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COMPOSITIONAL PARTICULARITIES AND ASIAN INFLUENCES IN THE MUSICAL CONCEPTION AND WORKS OF JOHN CAGE

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SUMMARY. One of the most important figures of the 20th century, avant-garde composer, artist, writer, and theorist John Cage was deeply influenced by various philosophical orientations from South and East Asia, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Zen, and I-Ching. He studied various doctrines and the works of several Asian philosophers, which resulted in the reorientation of his philosophical and aesthetic ideas. At the same time, this influenced his musical style, the conception of his compositions, as well as his thoughts on the functions of art – discernible in his music. Cage identified himself with certain ideas he encountered in the philosophical texts he studied, but he refrained from describing himself as representative of any of these orientations. Unlike other Western composers inspired by oriental art and music, Cage was rather influenced by the philosophical dimension of Asia. He avoided the use of Asian music sources in his works and was not interested in using new sounds for the sake of creating a novel musical discourse but aimed to evoke or emphasize certain philosophical ideas through his composition. The aim of the present paper is to present the Asian philosophical influences that marked the figure of John Cage, his perspective on life and art, and influenced his rhetoric, as well as the ideas that he employed within his compositional process.

Keywords: John Cage, Asia, Avant-garde, Hinduism, Buddhism, Zen, I-Ching, indeterminacy

Introduction

Unlike the music of the previous epochs, the music of the 20th century may be characterized by a unique and hitherto unprecedented pluralism of styles: important changes take place regarding the structures of a musical

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composition, melody, rhythm, and other aspects pertaining to the structure and form of a musical work. Beginning with the 20th century, three distinct attitudes occur in music: Expressionism, Neo tonality, and Neo modalism, all based on the discovery of innovative solutions, according to the latest aesthetic outlooks. Expressionism will eventually dominate the compositions of Arnold Schönberg and his disciples, Alban Berg, Anton Webern, Ernest Krenek, Franz Schreker. The group of Expressionist composers were in search for unusual techniques and methods, regarding every dimension of the musical discourse: melody, rhythm, harmony, dynamics, timbres. Often, they displayed the tendency to deny the traditional means of organizing the musical discourse: the symmetry of musical syntax, tonal unity, structural harmony. Within the domain of composition technique new means of expression occurred, such as the loosening of tonality, atonality, the method of the twelve-tone technique (dodecaphony), the transition from the bel canto manner of singing to the *Sprechgesang* and *Sprechmelodie*. All these means of expression reflected the natural evolution of the musical discourse.

Neo tonality and Neo modalism distinguish themselves due to the return towards previous periods and the rediscovery of certain methods in music composition. After the 1950s, Aleatoric music and Electronic music gradually became means of musical composition generally accepted, defined by the *abolition of any convention*. The arbitrary replaced the rules, while this perpetual search for novelty determined a considerable transformation of the musical language, to a degree that it fostered the disappearance of both score and musical work. According to Niculescu, this seemingly absolute freedom meant the annulment of freedom, for the performing musician often fell in the trap of his own subconscious associations (unconscious automatisms).[3]

In Aleatoric music, also known as chance music, the composer's attention is relocated from the level of the detail to the entire work, allowing the performer the freedom to improvise during the performance, thus contributing to the making of the score. Hence, the quality of Aleatoric music depends not only on the composer, but also on several aspects related to the performer's qualities.

John Cage – Compositional Particularities

Theorist and advocate of Aleatoric music and indeterminacy in music, exponent of the American school of composition, John Cage (1912-1992) was one of the most emblematic figures of the 20th century, avant-garde

[3] Niculescu, Ștefan. *Un nou „spirit al timpului" în muzică (A new 'zeitgeist' in music),* in: *Muzica*, nr. 9, 1986, p. 13.

composer, writer, artist, and theorist. Cage began the study of piano in his childhood, then later, when he was 17, he traveled to Europe aiming to expand his cultural horizon.

