Transformative Ambiguity: Günther Anders' anthropological inquiry and "musical situation"

Filippo Ursitti *

Abstract: The following article encapsulates Günther Anders' philosophical inquiries, focusing on his early works and culminating in Philosophische Untersuchungen über musikalische Situationen. Anders delves into humanity's existential dilemmas and the role of music in addressing them. Anders' anthropological theory, elucidated in works like Pathologie de la Liberté and Une Interpretation de l'a Posteriori, challenges notions of fixed human identity and explores the dynamic relationship between individuals and their world. Through contrasting ideal types like the nihilist and the historical man, Anders navigates the complexities of human contingency and freedom. Philosophische Untersuchungen über musikalische Situationen ventures into a metaphysical exploration of music, portraying it as a realm beyond conventional analysis, where individuals experience a profound sense of being-in-the-world. Anders' philosophical journey culminates in a dialectic of objectification, challenging traditional dichotomies and advocating for a holistic understanding of human experience through the lens of music. This article is divided into three sections: the first one investigates the anthropological background which enables Anders to later theorise his philosophy of music. The second section dwells with Anders' less known text Philoso-

* fursi001@gold.ac.uk

phische Untersuchungen über musikalische Situationen and his intricate analysis of the 'musical situation'. The third section briefly synthesises what can be gained from Anders' musicological writings in regard to humanity's social nature.

Keywords: Anders; anthropology; musical situation; freedom; contingency

1.

Günther Anders (born Günther Stern) devoted his early philosophical works to examining the position of humanity in the "cosmos" and the role of music in elucidating this issue. To fully grasp Anders' perspective, it is crucial to first outline his anthropological theory. In *Pathologie de la Liberté* and *Une Interpretation de l'a Posteriori*, Anders explores and critiques the notion of humankind as a stable entity throughout history, providing the anthropological foundation for what he later termed «systematic philosophical anthropology»[1].

In *An Interpretation of the a Posteriori*, Anders begins by examining the specific condition of a person existing in the world, demonstrating that there is a possibility for the individual to experience the world. This experience signifies man's "situationality", as it enables the relationship between man and the world, indicating that man is in the world but only retroactively "reaches" it. In other words, the world exists *a priori*, and man can only engage with it *a posteriori*. Due to this anthropological situation, man experiences two states: he is always within the world and forms a part of it, and he is particularly dependent on it. However, man can overcome this insufficiency *après coup*, as he is "suited" for a world that does not exist but which he can "create". As Anders notes:

> the world of man is not only always absent, but always needs to be created and administered; this is why it is impossible to foresee a determined world for man. Man does not only transform the given world in a world that belongs to him; he continues to re-transform the world as soon as he has finished designing one. Man is not 'suited' for this or that world, the only thing he cares is to live in a world that he has created. And this un-fixed situation of man is the *conditio sine qua non* of his freedom[2].

Therefore, in this *Bestimmtheit der Unbestimmtheit* – the fact that man has no fixed position in the world – can be found man's history, depicting humanity in its inherent lack of stability.

From Anders' initial philosophical-anthropological text emerged the idea that the essence of humanity is not fixed or pre-determined but is instead a process of constant creation, contrasting with the natural world. In *Pathology of Freedom,* Anders further explores another anthropological issue, the «double aspect»[3] of the

---

[1] - G. Anders, *Il Mondo Dopo l'uomo. Tecnica e Violenza*, tr. it. L. Pizzighella, Mimesis, Milano 2008, p. 60.

[2] - G. Anders, *The pathology of freedom: An essay on non-identification*, trans. K. Wolfe, in «Deleuze Studies» 3/2 (2009), pp. 58-59.

[3] - G. Anders, *The pathology of freedom: An essay on non-identification*, p. 280.

I. When an individual reflects on their specific position in the world, they eventually recognise their "double worldliness" and the double metaphysical structure in which they exist. On one hand, they are connected to the natural world from which they originate, while on the other, they strive towards the utopian place they are creating. In this sense, Anders' concept of humanity confronts the «deepening paradox»[4] of his existence: of existence: being a stranger in the world exposes one to uncertainty, yet this very unknown is the foundation for becoming something different. However, this form of contingency is devoid of any religious eschatological meaning since there is no God to provide a meaningful justification for this contingency[5]. Anders' secularised human must confront a radical form of contingency, which not only pertains to their presence on Earth but also represents an absolute contingency embedded in a "beheaded ontology" that is fully rooted in the immanence of their position, lacking any subordination to any *prima philosophia*[6]. Thus, for Anders, contingency signifies two distinct things: 1) the absence of an ultimate meaning; and 2) the paradoxical situation where humankind, despite being capable of exercising its freedom, discovers that it has insurmountable limits. Even as free beings, humanity is not self-determined, meaning that ultimately, humanity is unfree. The limits of humanity's freedom become apparent when it realises its connection to the natural world, as humanity is not a product of its freedom. After becoming aware of this, humanity must understand that its capacity for abstraction does not enable it to freely control itself and its environment[7]. Even though humanity's metaphysical structure is nomadic, this does not sever its *a priori* roots, and even if humanity has an elastic ability to create and transform worlds, this will never alter its belonging to the world. Consequently, every individual must come to terms with themselves as an "I" – one that «however unhappily, [is] nevertheless

4 - *Ibidem*.

