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Sounding signs: Intentionality and repetition between Peircean and Deleuzian semiotics

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Abstract. This article examines intentionality and habit formation in musical experience through Deleuzian and Peircean semiotic frameworks. Through analysis of experimental music practices, particularly extreme metal and jazz, we investigate how these philosophical perspectives illuminate contemporary musical phenomena. The study begins with an analysis of Deleuze's critique of phenomenological intentionality and his theory of temporal synthesis at the pre-individual level. This framework is then applied to the musical subgenre of thall to demonstrate processes of differentiation and actualization. The investigation proceeds to Peirce's semeiotic approach to intentionality, focusing on habit formation and the quasi-mind in relation to musical practice. Analysis of jazz improvisation and practice routines demonstrates the explanatory power of Peircean habit acquisition theory for understanding musical skill development. The study concludes by identifying theoretical convergences and divergences between Deleuze and Peirce, particularly regarding teleology and processual becoming. This comparative analysis reveals how both philosophical approaches transcend traditional subject–object dichotomies while maintaining distinct positions on teleological aspects of experiential and experimental processes.

Keywords: intentionality; habit; music; Deleuze; Peirce; metal; jazz

1. Introduction: Art as transformative experience of common sense

As John Dewey, perhaps Peirce's most famous student, notes, there is no better test that fully reveals the one-sidedness of philosophy than its approach to art and aesthetic experience (Dewey 1934: 274). Our goal here is not to create a comprehensive catalogue of Deleuzian and Peircean figures, but rather – following

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the good example of both writers – to draw inspiration from their overflowing semiotic *toolboxes*, to address the topic of the relationship between the notions of 'intentionality' and 'art' – specifically in the cases of extreme metal and jazz music. Our point of departure is the fact that both authors frequently turn to art as a distinctive activity and important life form that has strong potentiality to bring into cognition something unexpected or uncommon. In the Francophone tradition, the idea that artistic practices are not just illustrative but fundamentally transformative, showcasing something distinct from the ordinary, is almost an essential component of general philosophical discourse.[3] It is not a surprise that Deleuze often engages with post/modern music and its capacity to express complex temporalities and affective intensities (Deleuze 1993[1988]: xi, 33, 82, 163–164 n37; cf. Campbell 2019; Döbereiner 2014). Although he does not dedicate a single work exclusively to music, his ideas on rhythm, repetition, refrain, and difference permeate his philosophical inquiries, suggesting that music exemplifies the dynamic processes of becoming. Throughout his writings, art functions as a leitmotiv, enabling Deleuze to articulate concepts such as 'deterritorialization

[3] Let us recall, for instance, the opening scene of Foucault's *The Order of Things* (1966), which begins with a Borges citation that confronts the reader with unusual, confusing and strange form of taxonomy. Similarly, in Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987[1980]) the reader encounters an obscure musical pictogram on the very first page. In Deleuze's subsequent work, the transformative experience with art becomes a distinctive component throughout most of his writings. In *Proust and Signs* (1973[1970]), Deleuze examines Marcel Proust's exploration of time, memory, and signs, arguing that art reveals the multiplicities of meaning beyond traditional representational thinking. His two-volume work on cinema, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (Deleuze 1986[1983]) and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (Deleuze 1989[1985]), offers a philosophical analysis of film. Here, Deleuze, through a critical turn to Bergson's philosophy and with the help of Peirce, shows how the concepts of 'movement-image' and 'time-image' transform not only the artistic experience of time and movement but also introduce a new method of artistic work where montage becomes the primary principle. We find a similar theme in *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (Deleuze 1981), where he explores painting as a means to access pure sensation, interpreting Bacon's art as an encounter with forces that disrupt habitual ways of seeing. Collaborating with Félix Guattari in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (Deleuze, Guattari 1986[1975]), they explore Franz Kafka's works to develop the concept of minor literature, highlighting how language subverts dominant narratives of Western literature and thought. Analogous ideas are then elaborated to an impressive breadth in these authors' two key works, *Anti-Oedipus* (Deleuze, Guattari 1983[1972]) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze, Guattari 1987[1980]). And finally, in Deleuze's last collaborative work with Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* (1994[1991]), they explicate the vital role of art within the triad of philosophy, science, and art. They assert that each discipline engages in the creation of its own distinct concepts: philosophy generates concepts, science formulates functions, and art produces percepts and affects. Art, for them, is not merely a reflection or representation of reality but an active force that creates new sensations and experiences.

and reterritorialization', 'assemblage', 'nomadic' and 'rhizome' – ideas that underscore the 'smooth spaces' of thought (cf. Deleuze, Guattari 1987[1980]: 474–500). The foundation of the intersection between art and philosophy in Deleuze's post-Kantian[4] framework lies in his effort to capture those moments when art possesses the power to represent percepts and affects that are independent of or transcend individual subjective intentions. His writings embody a mode of thought that embraces creativity, experimentation, and the continual reconfiguration of concepts to reveal the new and the unexpected (see Deleuze, Guattari 1994[1991]: 73; cf. Campbell 2019: 358). Peirce is no less interested in art – he was a polymath who was apparently both a lover of theatre and music as well as a passionate reader and critic of Immanuel Kant's and Friedrich Schiller's aesthetics (cf. Ibri 2018: 61) and can also be seen as a truly experimental philosophical writer (cf. Keeler, Kloesel 1997: 283). Both Peirce and Deleuze share a common goal of portraying the artist as someone who introduces specific modes of inference, training and habituating their abilities to experience signs *differently*, or even, in a certain sense, *truthfully*.[5]

This emphasis on art's potential to reveal the unexpected is particularly evident in Peirce's phenomenological method. His approach articulates three fundamental cognitive abilities – attunement, persistence, and generalization – a triadic structure that would later find resonance in Deleuze and Guattari's work (see Deleuze, Guattari 1987[1980]: 311). To explain these capacities, he uses the example of artistic perception, showing how each ability contributes to genuine observation. First, attunement represents our capacity for direct, unmediated observation – as Peirce explains, "that which stares a man in the face, as it presents itself, unreplaced by any interpretation, unsophisticated by any allowance of this or that supposed modifying circumstance" (1903, CP 5.42). He illustrates this through the artist's perception of snow:

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[4] For Deleuze (and partially for Peirce, cf. 1905, CP 5.505–525) Kant is not critical enough. Deleuze's most significant engagement with Kant can be found in three of his works: *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (Deleuze 1983[1962]), *Kant's Critical Philosophy* (Deleuze 1984[1963]), and *Difference and Repetition* (Deleuze 1994[1968]). Deleuze argues that Nietzsche's philosophy of forces in tension provides a more adequate conception of synthesis than Kant's synthesis of representations. In Deleuze's opinion, Kant compromises critical philosophy by resorting to *common sense*. He fails to provide a true grounding principle because he only offers the conditions of possibility for experience rather than its real conditions, when the main failure is Kant's subsuming a harmony of faculties under the rule of understanding.

[5] For the interconnection of the concept of event and truth(s), see Badiou 2007: 38–41. Both authors thus – whether implicitly or explicitly – contend with a certain Platonic, dualistic framework in which true knowledge would belong only to the philosopher and in which the artist is a simple imitator of reality (further, see Vellodi 2014; Williams 2015).

> When the ground is covered by snow on which the sun shines brightly except where shadows fall, if you ask any ordinary man what its color appears to be, he will tell you white, pure white, whiter in the sunlight, a little greyish in the shadow. But that is not what is before his eyes that he is describing; it is his theory of what ought to be seen. The artist will tell him that the shadows are not grey but a dull blue and that the snow in the sunshine is of a rich yellow. (1903, CP 5.42)

This contrast between ordinary and artistic perception demonstrates how trained attunement allows one to see beyond theoretical assumptions about what *ought* to be seen. Where the ordinary observer falls back on preconceived notions of how things should appear (white snow, grey shadows), the artist's trained perception reveals the actual phenomenal qualities present (yellow snow, blue shadows). This capacity for direct observation, freed from habitual assumptions, represents precisely the kind of attunement that Peirce considers essential for phenomenological investigation.

The second capacity, persistence, manifests as what Peirce calls a "resolute discrimination which fastens itself like a bulldog upon the particular feature that we are studying, follows it wherever it may lurk, and detects it beneath all its disguises" (1903, CP 5.42). This vivid metaphor of the bulldog captures the tenacious nature of genuine phenomenological investigation. Where attunement opens us to direct perception, persistence enables us to maintain focus on a specific phenomenon despite its various manifestations and transformations. Just as the artist must study how light and shadow interact across different conditions and times of day, the phenomenologist must track their object of study through all its variations and appearances. This persistent attention allows for sustained focus on specific phenomenal features, building up a comprehensive understanding that goes beyond mere initial observation. The third, generalization, represents "the generalizing power of the mathematician who produces the abstract formula that comprehends the very essence of the feature under examination purified from all admixture of extraneous and irrelevant accompaniments" (1903, CP 5.42). This mathematical metaphor is crucial – just as a mathematician distils complex phenomena into precise formulas, phenomenological generalization involves identifying the essential patterns that persist across multiple instances of observation. Where attunement provides direct access to phenomena and persistence tracks their variations, generalization synthesizes these observations into broader understanding. In the artistic context, this might manifest as the ability to recognize underlying principles of light and colour that hold true across different scenes and conditions. This ability enables the observer to extract essential patterns and relationships from particular observations, moving beyond individual instances to grasp the general structures that govern phenomenal experience.

