5 [12] In his 1955 *Five Biblical Poems* silences are represented by three-sided boxes, 'each equal in duration to any word and thus indeterminate in length' (See Williams, *Anthology of Concrete Poetry* [1967]).

6 [13] The work that Forti recalls may have been Cage's score for *Fontana Mix*. For a detailed description of Robert Dunn's workshop, see Sally Banes, *Democracy's Body – Judson Dance Theater, 1962–64* (Epping: UMI Research Press, 1980).

7 [14] Brecht used cards from the beginning of his classes in 1958, as in *The Artificial Crowd* of 2 July 1958, for example, in which cards are 'passed out to the audience', bearing instructions using clapping (for x times), shaking or not shaking milk bottles filled with various objects and saying words (see Brecht, *Notebook I* [1958], in *Notebooks I–III* [1991] 12).

8 [15] The distinction between 'chance and 'choice' procedures is discussed by Earle Brown in 'Interview with Richard Duffalo, Rye, New York, 1986', Duffalo, *Trackings: Composers Speak with Richard Duffalo* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) 113.

9 [16] See Brecht, *Notebook I* [1958] in *Notebooks I–III* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 1991) 42. Brecht was referring to Wolff's *Duo for Pianists II* which preceded *Duet I*. Wolff started to develop notations stressing the 'cue and answer' relations between the performers in 1957; see Christopher Fox, 'Music as Social Process: Some Aspects of the Work of Christian Wolff', *Contact*, no. 30 (Spring 1987).

10 [17] For more information about concrete poetry and its relation to Mallarmé, see Mary Ellen Solt, *Concrete Poetry: A World View* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968).

11 [18] In the score for Brecht's 1961 *Incidental Music* Brecht gives instructions to a pianist for tasks such as tilting the piano seat, piling blocks inside the piano, or dropping dried peas onto the keyboard. 'I don't tell you what to try for', explained Brecht to Michael Nyman in his interview with Nyman, *Studio International*, 192 (984) (November–December 1976) 256.

12 [19] '[I]n order to be called "open form", a work must have an identifiable content which can then be formed, as in *25 Pages* or the *Available Forms* works. By this definition, *December 1952* is not a piece of music at all; it is musical activity when performed' – Brown, 'On Form', *Source*, I (1) 1965) 50.

13 [20] La Monte Young's 'Lecture 1960' was first given at Ann Halprin's workshop in California in the summer of 1960, and was first published in the *Tulane Drama Review* in 1965.

14 [21] 'Listen to the earth turning', Yoko Ono, *Earth Piece*, Spring 1963 in Yoko Ono, *Grapefruit*, 1964 (Tokyo: Wunternaum Press, 1964). Douglas Kahn has shown that it was the appearance of recording and amplifying devices that made composers realize that sound events should not be limited to what is audible to the human ear; see Kahn, *Noise, Water, Meat – A History of Sound in the Arts* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1999) 189–99.

15 [22] Brecht also showed in this exhibition some early paintings and collages and 'constructions to be hung upon a wall as a painting, but whose elements may be moved about by the viewer in a manner determined by the nature of the work', such as *Marbles and Blair* (see 'Brecht to Show Events at Reuben Gallery', press release for *Towards Events*, New York, Reuben Gallery, 1959).

16 [23] 'Yoko Ono: Jeder muss etwas dazu tun ... – ein Gresprächvon Andreas Denk', *Kunstforum International*, no. 125 (January–Februuary 1994) 278 (my translation).

17 [24] Ibid., 279, note 24.

18 [25] The work 'was done in a spirit of liberation: to let the spectators take part in what was happening' – Brecht, 'Interview with Irmeline Lebeer' (1973), in Henry Martin, ed., *An Introduction to George Brecht's Book of the Tumbler on Fire* (Milan: Multhipia Edizioni, 1978) 88.

Anna Dezeuze, extract from 'Origins of the Fluxus Score: From Indeterminacy to the "Do-It-Yourself" Artwork', *Performance Research*, vol. 7, no. 3 (2002) 79–92 [references abbreviated].