5 - Anders referring to Troeltsch's *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* which defined the contingency as the factuality and the causality opposed to the necessity and the adherence to the laws which was always related to the divine. See, E. Troeltsch, *Die Bedeutung der Begriff der Kontingenz*, Scientia, Aalen 1962, p. 772.

6 - L. Lütkehnaus, *Schwarze Ontologie. Über Gunther Anders*, Klampen, Luneburg 2002, p. 63. According to Lütkehaus, the contingency described in *Pathology of Freedom* is the propaedeutic concept for Anders' '*Gelegenheitsphilosophie*'. Such "occasional philosophy" emerges from the analysis of contingent phenomena through which it extrapolates practical philosophical consequences. *Ivi*, p. 127. However, as Colombo remarks, Lütkehnaus forgets the influence of this work on Anders' *Über das Haben*. See, D. Colombo, *Patologie Dell'Esperienza*, Mimesis, Milano 2019, p. 89.

7 - W. Reimann, *Verweigerte Versohnung. Zur Philosophie von Gunther Anders,* Passagen, Wien 1990, p. 49.

[him]self»[8] – even though they could have been radically different, originating from a source to which they do not correspond and yet must acknowledge. Facing this realisation, individuals experience what Anders calls the "shock of contingency", expressed through the anacoluthon proposition «that I am precisely myself»[9]. If individuals fail to reconcile with the paradox of their existence and begin to identify with their newly discovered condition, this shock can escalate into actual "terror", driving them to attempt to «escape from contingency»[10]. By realising their exact nature, people see themselves at their weakest and become resentful of the control that the external world exerts over them. The nihilist, Anders' initial ideal-type of responder to the shock, reacts with «protests and insults»[11], which, despite intending to overcome the existential paradox, ultimately exacerbate it and prevent him from resolving his antinomy. The anthropological predecessor of the nihilist can be seen in Hölderlin's *The Death of Empedocles: A Mourning-Play*, where the protagonist is dissatisfied, inconstant, and suffers because he embodies only particular relations[12]. Empedocles experiences what Anders would term *Versa-umnispänik*[13] the panic of realising one must be oneself while knowing they cannot be any of the infinite other potential versions of themselves, representing the loss of all other possible forms. This leads Anders' nihilist to disown «each being [as] the loss of all the beings whose form [he] could take»[14]. Thus, the nihilist directs his *odium fati* against himself and his surroundings, realising that both the "I" and the world are formed through what they possess of the accidental[15]. Nevertheless, the nihilist exhibits a longing for a full existence, which, on one hand, prevents him

8 - G. Anders, *The pathology of freedom: An essay on non-identification*, cit., p. 281.

9 - *Ibidem*.

10 - *Ivi*, p. 305.

11 - *Ivi*, p. 295.

12 - *Ivi*, p. 283.

13 - G. Anders, *Uomo Senza Mondo. Scritti Sull'arte e Sulla Letteratura,* tr. it. A. Aranyossy e P. P. Portinaro, Spazio Libri, Ferrara 1991, p. 178. As Reimann notes, (W. Reimann, *Verweigerte Versohnung. Zur Philosophie von Gunther Anders*, cit., p. 57), even before this term was used for the first time, Anders already engaged with this theme in his essay *The Devastated Man. On the absence of World and Word in "Berliner Alexanderplatz"*, where he writes: «the simultaneity, the adjacency of all things is the metaphysical panic of Döblin. What produces such panic? The fact that in a same moment it exists this and that […] that each individual, in which the world is embodied, is alive in passing and passes through […] that the totality of being, to which the omni-comprehensive word 'now' seems to refer, remains imaginary». G. Anders, *Uomo Senza Mondo. Scritti Sull'arte e Sulla Letteratura,* cit., p. 80.

14 - G. Anders, *The pathology of freedom: An essay on non-identification*, cit., p. 283.

15 - *Ivi*, p. 284.

from committing suicide – Empedocles' choice – while on the other, drives him to create new *modi vivendi* to alleviate the paradox of which he is a victim.

Since, in the end, even the nihilist desires to live, he must devise new strategies to cope with the unbearable condition of contingency. The first attempt involves retreating from the world and isolating himself. In this way, the very shame that drove him to escape becomes a secret to keep, a uniqueness not to be revealed to anyone. What once was the most «common thing in the world»[16] is turned by the nihilist into the most private aspect of his existence, which strengthens his "I" and imbues him with a «positive pride»[17]. The accidental ontological constitution that indelibly marks him, equipping him with a peculiarity that he shares with all other beings and with the world, is repudiated by the nihilist through the ascetic act of denying the fact of his contingent entry into the world[18]. However, this hermetic behaviour cannot keep the shame of contingency at bay for long, as it only leads to an addiction to oneself, a hypocritical form of disguise from which emerges only a sense of self-disgust for one's existence[19]. At this juncture, Anders describes the final possibility for the nihilist to overcome the humiliation of contingency, which is represented by the revitalisation of the "thirst for power" that aligns Anders' nihilist with Nietzsche's. After attempting to dissolve the contingency felt in relation to other beings, the nihilist concludes that he is ultimately confronting other accidental beings. This realisation leads him to the understanding that if his identity remains irrefutably particular – i.e., his "I" cannot become everything – then he must «force the world to become [his] I»[20] through domination and conquest. The nihilist aims to immortalise himself through the pursuit of fame and glory, filling the world with the indelible traces of his "contingent-I". Since he could not resolve his condition, he believes that by subjugating all other beings, he could achieve a status of the non-contingent, inspired by Zarathustra's rhetorical affirmation: «if there were gods, how could I stand not to be a god!»[21]. The existence of the nihilist, unravelled by the rhythm of repetition and nourished by the incessant paradox of freedom – which does not emerge from «an imaginary point of departure situated 'before' life. It is rather in the middle of life itself»[22] – com-

