linked to the undistinguished⁴², they are attuned to it.

In this sense, Heinz von Foerster's syntagm, which is frequently quoted by Luhmann, must be relativized: We would supposedly not see what we do not see.⁴³ With regard to the structural coupling outlined above, we could reply: We don't even need to see it, we can do it by heart.

ORDERS OF OBSERVATION. Luhmann emphasizes that the second-order observer (i.e. the one who observes the first-order observer) does not see more, but something different from the first-order observer⁴⁴. The question is whether first-order observation exists at all, or whether every observation always refers to earlier observations. A first-order observation could then perhaps - and in contrast to Luhmann's or von Foerster's description - be something that does not (yet) operate with a distinction. For example, one could imagine an "empty" stare out of the window, lost in thought: I am in thought and look out at the street, I see everything and then nothing because I am absorbed by my thoughts - until I notice something outside: "I know him...!" For Luhmann, only this moment would be called observation, and not the "empty", non-registering stare before it. I'm not so sure about that. The only thing that seems certain to me is that only the staring, and no longer the recognition, comes close to an observation that does NOT already refer to earlier observation.

⁴¹ *ibid.* S.14

⁴² "Structural coupling": a term coined by Maturana

⁴³ Cf. Heinz von Foerster, *Kybernetik* p.86

⁴⁴ Luhmann, *Einführung in die Systemtheorie*.

FIRST ORDER OBSERVATION is derived from first order cybernetics, which referred to machines and technical systems rather than machine-independent human observation. Interpreting a machine as a first-order observer may (metaphorically) work, but to want to transfer such a still-non-recursive machine observation to a human observer, as practiced by systems theory, seems questionable to me.

2ND ORDER CYBERNETICS. Without thinking about thinking, thinking cannot be understood, without observing the observing not the observing, without hearing the hearing not the hearing. However, it is only from this "higher" perspective, the position of the 2nd order, that questions can be asked that would previously have made no sense (below), such as the question of whether a 1st order observation exists at all - except as an abstract conceptual figure.

TWO SIDES AND THEIR NON-EXISTENCE. So on the one hand, it is about showing that there are also experiences/perceptions that can actualize the two sides of the "form" even without (subsequent) re-entry; and on the other hand, about those that have not even reached the (two-sided) distinction, and yet can already be evaluated as experience/perception.

In fact, it seems to me that there are different "forms" of perception:

The perception described by Luhmann/Spencer Brown, which always conceals another perception. And in contrast to the unwieldy theory, art can demonstrate this quite elegantly and vividly. See, for example, all kinds of tilting pictures. However, a difference to the Luhmann/Spencer Brown theory immediately becomes apparent in comparison: With the tilt image, it is not at all possible to distinguish between 1st and 2nd order perception. This difference appears here more as a kind of idealistic remnant, it seems dispensable.

In contrast to the tilt image and the oscillation between the sides, the simultaneity of two sides can also be recognized as a form of perception, such as the above-mentioned concurrency of two complementary observations that simultaneously perceive the 'how' and the 'what' of a message.

And finally, the perception that either has not yet arrived at a distinction/designation and wallows free-floating in the nirvana of freedom of meaning or, conversely, has risen above distinction and designation and rejects the compulsion and coercion of meaning and has left it behind.

"THE ONE WHO OBSERVES SOMETHING must distinguish himself from what he observes"⁴⁵. The types of non-distinction in perception

⁴⁵ Luhmann, Einführung in die Systemtheorie, p.73

already outlined show me that every observation is always already self-observation - or in other words: a part of what I observe is always already myself, i.e. cannot be (completely) distinguished from what is observed. The question is therefore no longer whether there is observation with simultaneous self-observation, but conversely whether there can be observation WITHOUT self-observation.

IF WE COULD STOP OBSERVING OURSELVES FOR A SECOND, WE WOULD HAVE TO SEE THE WORLD FOR A SECOND. The non-stopping self-observation shows itself as the never-ending inner monologue that draws us through our lives. The monologue is actually a kind of one-sided dialog; there is always another person involved to whom we address ourselves and in whose gaze we reflect. Should we or art ever succeed in cutting the ribbon of such 'drawnness', then these are always only moments, 'syncopations', small interruptions in an otherwise firmly linked routine. A "higher" order cannot be recognized in such self-observation. It is more like Wittgenstein's prison, from which we can hardly ever - if not never - escape.

THE OBSERVER IS THE PROBLEM. In this concept, the two sides are already fixed from the outset. In old terminology, it is the subject/object dichotomy. The observer always observes 'something' and stays out of the observed itself. The difference between observer and observed can only be reflected in re-entry, etc.

Hence the terms 'experience/perception', which attempt to get by without this preliminary separation. In particular, the aim is to contrast perception with something. Perception as something that captures concrete sensory data, quasi receives information that can then be processed further. Attention is only a provisional term that seeks to mark a perception before the decision, so to speak. Perhaps it should be called 'alertness' or 'openness': a state before the filter becomes effective for something specific, before a selection is made, a kind of open-ended perseverance before something takes possession of us. So 'attention' is precisely the opposite of attention 'for something'. In other words, attention for whatever may come. So readiness: it may or may not come, I am there. And the 'there' and the 'I' are not yet separated at this moment.