Branden W. Joseph
The Social Turn//2008

[...] Situated roughly between the *I-Ching*-derived chance techniques of the *Music of Changes* (1951) and the complete indeterminacy of *Variations II* (1961), [is the] period in John Cage's work [which] has long been recognized as central, indeed, fundamental, to the breakdown of the modernist project and the advent of postmodernism.[1] Despite its multidisciplinary importance, which had profound consequences for art, music, dance and film, Cage's impact on the period outside the discipline of music (and sometimes within) is more often minimized or dismissed than explored. Frequently, the idea of chance, aside from any specific understanding of Cage's deployment of it, is hypostatized as the sole content of his aesthetic and equated with an attitude of complete relativism. Caricaturing him as some type of holy fool, dismissing him as a mere imitator of Dada, or disparaging him as a religious reactionary on account of his invocation of Zen, critics consistently overlook the logical, self-reflexive and utterly consistent development of the first two decades of Cage's career. Individual quotes and compositions are routinely cited or analysed out of context (a practice, to be sure, abetted by Cage's decomposition of his own writings via chance procedures and typographic experiments), while the specifics of both his scores and his performances are usually simply ignored.

Such off-hand treatment by critics and historians, however, differs markedly from the reception of Cage by the artists (in the widest sense of the term) who interacted with him on an almost daily basis in New York or at Black Mountain College, encountered his work at Darmstadt (like La Monte Young), took his composition courses at the New School for Social Research, or studied his scores in Robert Dunn's choreography workshop, out of which the Judson Dance Theater would arise. While it would be impossible to chronicle the evolution of

Cage's project in detail here, it is nonetheless important to analyse certain of its most significant implications, for they formed the backdrop against which the aesthetic positions developed (variously) within the network of which Young and Tony Conrad were a part would play themselves out.[2]

The first implication of Cage's work is the production of an aesthetic of immanence. For the better part of two decades, Cage had pursued a thoroughgoing disarticulation of any and all abstract or transcendent connections between sound or between the individual components of a sound, such as frequency, amplitude, timbre, duration, or other morphology. In this, he opposed the direction of his European contemporaries, most notably Stockhausen and Boulez, who sought an aesthetic of integral serialism by which all aspects or parameters of a composition would be interrelated. Beginning with the investigation of chance procedures, Cage worked to detach sounds from traditional, illustrative or other pre-established meanings, as well as to disconnect composition (the arrangement of sounds) from continuity, whether produced by melody or by rhythm, and any form of structure: harmonic, atonal and eventally even the neutral time structures he himself had produced and lauded throughout the 1940s. 'It is thus possible', Cage argued, 'to make a musical composition the continuity of which is free of individual taste and memory (psychology) and also of the literature and "traditions" of the art. The sounds enter the time-space centred within themselves, unimpeded by service to any abstraction, their 360 degrees of circumference free for an infinite play of interpenetration.'[3]

Going beyond the disarticulation of a priori connections between sounds, Cage also sought to undercut the production of any determinate a posteriori interconnections between them, as well. Quickly realizing that, once fixed, a chance-derived score such as *Music of Changes* (which was indeterminate with regard to *composition*) was still as determinate upon *performance* as if it had been intentionally produced,[4] Cage sought to insert indeterminacy into the relation between composer and performer (by allowing, for example, for multiple realizations of any compositional notation) as well as into the relation between performer and listener (by means, for instance, of arranging loudspeakers and musicians around the audience so that no two listeners would hear the same 'mix' of sounds), so that there was no longer any 'best seat in the house' (one of the aspects of Cage's work that Henry Flynt replicated in 1959). Cage's goal, in all such endeavours, was to eliminate as much as possible from the acoustical experience the creation of any abstract form that could be received as existing on a level above, beyond or outside the immanent realm (what Deleuze and Guattari, when discussing Cage, among others, would term a 'plane of immanence').[5]