As a student he was attracted to painting, poetry, architecture, and music. He took piano lessons with Lazare-Lévy, who advised him to go to concerts to listen to music. Cage confessed that he decided to turn to composition after listening to the works of Scriabin and Stravinsky, admitting that he was not self-deprecating about his talent: "*My reaction to modern painting and modern music was immediate and enthusiastic, but not humble: I decided that if other people could make such things, I could too.*"[4]

Discovering that music is his life purpose, he improved himself in this domain, studying with Adolph Weiss and Arnold Schönberg. The latter regard Cage *not as composer, but rather an inventor – a genius*. Schönberg, with whom he began his studies in 1935, had been a compositional model for Cage and his influence manifested in the American composer's use of the twelve-tone technique. However, beginning with 1939, Cage gradually relinquished atonality, favoring in his works the rhythmic dimension over the harmonic structures. Cage may have found the latter part of his training with Schönberg constricting, since the German composer insisted on the importance of mastering harmony.[5] Opposed to this idea, Cage believed that it is not vital to organize the chaotic complex of notes, rather he desired to create a music that could express life. He believed that music should have a critical function, it should push the audience out of their comfort zone.

Between 1938-1940 Cage organized percussion ensembles that performed his works in Seattle, at the Cornish School of Arts, where he was teaching at the time. The concert given in 1943 with his percussion ensemble at the Museum of Modern Art, in New York, marked the first step in his emergence as leader of the American Avant-garde music.

His first experiment with electroacoustic music resulted in 1939 in the work *Imaginary Landscapes*, a series of five pieces in which the sound is distorted through the tape recorder.

In 1944 the composer experienced an emotionally challenging period, caused by his divorce and sexual reorientation, but also because Cage became aware of the fact that, until that point, he hadn't been truly able to convey his emotional experiences through his music. The works composed in this period, such as *Four Walls, Root of an Unfocus,* and *The Perilous Night*, mirror the emotional shifts and challenges encountered by the composer at that time.

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[4] Kostelanetz, Richard. *John Cage: Writer: Selected Texts*, New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000, p.29.

[5] Nicholls, David. *The Cambridge Companion to John Cage*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 93-94.

A new period of transition commenced in 1946, when Cage began to study various Oriental philosophies, such I-Ching, Zen Buddhism, and Hinduism. This brought about important changes in the philosophical ideas that lay at the core of his works, as well as in his musical style. Cage rejected the idea according to which music is a vehicle that allows the composer to express his emotions. This led to a deviation from the aesthetic assumptions he once shared with several leading artists from the New York School. For Cage art has, first and foremost, an ethical and spiritual function.

In his works Cage frequently used the prepared piano, a piano that had its sounds altered by the placement of various objects on or between the strings, with the purpose of obtaining novel sounds. Although the invention of the prepared piano is often attributed to John Cage, who first used it in the dance music for *Bacchanale* (1938), other instances of its use can be encountered in earlier compositions, such as the *Ragamalika* (1912-1922) of French composer Maurice Delage. Pasler considers that Delage's work offers *"the first example of prepared piano in European music"*.[6] Inspired by Indian music, Delage aimed to recreate the sound of the music he had listened to during his voyage in India. In *Ragamalika* the piano evokes the sound of the tabla drum and the drone strings of the sitar. To obtain this specific sound, the composer demands that a cardboard be placed inside the piano, under the B flat in the second line of the B clef, which creates a mystical effect.[7]

Cage uses the prepared piano in S*onatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano* (1946-1948) as well, however his approach to this technique is slightly different than Delage's. The aim of the American composer is not to evoke the Orient using transcriptions or a specific sound, rather Cage employs techniques or sounds inspired by this music with a philosophical purpose. In the preface of *Sonatas and Interludes* the composer describes the objects that should be placed within the piano to alter its sound, such as screws, bolts, rubber of various size and thickness, as well as the manner in which these should be placed between the strings of the piano and the particular register. Thus, it becomes more difficult to recognize the original timbre and pitch of a certain note – an idea that could be related to the concept of change in Oriental philosophy.