These three capacities – attunement, persistence, and generalization – come together most clearly when we examine their practical manifestation. First, let us emphasize Peirce's reference to (1) the difference between ordinary and specifically trained sensitivity, (2) the difference between habits and (3) the difference in potentially various possibilities of inferential processes dependent on different perceptions. This observation implies two types of 'indefinite' – in the sense of being open-ended and always capable of further development – but also general forms of self-control: of the so-called "ordinary person" and the "artist", the latter being someone who has cultivated specific attunement, specific perceptual, observational and experimental habits: persistent abilities to disrupt what *ought to be seen*. Even the artist's observational abilities are assembled from the persistence of the "bulldog" and generalization of the "mathematician" – capacities we have seen manifest in their sustained attention to phenomenal details and ability to extract general principles from particular observations.

Peircean semeiotic is, crucially, characterized by *continuism* (see Bellucci 2013; Stjernfelt 2014), which is why it cannot be simplified to any primitive dictum of supposedly distinct categories of icon–index–symbol. In this way, Peirce comes close to what Deleuze expected from the revision of Kantian philosophy: it becomes a leading methodological tool of the analysis of process of abstract observation and a ground for critique of common sense, as well as the critique of both Cartesian and ordinary intuition and deterministic and necessitarian philosophies.[6] As Deleuze (1995: 143) argues, "[e]verything I've written is vitalistic, at least I hope it is, and amounts to a theory of signs and events". The main link to follow here is primarily the leading idea of process: understood as irreducible to

[6] Deleuze finds promise in Kant's discussion of the sublime – seeing in this "discordant harmony" of faculties an opening towards a "transcendental exercise" of the faculties. Deleuze also identifies several other valuable elements in Kant's philosophy, which are (1) Kant's recognition of temporality's role in the move from 'I think' to 'I am' – what Deleuze describes as the constitution of a 'fractured I'; (2) the recognition of 'Ideas' as 'problems' and (3) the suggestion in *The Critique of Judgment* that harmony among faculties might be discordant. Deleuze then argues that Kant betrays these original insights in all three cases. Rather than assuming common sense, a truly critical philosophy should provide a genetic principle of accord behind the production of common sense. This is precisely what Deleuze's "transcendental empiricism" (and Peircean pragmaticism) aims to accomplish. Following other Kantian critics, Deleuze begins by abandoning Kant's dualism of sensing and understanding. To achieve this, he develops a novel conception of Ideas that reunites the two aspects of aesthetics that were separated: the theory of forms of experience and the work of art as experimentation (Egyed 2007: 1–3). See: Egyed, Bela 2007. Deleuze's transcendental empiricism. *Helicon*, available at https://www.academia.edu/20791821/DELEUZES_TRANSCENDENTAL_EMPIRICISM.

a single origin, namely the speaking and thinking subject. Subjectivity is always becoming something other; is always simultaneously tychistic, anancastic and agapistic (1903, CP 6.302); is always continuous and dissolved, because it is always third:

> Consistency necessarily occurs between heterogeneities, not because it is the birth of a differentiation, but because heterogeneities that were formerly content to coexist or succeed one another become bound up with one another through the 'consolidation' of their coexistence and succession. The intervals, intercalations, and articulations constitutive of motifs and counterpoints in the order of an expressive quality also envelop other qualities of a different order [...]. (Deleuze, Guattari 1987: 330)

1.1. Events: the lines of interconnections and flights

Most of Peirce's philosophical work is characterized by an effort to develop a non-psychologistic theory of logic (cf. Cristalli 2017),[7] coupled with an attempt to invent both: naturalist and speculative-philosophical vocabulary for understanding the general concept of the intentionality of mind (see Short 2007: ix; cf. 1897, CP 2.227). Thomas L. Short aptly pointed out a certain affinity in understanding the term 'to intend' as primarily and necessarily coexisting with the concept of 'mind'.[8] In Peirce's phaneroscopy (or phenomenology[9]), a particular branch of science that "ascertains and studies the kinds of elements universally present in the phenomenon, meaning by the phenomenon whatever is present at any time to the mind in any way" (EP2: 259, 1903), the concept of 'mind' relates to the category of

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[7] Cristalli, Claudia 2017. Experimental psychology and the practice of logic. *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* [Online], IX-1, https://doi.org/10.4000/ejpap.1006, was accessed on 10 October 2024.

[8] Peirce's broad understanding of the intentionality of mind stems from intertwined, expansive frameworks and various philosophical inspirations covering Plato, Aristotle, medieval and baroque realist scholasticism, German idealism, as well as the practice of the natural sciences of his time. Peirce often views progress in sciences such as chemistry, physics, astronomy, and mathematical logic as necessary inspiration for philosophy, especially in efforts to categorize and taxonomize knowledge and cognition, or in other words, habitual forms of reasoning.

[9] By 'phaneroscopy', Peirce meant a general description of formal elements defining anything that can be thought (1909, CP 8.265) – a description of the collective whole that can be present to mind (1902, CP 2.284). "Peirce himself claims to have taken the term from Hegel, but as has been pointed out by Frederik Stjernfelt (2007, 441 n. 153), his usage of the term coincides with the period in which he was reading Husserl, and there are indeed obvious similarities between Peirce's and Husserl's usages, which are not found in Hegel's work" (Sonesson 2013: 299; cf. Stjernfelt 2007: 141–142).

Thirdness, the crucial ontological design of generality, regularity, mediation, and law, that mediates between singular actualities and vague qualities (cf. CP 1867, 1.551–554; ca 1880, CP 1.353; cf. Nöth 2011). This general potentiality of things becoming "intentionally" objects of representations (cf. Deely 2015: 10–17) coexisting with the concept of mind that is distinct from human, or even non-human, consciousness (Santanella 2021). The English expression 'to intend' is not used here in the sense of the person 'having an intention', but rather in the Latin sense of 'intend', which means stretching or straining toward something. For this something to become something *other than itself in some respect, capacity, or regard*, it does not necessarily require human desires or intentions.[10] In Peirce's thought, the idea of representation is carried by a strong assumption of the teleology of intentionality: the objects of signs stretch towards being represented, and interpretants stretch towards becoming objects for further signs. Peirce never assumes intentionality to be dependent on mind, subject, or language (Short 2007: 6–8; cf. Short 1981).

Let us deterritorialize Peirce's ideas onto the field of Deleuzian thought: regarding the ethics of terminology, a philosophical concept first possesses rhetorical, persuasive force that connects the world its initiator observes in abstraction with the community to whom it is offered (cf. Švantner 2019a). For Peirce our thoughts and inferences are generally effective because they have adapted the general semiosic processes. The function of thinking and all meaning-making – and thus the emergence, action, and agency of signs – lies precisely in producing habits of action: capacities to guess successfully, to be erroneous, to be persistent and to persuade.

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[10] The first step in phaneroscopic analysis thus involves excluding the 'I' from the field of consciousness as well as from the intentional, subjective mind. It assumes that the theatre of phenomenal manifestation is not the mind, the Cartesian subject, or the individual – which Peirce considered phenomena among others – but something else requiring further investigation. Then concepts like 'I' are not attributed to the field of consciousness understood as opening their own specificity. Rather than requiring the subject to accompany each individual representation, it is understood here as an effect, as a co-relation of the field of consciousness and the phenomena occurring within it. Representation *per se* evidently differs from self-presentation, from phaneral self-presencing. Representation involves re-presenting something not immediately present. As André De Tienne (2013) summarizes, representation means that something is not self-manifested but must be manifested in some other way than by its own resources, and signs are charged with this mediating mission. Although signs are themselves phaneral, their peculiarity lies in trying to manifest and communicate something else through and beyond their own appearing, while exhibiting their own specific mode of being, representing something other than themselves (De Tienne 2013: 20).

The elaboration of the pragmatic maxim becomes clear here: observing "meaning" consists in determining what habits of thought it produces. The identity of a habit then depends on how it leads us to act, not only under circumstances likely to occur but under any circumstances that might occur, regardless of how improbable they may be. What a habit is depends on when and how it prompts us to act: to go, to stop, to settle, to flee and sometimes to move in a zig zag. What is tangible and conceivably practical as the root of every real distinction in thought, no matter how subtle? There is no distinction of meaning so fine that it would consist in anything other than a possible difference in a conduct, in an agency (1878, CP 5.400). In Deleuzian ontology, an event tends to be framed by the question "what happened?" (cf. Deleuze, Guattari 1987: 192). An encounter with an event then stimulates ways of codification through territorial index-signs, where these territories function as "zones of proximities". As Deleuze and Guattari (1987[1980]: 273; cf. Badiou 2007: 38–39) explain, "haecceity (individual uniqueness) is inseparable from fog and mist that depend on a molecular zone, a corpuscular space. Proximity emerges as both a topological and quantum concept, marking membership in the same molecule, independent of any considered subjects or determined forms."