16 - *Ivi*, p. 289.

17 - *Ibidem*.

18 - D. Colombo, *Patologie Dell'Esperienza,* cit., p. 96.

19 - G. Anders, *The pathology of freedom: An essay on non-identification*, cit., p. 289.

20 - *Ivi*, p. 293.

21 - F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra. A book for all and none,* trans. A Del Caro, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2006, p. 65; C. Benne and C. Zittel (Hg.), *Nietzsche und die Lyrik: Ein Kompendium*, J.B. Metzler, Stuttgart 2017.

22 - G. Anders, *The pathology of freedom: An essay on non-identification*, cit., p. 295.

pels him to continually renew his search for an identity. The nihilist comes to view the primary cause of his involution as the salvific element that preserves him from dying; he confuses repetition with the most adequate form of living.

In contrast to the nihilistic state of mind, Anders posits the second ideal-type, namely the historical man[23]. While the nihilist configures his life as non-historical[24], or more precisely as anti-historical – mistaking the repetition of life for life itself – the historical man finds in the path marked by history a force opposing the paradox[25]. The historical man maintains his "health" through a Cartesian argument – as Anders calls it – «I remember, therefore, I am myself»[26]. Through his memories, the historical man discovers two forms of simultaneous identification with himself: 1) today's "I" recognises yesterday's "I", meaning he realises that the shock of contingency is the changeless quid that unites us all[27]; and 2) he discovers that yesterday's contingent "I" is not an isolated fragment suspended in the temporal gap of repetition, but a constitutive element of life[28]. However, this double identification that leads the historical man to perceive something as "his own life" is ultimately a misunderstanding, for he can only possess things, including his life, insofar as his ancestors possessed them. In other words, the historical man does not own things; his ancestors do.

The original *Weltfremdheit des Menschen*[29] concluded without suggesting how to address or resolve the issue of contingency. However, Anders continued to revise this early work and later introduced a new ideal-type: the "man of action"[30]. This addition arose from the need to address a pressing practical issue of the time, specifically the political instability caused by the rise of Fascism and National Socialism. In the initial text of the *Weltfremdheit des Menschen*, only the nihilist and the historical man were mentioned, with no reference to this third type. Therefore,

---

23 - G. Anders, *Amare Ieri. Appunti Sulla Sensibilità*, tr. it. S. Fabian, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino 2004, p. 69. In 1948, Anders seemed to detach himself from these ideal-types saying that: «it is not very encouraging that the philosophical representations of man reveal itself as the representation of the philosophical man».

24 - G. Anders, *The pathology of freedom: An essay on non-identification*, cit., p. 302.

25 - *Ivi*, p. 305.

26 - *Ivi*, p. 298.

27 - Anders writes: «or the same reason, the very man who is astonished today by his contingency has the possibility of remembering his being astonished yesterday», *Ibidem*.

28 - *Ibidem*.

29 - M. Müller, *Von Der Weltfremdheit Zur Antiquarheit. Philosophische Anthropologie Bei Günther Anders*, Tectum, Marburg 1992, p. 34.

30 - M. Lohmann, *Philosophieren in Der Endzeit. Zur Gegenwartsanalyse von Günther Anders*, Wilhelm Fink Verlag, Bonn 1996, p. 154.

it can be argued that the significance of this new formulation lies in Anders' intention to shift the conversation from discussing ideal-types to examining the conditions of existence of anthropology and humanity itself. This change in perspective is the primary reason for the many inconsistencies in the essays published in the *Recherches Philosophiques*, which reflect a "troubled meditation". These works must be evaluated in light of the reasons that prompted Anders to critically reassess his previous writings[31]. Anders, referring to the state of incertitude and of crisis of the "European situation"[32], made it clear that he did not wish to be perceived as a mere theoretical thinker, guilty of apology and resignation, and ultimately justifying the *status quo*[33]. By engaging in defining man and the question of his authenticity [*Eigentlichkeit*], Anders did not aim to fall into the incongruities of anthropology; rather, he sought to explore the issue of the «real transformation»[34] of humanity without neglecting the subject within the socio-historical context. Here, Anders echoes Kant's thought, declaring his full allegiance to the «specific sense of his idealism»[35], which entailed a critical operation through which reason was formed, leading to both theoretical and practical dimensions: reason, through *Aufklärung*, destroys its self-illusions and thereby comes to understand itself in the practical dimension[36]. In aligning himself with Kantian philosophy, Anders refers to Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View,* where a clear distinction is made between a philosophy of man defined as "physiologic", which seeks to investigate what man's nature does to him, and a "pragmatic" one, which studies what man does and can do as a free-living being. Thus, if this last addition to the essay is considered a fundamental attachment for interpreting the entire work, then what Anders deems pathological is not the abstractions and ontological freedom[37] of humanity per se, but the persistence in a theoretical dimension devoid of