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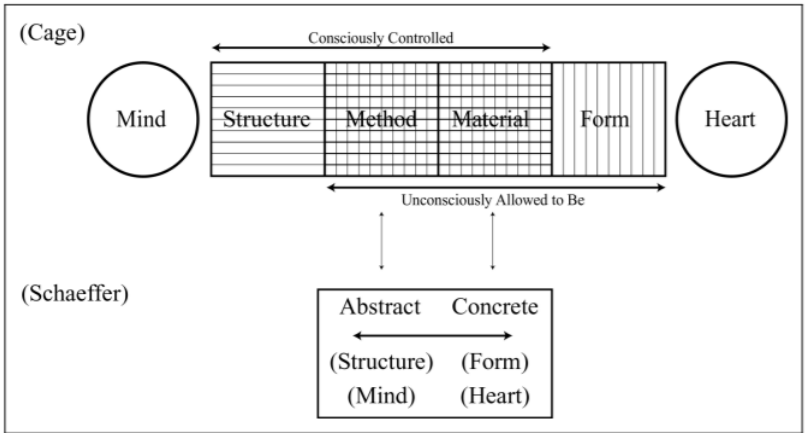
[6] Pasler, Jann. *Race, Orientalism, and Distinction in the Wake of the* "Yellow Peril" in *Western Music and its Others: Difference, Representation and Appropiation in Music*, edited by Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh, Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2000, p. 107.

[7] Idem, p. 107

In the following years Cage began to think of various sounds in the surrounding environment as potentially endowed with musical expression and significance. Owing to this idea, he encouraged his audience to take into consideration all the sounds accompanying a performance, not only those selected by the composer.

In the article *Forerunners of Modern Music*,[8] which appeared in March 1949 in the *Tiger's Eye* and in December 1949 in the French music journal *Contrepoints*, Cage explains the *"universal theory of modern music"*. According to him, this is based on four essential concepts – structure, method, material, and form – in their dual relation to either rational mind (thinking) or irrational heart (feeling) While the construction is always rationally controlled and organized, the musical form invariably refers to the feelings (E.g. 1). The compositional method and the support of the musical material between structure and form can be controlled either through correlation, or by sensation[9].

E.g. 1



The General Music Theories of Cage and Schaeffer

Cage defined both sound and silence as musical materials. While sound has four acoustic dimensions, silence has but one: duration. Hence, it should be agreed that only duration can be a viable principle of construction.

[8] Pritchett, James. *The Music of John Cage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 45-47

[9] Johnson, Steven. *The New York Schools of Music and the Visual Arts,* New York: Routledge, 2002.

In the beginning of the 1950s, Cage had a strong affiliation to the extremely modern Darmstadt School. As Boulez or Stockhausen, he carefully explored music composition based on all aspects of the musical sound. Cage was an outstanding theorist and for five decades he constantly published his thoughts in numerous articles or interviews, in which he revealed not only a revolutionary aesthetic, but his totalitarian political viewpoints as well.[10] Cage published several books, among which *Silence: Lectures and Writings* (1961) and *M: Writings '67 –'72* (1973).

In his essay *The Future of Music* (1974), Cage states that the work of art represents a model the way an ideal world could be created and explains that less anarchic genres convey less anarchic emotions to the audience. Furthermore, he draws an analogy between political functions and musicians: *"Composer and conductor: king and prime minister. By making musical situations which are analogies to desirable social circumstances which we do no yet have, we make music suggestive and relevant to the serious questions which face mankind."* [11]

Among the most popular works of Cage, the following can be mentioned: *Imaginary Landscape No. 4* (1951) for 12 radios, 24 performers, and conductor (the sound material of this work was obtained from various radio shows, on different wave-lengths, and mixed on tape recorder); *4'33* (***Four Minutes and Thirty-three Seconds***, 1952), where the performer or performers remain silent on stage for the indicated time span (although the duration of the performance is up to the performer); *Fontana Mix* (1958), based on the principle of indeterminacy in music (consisting in ten transparent sheets inscribed with randomly placed dots and ten pages with curved line, which offered a graphic code for the random selection of electronic sounds); *Cheap Imitation* (1969), inspired by the music of Erik Satie; ***Roaratorio*** (1979), an electronic composition in which Cage employs thousands of words from the novel of James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*.

The second half of the 20th century witnesses the emergence of Experimentalism, represented by improvisation and the use of electronic means during the performance. The three categories: Multimedia, Mixed Media, and Intermedia, are the result of an intense process of expansion, amplification, and fusion between music (including electronic music) and various forms of art, such as ballet, opera, theater, and other diverse visual activities: light show, fireworks, movies, etc.[12]

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[10] Kostelanetz, Richard. *John Cage explained*, New York: Schirmer Books, 1996, p. 22-23.
[11] Cage, John. *Empty Words*. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1979, p. 183.
[12] Cope, David. *New Directions in Music*, Dubuque, Yowe: W. M. Brown Company Publishers, Ed. 7, 2001, p. 137.