In Peirce's metaphysics, an event tends to become action and thus a sign. However, in contrast to Deleuze (and Guattari; see Deleuze 1991: 474–475), this premise leads Peirce not to reject the idea of a grand metaphysical system, which manifests as his objective idealism. If continuity tending toward possible finality is the fundamental principle of Peirce's objective idealism, then all universal processes are teleological (cf. 1893, MS 963).[11] Therefore, all generalities are includable under the category of representation and all meaning is processed in continuity, community and evolutionary growth and this is because every causal act contains efficient cause, purpose and some degree of finality, and mechanical phenomena are understood here as teleological processes with a low degree of finality (cf. Stjernfelt 2007: 43). Peirce's evolutionary teleology additionally includes the concept of – in this sense positive – objective chance, meaning that at every stage of the process, the emergence of irreducible novelty or innovation is possible (1892, EP1: 308). Peirce thus emphasizes the necessary possibility of innovative force of mediation, expressed in semeiotic as potentially infinite growth of semiosis (1902, CP 2.92).

Deleuze and Peirce share a broad metaphysical vision of the mutual interplay between continuity and radical change, where representation always resides in

[11] Peirce maintained (cf. 1903, MS 478) that final and efficient causality complement each other (1902, CP 1.212).

the blending of different ontological orders (cf. Champagne 2015: 546–547). The sign is a relationship – or what Deleuze calls an 'assemblage' – of diverse modes of representations, encompassing mental states, images, and materiality (cf. Charvát, Karľa 2018: 142–144). The sign as a relationship is inextricably linked to the concept of process and is irreducible to a single or dual exclusive source. Both Deleuze and Peirce are indeterministic thinkers of the event: the main semiosic power of the universe can be described precisely through a broader understanding of the concept of the 'intentionality', as will be discussed further below. This vague power stretches through events towards a general *will to invent*. When philosophical investigation or artistic sensibility encounters something for which one lacks satisfactory representation, it must attempt to invent such a system of signs which diffuse this irritating state of affairs (cf. Deleuze, Guattari 1994[1991]: 141). One might desire to produce a book-event consisting of "vibrating plateaus" instead of "chapters" or try to express the daring generalization that all steps in cognition have the nature of inference and all reasoning is diagrammatical (cf. 1905, CP 4.530; Stjernfelt 2014: 2–3).

2. Deleuze on subject, intentionality and thought

Deleuze develops many of his treatises from the critique of the Kantian conception of a stable and/or permanent subject. As we will see below, he shares with Peirce a certain reluctance, more of a methodological nature, towards what he calls "vulgar" (or "common-sense") phenomenology, which derives both from the idea of the primacy of human consciousness and from the dominant position of intentionality grounded exclusively in language. In his 1985 seminar, he expresses this as follows:

> One of the immediate consequences of such a point of view is a fundamental criticism of intentionality. Or, if you prefer, it is a critique of phenomenology, at least in its vulgar form. By "vulgar", I mean nothing pejorative, I mean: what has been retained as the most known, what has been retained as the most prevalent understanding of phenomenology is the idea of intentionality, not only of consciousness, but of syntheses of consciousness according to the famous formulation that "all consciousness is the consciousness of something." And, from this point of view, language, one synthesis of consciousness among others, is presented as being intentional, exhibiting an intentionality towards a state of affairs, or of something. It's as if language is aiming toward something.[12]

[12] Deleuze, Gilles 1985. Seminar on Foucault, 1985–1986, Part I: Knowledge (Historical Formations), Lecture 07, 10 December 1985 (Dufourcq, Annabelle, transcription; Bankston,

Defined here as the orientation of consciousness to an object, for the most part, every act of consciousness has an object. This subject–object relation requires equating a certain, more or less permanent, subject, who possesses the power of volition to choose to aim it at a more or less distinct object in the external world. Deleuze turns this model upside down so to speak, erasing the priority of the subject as well as the importance of consciousness in the process of the formation of experience. He, as a follower of Whitehead's processualism (cf. Shaviro 2012), reverts to impersonal procedures, pre-subjective forces, and dynamic *becomings*, instead of a subject-based perspective of stabilized *beings*. In other words, language itself, which was meant to be the guarantee and centre of stability insofar as it conducts subjectivity's dialogue about subjectivity, becomes from this perspective a key problem for phenomenology.[13] Deleuze focuses, in the context of his seminars and his book concerning Michel Foucault, on the core problem of intentionality:

> The idea that consciousness is directed towards the thing and gains significance in the world is precisely what Foucault refuses to believe. In fact intentionality is created in order to surpass any psychologism or naturalism, but it invents a new psychologism and a new naturalism to the point where, as Merleau-Ponty himself said, it can hardly be distinguished from a 'learning' process. It restores the psychologism that synthesizes consciousness and significations, a naturalism of the 'savage experience' and of the thing, of the aimless existence of the thing in the world. (Deleuze 1988[1986]: 108)

Thus, in proposing the directedness of consciousness to an object, phenomenology reconstitutes the subject – a move which Deleuze deems unnecessary. Deleuze's critique of phenomenology fundamentally develops from semiotics in three ways: in the ontological context, it stems from the Nietzschean turn toward pre-individual forces and intensities of events that precede both subjective and linguistic intentionality; in the consideration of language not as the ultimate guarantor of thought but rather as one of many tools; and finally, in his effort – like Peirce implicitly – to liberate the sign from a logo-centric understanding of representation. Intentionality thus cannot be reduced to the primacy of consciousness, to an 'I' that serves as the absolute source of knowledge. However, this illusion is not opposed by any better or truer knowledge, but rather by an endless process of encountering forces from various natural and social environments which we try

Samantha, trans.). *The Deleuze Seminars*. Available from: deleuze.cla.purdue.edu/lecture/lecture-07-11/ (accessed 18 October 2024).

[13] Deleuze, similar to Derrida in this regard (cf. Derrida 1972), refuses to accept the postulated of linguistic structuralism (cf. Deleuze, Guattari 1987[1980]: 75–110), which merely replaces the primacy of the subject with another stable centre: de-subjectivized language.

to adapt to through the mobilization, coding and re-coding of signs. In Deleuze's metaphysics, 'existence', i.e. being in dynamic relation, is constituted on a 'plane of immanence', a pre-individual field where virtual potentials and active forces interact. This plane is characterized by processes of differentiation and becoming, which are not governed by any central consciousness or subject (cf. Deleuze 1994[1968]: 35–60; Deleuze 2001[1995]: 25–33).[14] Thus, 'intentionality' no longer signifies a conscious subject aiming his/her thought at an object but refers to the immanent processes of production that gives rise to subjects, objects and thoughts. "Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental encounter" (Deleuze 1994[1968]: 176). From this perspective, signs are primarily indexes of territory, tools for navigations that can install specific habits.

Following the above, we arrive at the position where thought is not a product of a subject directing its intentionality toward an object. Instead, thought is an event – its nature is not of being, but of becoming – taking place on a plane of immanence. And this becoming occurs through two interwoven processes that Deleuze identifies as central to all becoming: differentiation and actualization. To understand these two processes, we have to outline Deleuze's specific notion of reality. For Deleuze, following Bergson, reality consists of two intertwined dimensions: the virtual and the actual. The actual refers to the observable states of affairs – the empirical reality we can perceive and interact with directly. The virtual, however, is not simply the possible or the imaginary; it is fully real but not yet actualized:

> The virtual is opposed not to the real but to the actual. *The virtual is fully real in so far as it is virtual.* Exactly what Proust said of states of resonance must be said of the virtual: 'Real without being actual, ideal without being abstract'. (Deleuze 1994[1968]: 208)

Virtual is constituted as a field of real potentials and tendencies that, while not physically present, exert genuine effects on the actual world. This unfolding of a reality happens through immanent processes, which are self-organizing and self-differentiating – they do not have direction given to them from the outside, they do not have any external organizing principle. These are the processes of differentiation and actualization. Differentiation occurs within the virtual and involves

[14] See for example D. W. Smith "Deleuze and the question of desire: Towards an immanent theory of ethics", in *Deleuze and Ethics* (2011). For an exhaustive analysis of immanence in Deleuze's works, see Christian Kerslake's *Immanence and the Vertigo of Philosophy: From Kant to Deleuze* (2009).

the determination of virtual differences and their relations. This process defines the structure of virtual multiplicities – the network of tendencies, problems, and potentials that exist in a state of mutual implication. Actualization, on the other hand, is the process by which these virtual differences become expressed in actual forms, creating specific solutions to virtual problems (Deleuze 1994[1968]: 182–183). Unlike the relationship between the possible and the real, where the real simply mirrors pre-existing possibilities, Deleuze emphasizes that the process of actualization involves genuine creation and difference. When the virtual becomes actualized, it does not merely replicate what was already contained in the virtual state. The virtual must undergo differentiation to become actual, creating new lines of differentiation that were not predetermined. This means that the virtual's essential characteristic is its need to differentiate itself in order to be actualized (cf. Deleuze 1988[1966]: 96–98).