---

31 - D. Colombo, *Patologie Dell'Esperienza,* cit., p. 122. Colombo suggests this reading basing himself on the fact that the man of action's section is not adequately introduced and does not fit with the previous ideal-types.

32 - G. Anders, *The pathology of freedom: An essay on non-identification*, cit., p. 307.

33 - In the conclusive paragraphs of the essay, is perceivable the echo of Anders' voluminous essay *Heidegger und Geschichte des Nihilismus. Zu Heidegger und Philosophische Anthropologie* criticising Heidegger's philosophy. See, G. Anders, *Über Heidegger*, C. H. Beck, München 2001 – that the author realised after a two decades long meditation concluded in 1950 which means that Anders was reflecting about it during the re-vision of the essay *Pathology of Freedom*.

34 - G. Anders, *The pathology of freedom: An essay on non-identification*, cit., p. 307.

35 - *Ibidem*.

36 - G. Anders, *Über Heidegger,* cit., p. 16.

37 - W. Reimann, '*Nihilismus Und Scham*', in *Gunther Anders Kontrovers*, C. H. Beck, München 1992, p. 62. As noted by Colombo, (D. Colombo, *Patologie Dell'Esperienza,* cit., p. 124), in

any practical outcome[38]. Nonetheless, it would be misleading to view the "man of action" as suddenly free from the traumatic process of identification. He must still respond to the need for a juridical and moral identity[39], which the social world would demand he prove through acts of responsibility. However, Anders' inclusion of this last ideal type underscores the philosophical necessity of addressing issues arising from actual historical events.

> The philosophical "experiments" of *Pathologie de la Liberté* and *Une Interpretation de l'a Posteriori* offer a dual insight: first, anthropology must engage with practical issues since the notion of authenticity alone cannot adequately define what a human is. Second, humans do not control their history, their surroundings, or even their creations – cultures and societies are destined to fall and generate unforeseen outcomes. Building on this new anthropological understanding developed over the years, Anders ultimately synthesises his musicological and anthropological vision in a single text, *Philosophische Untersuchungen über musikalische Situationen.*

2.

As uncompromising as Anders's axiom in *Pathologie de la Liberté* is, the *Philosophische Untersuchungen über musikalische Situationen* presents a more conciliatory and even metaphysical discussion, though it remains terminologically in-

---

L'uomo e Antiquato Vol 1, Anders, referring to *Pathology of Freedom,* defines as "exorbitant" and "pathological" the claim of the nihilist to be absolutely free and nothing more than himself. In a more circumstantial manner, Müller speaks of «the pathological aspect of freedom» insofar as man is unable to auto-determining his own origin, M. Müller, *Von Der Weltfremdheit Zur Antiquarheit. Philosophische Anthropologie Bei Günther Anders,* cit., p. 29. Similarly to Müller, Lolli, in the introduction to the Italian translation of the text, claims that freedom is pathological because it is not the product of a choice but rather the traumatic outcome of a shocking experience, namely, the experience of one's one contingency, G.Anders, *The pathology of freedom: An essay on non-identification*, cit., p. 18.

38 - G. Anders, *The pathology of freedom: An essay on non-identification*, cit., p. 284. Anders hints to the "pathological forms of freedom" of both the nihilist and the historical man. Anders points out that both arrive to the extreme limits of their pathologies because they remain on a purely theoretic dimension and do not realise their freedom in the *praxis* – i.e., in the creation of their own world. Thus, it appears misleading the affirmation made by Liessmann that only the nihilistic perspective contains pathological elements, K.P. Liessmann, *Günther Anders*, C. H. Beck, München 2002, p. 40.

39 - G. Anders, *The pathology of freedom: An essay on non-identification*, cit., p. 304.

debted to the earlier text[40]. In 1929-30, Anders viewed "listening" as the decisive release from the pathological state of being detached from the world. Thus, granting music the status of an object of experience through formal analysis of musical works or by considering the histories or motives of the subjects producing it is, for Anders, utterly futile. Music's secret lies elsewhere[41], in a realm beyond objective knowledge and subjective choice, beyond music theory and music psychology. As such, it is accessible only through a form of gnosis that captures the simultaneity of being-in-the-world and being-in-music as part of one's existence. For Anders, the musical situation[42] is initially characterised by a certain ambiguity, producing an inarticulate restlessness [*unartikulierte Unruhe*], which for him is the pivotal feature of the incompatibility between the empirical world and music:

> that one (in music) falls out of the world, that one is still somewhere; that one is always torn out of the continuum of one's own life; that one, even in this hiatus, still remains in the medium of time; that one's own (personal history) life becomes before the other; that one has to return to oneself; that music in every tone says something and yet – in the sense of the sentence – says nothing; that it seems to be revealing; that it still conceals what it reveals, that one understands something – and yet[43]

says nothing. If the ideal-type of the historical man was characterised as an individual who continuously defined himself through memories – picturing himself through his history – then, in the *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, such a life has no musical existence[44]. Music, contrary to the other forms of art, has its own "musical time" [*musikalische Zeit*] which is *"*closed off" [*abgesperrt*][45]. Being "in-mu-

---

40 - As Khittl suggests, the theoretical debt of this work traces back to Anders' *Die Rolle der Situationskategorie bei den 'Logishen Satzen'* and to *Zur Phänomenologie des Zuhörens*. See C. Khittl, *"Gute" Musik? In Musikpädagogischen Kontexten? Phänomenologische Überlegungen Zu Einem Situativen Musikbegriff – Essay Zur Theorie Der Musikalischen Situation Nach Günther Anders'*, in *Musik: Wissenschaftlich – Pädagogisch – Politisch. Festschrift Für Arnold Werner-Jensen Zum 70. Geburtstag,* Die Blaue Eule, Essen 2014, pp. 219-220.

41 - Khittl clearly states that Anders wanted to achieve nothing less than a music ontology which does not investigate the musical works but music itself. *Ivi*, p. 212.

42 - Which can be defined as the moment in which the listener and/or the composer has an experience of a musical product.

43 - G. Anders, *Musikphilosophische Schriften*, R. Ellensohn (ed.), C. H. Beck, München 2018, p. 18.

44 - *Ivi,* p. 37.

45 - As Ellensohn notes, other authors such as Eggbrecht and Ingarden formulate similar statements in regard to the particularity of music. R. Ellensohn, *Der Andere Anders: Günther Anders Als Musikphilosoph*, Lang, Frankfurt am Main 2008, p. 66.

sic" simply means 'being-out-of-the-world'; in other words, a-cosmicity. For Anders, music is an "existential" state, not merely a modus of "being-in-the-world", a sui generis "not-in-the-world". Music's distinct temporality in relation to historical time leads Anders to typify the musical situation as an "enclave situation" because it is «an enclave in the historical continuum of the human life» [*Enklave im geschichtlichen Kontinuum des menschlichen Lebens*][46]. Through this formulation, Anders aims to distinguish the musical enclave from other *abgesperrte* situations such as fear, playing, and sleeping, which seem to share music's a-cosmicity. Fear, he writes, is a "gap" [*Lücke*] devoid of any content, making it similar to a space with "no time" [*keine Zeit*][47]. Sleeping is a form of "falling/sinking" [*Absinken*] which leads to its realisation, the dream[48]. Lastly, playing is different from music because it is not merely «a misuse of imagination» [*Missbrauch der Einbildungskraft*][49] which has no meaning other than itself. Music, by contrast, is «insightful, it says something» [*aufschlusshaft, sie besagt etwas*][50]. In its temporality, music deprives one's life of its medium and movement, but, at the same time, music preserves one's expressivity, which it uses for its purposes. The "being-in-the-music" lives, to a certain extent, "over itself", existing in temporal structures rather than historical ones, that is, in "musical time". "Musical time" is not a continuum consistent with history or one's individual life story; it has no actual beginning and no actual end, no birth and no death. Anders is particularly clear in distinguishing "musical time" from historical time; he states:

> in time, music strips life of its actual medium and its power of movement, keeps it outside its historical context and outside the continuum of its motifs, nevertheless keeps it alive in its product, yes, it does so as if it were unrecorded, parasitic to its own medium, and to the power of movement of the product, and now lives a spooky side-life at the expense of the life realized in time[51].

Music's inconceivability and unimaginability are directly linked to its anti-historicism, which is revealed in its repeatability [*Wiederholbarkeit*][52]. By juxtaposing

---

46 - G. Anders, *Musikphilosophische Schriften,* cit., p. 44.

47 - *Ivi,* p. 45.

48 - This is a sign of how Anders goes beyond previous musical analysis such as that on of Schopenhauer who saw music as the immediate expression of the will *qua* thing in itself. See, A. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation Vol I*, trans. R. Welchman – C. Janaway – J. Norman, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2011, p. 285.

49 - G. Anders, *Musikphilosophische Schriften,* cit., p. 46.

50 - *Ivi,* p. 47.

51 - *Ivi*, pp. 48-49.

52 - *Ivi,* §6

Pathologie de la Liberté with the *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, one can see that if the historical man lived by accepting the irreversible fact of what happened yesterday, which he keeps pictured in his memory, then music escapes such representability since

> no gramophone record gives the image of the Moonlight Sonata, but this itself [...] no musical figure gives the image of someone who appeared earlier, but, albeit changed, [...] this itself. [...] Irrepresentability, however, is closely related to un-historicality. What is not remembered, but can only be realized again and again, is unhistorical[53].