In 1965 Cage created *Variations V*, an original Multimedia performance in which the video images of Nam June Paik and fragments of movie were combined with dance, in the choreography of the outstanding Merce Cunningham. The sound material was processed live by the composer, together with David Tudor and Gordon Mumma. The novelty of the show was given by the fact that the electronic sensors placed on stage were modified by the movements of the dance company, which resulted in unique sounds obtained from the synthesizers.

Apart from composition, Cage had other interests as well: from 1978 and until the end of his life he created and published series of prints: drawings, etchings, as well as artwork made from unconventional materials. A passionate mycologist, he was co-founder of the New York Mycology Society.

John Cage died in New York, on 12 August 1992. Considered by critics an Avant-garde artist, a flamboyant spirit, Cage left behind a unique artistic legacy. Although his innovative spirit was often unacknowledged, his thoughts and works had an important role in the subsequent evolution of contemporary music and arts.

Cage and Oriental Influences

The fascination of John Cage with Oriental philosophy could be related to the composer's exposure in the 1930s to various writings. However, he began deepening this knowledge during the 1940s. At first, he was acquainted with general ideas belonging to Eastern thinking, gradually focusing on certain schools or philosophies. It should be mentioned that not all of Cage's ideas are of Oriental origin, rather these represent the combination between European philosophy, North American transcendentalism, Christian mysticism, and certain Oriental approaches. Nonetheless, aspects of Oriental philosophy had an important influence on his evolution and works: *Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Zen,* and *I-Ching* were harmoniously integrated in his philosophical ideas and compositions, also shaping his entire being. Experts who studied his works stated that Eastern philosophy and Zen are 'synonymous' with Cage[13], why the composer had studied Buddhist texts for more than five decades[14].

[13] Brent, Jonathan. *A John Cage Reader: In Celebration of His 70th Birthday.* New York: C.F. Peters Corporation, 1982, p.69.

[14] Cage, John. Retallack, Joan. Musicage: Cage Muses on Words, Art, Music. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press/University Press of New England, p. XIV, 1996.

Robert Cole believed that Cage had done *"as much to introduce a deliberately Buddhist view into the cultural discourse of the West as any artist alive"*[15], while musicologist Peter Yates affirmed that in the 1940s Cage was stubborn, gifted, argumentative, then, after immersing himself in the study of Zen he became more silent, more self-absorbed, learning how to master himself, tolerant of misconception, self-forgetful, and considerate[16].

Unlike some of his contemporaries or the orientalist composers of the previous generations, Cage was less interested in recreating the sound of the Orient in his works. The Asian culture clearly had an important influence on his works; however, this was related rather to the philosophical aspects of the composition – the musical discourse has but a vague hint at the oriental sound.

In the 1930s Cage had numerous opportunities to become familiar with Oriental music, during his studies with Henry Cowell (1934), or through various acquaintances interested in Oriental studies. Despite the fact that his percussion works display his predilection for the gamelan and that his approach to the prepared piano are traits often associated with musical orientalism, Patterson states that *"no significant structural or procedural affinities between Cage's oeuvre and the music of Asia have been demonstrated to date."*[17] Nonetheless, it is important to observe the manner in which Cage's exposure to various philosophical ideas of Oriental origin influenced his thoughts on music and art, as well as the structure and form of his compositions.

Hindu Influences

During the 1940s Cage strove to deepen his knowledge about Oriental philosophy and culture. At first, he became immersed in the philosophies of South Asia: in New York he met mythologist Joseph Campbell, who had worked with Indologist Heinrich Zimmer at the Columbia University and was extremely interested in the philosophies of India. Through Campbell, Cage had the opportunity of discovering the work of Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. After having read the works of Coomaraswamy, Cage *"decided to attempt the expression in music of the «permanent emotions» of Indian tradition: the heroic, the erotic, the wondrous, the mirthful, sorrow, fear, anger, the odious,*

[15] Crooks, Edward James. *John Cage's entanglement with the ideas of Coomaraswamy,* PhD, University of York, 2011, p. 255. https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/1985/.
[16] Yates, Peter. *Twentieth century music: its evolution from the end of the harmonic era into the present era of sound*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1968, p. 59.
[17] Nicholls, David. *Op. Cit.*, 2002, p. 41.