Of course, the "information theorists" are right that attention, unlike perception, cannot be communicated (or is difficult to communicate). It cannot be objectified (or is difficult to objectify) and therefore does not fit into the information-conduction-reception scheme. But if we want to go a little further here, we cannot be satisfied with this scheme. Attention understood in this way comes BEFORE selective perception.

Furthermore, the terms 'experience' and 'perception' also include the passive moment of suffering the experience. It includes the experiencer, who becomes part of the experience. The moment of distinction remains untouched where one experience differs from another. But other requisites of Luhmann's 'mechanics' remain in question: The exclusion of the observer from observation first, but also re-entry as the sole 'transcendental' condition of the observer's reflection on himself.

THE RE-ENTRY, AN ARTIFACT? or: the difference between observing and being observed. Luhmann describes re-entry as paradoxical. For him, paradox is to see oneself in that which is observed⁴⁶. (He loves this paradox, rides on it a lot): But the paradox is possibly an artifact of conceptual construction. In fact, it seems to me that there is no observation that does not know that it is I who am observing, that does not recognize itself in what is observed - if not every recognition is a recognition of oneself anyway. The two-sided form that presupposes re-entry would therefore always already be suspended in any observation - suspended and transcended. Even in an example of the greatest possible disorientation - if I wake up in a hotel at night and don't know where I am - I still know that it is me who doesn't know where I am. I-consciousness should therefore precede any observation⁴⁷.

Even if system theory will probably maintain that my revocations are nothing more than re-entries, I hope to be able to give some sketches of such revocations in art in section V. Furthermore, it seems to me that there is also a steady increase in alternatives to the relentless bifurcation of the two-sided form outside of art, for example in the countless small steps that Bruno Latour reconstructs in order to lead from the indistinguishable of a given to its mapping and conceptualization⁴⁸.

But what happens when we alternate between observing and being observed? Superficially, this seems to be a model for re-entry. A moment ago I was looking at the reflections of light on the surface of the water, and suddenly I realize that someone is watching me. I feel framed as the one looking at the reflections of light on the surface of the water. Sure. But what exactly was the nature of the observation before being observed? I always address my contemplations to someone or something. I always "tell" what I notice. There is always an I who observes and a virtual address to which the result of

⁴⁶ *ibid.* 166

⁴⁷ Proust (vol.1, p.12f) writes that when he woke up he not only did not know 'where' he was, but also 'who' he was. However, in the subsequent closer examination of this state, he no longer questions the 'who' anywhere. In any case, the 'who' comes before the 'where'.

⁴⁸ Bruno Latour, *Die Hoffnung der Pandora*, Suhrkamp 2002

the observation is sent. An I and a you are always already included in every observation. A first-order observation would then also be an artifact.

Mitigating the questioning, it must be seen that the identification of the artifact is dependent on the artifact itself. Only through the - artificial - distinction between first and second order can it be seen that the first order is, as it seems to me, a purely theoretical construct⁴⁹.

THE OTHER. Even if the concept of a first-order observer is questioned here, it seems to me that systems theory offers a way of depicting the Big Other of psychoanalytic philosophy in the second-order observer that is much more relaxed than the latter. In fact, the second-order observer - from the perspective of observed observation - is nothing other than the Big Other, precisely the one who is always already present. And conversely, Lacan also sheds light on the cybernetics of 'orders': According to him, there is no being without the big Other, just as little as the 1st order observer.

ALWAYS ALREADY. It is therefore not enough to say that every observer always already has a self-consciousness; "always already" is also the carrying along of the gaze from outside, the being observed, or in Lacan's case, the big Other. We are therefore dealing with this "always-already" twin, consisting of the self(consciousness) and the big Other. But what kind of "always already" is it? Is it a "transcendental" always-already, i.e. one that only ever arises in an observation as "always-already", and is therefore an effect of the observation? Or is it a real before, something that is there even without observation? Everything points to the former, the "transcendental" variant. However, the previous concept of observation can be supplemented by a non-differentiating awareness that produces other 'effects': It does constitute a self, indeed it generates a me and the world, which are hardly different, at least not irreconcilably opposed to each other; but it bypasses the big Other: As long as I do not decide on something, as long as I do not take up a concept (like a playing card that sooner or later demands to be played), there is also no one who could observe, judge or even distinguish this 'not', or my awareness, from another awareness. Can I even say: I am mine then? Can I say: Then there are NOT two of me?

NOT TWO OF ME. Is that what we are looking for in art - if we cannot achieve it in everyday life - that experience without being observed? Being without being 'two', without the big

⁴⁹ Dirk Baecker can possibly be understood in precisely this sense when he formulates that every distinction is already a re-entered distinction; 'Im Tunnel', included in: Kalkül der Form

Other? If this could be answered positively, it would provide an alternative to distinguishing observation, one that would probably have less significance in the theories of the human being - if it were registered at all - but would nevertheless have the potential to scratch at the uniqueness of the postulate of distinction, or, to remain realistic, to put a foot in the door that would prevent it from closing.