Music repetitively realises itself in its sounds; it requires «a reproduction continuously repeated» [*einer stets wiederholten Reproduktion*][54]. By this, Anders means that music is meaningful only in the repetition of its chronological sequences, making it ambiguous since it is not in time but is nonetheless based on temporal structures. As Anders writes: «the piece is not repeated in the medium of time, but time itself, or, since the piece and its time must not be distinguished here, its time is repeated with the piece which is presented again»[55].

Music is ἐνέργειᾰ, both structure and process, resolving the subject-object dichotomy by containing the product within the activity itself. In music, the possibility of repetition is not simply contained but must be achieved, otherwise music would not exist. With the association of music to the notion of ἐνέργειᾰ, Anders challenges previous musical ontologies that treated the musical product as separate from its execution. Thus, music's objectivity and expressivity coexist within a broader dialectical notion of expressivity, where objective musical structures and subjective mood are inseparable. Linked to this reading of music as ἐνέργειᾰ is the concept of "co-participation" [*Mitvollzuges mit*][56], which represents another manner of surpassing the subjective-objective dichotomy. "Co-participation" is a specifically neutral form of the relation subject-object and understood as an "active-passive-neutral" situation [*aktiv-passiv-neutral*][57] that Anders explains as the «the unity of act and mood» [*Einheit von Akt und Stimmung*][58] and «following the Kantian imagination as "receptive-spontaneous-neutral"» [*Anlehnung die Kantsche Einbildungskraft als 'rezeptiv-spontan-neutral'*][59]. Anders challenges hereby

---

53 - *Ivi,* p. 54.
54 - *Ibidem.*
55 - *Ivi,* p. 55.
56 - *Ivi,* p. 20.
57 - *Ivi,* p. 128.
58 - *Ivi,* §7.
59 - *Ivi,* §8.

the ocular-centrism of Husserl's phenomenology, which separated actions – always understood intentionally due to its directedness towards its object – from *Stimmung*, by placing hearing between sight and smell[60]. Hearing is, according to Anders, not as intentional as sight but not impersonal as smell; rather, it is "expressive" [*ausdruckhaft*] since requires a bearer of expressivity. In this manner, Anders can oppose music's objectivity and expressivity with the above-mentioned neutrality which previous dichotomic interpretations did not account for. The objectivity and expressivity of music belong together to a wider dialectical notion of expressivity. Music cannot be reduced to a series of symbols nor an expression, but rather something distinct from both of these alternatives; or even better, it is the simultaneous presence of both within the same entity. The uniqueness of music lies prior to the distinction between subjects and objects. Thus, a philosophy of music that focuses solely on an objective or ideal realm of tones or their forms and denies or avoids subjectivism is just as incorrect as philosophical subjectivism itself.

As mentioned above, co-performance [*Mittvollzug*] is not only a unity of act and *Stimmung,* it also represents Anders' attempt to re-introduce Kant's imagination into the philosophical debate. Kant's imagination functioned as the medium-term between the senses and reason via its being receptive-spontaneous-neutral[61]. Thus, Anders' co-performance is neutral however, it can opt to become more active/creative oriented or more passive/receptive according to the situation[62]. This adaptability of the co-performance suggests the existence of different forms of movement [*Bewegungsformen*] which shape the co-performance. Therefore, co-performance means, on one hand, the reproduction of a musical piece, on the other hand, being influenced by it. «The character of the co-performance depends on the objectifying character of the musical production, which is quite different according to different kinds of music»[63]. For Anders music is an art of movement insofar as «the meaning of time is a variation of the meaning of movement» [*der Zeitsinn sei eine Variante des Bewegungssinnes*][64] because the movements are not the result of a previous temporal structure but rather «they create their own time» [*schaffen sie sich ihre Zeit*][65]. Thus, the co-performance displays the identity of external and internal time insofar as the experience of time can be seen as the

60 - The sense of smell, for Anders, has no object to which direct an act.

61 - *Ivi*, p. 61.

62 - Khittl notices that such *rezeptiv-produktiven Zweiseitigkeit* (receptive-productive doubleness) is present in Plessner's *Anthropologie der Sinne*. See, C. Khittl, *"Gute" Musik? In Musikpädagogischen Kontexten?,* cit., p. 225.

63 - G. Anders, *Musikphilosophische Schriften,* cit., p. 63, (T.d.A.).

64 - *Ivi,* p. 65.

65 - *Ibidem*.

coordination of movements according to its *Bewegungssinn*. There have been many attempts to describe music's *Bewegungssinn* by, for instance, Hugo Riemann, Ernst Kurth, Heinrich Schenker, Eduard Hanslick and Ernst Bloch[66], but Anders' approach is different for it aims at being philosophical and not metaphorical. Anders believes that the «the musical *Bewegungsformen* become mankind's *Bewegungsformen*» [*die musikalischen Bewegungsformen werden zu Bewegungsformen des Menschen*][67]. This transformation is as arbitrary as music is a game of melodies and tones; nonetheless, its unpredictability entails an opening towards forms of movements that would have been impossible to experience without it. In the musical situation, a person is identical to the musical object, she is that form of movement and because of this inescapable condition the analysis of the *Bewegungsformen* must be non-metaphorical[68]. «The individuals are completely retuned and transformed in the musical situation» [*Der Mensch ist in der musikalischen Situation völlig umgestimmt und verwandelt*][69], making music a "transformative art" [*Verwandlungskunst*][70] of man – it is «always anthropology of music» [*immer Anthropologie der Musik*][71]. It is only in such a unity that music acquires epiphanic qualities[72], as a "revealing" which «something seems meaningful but nevertheless says nothing» [*etwas besage und dennoch nichts aussage*][73]. In

66 - See, R. Ellensohn, *Der Andere Anders: Günther Anders Als Musikphilosoph,* cit., p. 77.