When Deleuze claims that "something in the world forces us to think" (Deleuze 1994[1968]: 176), he is describing how thought emerges through encounters with virtual multiplicities that demand actualization. For Deleuze, these encounters always take the form of problems. However, problems here are not simple obstacles that are to be overcome; or questions awaiting pre-existing answers. Instead, a problem for Deleuze constitutes a virtual structure of differential elements and relations that precedes any particular solution. As he argues:

> The problem is at once transcendent and immanent in relation to its solutions. Transcendent, because it consists in a system of ideal liaisons or differential relations between genetic elements. Immanent, because these liaisons or relations are incarnated in the actual relations which do not resemble them and are defined by the field of solution. (Deleuze 1994[1968]: 163)

Thought, in this framework, is the process by which virtual problems become actualized into specific conceptual determinations, always involving creation rather than mere recognition or mirror-like representation. Thus, intentionality cannot be understood as a relation between consciousness and its objects, but rather as the productive process through which both consciousness and objects emerge. It describes the dynamic movement of differentiation itself – the way virtual multiplicities become actualized into specific forms of thought and experience. What makes this conception distinct is that intentionality operates at the pre-individual level where virtual problems demand actualization, creating the conditions for both thinking and being. In this sense, intentionality is the immanent process of differentiation that precedes and produces what we traditionally understand as subject–object relations.

2.1. Habit, memory and eternal return

Having established that intentionality cannot be reduced to a conscious subject directing thought toward objects but rather refers to immanent processes of production that give rise to both subjects and objects, we must examine how these processes operate. For Deleuze, these productive processes are fundamentally temporal in nature, occurring through three syntheses that structure how thought engages with virtual problems at a pre-individual level. These passive syntheses of time – habit, memory, and the empty form – are crucial for understanding how intentionality functions without a conscious subject as its source. Thus, time itself must be understood not as a uniform container for events but as actively produced through these three syntheses. Each synthesis constitutes a different dimension of temporality: habit's contraction of the present, memory's preservation of the past, and the future's potential for difference. These syntheses are themselves aspects of the immanent processes of production that we identified with intentionality – they describe how these processes operate temporally, prior to and independent of any conscious subject or represented object.

The first synthesis, habit, operates in the dimension of the present and establishes the most fundamental level at which experience is organized. Habit is not a conscious repetition or learned behaviour, but rather a general process through which the living present itself is constituted. As Deleuze (1994[1968]: 71) emphasizes, this synthesis "is not carried out by the mind, but occurs in the mind which contemplates, prior to all memory and all reflection". Habit works through contraction – it contracts passing moments into a lived present, creating the basic continuity of experience without requiring any conscious intervention. This contraction allows us to perceive sameness and difference in our environment without active thinking, forming what we might call a pre-reflective grasp of our surroundings.The passive synthesis of habit thus reveals how intentionality first emerges at a pre-individual level. Before there is a conscious subject who could direct attention toward objects, there is already a process of contraction that creates the basic patterns and regularities in experience. Thought arises here not through deliberate acts of will, but as a response to the rhythms and patterns that habit synthesizes from the continuous flow of experience. This synthesis operates through repetition, but not as a simple reproduction of the same. Rather, repetition in habit always introduces variation – by sensing the process of continual differentiation, we become capable of discerning both what remains constant and what emerges as new.

While the first synthesis establishes the lived present through habit's contraction, the second synthesis of memory reveals a more complex dimension of

temporality. This synthesis concerns not just the preservation of past moments, but the way in which the past as a whole coexists with and conditions the present. Drawing on Bergson's concept of '*durée*' (cf. Deleuze 1988[1966]: 55–56), Deleuze (1994[1968]: 82) shows how the past is not simply a chronological series of former presents, but a virtual realm that persists in itself: "[T]he past is not conserved in the present in relation to which it is past, but is conserved in itself, the present present being only the maximal contraction of all this past which coexists with it." Memory thus operates not through conscious recollection of specific moments, but as a vast virtual field that provides the ground for any present experience. It is the condition that allows each present moment to pass while simultaneously being preserved. As Deleuze (1988[1966]: 59) emphasizes: "The past and the present do not denote two successive moments, but two elements which coexist: one is the present, which does not cease to pass, and the other is the past, which does not cease to be but through which all presents pass." It is the condition that allows each present moment to pass while simultaneously being preserved. This synthesis reveals another crucial aspect of how intentionality operates at the pre-individual level. Memory does not just store past experiences for a conscious subject to recall; rather, it establishes the coexistence of multiple temporalities within thought itself. Each present moment is already inhabited by the entire past, not as a collection of remembered events, but as a virtual multiplicity that conditions how new experiences can be synthesized. The second synthesis thus shows how intentionality involves not just the contraction of presents through habit, but also the continuous preservation and virtual coexistence of the past with each new present.

While habit contracts moments into a lived present and memory preserves the past as a virtual coexistence, there remains a third synthesis that introduces an entirely different dimension of temporality. This synthesis – "empty form of time" (Deleuze 1994[1968]: 88) – concerns the future, but not as a simple extension or prediction based on past and present. Drawing on Nietzsche's concept of eternal return, Deleuze (1994[1968]: 41) reconceptualizes this synthesis not as a return of the same, but as the perpetual return of difference itself:

> The eternal return does not bring back 'the same', but returning constitutes the only Same of that which becomes. Returning is the becoming-identical of becoming itself. [...] Repetition in the eternal return, therefore, consists in conceiving the same on the basis of the different.

The third synthesis, through its connection to eternal return, represents a radical rethinking of temporality itself. While the first two syntheses establish how the present is contracted and the past preserved, this synthesis concerns how

difference itself returns. What returns is not the same content or form, but the very power of difference to produce the new. The eternal return thus functions not as a circle that brings back what was, but as a selective principle that only affirms what differs. This is why Deleuze (1994[1968]: 41) insists that repetition in eternal return "consists in conceiving the same on the basis of the different" – it is precisely through the return of pure difference that novelty becomes possible. This conception of the third synthesis reveals another crucial dimension of how intentionality operates at the pre-individual level. Beyond the contractions of habit and preservations of memory, intentionality must also encompass this capacity for radical novelty. It shows how intentional processes are not merely about organizing experience or preserving the past, but also about encountering what has never been present before – the genuinely new that emerges through the return of difference itself.

Through these three syntheses, we can now see how intentionality operates as a complex temporal process at the pre-individual level. The synthesis of habit reveals intentionality's most basic operation in contracting moments into a lived present, establishing the fundamental patterns of experience without conscious intervention. The synthesis of memory shows how intentionality functions through the virtual coexistence of the entire past with each present moment, providing the conditions for experience to be meaningful beyond mere habit. Finally, the synthesis of empty time reveals intentionality's capacity for genuine novelty through the eternal return of difference itself. Together, these syntheses demonstrate how intentionality emerges not from a conscious subject, but through temporal processes that simultaneously organize experience (habit), preserve and condition it (memory), and open it to radical transformation (eternal return). Drawing on Deleuze's theory of the three temporal syntheses, this analysis proposes a fundamental reframing of the concept of intentionality: no longer understanding it as a property of consciousness directed at objects, nor as a simple relation between subject and world. Instead, the argument suggests that intentionality can be reconceived as an immanent process operating through these temporal syntheses, which together produce both consciousness and its objects. While Deleuze himself does not explicitly connect his temporal syntheses to the phenomenological concept of intentionality in *Difference and Repetition*, this reconceptualization reveals intentionality as a dynamic process of differentiation that works through contraction, preservation, and transformation, operating at a more fundamental level than either subject or object. Through this interpretive lens, intentionality appears not as a feature of an already-constituted consciousness, but as the very process through which consciousness and its objects come to be.

The distinction of thought and intentionality becomes somewhat blurred. While both operate as processes of differentiation at the pre-individual level, their relationship needs to be carefully distinguished. Intentionality describes the broader process through which experience itself is structured temporally – it is the dynamic movement of differentiation that creates the conditions for any experience to occur through the three syntheses. Thought, on the other hand, emerges as a specific actualization of virtual problems within this broader temporal structure. In other words, intentionality provides the temporal conditions through which thought becomes possible – it is the more fundamental process that allows virtual problems to present themselves as demanding thought. Thought then operates as the creative response to these problems, producing specific conceptual determinations. Thus, while intentionality structures the experience through temporal syntheses, thought is the creative process that occurs within and through this temporalized field of experience.

2.2. Thall: between virtual intensities and sonic actualization

This section examines how Deleuze's conception of intentionality, particularly his understanding of pre-individual forces and temporal syntheses, manifests in contemporary experimental extreme metal music, specifically in the subgenre known as 'thall'. Through analysis of this musical phenomenon, we can observe how Deleuze's theoretical framework provides unique insights into understanding musical experience beyond traditional phenomenological approaches to intentionality. While existing scholarship has addressed Deleuze's influence on musical analysis (see Buchanan, Swiboda 2004; Hulse, Nesbitt 2010; Campbell 2013), the application of his theories to extreme metal remains relatively rare.

Thall emerges from the experimental periphery of progressive metal and the djent[15] movement, yet unlike these established genres, it resists conventional classification into existing metal genres. This resistance arises not simply from being different from existing subgenres, but from thall's creation of its own distinctive sonic territory. While it emerged from the experimental periphery of progressive metal and the djent movement, it does not merely extend or combine these influences – rather, it generates an entirely new sonic space with its own internal logic. It cannot be adequately subsumed under broader umbrella terms such as 'progressive contemporary metal' because it operates through unique approaches to sonic organization and temporal structure that constitute a genuine innovation rather

[15] See Weller, Phil 2024. "It was tone-chasing for people who couldn't afford real amps and nice microphones": Djent's key players on the unlikely origins – and experimental techniques – behind modern metal's most influential subgenre. *Guitar World* 28 June; https://www.guitarworld.com/features/djent-explained.

than a junction of existing forms. This creation aligns with what Deleuze terms an 'intensive multiplicity' – a concept he develops in *Difference and Repetition* to describe phenomena that cannot be divided without them changing in nature (cf. Deleuze 1994[1968]: 238; see also Cardoso 2024). Just as Deleuze argues that intensive multiplicities operate through continuous variation rather than fixed states, thall functions as a genre of dynamic fields of sonic possibilities. These possibilities manifest through specific approaches to composition, production, and performance that continuously generate new forms of musical experience. While the term 'thall' itself was first popularized by Swedish band Vildhjarta, it has come to designate not merely a style but a particular approach to sonic organization and temporal structure.