OBSERVATION OF OBSERVATION IN ART. Luhmann says that only modern art is interested in being observed itself as an observer. But where does he get this from? What about the genre of the self-portrait, which has tended to lose importance in modern art? Here we should not only think of the single image of the painter painting himself, but also of self-portraits on the margins or as part of a more comprehensive, multi-figure representation. Think of the mirrors in which the painter and his canvas are recognizable WHILE he is painting the picture you are looking at.

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING: It doesn't even take art to track down the difference that makes no difference: we find it in the 'most important thing' in life, for life: in sex, in reproduction. We find it here in the form that has the greatest conceivable meaning for us, and yet cannot be represented in language - or which can only ever be pointed to by proxy - metaphorically, allusively, ironically.

SEX, OR: A NON-DIFFERENCE THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE ... the way in which a person is driven and controlled by the sex drive from puberty to a mature age ... and how this becomes the basic decisions of most biographies: Forming a couple, starting a family, changing location, settling down, starting a home ... Things like consciousness, communication or society can only arise if the sex drive has ensured that the necessary bodies populate the planet. It is a prerequisite for theories to be formed. The basic condition of a theory of difference is an indifference, something about which many words are spoken, but which - like music, like toothache - cannot be put into words.

WHAT CANNOT BE COMMUNICATED cannot be taken away from me. As incompatible as taste sensations, erotic or aesthetic experiences are in relation to the taste sensations, erotic or aesthetic experiences of others, they are mine and mine alone. But that which belongs only to me gives the otherwise constitutive emptiness of the subject a temporary foothold, something that cannot be pinned down, but to which one can refer, or against which one can hope for repetitions and variations of such experiences. Like Tarzan or Jane, the otherwise unstable individual slithers through his or her own life story, shimmying from one vine of the only thing that belongs to him/her to the next, thus avoiding the cruel ground

contact of the subject's absolute emptiness and lack of stability.

MORE THAN TWO SIDES. The question is therefore whether the two-sided form and the associated narratives of crossing, re-entry and blind spot are not an over-simplification⁵⁰. When Spencer Brown - and Luhmann with him - begins with a distinction, it is usually ignored that this beginning has always already begun, is based on something else, another distinction: self-consciousness, for example. Such a self-consciousness - if I were to use Luhmann's terms - would be a re-entry that has always already taken place when we decide to make a distinction. But this also means that the two-sided form is always already multiplied, always already reflected in itself, and is therefore more than two. What the narrative (of the two-sided form) breaks down into a sequence is actually always already present at the same time. And the blind spot does not just emerge, it is always already reflected: We see as much of it as the child who plays with childlike seriousness, who assumes, for example, that the chair here and now is a horse. It knows, of course, that it is a chair that has to serve as a horse, but it also knows of the necessity that the chair is a horse NOW.

SELF-REFERENCE AND DISTINCTION ARE THE SAME THING.

"selfreference and the idea of distinction are inseparable (...identical)"⁵¹ This seems to clarify that every distinction always presupposes self-distinction. The two-sided form is not the precursor of more complex forms, it is their result. It is easier to operate with.

IMMEDIACY IS AN EFFECT OF THE 2ND ORDER. In the discussion about the relationship between 1st and 2nd order observation, Luhmann also addresses the question of this relationship to immediacy or "naive" observation. In art, at least, he wants to find an opportunity for immediacy⁵².

However, I continue to assume that this distinction is artificial or at best serves as a kind of idealized visual model: First-order observation and second-order observation are considered separately, just as in music tone duration and intensity are considered separately although they can only

⁵⁰ Rather rarely do I come across the insight among systems theorists that Spencer Brown's calculus of form "only provides the very first steps in tracking down the connection between designation, distinction and form." (Dirk Baecker, *Beobachter unter sich*, Suhrkamp 2013, p.24; an illuminating book, even or especially where it invites further divergent thinking). In most cases, calculation tends to appear in the habitus of universal explanatory claims. (Of course, I do not want to give the impression that I have understood Spencer Brown; I am only inspired by the interpretations, implications and applications of his calculus, for example in Luhmann or Baecker)

⁵¹ Luhmann cit. Kauffmann, *Einführung*, p.205, FN 15

⁵² Luhmann, *Weltkunst*, in: *Unbeobachtbare Welt*, p.25

exist together and simultaneously: There is - except on paper - no pitch without loudness, and vice versa. So what is presented to us as a succession is always given simultaneously. Observation without self-awareness does not seem possible. And self-awareness includes the difference between system and environment - which Luhmann excludes for first-order observation⁵³. Immediacy, on the other hand, is not a before, not a naive observation - there is no such thing. There is perhaps a naïve description: the mutually exclusive distinction between first-order observation and second-order observation seems to me to be such a description - but there is no naïve observation. Immediacy is rather the inclusion of both, transcending these orders, in a kind of higher or even more immediate consciousness.

2nd ORDER OBSERVATION: How else could we enjoy a movie as 2nd order observers - knowing at the same time that they are actors and following the action with sympathy?

