

Metaphysics in Messiaen / Formal Analysis more generally

1. Plato (Timaeus):

a. Being / Becoming

- i. Messiaen's Time is eternal (we see a snapshot of eternity — or rather, a snapshot of a snapshot)

b. Platonic Forms

- i. Allegory of the Cave - the world of appearance / essence - Universals / Particulars

ii. Chair

1. what damage can we do to it until it no longer partakes in the form of chair
2. At what point did it move from the form of Tree to the Form of Chair

iii. EX: Triangle (Descartes)

1. Notion/Form of Triangle — essence (being)
2. Whatever that shape is — existence (becoming)
 - a. We know that all triangles have angles that equal 180o
 - b. We can provide a geometrical proof to this effect with a particular triangle
 - c. however any particular triangle is not perfect, so the proof only perfectly describes not any material triangle we see with the eyes but a triangle we see with the mind
 - d. conversely we could provide an algebraic proof, but then there is no instantiated triangle - we only have the mathematical form
 - e. Conferre: if we say that the universal triangle exists then it must have three sides
 - f. if it has three sides it must be isocetes (incl. equilat.) or scalene but cannot be both
 - g. however if the universal is true for all triangles then the universal must be both isocetes and scalene, which is impossible

c. Musical Form / Performance

- i. how do we determine excellence in performance without some notion of a perfect performance?

- ii. A tenet of formal analysis is that it is the essential formal coherence that grants meaning to the individual (isolated) events in a piece.

1. To explain this you need to introduce Aristotle's hylomorphism exemplified in a work of art
2. viz. a good work of art has the form of beauty in it

d. "The harmonious silence of heaven"

i. **Harmonia / Homonoia**

***ar- to fit together**

***men-[1]**

1. to think, mind
2. spiritual activity

***mon- being**

harmony = homo -noia "thought" (from nous, mind)

Nous — Parmenides: "intellectual" perception (not sense) | Anaxagoras: Cosmic Nous (more active logos, but does not necessarily continue active role)

e. Plato on art

- i. he didn't hate it he just thought it should lead to contemplation of the forms
- ii. MEANS should be connected to ENDS
- iii. Modernity (i.e. Enlightenment) tends towards the separation of means and ends, and the dispersal of ends
 1. Management culture — "it doesn't have to be good, it just has to be"
 2. Messiaen's Catholic Serialism vs. Boulez / Cage

- f. government - the history of the 19th / 20th centuries is the history of attempts (and horrifying failure) to realize utopias
2. Mode de valeurs
- a. Incomprehensible surface / carefully designed process — reflection on god's will?
 - b. underlying numeric attributes are what is important
 - c. Rational/Technical or Pythagorean Mysticism?