and their common tendency toward tranquility. These pieces were the first product of that effort."[18]

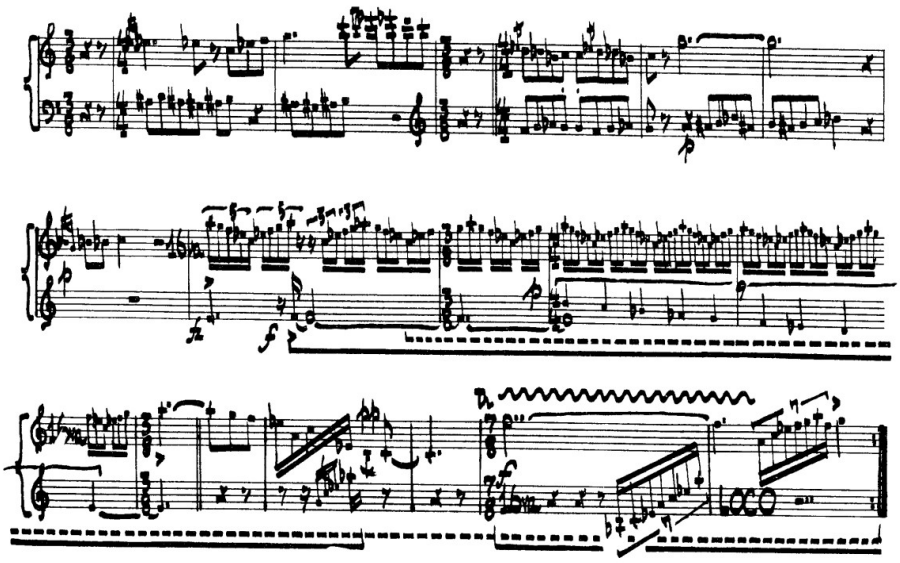
Particularly Coomaraswamy's *The Transformation of Nature in Art* (1934), a series of essays that advance a general theory of art, had a profound influence in shaping the composer's own aesthetic ideology. The work strives to reveal the principles of Asiatic art, through the examination of Indian and Chinese treatises, as well as medieval European art. Coomaraswamy demonstrates the similarities between medieval European and Asiatic art, both based on the relationship between art and religion, perceived as having similar aims. In 1946 Cage wrote the article *The East in the West*, in which he restates Coomaraswamy's idea that the East and West shared common philosophical ideas and values before the epoch of the Renaissance produced a radical change, which installed different values in modern Europe. Patterson argues that this article mirrors the importance of the Orient in Cage's personal philosophy and *"anticipated what would become his extensive use of Asian concepts and terms (…)."*[19]

Shortly after his immersion in Indian philosophy and the teachings of Coomaraswamy, between 1946-1948 Cage composed a collection of twenty pieces for prepared piano, *Sonatas and Interludes*, generally recognized as one of the composer's greatest accomplishments. As Cage himself explains, *"the work deals with the nine permanent emotions of the Indian tradition. (…) In it there are some pieces with bell-like sounds, that suggest Europe, and others with a drumlike resonance that suggest the East."*[20] As in other works, here as well Cage used the prepared piano: he placed objects on the strings, deciding the position of these objects according to the resulting sounds. The written structure of the pieces was decided in advance, while the melodies and combinations of sounds, which were suitable to the given structure, were played in an improvisatory way.

The cycle of sonatas and interludes comprises thirteen sonatas in binary form, three in ternary form, and four freely structured interludes. As stated by Cage himself, the composer desired to express the eight emotions of the Indian *rasa* aesthetics, however there is no clear mention regarding which emotions are expressed in each of the pieces of the cycle. The Eastern influence is easily discernible in Sonata III, for example – E.g. 2.

[18] Patterson, David. Cage and Asia: History and Sources, 1996, in: John.Cage, edited by Julia Robinson, London: Cambridge, Massachutts, 2011.
[19] Nicholls, David. *Op. Cit.*, 2002, p. 45.
[20] Kostelanetz. Richard. Conversing with Cage, New York, Routledge: Taylor & Francis, 2003, p. 62.

E.g. 2



John Cage: *Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano* (1946-1948)
Excerpt from Sonata II
The Eastern inspiration is discernible in the obtained timbre, as well as the rhythmic and melodic structure.