Such an embrace of immanence does not, as is often charged, amount to a quietistic acceptance of 'life' or 'nature' (two of Cage's favourite terms) as unchanging or eternal realms, or as ones that are identical to the actually existing social structure as it unreflexively appears from what Cage called an 'anthropomorphic' point of view. 'Nature', for Cage, or more properly, nature's 'manner of operation', was understood as an ongoing process of ateleological and non-hierarchical transformation. At his most specific, Cage described the purpose of music as 'an imitation ... of nature in her manner of operation as, in our time, her operation is revealed', further explaining that 'art changes because science changes – that is, changes in science give artists different understandings of how nature works'.[6] Always attentive to contemporary scientific and technological developments (the one-time futurist was famously the son of an inventor), Cage's notions of complexity and chaos ultimately, perhaps, have more resonances with cybernetics and chaos theory than with Eastern religion. For Cage, the idea of 'identifying with nature' was above all a reconfiguration of the avant-garde technique of estrangement, the most important aspect of which, arguably, was the disidentification with overly reductive (but not all) ideas of causality: 'The life situation from a natural, rather than anthropomorphic, view is more complex than art or putting arts together tastefully ... the really important problems require greater earnestness.'[7]

The second component of the Cagean aesthetic concerns the relation between the listener and the indeterminate musical production. Instead of confronting the composition as a totality – unified by its derivation from or representation of an abstract (non-immanent) structure or form – listeners were to encounter sonic events as a 'field' or 'constellation' that not only potentially surrounded them, but that opened onto and interpenetrated with random acoustical occurrences 'outside' and therefore beyond any single intentionality. (Hence Cage's quip that 'a cough or a baby crying will not ruin a good piece of modern music.')[8] Like a glass house, to use one of Cage's favourite metaphors, or an auditorium with the windows left open, Cage's compositions emulated a type of acoustical 'transparency' to external events that undermined their separation and autonomy. To this end, many of Cage's compositions could be performed simultaneously, allowing for a kind of superimposition or audio collage effect through which they melded into one another and further blurred their status as discrete works. With neither determinable formal nor 'spatial' limitations, Cage's compositions were to be grasped not as discrete, acoustical 'time-objects', but as temporally changing, yet ateleological ('purposeless') 'processes'.[9] The listener, then, instead of following pre-given structures or attempting to comprehend the work as a message (whether intentionally implanted or not), was to assume an attitude of attentiveness within a differentiated, but non-

hierarchical field of sonic occurrences: 'to approach them as objects is to utterly miss the point.'[10] For Cage, this reconfiguration of the traditional subject-object/listener-work relation into an almost topographical situation of a listener within a multidimensional transformational field (i.e., a field of more than two dimensions) was an explicit challenge not only to abstraction but to dialectics:

> Where a single operation is applied to more than one notation, for example to those of both frequency and amplitude characteristics, the frequency and amplitude characteristics are, by that operation common to both, brought into relationship. These relationships make an object; and this object, in contrast to a process which is purposeless, must be viewed dualistically. Indeterminacy when present in the making of an object, and when therefore viewed dualistically, is a sign, not of identification with no matter what eventuality, but simply of carelessness with regard to the outcome.[11]

According to Cage, seeing the composition as an ateleological process, or focusless but differentiated field, produces an additional transformation in the listening relationship, which is the third relevant point of his aesthetic: Interpretation gives way to 'experimentation'. In place of the attempt to comprehend the meaning of a composition or any of the sounds in it as signs with unilaterally determinable (i.e., bi-univocal) meanings – whether pre-given or a posteriori and even if multiple or ambiguous – the listener was to experience the process as without ulterior signification, structure or goal. Cage sometimes groped for terms to describe this relationship: 'awareness', 'curiosity', 'use', even 'an entertainment in which to celebrate unfixity'.[12] Nevertheless, 'experimentation', as developed within the Cagean project, was the process of interpretation, of reading and receiving signs, in the absence of pre-given signifieds.[13] Such was not conceived by Cage as an embrace of negation (no received meaning whatsoever), or of irrationality or mystical oneness (though, combined with Zen, both were almost unavoidable receptions), but at least at its most radical, as a death of the composer that was also a liberating birth of the listener. As Liz Kotz has observed, the more celebrated notion of the 'death of the author' put forward by Roland Barthes in 1968 was likely a reimportation of the idea into literature and art from the context of contemporary music.[14]