1ST ORDER OBSERVATION, THE ART PRODUCT. Once again: there is no first-order observation - perhaps for an earthworm, but I can't attest to that. Luhmann claims that art bases its world on the difference between first-order observation and second-order observation. For the longest time, art has always known that a thing is never just itself - so it has always been second-order observation. It was only minimal art - having grown weary of this always-already-known - that took the provocative step of claiming that a thing is a thing and nothing else. This is a good example of the fact that first-order observation is, to a certain extent, a very late result, or artifact, of cultural history: an art product created from excess, weariness and, in this case, even a certain decadence.

3RD ORDER OBSERVATION. Luhmann, too, finally seems to see that the distinction between the two orders originating in cybernetics has become under-complex and calls for "a third (and final) level of observation"⁵⁴ - which makes the previous division into first-order and second-order observation obsolete - or, perhaps more creatively: we recognize that lower levels are subsequent theory effects.

INDIRECTNESS AND DIRECTNESS. Indirectness is the norm. We do not start "naively" and directly, only to degenerate into indirectness. Indirectness is the norm. Immediacy, on the other hand, is a cultural achievement. Immediacy is what arises when we have passed through the mediating forces. It is perhaps conceivable as a synthesis of these forces, as their 'suspension'.

⁵³ *ibid.* 24

⁵⁴ *ibid.* 28

NOT BLIND. So we are not blind to our blindness. We know very well that in certain moments we have to block out certain things in order to remain capable of acting - or 'capable of playing': every child masters the trick, as we have seen. The implied blindness should therefore be (indignantly!) rejected. Theory seems to me to be more blind than man in this case - blind to the virtuosity and naturalness with which man "swings" the two-sided form, the conscious instrumentation of ignoring, of looking away, of omission.

V

Predecessor/successor

BOREDOM. Undoubtedly an existential candidate for an album of 'indistinguishabilities'. Boredom is like an empty room, like touching the ground from which something can only arise.⁵⁵ Agamben discusses Heidegger, who calls boredom a "basic mood" ("Grundstimmung"). Heidegger sees boredom in the proximity of the animal, its stupor and opacity. But only in this closeness - according to Agamben's conclusion - can the "there" ("Da") that is otherwise closed to humans be accepted.⁵⁶

BODY. Boredom precedes the "there", just as, since Merleau-Ponty, the body precedes consciousness. But the body is not yet the first instance. Or rather: the 'own' body is not. Perhaps we could say that the separation from the womb, i.e. the experience of difference, the experience of distinguishing oneself from the other body, precedes (one's own) corporeality.

CRAFT. Craft knowledge: The fingers know (how to do) things that the head could never articulate or put into language. This seems to come close to Merleau-Ponty's 'body' ('Leib') and perhaps it is also that which - apart from a machine 'thinking' - corresponds most closely to a first-order observer (if we cannot even say that fingers, and nowadays also machines, also observe themselves, insofar as they can correct and optimize themselves, i.e. simultaneously represent first- and second-order observers).

⁵⁵ "The deep boredom (...) reveals the being as a whole" (Heidegger, Was ist Metaphysik, FfM 1989, p.31)

⁵⁶ Giorgio Agamben, Der Gebrauch der Körper, p.318f. Later in the book, Agamben praises "indifference" and "indistinction" as effective strategies of resistance against power, the political machine, as a "zone of irresponsibility in which identities and legal sanctions are suspended" (p.414). "Resisting Representation" is a book title by Bell Hooks; this seems to aim in a similar direction.

HYBRID. Every craft is simultaneously a hybrid of man and technology, a symbiosis that is based on a certain indistinguishability or at least ambiguous delimitability. We should actually say 'hybrid of man-ape and technology', because a human being without technology is not yet a human being. Only when he grabs a hand axe or smartphone can he boast of being so.

OPACITY AND DISTANCE FROM ANIMALS. There are other possible links to opacity than Heidegger's stupor and closeness to animals: Jean Oury: "How do you recognize a paranoiac? Well, by the fact that he is transparent. Someone who is not a paranoiac has an opacity. On an ethical level, this opacity corresponds to respect for others"⁵⁷. And the psychiatrist who is confronted with this kind of indistinguishability could even come to the conclusion that this person is healthy.

SELF-REFERENCE AND BEING. Opacity - Luhmann calls it "intransparency" - is an inseparable part of self-reference, which in systems theory is the term for self-awareness. Because it cannot be proven empirically, Dirk Baecker calls it "the predetermined breaking point in systems theory"⁵⁸. Self-consciousness, toothache, love, being moved emotionally, having sex, artistic experience, the feeling of being THERE now, watching the glittering reflections of light on the waves, a wine tasting, the smell of snow - everything that cannot be proven empirically: nothing but predetermined breaking points, or: Being. Because self-reference "reaches into the void", and this void - says Luhmann - is being.⁵⁹

PREDECESSORS. The assertion that consciousness is always consciousness of something⁶⁰ can probably be found in different variations throughout the history of philosophy. But no matter how often it has been repeated, I don't believe in the "always". The consciousness of something is the thought that takes the place of what is thought. The aforementioned Bruno Latour, on the other hand, believes that he can refuse to allow cognition to take the place of the cognized by keeping his gaze firmly fixed on the reference chain that produces cognition, instead of seeing only the beginning (a thing) and the end (its name).⁶¹

Or let us think of the sound in the forest, of that presence and lucidity that crosses the highest form of attention with complete emptiness of thought. "Thinking involves not only the movement of thoughts, but also their silencing

⁵⁷ from: Henning Schmidgen, Die Guattari-Tapes, Merve, p.71; Jean Oury refers here to the psychiatrist Robert Gaupp.