The musical characteristics of thall manifest through extended downtuned instrumentation that operates at the threshold of human auditory perception, coupled with complex rhythmic structures that deliberately disrupt temporal expectations. Its distinctive timbral characteristics emphasize both fundamental frequencies and complex harmonic content, while compositions typically move between dense, aggressive and somewhat-chaotic sections and ethereal, ambient passages. These elements combine to create what Deleuze would describe as a field of intensive differences – variations in force that precede and enable the formation of extensive properties.

The development of thall must be understood within the broader context of metal music's experimental trajectory. While metal has long been characterized by its exploration of extreme sounds and complex structures (Walser 1994; Berger 1999), thall represents a distinct departure from established paradigms. Its emergence in the early 2010s coincides with crucial technological developments in music production and instrument design that made its distinctive characteristics possible. Advanced digital audio workstations enabled precise rhythmic and pitch manipulation, while extended range instruments capable of extreme downtuning and developments in amplification technology permitted accurate reproduction of sub-bass frequencies. These material conditions should not be understood as mere technical prerequisites but as integral components of what Deleuze would term the 'problematic field' – virtual plane of differential elements and relations – within which thall operates. The pioneering work of Vildhjarta, particularly their 2011 album *måsstaden*, established foundational elements of the style, while subsequent artists such as Humanity's Last Breath extended these principles through further timbral and structural experimentation. More recent developments in the approach can be observed in the work of bands like Mirar.

By examining the sonic materiality of thall – a term that aligns with Deleuze's distinctive materialist philosophy where matter is understood not as inert sub-

stance but as active force of intensive differences and becomings (Deleuze 1994[1968]: 222–223; Deleuze, Guattari 1987[1980]: 407–408) – we can ponder on how musical meaning and directedness emerge prior to any conscious musical interpretation. Deleuze's materialism, unlike its traditional forms, emphasizes the dynamic, productive nature of material processes themselves, where physical forces generate real effects before any conscious interpretation (Deleuze 1990[1968]: 4–8). When examining Vildhjarta's 2011 album *måsstaden*, the way sound shapes experience does not stem from either the musicians' planned compositions or listeners' active interpretations. Instead, the extreme downtuning and precise timbral manipulation create sonic conditions that structure how the music can be encountered and understood. These conditions operate through what Deleuze terms 'intensive differences' – a concept he develops to describe differences in intensity that cannot be divided without them changing in nature and that constitute the genetic conditions of real experience (Deleuze 1994[1968]: 222). Unlike extensive differences that can be measured quantitatively, intensive differences operate qualitatively through degrees of intensity.

In thall, this manifests in how the characteristic guitar tone affects our bodily experience of rhythm, how specific frequency ranges shape our perception of musical space, and how production techniques determine possible ways of engaging with the musical material. This becomes particularly evident in how thall compositions organize their sonic elements. Rather than presenting a musical object for contemplation, they establish a "sonic field" through the precise manipulation of frequency ranges at the edges of auditory perception. When these frequencies interact with polyrhythmic structures, they create not just patterns to be heard, but material conditions that structure the very possibility of listening itself. For instance, when a thall composition moves between the threshold of sub-bass frequencies (around 20–40 Hz) and standard guitar ranges, it does not merely produce different tones – it creates distinct zones of sonic experience that affect how subsequent musical events can be perceived. This effect is further intensified through characteristic microtonal bending techniques and deliberate avoidance of tonic resolution, creating a constant state of harmonic tension. The unexpected vertical leaps between extreme registers – from the lowest possible guitar frequencies to piercing high notes – do not simply create dramatic contrast but establish a distinctive spatial organization of sound. Similarly, when these elements are layered over sustained, atmospheric sections, they do not simply create contrast – they establish different planes of sonic density that coexist and interact within the same spatial field. This encounter occurs through sonic materials that do not just present themselves to consciousness but actively shape the conditions under which musical understanding becomes possible.

Another important part of intentionality that we have discussed was the temporal organization. In thall music each layer structures our engagement with the music differently, as evidenced in Vildhjarta's compositions where rhythmic patterns establish and then deliberately break expected continuities. The constant tension between establishing and disrupting rhythmic expectations shows how our most basic level of musical understanding operates: we grasp the complex polyrhythms in thall not through conscious analysis, but through an immediate bodily synthesis that forms temporal continuities even as they fragment over time. This temporal synthesis manifests particularly in how thall compositions use the signature polyrhythms – not as a fixed pattern to be recognized, but as a dynamic element that continuously reshapes our temporal orientation to the music.

This basic temporal synthesis interweaves with a deeper layer of musical memory, particularly evident in extended compositions like Vildhjarta's "Dagger". Here, the alternation between aggressive and ambient passages does more than create contrast – it establishes multiple temporal dimensions that operate simultaneously. When atmospheric sections return throughout the piece, they do not simply repeat previous material; rather, they establish multiple temporal dimensions that operate simultaneously. As Campbell (2019: 351) describes it, rhythm in Deleuze and Guattari's thought is "not meter or cadence" but rather concerns "the Unequal or the Incommensurable". These atmospheric passages create temporal depths that continue to resonate through subsequent aggressive sections, establishing what Campbell (2019: 351) characterizes as a kind of "critical rhythm" that resists reduction to simple metrical patterns or chronological progression. This temporal complexity aligns with what Campbell terms 'semiorhythmology' – an approach that examines how different rhythmic territories can overlap and coexist within the same piece.

This temporal complexity goes even further in Vildhjarta's approach across their albums *måsstaden* and *måsstaden under vatten* (2021). By reintroducing and transforming musical themes from their first album throughout their second, Vildhjarta creates an expansive temporal field where musical memory operates across a decade-long gap. These reappearing leitmotifs do not simply call back to the original album; instead, they create new layers of meaning through their transformation and recontextualization. Their reemergence creates a complex web of musical significance where past and present continuously reshape each other. These musical elements operate through what Deleuze and Guattari (1987[1980]: 111–148) call "regimes of signs" – systems that exceed traditional representational frameworks and organize experience through multiple, intersecting semiotic flows. The recurring motifs function not merely as references but as assemblages that generate new territories of expression – when a theme from *måsstaden*

reappears in *måsstaden under vatten*, it creates what Deleuze terms a 'line of flight', deterritorializing the familiar material into new sonic spaces while simultaneously reterritorializing it within an expanded narrative framework (cf. Deleuze, Guattari 1987[1980]: 508–510).

This semiotic operation can be understood through both Peircean and Deleuzian frameworks. From Peirce's classification of signs, these musical themes operate simultaneously across multiple sign types: as qualisigns in their pure tonal qualities, as rhematic indexical sinsigns in their immediate manifestation pointing to past iterations, and as dicent symbols in their proposition-like statements within the broader musical narrative. As Peirce later elaborated (1903, CP 2.243–252), this complexity of sign relations allows for what he terms 'genuine thirdness' – the mediation through which musical meaning grows and evolves.

Deleuze's engagement with Peircean semiotics in *Cinema 1* and *Cinema 2* provides particular insight into how such musical themes operate across time. In discussing movement-images, Deleuze (1986[1983]: 197–198) adopts Peirce's concept of thirdness specifically to understand how temporal art forms create meaning through relations rather than fixed representations. Applied to Vildhjarta's work, this helps us understand how their recurring themes function through all three Peircean categories as discussed by Deleuze: from the immediate qualities and sensations (firstness), through the actualized relations to past material (secondness), to the interpretive syntheses that establish new connections with each appearance (thirdness) (Deleuze 1989[1985]: 30–31). When a motif from *måsstaden* resurfaces in *måsstaden under vatten*, it operates in a way that transforms both past and present iterations into new assemblages of meaning (Deleuze, Guattari 1987[1980]: 330).

These processes of temporal and semiotic transformation are particularly evident in how thall approaches musical repetition, especially noticeable in Humanity's Last Breath's "*Vittring*" from their 2021 album *Välde*. The composition demonstrates how a recurring rhythmic motif evolves throughout its duration – its initial presentation as a stark, isolated pattern gradually accumulates new harmonic and textural elements with each return. These returns do not simply add layers to the original pattern; they fundamentally alter how we hear the initial motif itself. The surrounding atmospheric elements and subtle variations in timing transform what began as an aggressive rhythmic statement into something more ambiguous and complex. Repetition in thall becomes a means of transformation rather than mere reinforcement.