67 - G. Anders, *Musikphilosophische Schriften,* cit., p. 64.

68 - An example of non-metaphoric transformation is that of an actor who "becomes" a character of a play while remaining him/herself.

69 - *Ivi,* p. 68.

70 - In Aristotle it is said: «for listening to such strains our souls undergo a change». See, Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. B. Jowett, Batoche Books, Kitchener 1999, p. 187. As mentioned in footnote 62, it was Plessner who defined music as the art of movement.

71 - G. Anders, *Musikphilosophische Schriften,* cit., p. 75.

72 - This revelatory character of listening is not new to Anders who, in his discussion of Rilke's *Duineser Elegien* (1930) with his wife Arendt, described the hopeless situation of a man that has lost his world. This condition is epitomised by the loss of echo [*Echolosigkeit*], meaning that this man is doomed to not being heard at all. Thus, the task of poetry is, according to Anders and Arendt, to "invoke" the urgency of being-in-listening [*Im-Horen-sein*] as the only possible attempt to reach the stronger form of existence [*stärkere Dasein*]. See, V. Erlmann, *Reason and Resonance A History of Modern Aurality*, Zone Books, New York 2010, p. 315 and S. Maletta, *Arendt e Anders: ipotesi per un'etica post-nichilista* in H. Arendt and G. Stern, *Le Elegie Duinesi*, tr. it. S. Maletta, Asterios, Trieste 2014, pp. 10-22.

73 - The epiphanic character of music discloses the manifold dimensions of man. However, it cannot bridge them or enact them. As Erlmann puts it: «Anders deplores the growing gulf between a culture of things and a culture of humans [and] he refuses to bridge this gulf with a 'happy rhythm'». See, V. Erlmann, *Reason and Resonance A History of Modern Aurality,* cit., p. 227.

this sense listening to music becomes a metaphysical symptom insofar as it is heralded by a foresight [*Ahnen*] of the indication of humanity's precise dwelling in the world as its "Not-being-only-in-this-world": the fact that a person, as someone with *Ahnen*, «can *mean* something other than this world that she experiences and that is available to her or something other than herself […], that she is free to 'mean past' [*vorbeimeinen*] her world is evidence of her lack of fixation on this world»[74].

3.

Given what has been said so far concerning both Anders' anthropology and musicology what can be said about humanity's place in Anders' early writings? Anders' *Philosophische Untersuchungen* is a development of the negative anthropology of 1929-1930 with which it has some analogies[75] and leads Anders to elaborate the following problem: if the transformative art called music is a man-made product, then, in the situation of musical transformation, can humanity be "transformed" into something else? Anders' answer is clear, humanity cannot be transformed into something other than itself, something "non-human", but rather into «a dimension of itself» [*einer Dimension seiner selbst*][76]. «Being-in-music can at times mean becoming identical with one dimension of oneself, and at other times a different dimension of oneself, or becoming these dimensions themselves» [*In-Musik-Sein heisst dann das eine Mal: identisch werden mit dieser und das andere Mal mit jener Dimension seiner selbst bezw. diese Dimension selbst werden*][77]. The essential condition for this transformation is humanity's inherent "ontological ambiguity", which asserts that there is no singular, precisely definable type of human being. Anders is here implying that human existence can be known only in its ambiguity and contingency. In music, a person is not only in a particular dimension, but she lives it, and this dynamic resembles what the historical man used to do with his memories which were at the same time the medium and the constitutive element of his life.

---

74 - G. Bischof, et Al. (eds.), *The Life and Work of Günther Anders: Émigré, Iconoclast, Philosopher, Man of Letters*, BoD – Books on Demand, Norderstedt 2014, p. 111. Macho believes that Anders' musical philosophy is bound to be formulated as a negative-theology. See, T. Macho, *Die Kunst Der Verwandlung*, in «Merkur» 45/507 (1991), p. 481.

75 - On the shared elements between *Patology of Freedom* and *Philosophische Untersuchungen* see, R. Ellensohn, *Der Andere Anders: Günther Anders Als Musikphilosoph,* cit., p. 81 and W. Reimann*, Reason and Resonance A History of Modern Aurality,* cit., p. 20.

76 - G. Anders, *Musikphilosophische Schriften,* cit., p. 78.

77 - *Ivi,* p. 75.