⁵⁸ Dirk Baecker, Beobachter unter sich, Suhrkamp 2013, p.136

⁵⁹ ibid. 138

⁶⁰ Representative: Remo Bodei, Das Leben der Dinge, Matthes & Seitz 2020, p.62

⁶¹ Bruno Latour, Existenzweisen, Suhrkamp, 2018, p.145

('Stillstellung')," says Benjamin⁶². This morning I heard a demographic scholar on the radio⁶³ analyzing overpopulation and discussing the disproportionately high consumption of resources in 'developed' societies. He recommended "doing nothing" as a resource-saving 'activity'. Is it possible to think of "doing nothing" or "not distinguishing" together with Benjamin's "silencing", can it be seriously used to conserve resources, does it help us to be here instead of going somewhere, to preserve instead of consume, to pass on traditions instead of overcoming them? But perhaps these are too big words for this short text. Or let's link silencing with "depression", psychosis (refusal to speak), and let's not just think of mouthy poetic heroes or the "inarticulate sounds" of philosophers⁶⁴, but also of children and people who are less eloquent: they still show that they do not identify with the word that they - as if by necessity, reluctantly - take up. Does this lead anywhere - except perhaps to music? Let us first return to the more modest question of the temporality of silencing.

BEFORE/AFTER. So far, we have regarded boredom as the predecessor of presence, as well as the concentrated emptiness of thought with regard to the access of consciousness to a certain thought content, the tense indifference towards the decision that has been made. But that's one of those things with the 'before'. Often only the assumption of a before seems to reveal that it was a 'mythical' before, or perhaps a 'transcendental' one, one that only emerged from the process of perceptual work. The before as a result. So why not speak of an after. The 'silencing' is also such an after: it follows the thought. So the scheme is: we have to set a beginning in order to recognize it as its result at the end of the movement of thought.

The 'hearing' of which I spoke at the beginning is also subject to this movement. Initially, when I discovered it for myself, I was tempted to call it "pure hearing", and thus implicitly to see it as the more primal hearing that precedes the hearing of "something", the decoding hearing. In the meantime, it seems to me that "pure" is perhaps not entirely wrong, only in a different sense: pure not in the sense of still untouched, but in the sense of distilled, processed, elaborated, pure like pure alcohol.

It is about a culturally developed indistinguishability. An area where society has (re)conquered a zone, so to speak, in which distinguishing thinking no longer holds sole dominance.

⁶² Benjamin, Zur Kritik der Gewalt, p.92

⁶³ Reiner Klingholz, RBB Info-Radio, 17.7.2021

⁶⁴ "In philosophizing, one ends up where one only wants to emit an inarticulate sound." Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophische Untersuchungen §261.

And of course 'we', the musicians and artists, are the paradigm for such an area.

THE UNDISTINGUISHED AND THE FORM. Is the undistinguished that which makes form possible in the first place, or can it itself be form, as distinguished from the undistinguished? There is a third possibility: the undistinguished as that which transcends the difference between the distinguished and the undistinguished (the 'after'). We are therefore dealing with 3 modes of the undistinguished: The undistinguished as a Tohuwabohu that has not (yet) assumed a form and precedes all forms; the undistinguished as an opposition to the distinguished and thus as an independent form; and the undistinguished as a transcending of the opposition of the distinguished and the undistinguished.

If this is not too academic, it would result in a tripartite division: a thinking/perception that is not subject to the will BEFORE the distinction; in the middle, a distinguishing thinking/perception; and then a thinking/perception AFTER the distinction, which this time, however, follows an intention or even requires years of training (not unlike practicing the piano!).

THE CONCENTRATION, the tension paired with indifference that it takes just to be 'there', not to miss anything, and certainly not to allow even the slightest thought to stir up this concentration, to overshadow this clarity...

TENSE INDIFFERENCE: isn't that a characteristic trait of listening to music? Sure, there are also the more analytical, critical, deciphering sequences in listening. But the sitting still that embodies readiness, the gift of attention (- 'gift' in the sense of 'present' or perhaps 'credit'), the making oneself an empty vessel that is ready for any content, isn't that even more specific to listening to music than decoding a message? The basic features of musical experience therefore include indistinction, not the making of a distinction, but the gift of readiness.

"I DONT'T MIND BEING AN AN-ARTIST" (Duchamp)⁶⁵. But the other side, the only seemingly more active side of the artist or musician, cannot be grasped as "communication", or only insufficiently so⁶⁶. Anesthetic and anti-"retinal" intentions have accompanied art (especially) since the emergence of abstract art and the forerunners of conceptual art (Duchamp). Malevich speaks of the "non-representational desert of art". And indeed, some works of the past 100 years or so are as

⁶⁵ Marcel Duchamp, interview, 1959

⁶⁶ For Luhmann, the work of art is "exclusively" a means of communication (Die Kunst der Gesellschaft, Suhrkamp, 1995, p.41); on the other hand, he deprives even the most unambiguous body gestures of their full communicative competence (Einführung in die Systemtheorie, p.277).

aesthetic, sensual or inviting as a gray concrete wall. Instead of conveying meaningful information or sensual stimuli, they seem to confront us with a kind of denial of communication and sensory deprivation.