Other distinctive feature of thall compositions lies in their unique handling of musical space and atmosphere, apparent in Vildhjarta's 2021 album *måsstaden under vatten*. Throughout tracks like "*måsstadens nationalsång (under vatten)*"

and "*när de du älskar kommer tillbaka från de döda*", atmospheric sections do not simply function as interludes or background textures. Instead, these passages establish specific ways that the music can unfold – certain harmonic possibilities, rhythmic tensions, or timbral relationships that shape what can emerge in subsequent sections. When the composition shifts from these atmospheric moments into more aggressive passages, the transition does not feel abrupt or contrasting, but rather like a natural emergence of something that was already suggested or implied. Take for example how in "*måsstadens nationalsång (under vatten)*", the subtle dissonances and layered clean guitar melodies in the ambient sections gradually coalesce into the massive rhythmic patterns that follow, as if the heavy sections were already present in potential form within the atmospheric passages. Musical development here operates through suggestion and implication rather than direct statement, where each moment of the music contains within itself multiple possibilities for what might follow.

The analysis of thall through Deleuzian lens reveals how musical intentionality operates beyond the traditional model of conscious interpretation. Instead of treating music as an object that a listener's consciousness aims to understand, thall demonstrates how musical meaning emerges through multiple interconnected processes. First, through the immediate impact of sonic forces – the extreme frequencies, distinctive timbral manipulations, and intense dynamic contrasts that affect listeners at a bodily level before any conscious processing occurs. Second, through the layered operation of temporal synthesis, where musical patterns establish and break continuities, while musical memory operates across multiple temporal dimensions, creating complex webs of meaning through the transformation and recontextualization of musical material. Third, through the continuous unfolding of potential in atmospheric spaces, where ambient passages do not merely contrast with heavy sections but establish fields of possibility from which new musical events emerge. What makes thall particularly significant for understanding Deleuze's notion of intentionality is how explicitly it foregrounds these processes in its very composition. Where Deleuze critiques the phenomenological understanding of intentionality as being derived from consciousness and linguistic meaning, thall presents us with musical experiences that cannot be reduced to either conscious interpretation or symbolic representation. These characteristics align precisely with Deleuze's reconceptualization of intentionality as operating at the pre-individual level, where experience is structured not by conscious acts of interpretation, but through the organization of forces, intensities, and temporal syntheses. In this way, thall provides a concrete demonstration of how intentionality can operate through material forces rather than conscious acts.

This understanding of intentionality through thall opens new possibilities for thinking about musical experience more broadly. Our analysis suggests that traditional approaches to musical meaning, which focus either on formal analysis of compositions or on listeners' subjective interpretations, might miss crucial dimensions of how music actually operates. Rather than asking how we consciously interpret or understand music, we might instead examine how different musical forms create specific conditions for experience. Each genre, style, or compositional approach establishes its own unique way of structuring temporality – whether through the cyclical patterns of electronic dance music, the extended developments of classical symphonies, or the layered progressions of jazz improvisation. Similarly, different musical forms organize sonic space in distinct ways, from the cathedral-like reverberations of ambient music to the compressed intensity of punk, each creating specific possibilities for how sound can be encountered and experienced. Even the way music engages with bodily sensation varies dramatically – from the visceral impact of extreme metal to the subtle kinesthetic suggestions of minimalist composition.

This shift in perspective has significant implications for how we approach musical analysis and understanding. Instead of treating music as either a text to be decoded or a stimulus that produces subjective responses, we can examine how musical materials themselves organize and structure experience. This means paying attention not just to what music means, but to how it creates conditions for meaning to emerge. Such an approach might help us understand why certain musical forms resonate so powerfully with particular cultural moments or social contexts – not because they represent these contexts symbolically, but because they create experiential conditions that align with or challenge existing ways of organizing experience. Moreover, this perspective suggests new ways of thinking about musical innovation and experimentation. Rather than focusing solely on novel forms of expression or representation, we might consider how music can create new ways of structuring time, space, and bodily experience. Ultimately, this Deleuzian understanding of musical intentionality points toward a more dynamic and materialist approach to musical experience. It suggests that musical meaning emerges not through the imposition of consciousness on sound, nor through the passive reception of musical stimuli, but through the active organization of experience by musical materials themselves. This opens up new possibilities not only for analysing existing musical forms, but for understanding how music might continue to evolve and develop new ways of structuring experience.

3. Peirce: general semeiotic of processual intentionality of mind

For our purposes, we can identify at least two interconnected aspects of 'mind' in Peirce's works. The first, which we might call "more local" as it relates to his definition of a sign, is termed 'quasi-mind'. Peirce introduces this formal term to conceptualize a process applicable to both human and non-human agency – specifically, any entity capable of being affected by signs, participating in semiosis, and adapting certain habits. The concept expresses the ability of any entity to adapt to general inferential processes, through which indeterminate qualities break into existence and become constituents of propositions in a broad sense (cf. Stjernfelt 2014). The second, conversely all-encompassing concept is found at the other end of the spectrum and is a key component of his speculative philosophy of objective idealism. In this version of idealism, it is precisely the activity of the objective mind that serves as a general mediating, *synechistic* force. Certain aspects of Plato's philosophy are reformulated by Peirce within the framework of his own continualist and evolutionist metaphysics (cf. Calcaterra 2011: 413).

> Plato before he went to Socrates had been a student of the Heraclitean Cratylus. And the consequence of that accidental circumstance is that almost every philosopher from that day to this has been infected with one of the two great errors of Heraclitus, namely with the notion that Continuity implies Transitoriness. The things of this world, that seem so transitory to philosophers, are not continuous. They are composed of discrete atoms [...]. The really continuous things, Space, and Time, and Law, are eternal. The dialogue of the *Sophistes*, [...] gives reasons for abandoning the Theory of Ideas which imply that Plato himself had come to see, if not that the Eternal Essences are continuous, at least, that there is an order of affinity among them, such as there is among Numbers. Thus, at last, the Platonic Ideas became Mathematical Essences, not possessed of Actual Existence but only of a Potential Being quite as Real, and his maturest philosophy became welded into mathematics. (1898, EP2: 35)

Peirce's presumed development of Plato's thought reflects changes in Peirce's own philosophy. The re-evaluation of Plato's concept of ideas is closely related to Peirce's reconsideration of the concept of natural law. In the mature elaboration of his semeiotic, Peirce, analogously to the Eleatic Stranger, understands 'number' not as a pure, unchanging Idea, but as a general law and thus necessarily a continuity. Through his prism, natural laws, like his interpretation of Plato's later understanding of form, need to be rethought as continua with infinite possibilities of being represented in the world (O'Hara 2008: 29). Peirce offers here an idea of a grandiose, mathematically realistic (in this sense Platonic), and therefore

ultimately objective-idealistic evolution of the universe (cf. Calcaterra 2011: 414). The evolutionary process is not merely an evolution of the existing universe, but rather a process by which Plato's forms and natural laws themselves have evolved or are still evolving (see 1898, CP 6.196). This blending of Platonic idealism with evolutionary thought suggests that even the most fundamental aspects of reality – the forms or laws that govern the universe – are subject to a process of evolution and representation.[16] This view radically dynamizes Platonic forms, transforming them from static, eternal entities into evolving principles that unfold through cosmic history. It maintains the reality of abstract, general principles (akin to Platonic forms) while insisting on their participation in a grand cosmic process of growth and development.

This allows Peirce to preserve the explanatory power of universal laws and forms while accounting for the novelty and change observed in the universe. If the forms themselves evolve, then the human mind's ability to grasp these forms can be seen as part of the same cosmic process, rather than as something separate or transcendent: therefore, there is deep continuity between the mind and nature. Given these synechistic, objective-idealist premises, even "local" representation in Peirce's conception is never singular, non-relational, or ahistorical – it is not a freely floating entity existing outside the quasi-mind or the Mind that is outside any agency interpreting signs (Liszka 1996: 30). Representation, as a synechistic force of relational generality, mediates various effects and forces, including both those bound to the sensory apparatus and assertoric and illocutionary forces characteristic of living intelligence (Pietarinen, Issayeva 2019: 211).

The essential difference between forms of quasi-mind lies in their potential capacity to act – in other words, to acquire a more or less sophisticated habitus, to learn according to more or less articulated forms of representation (cf. Stjernfelt 2014: 44; Merrell 1996). The crucial role here is played by the phenomenon of the communal nature of knowledge, understood as the public cultivation of perceptual

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[16] Peirce's interpretation offers a remarkable comparison with Deleuze's reading of *The Sophist* dialogue. Deleuze interprets the famous passage about the angler (*Soph.* 218e): dialectics is a form of rivalry, and Plato's dialectical method, largely developed in dialogue with agonistic and tragic rhetoric (the "false" dialectics of poets), naturally carries many of their elements. As Deleuze notes, unlike *The Statesman*, *Republic*, or *Phaedrus*, *The Sophist* contains no founding myth because this dialogue does not assess the "legitimacy of claimants" (to be a politician, to be a proper rhetorician...). Instead, its purpose is purely negative – seeking the false claimant. This moment is crucial for Platonic dialectics, which must define non-being or the being of negation. The simulacrum 'Sophist' is thus the being of simulacra, like a satyr or centaur, a Proteus that mixes with and penetrates everything. For Deleuze, Plato ultimately becomes the one who begins the "reversal of Platonism" in *The Sophist* – Socrates, philosopher can no longer be distinguished from the sophist (Deleuze 1990[1969]: 253–266).

judgements and common sense, broadly conceived both as an analysis of ordinary experience and as a process of clarifying ideas. Teleology, intentionality, and generality go hand in hand in this metaphysical vision: semiosic organisms adapt to their environment inferentially, with the continuous process of inference itself being real. It consists of elements where First, pure, vague, mere "would-be" – that is, qualities of a possibly intelligible universe – realistically tend to exist, becoming constituents of full-fledged and complex signs. This occurs initially as *sign constituents* that are pure icons and indexes, then as *propositions* unifying their mere possibility in the existence of subject and predicate, and finally as *arguments*, i.e. general rules under which propositions relate to each other.