In this reconfigured listening experience, neither the unavoidably *perceived* connections between sounds nor the listener's thoughts or feelings about them were denied or eliminated. 'Hearing sounds which are just sounds', Cage stated, 'immediately sets the theorizing mind to theorizing.'[15] However, the locus of the meaning of the acoustical experience is transferred to the listener, who is thereby allowed to 'become their own centre', rather than submit to the will or

thoughts of either composer or performer. 'Of course, there are objects', Cage declared about the visual analogue of his aesthetic in Rauschenberg's Combines. 'Who said there weren't? The thing is, we get the point more quickly when we realize it is we looking rather than we may not be seeing it.'[16]

The dissolution or dismantling of transcendent structures was understood as a subversion of power. This was the fourth relevant point of Cage's aesthetic. For Cage, the traditional, determinate passages from composer to score, score to performer, and performer to listener, were understood in terms of power relations. Thus, to disarticulate them as necessary, bi-univocal relations meant that neither performer nor audience had to be subservient to the will of another; they could instead work from their own centres, not by doing whatever they want, but nonetheless without being 'pushed', as Cage put it, in any one direction.[17] As he explained about one such musical relation, 'Giving up control so that sounds can be sounds (they are not men: they are sounds) means for instance: the conductor of an orchestra is no longer a policeman.'[18] This (ultimately utopian) attempt to dissolve or to eradicate all forms or effects of power was essentially an anarchist position, and it would be explicitly labelled as such by Cage in 1960 in a brief statement published in *ARTnews*: 'Emptiness of purpose does not imply contempt for society, rather it assumes that each person, whether he knows it or not, is noble, is able to experience gifts with generosity, that society is best anarchic.'[19]

The final component of the Cagean legacy to be drawn out at this point is its challenge to the disciplinary status of the separate arts. Beginning with a quest to undermine the separation between music and noise in his futurist-inspired percussion work of the 1930s and 1940s, Cage moved, at the outset of the 1950s, to undo the distinction between sound and silence. Following upon his experience in an anechoic chamber at Harvard in 1951, Cage famously redefined silence as inherently and unavoidably filled with sounds, the production of which is simply unintended. There is thus no such thing as silence. Instead, there are only two kinds of sounds: 'those intended and those others (so-called silence) not intended.'[20] By 1954, Cage would go further, extending the progressive disarticulation of 'abstract' categories such as sound and silence to the distinction between the auditory and the visual. The inevitable combination of these two components in any and all performed actions, which implicitly questioned the distinction between the visual arts and music, Cage described as 'theatre'.[21] As he wrote in *45' for a Speaker* (a lecture carefully scripted to incorporate, via chance determinations, such activities as coughing, brushing his hair, blowing his nose, and banging his fist on the table), 'Music is an oversimplification of the situation we actually are in. An ear alone is not a being; music is one part of theatre. "Focus" is what aspects one's noticing. Theatre is all

the various things going on at the same time. I have noticed that music is liveliest for me when listening, for instance, doesn't distract me from seeing.'[22]

All five aspects of Cage's aesthetic would have been available to an attentive student in 1959 and would become progressively more so up to the publication of *Silence*, the first volume of his collected writings, in 1961. [...]

1 [footnote 32 in source] This was actually the second major phase of Cage's development. The first revolved around percussion. Cage's work would transform again in the 1960s, a transformation that Henry Flynt suggests was, in part, brought forth by the developments in the circle around La Monte Young. Henry Flynt, 'La Monte Young in New York, 1960–62', in *Sound and Light: La Monte Young, Marian Zazeela*, ed. William Duckworth and Richard Fleming (Lewisburg, Pennsylvania: Bucknell University Press, 1996) 77.

2 [33] The best critical study of Cage's work remains James Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). I have attempted to chronicle certain aspects of Cage's development in detail elsewhere. [...]