Cage also affirmed about this cycle that *"nothing about the structure was determined by the materials which were to occur in it; it was conceived, in fact, so that it could be as well expressed by the absence of these materials as by their presence."*[21]

The composition of the *Sonatas and Interludes* was also influenced by the figure of Indian musician Gita Sarabhai, who came to the United States to study Western music. Sarabhai studied counterpoint and contemporary music with Cage and in exchange she offered to teach him about Indian music and philosophy. One of the principles Sarabhai explained to Cage regarded the function of art (and music): according to the teacher of

[21] Cage, John. *Silence: Lectures and Writings,* Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1961, pp. 19-20.

Sarabhai, the prime function of art is not to communicate (to express), but to induce a tranquil and sober state, which allows the mind to become receptive to the divine messages.[22] This idea would influence Cage's view on art, as well as his composition. His works aim to create a certain atmosphere, to raise the public's awareness not only to the music that is being presented, but also to the environment in which the performance is taking place, every sound and sensation becoming part of the work. As Cage himself stated: *"Thoreau and the Indians, and I have said all along that the sounds all around us are equivalent to music. In India they say that music is continuous; it only stops when we turn away and stop paying attention. Thoreau said that silence is like a sphere. Each sound is a bubble on its surface. I want to keep from interrupting the silence that's already here."*[23]

Cage was inspired to create music that could mirror the deep meaning of the oriental philosophical ideas he had become acquainted with. According to the composer, The *String Quartet* composed in 1950 suggests the Indian perspective regarding the four seasons (creation, preservation, destruction, quiescence), as well was the eight permanent emotions of the *rasa* theory, united at the center by tranquility. The Indian view of seasons could also be related to the triple function of creation, preservation, and destruction, personified by Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. Quiescence represents the Void from which everything is created, and into which everything dissolves at the time of cosmic dissolution (*pralaya*). Cage stated that he intended *to make music nonintentional, starting from an empty mind*.[24]

Zen, Buddhism and Taoism

The most striking changes in the works of Cage occurred in the 1950s and were strongly influenced by the philosophical and aesthetic ideas he had acquired from his encounter with East Asian philosophies.

His desire to understand Oriental thought and deepen his knowledge, led Cage to study Zen Buddhism and the Chinese book of divination *I-Ching*. In the early 1950s Cage attended the classes of Suzuki Daisetz Teitaro, a Japanese American monk and essayist, whose teaching and writings focused on Buddhism, Zen, and Shin. Zen Buddhism became a landmark for Cage, having a profound influence on his philosophy, aesthetic outlook, as well as

[22] Nicholls, David. *Op. Cit.,* 2002, p. 49.
[23] Kostelanetz, Richard. *Op. Cit.,* 2003, p. 44.
[24] Idem, p. 63.

his compositional ideas. Despite his influence on his evolution, in his own works Cage did not cite any of Suzuki's works, however he mentioned that Suzuki had recommended him to read the works of the Chinese philosopher Zhuangzi, an important figure of Classical Philosophical Taoism. Patterson believes that Suzuki's role on the development of Cage's aesthetic *"is a frustratingly speculative issue"*, and that the composer's *"published remarks on Suzuki are primarily anecdotal, seldom indicating the impact that Suzuki's actual writings or lectures may have had"*, as several fragments from Cage's publication illustrate.[25]

On the other hand, some of Cage's publications evoke the influence of a ninth-century Chinese Zen text attributed to Huang Po, the *Doctrine of Universal Mind*. The idea that *nothing is accomplished* by doing certain activities can be led back to this text.

Taoism, as borrowed from the writings of Zhuangzi, inspired Cage to write about the damaging effect of intentional action on the natural (therefore, dynamic) state of things. This idea could be related to Cage's point of view regarding music composition and his compositional process.

Ideas pertaining to the Tao Te Ching influenced the composition of *Imaginary Landscape No. 4* (1952), a composition for 24 performers on 12 radios. The work is the first in the series of *Imaginary Landscapes* that doesn't include percussion instruments and is fully based on the idea of unpredictability (the composition is accomplished through chance operations).