The negativity of the refusal to communicate has its positivity in its own temporality: the now. Nothing = Now. The absence of words is the absence of absence. The presence of refusal and sensory deprivation is the gift of pure presence. (The greatest disadvantage of texts such as this one lies precisely in this: when "philosophizing" I forget the here and now. In art, it remains closer to me).

UNTITLED. "You don't just want to be understood, you also want NOT to be understood" (Nietzsche)⁶⁷. A significant trait of visual art since 1913 (the year of the black square and the bottle dryer) cannot be derived from the production of meaning, even if there is probably nothing into which meaning cannot subsequently be interpreted. Rather, this trait seems to be based on a recurring impetus that is aimed more at pure imposition, astoundment, choc and speechlessness. In a way, the viewer is transformed into one big question mark. All bridges of explanation seem to break away, and despite the "tranquilizers" of meaning administered, there is no reassurance; all the mechanisms for assigning meaning that are otherwise so well practised suddenly fail to have their relieving effect. The work of art hurls us into a nirvana of indifference from the absence of meaning. We experience an empty place within ourselves, a cleared room that was previously unknown and closed to us. The absence of meaning corresponds to the presence of the emptiness of the 'room'. And it is precisely this synchronization that mutates into a key experience that collapses established stereotypes in order to enable new experiences and, inevitably, innovative art theories in the place that has been freed up or created in the first place.

Admittedly, at the end of the day, it looks as if only one meaning has been replaced by another⁶⁸. And not only the audience, but also the cultural institutions can breathe a sigh of relief when they can deal with and conclude one artistic imposition after another with meaning. The excitement may have died down and nerves are calmed, but we have not come any closer to understanding art or the basic impulses to which it owes its creation in many famous cases. The final meaning is preceded by something that, if it is not outright productive nonsense, can certainly not be dealt with by the scheme of meaning.

⁶⁷ Nietzsche, Briefe, cit.: Christof Windgätter, Medienwechsel, Kadmos 2006, p.18

⁶⁸ Dirk Baecker sees art - or cultural systems in general - quite generally as a symbolization of "the unity of meaning"; in: Intelligenz, künstlich und komplex, Merve 2019, p.30

Of course, this does not apply to all art. On the contrary, in recent years artistic motivations seem to dominate that are almost submissively subordinated to the imperative of producing meaning:

RESEARCH ERASES THE NON-RESEARCHABLE. There is a connection between the university development towards artistic research and the current rapid decline of abstract art or art of emptiness and refusal of expression. I have observed both in the last 15 years, i.e. since about 2005. Art such as "8 Grau" by Gerhard Richter, or other monochrome tendencies, or other manifestations of a successor to the 'black square', has since disappeared from the 'market'. What has remained is a talkative art, a rhetorical art, an art that always has good (political, socio-critical) reasons - the art of good reason. Only such an art is accessible to research, only such an art can be used to make a statement. Research is therefore carried out where researchable things can be found. And what is no longer "researched" today, what is not accessible to "research", no longer has a chance of being heard - how could it? How could silence make itself heard?

Musicology has always suffered from the fact that it has necessarily had to limit itself to what is discursively accessible - and has accordingly always been despised by the "real" musicians, who instinctively knew that discourse only scratches the surface of what really constitutes music. What is new is that today it is the "real" musicians who are leading the discourse, the composers and performers who are striving for a PhD, and who seem to forget what else is slumbering beneath the discursive surface - even worse: the forgetting is joined by a musical practice, a composing that tends to be limited to surface phenomena. Only what is accessible to the discourse is composed, while the unsaid or unspeakable, which actually - or once? - constituted the music, is suppressed and disappears from the stage.

Let us return to an art or music that does not (primarily) 'say'. Perhaps, like an architect, it provides society with buildings or places in or on which it is possible to say something - the listener's reception, which is always searching for meaning and testing interpretations - but which does not say anything itself. We return, but in a roundabout way.

THE HEARING THAT DOES NOT SAY. At first we would like to ask what that might be. Then, immediately afterwards, when we try to imagine what it might be, we realize how much 'normal', everyday hearing actually is saying: it is always spelling, always translating, always quietly mumbling along with the corresponding text, never just listening, always reading subtitles. It is listening that is subject to the 'torture of

thinking'. Conversely, a hearing that does not say would perhaps be a situation in which someone speaks to me, but I do not follow the content, but only the sound of what is spoken. This is also a strategy of indifference, an anti-authoritarian subversion, the interruption of the 'torture' in which I suspend the meaning by simply overhearing the 'text'.⁶⁹

NOT MEANING. Even if we cannot free ourselves from signification, from meaning as an instrument of discipline, order and oppression, preserving or reclaiming even a limited, temporary freedom from meaning is equivalent to the corresponding independence from what is NOT. For language, the text, is the negative, only it produces what does NOT exist.