> At the pinnacle of his work, around 1903 with the writing of the monumental text *Syllabus*, Peirce embodies these gradually developed assumptions into the idea of diagrammatic reasoning, which is driven by the effort to incorporate the idea of intentionality into the structure of cognition. All reasoning stretches towards real general forms whose existence we can observe in the world, as exemplified by Peirce's famous examples of the apple pie (ca 1895, CP 1.341) and the decapitated frog (1883, CP 2.711). This conviction rests on a philosophical postulate (connected to Peirce's conception of synechism and pragmaticism) that events are not "states of affairs", but rather structural principles extracted from reality (1909, EP2: 378; cf. Stjernfelt 2014: 6).

Peirce's concept of diagrammatic reasoning represents a crucial nexus in his philosophy, where his ideas on semeiotic and metaphysics converge. Diagrams are not mere visual representations but dynamic, experiential tools of thought that capture the relational, therefore semiosic and inferential, structure of reality. The power of diagrammatic reasoning lies in its ability to make visible the general forms and relations that underlie particular phenomena. Peirce's notion of the 'would-be' is crucial here. When we construct and manipulate diagrams, we are not simply pushing around arbitrary symbols, but we are engaging with the very fabric of reality. This engagement is inherently intentional, as it involves the stretch towards the general structures that pervade the universe. The "world" in general is not a collection of actualized facts but a developing web of potentialities and tendencies. These tendencies – these 'would-bes' – are *virtual* and operative even when not actualized, i.e. existent. They represent the intentional structure of reality itself, always straining towards its own self-realization. Peirce proposes a continuity between mental processes and the general semiosic habitualization of the universe.[17] For instance, when a plant turns towards the sun, it is engaging in a

[17] In Peirce's idealism, which was here likely inspired by Hegel, matter is only a strictly habitual-governed mind. The mind, considered in general abstraction here, is thus always

rudimentary form of inference. The plant represents the dynamic object of sunlight as a sign for growth, responding with the general law of phototropism. This process, while not conscious in the human sense, still involves a kind of proto-reasoning, a response to signs that is continuous with more complex forms in the cognitive field. The decapitated frog, continuing to respond to stimuli, demonstrates the persistence of general habits or laws even in the absence of a centralized consciousness. Every entity, from the simplest particle to the most complex organism, exhibits a kind of proto-intentionality in its adherence to general laws and its tendency towards certain ends. If the universe itself is real and semiosic in the sense, then our scientific and philosophical investigations are not impositions of human categories on an alien world, but a refinement and clarification of the meaning-making processes of symbolic growth already at work in nature.

3.1. Sounding habits

Habit expresses regularity both in some time and place, and it is defined by durability, persistence, and the possibility of change or modification (1907, CP 5.492; see also 1868, W2: 227). If a habit is to be regular, it must be at least implicitly followable and thus viable for a certain period of time (cf. 1893, EP2: 12). Peirce's idea of the growth of inferential, i.e. decisive, habituation can be simply illustrated, as Reynolds (2002: 109) does, by the example of organism nutrition. Nutrition is the keystone of growth and behaviour; it involves a principle of selection that cannot be entirely contingent (*tychistic*). If the organism is to get rid of the irritating stimulus (hunger), its reaction must be "intentional" in the sense that it must fit the general scheme of activity that solves the current problem and possibly all similar types of problems that may arise in the future. The law by which habit is established here thus means a teleological, behavioural and intentional mediation between events (Reynolds 2002: 162). Nutrition, the specific form of growth, whose analogy Peirce finds in the growth of any semiosis that learns, repeats, differentiates and exercises and thus continuously grows. Semiosis thus consists in the emergence and growth of any habituation, therefore also in any form of art (cf. 1902, CP 6.360).

In this sense, music represents and shapes inferentially and procedurally the production of meaning, bearing a process of habituation and growing into more complex forms. Both for Deleuze and Peirce, a key aspect of art, and thus also of music, is that it is a form of action that brings the problem of articulation and thus

connected to matter (1892, CP 6.268). Peirce ultimately concludes that mind and matter are not radically distinct entities, but rather different, i.e. differently habitualized and thus differently interpreted, aspects of reality (cf. Reynolds 2002: 109).

habituation of *affect* to the very core of philosophical inquiry. When we hear an unexpected sound, we have the habit of directing our bodies towards this irritating stimulus. This basic reflex is evident in both children, adults and most vertebrates (Huron 2006: 49). The reflexive reaction is interconnected with the evaluation of the situation, which does not remain only to be a direct reflex but soon becomes more complex: it can lead both to what cognitive psychology calls 'dishabituation', i.e. a type of behaviour that leads to ignoring the stimulus after its repetition, and to further interest, in other words, to further growth of interpretative semiosis.

Let us consider an example where one hears an unusual harmonic change in an otherwise familiar, standard jazz environment, such as a relatively banal substitution of the tonic (Cmaj7) for the upper mediant, i.e. the minor chord of the third scale degree in a major key (Em7). With repeated listening, I come to a certain habit of considering this change as "natural" and it may even become part of my improvisational vocabulary – in other words, the unexpected becomes part of what we commonly call "musical growth". From the perspective of pragmaticism, the "full understanding" of the concept of the G7 dominant seventh chord is conditioned by having a clear idea about it in three basic respects (1897, CP 3.457). The first lies in common practice – if I am able to identify the dominant seventh chord as a specifically "irritating" or "unstable" (due to its "intentional" tendency resolving towards the tonic) sounding chord and use it appropriately, I no longer just understand it as a kind of irritating sound that I turn my head towards; I can simply play it, for example when I look at a written chord symbol. The ability to define the seventh chord as a chord composed of four tones, with the distinctive feature of a minor seventh and a resolving towards the tonic, is the second aspect.

The third aspect of clarity involves the ability to use this concept in definitional sentences such as "it is a chord created on the fifth scale degree, composed of a major third and a minor seventh", from which I can further infer the list of other conditional statements that suggest what one can expect from actions based on this concept and interactions with it. For example, to develop its relationship to other harmonic functions of the given scale: in jazz typically to the supertonic (Dm7), or its altered form (Dm7b5) and the possibility of forming a dominant core (Dm7-G7), its possible bass superpositions and its further substitutions and extensions. This third and final stage of clarifying meaning is the core of the pragmatic maxim: examining the nature of relations and the types of actions they can lead to – in this case, it may involve the creation of a habit following a certain general aesthetic ideal, for example in the bebop "dense harmony". Regarding the idea of continuity, this observation does not completely fall under distinct or isolated kinds, but is always an assemblage of various habits, i.e. it is the acquisition

of certain inferential rules and at the same time experimental, diagrammatic behaviour (cf. 1901, CP 7.187).

For Peirce, the formation of habit is the general goal of reasoning, whether it is a habit concerning thought, action or, in this sense, *playing*. The purpose of this maxim is to search for, test and acquire such agency from which we can infer practical, experiential and experimental consequences. Understanding "meaning" then lies in nothing other than grasping and embracing these consequences. Every action, understood here essentially synechistically, spans both the bodily affective dimension in the semiosis of sounding bodies, and between expectation and the teleological orientation of habit (cf. 1905, CP 5.431). Specific growth of quasi-mind is then a deliberate effort to develop habits of a certain kind. For any articulation of habit to occur at all, as we have seen above in the example of nutrition and unexpected sound, we necessarily have to consider some event/encounter, some present phenomenon that enters sign interpreting agency attention. This is why Peirce turns to the specific, self-controlled habituation of the artist, who has the closest connection to the work with the process of possible composition and the effect of qualities, and thus the representation and articulation of affect.

Improvisational effort provides a compelling illustration of Peirce's – and Deleuzian – idea of a teleological continuum. In collective improvisation, the musicians cannot simply pause or replace the ongoing flow of the performance. The musicians must attune themselves as closely as possible to what appears and how it appears in the present moment (cf. Švantner 2019b; Davidson 1993). This is not a romanticized irrationalism, but a practical necessity – the musicians' awareness is fully embedded in the unfolding process, connecting the materiality and ideality of the sounding bodies. Their semiotic engagement in the moment does not allow for detached reflection, but instead involves a reactive, habituated metabolization of qualities into signs. This improvisational semiosis operates as a collective inferential mechanism, guided not by slow deliberation, but by a vague regard for an elusive, shared aesthetic ideal. This ideal functions as a vanishing point, with tangible physical consequences articulated communally – carried by the individual musicians, their instruments, the audience, and potentially other elements like drugs. The improvisation thus embodies Peirce's vision of a continuous, teleological process, where the performers must remain fully present and responsive to the emergent, collaborative unfolding of the performance.