Anders' *Philosophische Untersuchungen* can be defined as a dialectic of objectification which does not entail the objectification of subjectivity but rather «the retrieval of the separated into subjectivity» [*das Zurückholen des Abgetrennten in die Subjektivität*][78]. Its entire philosophical project is an attempt to overcome the ancient dichotomy subject-object[79] through the interpretation of music as subject-object-neutral, determined indeterminacy, and identity of identity and non-identity. This marks the zenith of Anders' philosophical evolution before the Second World War, centred on critiques of Husserl's subject-object dichotomy, a transformative shift inspired by Plessner's *Die Einheit der Sinne*, humanity's absence of an a priori, and its contingent nature as explored in *Pathology of Freedom*. These elements collectively shaped a pessimistic anthropological philosophy of music entrenched in an anti-idealist framework. «Music» – Anders underlines – «is ever indeed [*zwar stets*] the music of its time, but not every time is the time of its music»[80]. There lies the realm of music, embodying its own essence of "another world". For Anders, the task is to articulate this concept. Despite the undeniable social aspect of music, its true essence cannot be fully understood solely through the lens of humanity's social nature.

Bibliography:

Anders, G. *Amare Ieri. Appunti Sulla Sensibilità*, tr. it. S. Fabian, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino 2004;

Id., *Il Mondo Dopo l'uomo. Tecnica e Violenza*, tr. it. L. Pizzighella, Mimesis, Milano 2008;

Id., *Musikphilosophische Schriften*, R. Ellensohn (ed.), C. H. Beck, München 2018;

Id., *The pathology of freedom: An essay on non-identification*, trans. K. Wolfe, in «Deleuze Studies» 3/2 (2009), pp. 278-310;

Id., *Über Heidegger*, C. H. Beck, München 2001;

Id., *Uomo Senza Mondo. Scritti Sull'arte e Sulla Letteratura*, tr. it. A. Aranyossy e P. P. Portinaro, Spazio Libri, Ferrara 1991;

Arendt, H. and G. Stern, *Le Elegie Duinesi*, tr. it. S. Maletta, Asterios, Trieste 2014;

78 - *Ivi,* p. 20. As Ellensohn says: «become different» [*Anders-werden*]. See, R. Ellensohn, *Der Andere Anders: Günther Anders Als Musikphilosoph,* cit., p. 111.

79 - Both Ellensohn and Khittl agree on this, and they rightfully link it to Anders' *On Phenomenology of listening*. See, C. Khittl, *"Gute" Musik? In Musikpädagogischen Kontexten?,* cit., p. 225; G. Anders, *Musikphilosophische Schriften,* cit., p. 227, and R. Ellensohn, *Der Andere Anders: Günther Anders Als Musikphilosoph,* cit., p. 111.

80 - G. Anders, *Musikphilosophische Schriften*, cit., p. 184.

Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. B. Jowett, Batoche Books, Kitchener 1999;
Benne, C. and C. Zittel (Hg.), *Nietzsche und die Lyrik: Ein Kompendium*, J.B. Metzler, Stuttgart 2017;
Bischof, G, et. Al. (eds.), *The Life and Work of Günther Anders: Émigré, Iconoclast, Philosopher, Man of Letters*, BoD – Books on Demand, Norderstedt 2014;
Colombo, D. *Patologie Dell'Esperienza*, Mimesis, Milano 2019;
Ellensohn, R. *Der Andere Anders: Günther Anders Als Musikphilosoph*, Lang, Frankfurt am Main 2008;
Erlmann, V. *Reason and Resonance A History of Modern Aurality*, Zone Books, New York 2010;
Khittl, C. *"Gute" Musik? In Musikpädagogischen Kontexten? Phänomenologische Überlegungen Zu Einem Situativen Musikbegriff – Essay Zur Theorie Der Musikalischen Situation Nach Günther Anders'*, in *Musik: Wissenschaftlich – Pädagogisch – Politisch. Festschrift Für Arnold Werner-Jensen Zum 70. Geburtstag,* Die Blaue Eule, Essen 2014;
Liessmann, K. P. *Günther Anders*, C. H. Beck, München 2002;
Lohmann, M. *Philosophieren in Der Endzeit. Zur Gegenwartsanalyse von Günther Anders*, Wilhelm Fink Verlag, Bonn 1996;
Lütkehnaus, L. *Schwarze Ontologie. Über Gunther Anders*, Klampen, Lüneburg 2002;
Macho, T. *Die Kunst Der Verwandlung*, in «Merkur» 45/507 (1991), pp. 475-497;
Müller, M. *Von Der Weltfremdheit Zur Antiquarheit. Philosophische Anthropologie Bei Günther Anders*, Tectum, Marburg 1992;
Nietzsche, F. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra. A book for all and none*, trans. A. Del Caro, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2006;
Reimann, W. '*Nihilismus Und Scham*', in *Gunther Anders Kontrovers*, C. H. Beck, München 1992;
Id., *Verweigerte Versohnung. Zur Philosophie von Gunther Anders*, Passagen, Wien 1990;
Schopenhauer, A. *The World as Will and Representation Vol I*, trans. R. Welchman – C. Janaway – J. Norman, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2011;
Troeltsch, E. *Die Bedeutung der Begriff der Kontingenz*, Scientia, Aalen 1962.

Additional notes:

I hereby certify that this contribution has been written by myself only and that my contribution has not been published and has not been successfully evaluated in other editorial offices.