LISTENING AWAY, CEASING TO HEAR, OVERHEARING⁷⁰. Forms of active non-perception. Of being visually blind. A suspension, a "silencing".

We find further forms of active non-perception in the aspects of redundancy that are so important for music: the too little, for example in moments of pure repetition or pure mechanics. There are forms of music that are as redundant and empty of information as counting from 1 to ∞ (or until the performance is whistled down by the audience)⁷¹. For the distinction theorist, such redundancy is not wrongly given meaning by the completely non-redundant 'outside' that it opposes. In addition (for the perception that has not yet been whistled down) there is a paradoxical pleasure in the senseless. But redundancies in art go far beyond special experimental cases. I would like to say: without redundancy there is no song: "...bring back, bring back, oh bring back my Bonnie to me, to me, bring back, bring back, oh bring back my Bonnie to me!" Axiom 1 of the calculus of forms says, "The value of the call made again is the value of the call"⁷². So all that remains is "Oh bring back my Bonnie to me". No more song. Not to mention all the variationless iterations in the various forms of minimalism in art and music. Even the first literal repetition introduces time AS time. In repetition, time no longer disappears behind information.⁷³ The quoted axiom translates as: If something is called by its name twice, the name does not change as a result. (Baby, baby = baby). In the sonata, the literal repetition is confirmation and consolidation. A

⁶⁹ Peter Ablinger, *Antiautoritär Etüde*, 2016, ablinger.mur.at/txt_antiauthoritarian.html

⁷⁰ In 2009, I took part in an interdisciplinary symposium entitled "Hinhören - Weghören - Überhören" at the Institute for Theater Studies at the FU Berlin.

⁷¹ Cf. for example Tom Johnson, *Power in Numbers*, 1987

⁷² George Spencer Brown: *Laws of Form*

⁷³ Although the fame of Spencer Brown's calculus of forms is based on the fact that he introduced time into logic, arithmetic or algebraic logic are not my forte, which may be the reason why I cannot see whether the calculus can still comprehend time in variationless repetitions; the signs and interpretations apparent to me seem to speak against it.

theme is thereby marked as such and set apart from a mere transition. The "name" of the theme thus changes through its consolidation. To paraphrase Hegel: The result is the being repeated, but not as a (pure) something.

Something quite comparable applies to the pleasure in the meaningless, the pleasure in that which means nothing, distinguishes nothing. If you need an example of this, here's a song from my Upper Austrian origins: "Druntn in Linz, do gibts a Tunnö, wau ma einifoad wirts finsta wau ma aussifoad wirts hö". [Translation: Down in Linz, there's a tunnel, when you drive in it gets dark, when you drive out it gets light]. Although nothing could be cut away here on the surface of the syntactically correct form, the consistent subversion of semantic content would have to be trimmed accordingly until there was nothing left - at least not pleasure - and could at best "condense" the subtext to: 'übermütiger G'stanzl-Sänger' ('boisterous folk singer'). But what is cut away here is far more than 'a bissl Gaudi' ('a little fun'). The musical and artistic form is fed from the same source as the musical subversion of meaning. It may appear superficially justified, but the 'form of the form' is not; it is not exhausted in meaning.

The other species of structured non-perception is the opposite of too little: too much, excessive demands, over-complexity. Categories that would strictly contradict classical aesthetics, which consists of a manageable number of clearly distinguishable "speaking", "signifying" units that can be grasped and described in every detail by the "ideal listener". And just as Saussure took speaking away from speech, such an aesthetic paradoxically requires a music that has been robbed of sound.

However, over-complexity is one of the most interesting challenges of contemporary art and music, especially when the source material that produces it is based on the opposite of complexity, namely on redundant, mechanistically simple structures. In a comparable way, Luhmann speaks in a posthumously published text of the "reversal of determined processes into intransparency" - intransparency, the "control" of which he then sets systems theory the task of yet to be achieved.⁷⁴ In our text, however, what Luhmann's legacy calls "intransparency" means: the undistinguished, that which art is "always already" in the process of redeeming and which determines our everyday lives as "controlled" indifference.

AMBIGUITY 2. The perceptual side is contrasted with the factual-practical generation of ambiguity. This is art's daily bread. Not only does it generate the undecidable, it also

⁷⁴ Niklas Luhmann, Die Kontrolle von Intransparenz, ed.: Dirk Baecker, Suhrkamp, 2018

transforms what was previously decided and to a certain extent discarded into undecidability and thus into new topicality. But it is not only art that can do this. A consciousness that acquires the ability to endure undecidability and remain capable of operating with it and despite it is also a consciousness that can cope with more than an either/or. And this also applies to other areas, social or political, for example, when unresolved and currently unsolvable questions not only do not prevent subsequent action, but also make it possible and bring it about in the first place.