The second form of the phenomenological effort, as a semiotic path to the acquisition of some habit, is defined by perseverance. A promising example illustrating the teleological nature of semiosis here could be practising a musical instrument: both in the sense of repeatedly playing a certain difficult passage in

order to master it technically, and in order to integrate it into the whole of desire, into the whole of the aesthetic ideal, which may be the mastery of a composition or the integration of a counterintuitive expressive pattern into the improvisational vocabulary; such as the symmetric scales and phrasing of Allan Holdsworth or the appropriation of the harmonic substitutions of the dominant cores of John Coltrane. The acquisition of habits, both as convictions and persuasive tendencies, naturally has a qualitative and therefore potentially affective nature. This is evident in any skilled activity, such as playing a musical instrument. The challenge then becomes how to shed "bad habits" that hinder the cultivation of generally and individually desired aesthetic ideals. Peirce sees habit formation as a melioristic process – one where the qualitative, pleasurable experiences of the individual and the collective mutually reinforce the development of desired habits and aesthetic ideals. Overcoming problematic habits becomes a pathway to cultivating richer modes of expression and interaction.

4. Conclusion

As evident from the previous exposition of Deleuze's thoughts on intentionality, Peirce and Deleuze share several key themes and *rhemes*. Neither Peirce's semiotic nor Deleuze's philosophy can be explained through a Neo-Platonic, dyadic, binary, dichotomous approach, as attempted by various forms of structuralism and cognitive sciences, where an invariant structure (language structures, universal grammars, etc.) is presumed to stand on one side and the empirical process it generates on the other. Their common ground lies in their critical assessment of both Cartesian *cogito* and Kantian philosophy of the subject (cf. 1886, EP1: 242–244) – their understanding of the Self as ultimately a semiosic process shaped by a transcendental subject contextualized through specific form of vitalistic philosophy. A notable point of convergence appears in their distinctive handling of German classical and post-classical philosophical heritage. In simpler terms, both refer to forces that the subject cannot master, and which cannot be dissolved into a one-sided understanding of intentionality or even representation.

These shared perspectives lead both Peirce and Deleuze to reject insufficiently abstract theories based on any form of psychologism. Both thinkers articulate radically different versions of naturalism, avoiding reductionist views that source intentionality either solely in the Self or in Nature. Both also oppose the notion of the totality of language and human consciousness: Deleuze fights against reductive structuralism, just as Peirce opposes any form of nominalism. The most significant point of comparison – which simultaneously marks their fundamental

difference – lies in their concept of the dynamic process of becoming and its teleological layer. For Deleuze, processuality is teleological only "locally", preventing the invention of vast metaphysical systems in the Platonic, Aristotelian, or quasi-Hegelian sense. For Peirce, however, this process serves as a means to renovate scientific, inferentialist, and therefore semiotic metaphysics. Put simply, while Deleuze sees this attempt as functioning within the regime of constituting a dominant code of thought that ultimately terminates thinking at all, for Peirce evolutionary metaphysics serves as a means – however incomplete – to comprehend the process of thinking itself through establishing semiotic parameters for the taxonomy and classification of concepts, propositions, arguments and also affects.

This fundamental divergence in their approaches to teleology has profound implications for how we understand the relationship between intentionality and artistic practice, particularly in music. As demonstrated through our analysis of thall and jazz improvisation, these different philosophical frameworks offer complementary insights into how musical meaning emerges and evolves. Deleuze's emphasis on pre-individual forces and intensive differences illuminates how musical experience operates beneath the level of conscious interpretation, while Peirce's focus on habit formation and evolutionary growth helps us understand how musical practices develop and transform over time. The musical examples we have examined – from the complex temporal syntheses evident in thall to the collective inferential mechanisms of jazz improvisation – demonstrate how both philosophers' approaches can provide new and different understandings of contemporary music. Deleuze's concept of intensive multiplicities helps us grasp how genres like thall resist traditional classification while generating new forms of musical experience. Similarly, Peirce's theory of habit formation illuminates how musicians develop their craft through practice and experimentation, guided by aesthetic ideals that function as teleological endpoints for their artistic development.

As we have shown, their different approaches to process philosophy provide valuable insights into the nature of musical innovation and experimentation. Deleuze's emphasis on difference and becoming helps us understand how new musical forms emerge through processes of differentiation and actualization, while Peirce's evolutionary metaphysics helps us comprehend how these innovations become integrated into broader musical practices and traditions. This dual, and mutually complementary perspective is particularly relevant for understanding contemporary experimental music, where traditional boundaries between genres, techniques, and practices are constantly being challenged and redefined.

Their contrasting views on teleology also have important implications for how we understand the relationship between individual artistic expression and collective musical development. Deleuze's resistance to overarching teleological

systems emphasizes the importance of local, experimental processes in artistic creation, while Peirce's broader evolutionary framework helps us understand how these individual experiments contribute to the longer-term development of musical practices and traditions. This tension between local innovation and broader evolution remains highly relevant for contemporary discussions about musical experimentation and development.

Finally, both philosophers' work paves the way for new modes of thinking about the musical practice and novelty. Their shared emphasis on process, becoming, and the limitations of traditional subject–object dichotomies points toward approaches to music that emphasize its dynamic, evolving nature rather than treating it as a fixed object of study. This perspective seems particularly valuable in an era where technological innovation, global cultural exchange and experimental practices are rapidly transforming how we create, perform, and experience music.

Both Peirce and Deleuze are far from the desire to place philosophy on a pedestal of autonomous Cartesian purity and certainty – in the sense of standing apart from both ordinary experience and other fields of inquiry. For both authors, process of thought/inquiry is always strongly cooperative, communal and is not bound to isolated human self-consciousness: it is stretching between rules and laws (i.e. "sedimented" disciplines or "genres") and it also encompasses flows of bodies, machines, sounds, environments, and languages. The process of thought always operates in a continuum with its general aspect of the vague intentionality to signify (cf. Deleuze 1987: 75–110).

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Znějící znaky: Intencionalita a opakování mezi Peircovou a Deleuzovou sémiotikou

V textu se zaměřujeme na problematiku intencionality a formování habitu v hudební zkušenosti prostřednictvím sémeiotiky Charlese Sanderse Peirce a procesuální filosofie Gillese Deleuze. Probraná teoretická východiska zvolených autorů ilustrujeme na analýze experimentální hudební praxe – jmenovitě v oblasti extrémního metalu a moderního jazzu. Studie nejprve pojednává o Deleuzově kritice fenomenologického pojetí intencionality a jeho teorii časové syntézy na před-individuální úrovni. Představená filosofická koncepce je následně kontextualizována v rámci hudebního sub-žánru *thall*, přičemž hlavním vodítkem je zde ukázat důsledky Deleuzova chápání procesů diferenciace a aktualizace. V další části se obracíme k rozboru Peircova svébytného chápání intencionality, jakožto svého druhu asubjektivní, či také před-individuální fenomenologie, jejíž hlavní elementy nalézáme v pojmech kvazi-mysli a habitu. Pro následnou extrapolaci Peircových východisek na pole filosofické reflexe umění volíme fenomény kolektivní jazzové improvizace a cvičební rutiny, které chápeme jako klíčovou součástí získávání a rozvíjení hudebních dovedností. V závěru článku popisujeme jak možné konvergence, tak podstatné rozdíly mezi oběma autory, zejména pak v otázkách teleologického charakteru procesuální filosofie a s ním spjatou problematiku bytí jako stávání. Závěrečná komparace má za cíl ukázat, jak oba filozofické přístupy překračují tradiční dichotomie subjekt-objekt, přičemž si zachovávají odlišné postoje k teleologickým aspektům zkušenostních a experimentálních procesů.

Kõlavad märgid: intentsionaalsus ja kordus Peirce'i ja Deleuze'i semiootika vahel

Artiklis uuritakse intentsionaalsust ja harjumuste kujunemist muusikalises kogemuses lähtuvalt Gilles Deleuze'i ja Charles Peirce'i semiootika raamistustest. Käsitledes eksperimentaalseid muusikalisi praktikaid – eriti äärmuslikku *metal*'it ja džässi – uurime, millist valgust heidavad need filosoofilised vaated tänapäevastele muusikanähtustele. Uurimus alustab selle analüüsist, kuidas Deleuze kritiseerib fenomenoloogilist lähenemist intentsionaalsusele ning kuidas ta vastukaaluks esitab oma teooria ajasünteesist, mis toimub eelindividuaalsel tasandil. Seejärel rakendatakse seda raamistikku žanrile nimega „*thall*", et näidata erinevustumise ja aktualiseerumise protsesse. Seejärel liigutakse Peirce'i semeiootilise

arusaamani intentsionaalsusest, keskendudes sellele, kuidas muusikalises praktikas toimub harjumuste kujundamine ning kuidas seal toimib kvaasimõistus. Džässimprovisatsiooni ja praktiseerimistavade analüüs näitab Peirce'i harjumuste omandamise teooria võimekust selgitada muusikaliste oskuste arengut. Uurimuse lõpus tuuakse välja Deleuze'i ja Peirce'i teoreetilised kokkulangevused ja erisused, ennekõike seoses teleoloogia ning protsessuaalse saamisega. Sellest võrdlevast analüüsist ilmneb, et mõlemad filosoofilised lähenemised ületavad tavapäraseid subjekti-objekti dihhotoomiaid, jäädes samas erinevatele seisukohtadele kogemuslike ja katsetuslike protsesside teleoloogiliste tahkude suhtes.