3 [34] John Cage, 'Composition: To Describe the Process of Composition Used in *Music of Changes* and *Imaginary Landscape No. 4*' (1952) in *Silence* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1961) 59.

4 [35] John Cage, 'Composition as Process II: Indeterminacy' (1958), in *Silence*, 36.

5 [36] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987) 266–7.

6 [37] John Cage, 'On Film' (1956), in *John Cage: An Anthology*, ed. Richard Kostelanetz (New York: Da Capo Press, 1991) 115; John Cage, 'Where Are We Going? And What Are We Doing?' (1961), in *Silence*, 194. [...]

7 [38] John Cage, 'On Film' (1956), in *John Cage: An Anthology*, 115.

8 [39] John Cage, '45' for a Speaker' (1954), in *Silence*, 161.

9 [40] John Cage, 'Composition as Process II: Indeterminacy', in *Silence*, 38.

10 [41] John Cage, 'Composition as Process I: Changes' (1958) in *Silence*, 31.

11 [42] John Cage, 'Composition as Process II: Indeterminacy', in *Silence*, 38. Cage comments further on dualism and dialectics in 'Program Notes' (1959), in *John Cage: Writer*, ed. Richard Kostelanetz (New York: Limelight Editions, 1993) 81–2.

12 [43] John Cage, 'Where Are We Going? And What Are We Doing?' (1961), in *Silence*, 237; and 'On Robert Rauschenberg, Artist, and His Work' (1961), in *Silence*, 98.

13 [44] Daniel Charles, *Gloses sur John Cage* (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1978) 91–109; and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Mark Seem, Robert Hurley and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983) 370–71.

14 [45] Liz Kotz, 'Post-Cagean Aesthetics and the "Event" Score', *October*, no. 95 (Winter 2001) 59 and 59n10.

15 [46] John Cage, 'Experimental Music' (1957), in *Silence*, 10.

16 [47] John Cage, 'On Robert Rauschenberg, Artist, and His Work' (1961), in *Silence*, 108.

17 [48] John Cage, 'Where Are We Going? And What Are We Doing?' (1961), in *Silence*, 224–6.

18 [49] John Cage, 'History of Experimental Music in the United States' (1959), in *Silence*, 72.

19 [50] John Cage, 'Form is a Language', *ARTnews* (April 1960); reprinted in John Cage: An Anthology, 135. [...]

20 [51] John Cage, 'Experimental Music: Doctrine' (1955), in *Silence*, 14.

21 [52] Ibid., 12.

22 [53] John Cage, '45' for a Speaker', in *Silence*, 149.

Branden W. Joseph, extract from *Beyond The Dream Syndicate: Tony Conrad and the Arts after Cage* (New York: Zone Books, 2008) 76–82 [some footnotes abbreviated].

Alexandra Munroe
Cage Zen//2009

Cage's study and appropriation of Asian philosophy and aesthetics shaped his compositional practice and writings from the mid 1940s to at least the mid 1960s. He was open about his use of Taoist and Buddhist texts, haiku poetics and Indian mysticism as inspiration for his radical proposition 'to stop all the thinking that separates music from living.'[1] Increasingly, Cage's formal and philosophical insights became the foundation of his credo on art as an open field of experiential immediacy:

> We learned from Oriental thought that those divine influences are, in fact, the environment in which we are. A sober and quiet mind is one in which the ego does not obstruct the fluency of things that come in through the senses and up through one's dreams. Our business in living is to become fluent with the life we are living, and art can help this.[2]

Thoroughly identified with Japanese Zen, Cage is most revered as a modern American Zen master. 'I thought of John as a sort of teacher/preacher/soldier', Jasper Johns remarked.[3] His studies and friendship with Suzuki, whose Columbia University lectures he attended in the 1950s, stimulated this focus.[4] 'Since the forties and through my study with D.T. Suzuki of the philosophy of Zen Buddhism', he wrote, 'I've thought of music as a means of changing the mind ... an activity of sounds in which the artist found a way to let sounds be themselves.'[5] Cage's aesthetic statements, appropriating Zen terms, concepts and