INABILITY FOR SUBSEQUENT ACTION. If the sociologist stamps a thing as 'inable for subsequent action', this is tantamount to a death sentence, the thing may be discarded as irrelevant. The irritation (occasionally) generated by art, especially when it is experienced as emptiness, can derive this effect precisely from a gesture of refusal to communicate, from a temporary inability to connect. Temporarily, of course. But what can be connected to afterwards is in any case the experience of this inability to connect, or the inability to connect AS an experience, something to which we can then also attach a value, at least in art.

MORE WORLD. In the past (until Kant) there was only language. Or symbols. Nature/the world did not exist. Except as language or symbol. Later (from Kant onwards) there was language and the world. Separated from each other by an abyss. Today, this separation is still carried out, but the 'world' part is under a spell, for example as suspected of being metaphysical. Therefore, there is a separation of language and world, but at the same time the world is tabooed, while paradoxically maintaining the difference between world and language. After all, we have 'a little' more world than before. Can this be developed further? Become more world? (Less language?). For the time being, Latour's reconstruction of the individual connecting steps between the world and its own representation (in maps, for example)⁷⁵ is perhaps an anchor, a ray of hope, something that manages without the well-rehearsed division into fact and its concept, without the abyss between subject and object, but also - in system-theoretical terms - mediating between system and environment, perhaps a promise in the direction of 'more world' - 'more reality' - 'more there' ('Mehr Da').

MORE 'AH'. Finally, another trip to the sea. We've just arrived, and all we see is the line that separates sky and sea, nothing else, and we say 'Ah'. We don't say 'There' ('Da'). So in a way it's not about being there but about being Ah. Compared to 'ah', 'there' is still a metaphysical place. The there has not yet arrived. It still points somewhere, away from us. Only the Ah is identical with itself.

⁷⁵ Bruno Latour, Die Hoffnung der Pandora, Suhrkamp 2002

UN-DIVIDED. "First divided ("geschieden"), they are finally decided/undivided again ("entschieden")"⁷⁶, Windgätter summarizes the Hegelian movement of the spirit from negation to the negation of negation. For us, therefore, un-divided could mean moving away from divide, from difference, leaving it behind. The highest or most developed decision is therefore the one that turns against division, that puts an end to division.

BEING AWARE. To put an end to division could also mean to be fully aware of the non-divided options, much more clearly than if I had chosen one of the options. Choosing one of the options is (in traditional art) like choosing the object I want to represent. But if representation is not the primary task of art (it never was!), philosophers tend to bounce off it. And if the difference between applying and averting (the visible and the invisible) no longer applies, the system theorists feel the same way. Being aware, however, means seeing what is not visible, means recognizing the unity of form (also in the sense of Spencer Brown) without having made a distinction, means "seeing" what is present and what is absent at the same time, what is not and what is.

"THE UNREST IN ITSELF"⁷⁷. It would be "crooked and incorrect" and "rightly offensive" to contrast being and nothingness or subject and object without also emphasizing their unity. And this unity is not always a fixed quantity, but a continuous "dealing with distinctions", as Dirk Baecker puts it. "For the 'unrest in itself' of distinction is as important as difference and insight".⁷⁸ The attempt to think the undistinguished is perhaps a suitable 'unrest maker' that could enable the diversity of unity to be set in motion.

INDISTINGUISHABLE. Dirk Baecker again: "If you combine the observation of something and the observation of the observation itself, then what should be distinguished becomes indistinguishable."⁷⁹ The general question of my text was whether I do not also obtain 'something' with this indistinguishability. Something I've never had 'like this' before. In other words, whether in difference does not itself make a difference. "The operation negates itself", Baecker begins again in order to quickly return to differentiation. At

⁷⁶ Christof Windgätter, Medienwechsel, Kadmos 2006, p.126

⁷⁷ Hegel, Encyclopaedia, §88, cit. Baecker, Beobachter unter sich, p.88.

⁷⁸ Baecker, *ibid.* Elsewhere, Dirk Baecker argues that we should not just count to 2, i.e. go beyond binary thinking. It is still unclear how this should be compatible with the binarity of the 2-sided form, which only ever draws ONE boundary. How would it be if, instead of Spencer Brown's hook: \neg , we formulated a three-country triangle: Υ , a kind of multivalent divorce that would include the unlabeled (human) practice in the duality of the labeled and unlabeled; things that reproduce themselves autopoietically without having to resort to the distinguishing label.

⁷⁹ Dirk Baecker, *Intelligenz, künstlich und komplex*, Merve 2019, p.50

this point, however, we drop the axe, the one that 'falls' the distinctions, and grasp this negation in a different sense, as the negation of negation, as the coincidence of observation and observation of observation, as un-devision in the sense of the farewell of difference.

NON-SENSE AND THE INDISTINGUISHABLE. In the search for a way of thinking about art that is neither insinuating language, semiotically limiting nor reducing to communication, we have come across the non-sense of the indistinguishable. From there it should have become apparent that this non-sense is not limited to art, but that it intervenes in our everyday lives far beyond art. If it is true that non-sense and the indistinguishable cannot be pronounced, the intention of this text was to show that they can, however, be addressed, invoked, circumscribed and mapped. But above all - and the musician is reasonably certain of this - they can be played, sung, danced, painted, marveled at, practiced, lived.

*(English translation from DeepL,
with cursory edits by the author)*