Cage employed his studies on Zen and I Ching in order to advance a new perspective regarding art in the 20th century. The composer acknowledged the influence Zen had on the conception of his works, but he refrained from stating that Zen principles can be identified in his works. Zen is not a concrete entity that can be taken and placed within a musical frame. Classical Chinese artists would communicate their spiritual teachings through various form of art, like painting or calligraphy. Similarly, Cage aspires to express in music his understanding of time and space, as represented in Buddhist faith. Zen Buddhism inspired Cage to ascribe metaphysical powers to the musical notes.[26]

[25] Nicholls, David. *Op. Cit*., 2002, p. 54.

[26] Nelson, Mark. *Quieting the Mind, Manifesting Mind: The Zen Buddhist Roots of John Cage's Early Chance-Determined and Indeterminate Compositions,* Princeton University, 1995, p. 286-287.

I-Ching

For a considerable amount of time, one of Cage's main sources of inspiration was the *I Ching* (Book of Changes), an ancient Chinese divination text. In line with the Buddhist principle that expresses the impermanence of the universe, the *I-Ching* was based in cleromancy, and it was interpreted as the symbolic description of change and its processes.[27] Cage was less interested in the philosophical aspect of the I-Ching, rather he used the work *"as a mechanism of chance operations that produces random numbers from 1 to 64"*, as Lewallen observes.[28] Thus, through the limitation of choice, he would determine certain parameters of the musical discourse, such as the duration of sound. This allowed him to create complex scores. As Cage himself confessed, the compositional strategies he employed were seen as agents of personal change: „*I use chance operations instead of operating according to my likes and dislikes. I use my work to change myself and I accept what the chance operations say. The I-Ching says that if you don't accept the chance operations you have no right to use them. Which is very clear, so that's what I do*." [29]

The *Music of Changes* (1951) consist of four books composed using the *I-Ching*. Cage used a modified version of the chart system he had employed in *Concerto for prepared piano,* applying the principles of the *I-Ching* to certain parameters of the musical discourse, such as duration, dynamics, tempo. The divination text was first consulted with regards to the sound event to be chosen from a sounds chart, then the procedure was applied to other charts (duration, dynamics, density, tempo).

Within the sounds chart with 64 hexagrams, the odd-numbered cells contain sounds, while the even-numbered cells represent silence. New material is introduced through the alternation of *movement* and *immobility*, a characteristic idea of the *I-Ching:* charts can either remain unchanged, or immediately replaced when the content has already been used.[30]

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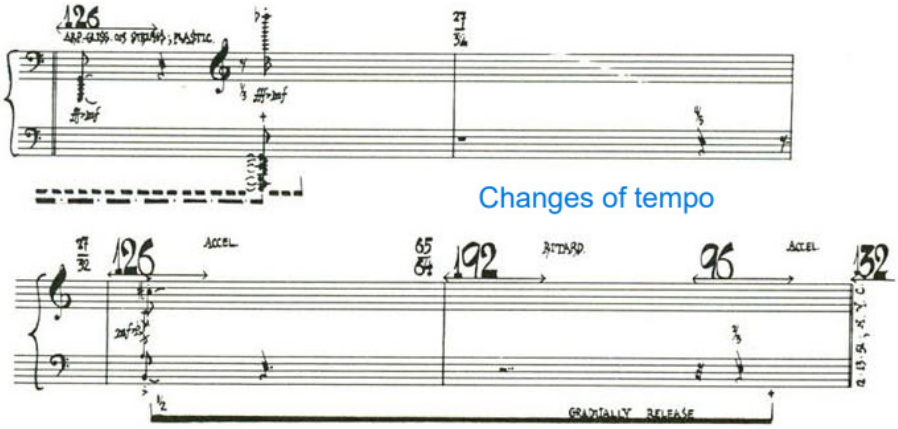
[27] *Shaughnessy, Edward. Unearthing the Changes: Recently Discovered Manuscripts of the Yi Jing (I Ching) and Related Texts. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014, p.14.*

[28] Lewallen, Constance in Bernstein, David & Hatch, Christopher (Ed.). *Writings through John Cage's Music, Poetry, and Art*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001, p. 235.

[29] Kostelanetz, Richard. *Op. Cit.,* 2003, p. 215.

[30] P*ritchett, James. The Music of John Cage. Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 79-83.*

E.g. 3



John Cage, The *Music of Changes* (1951) - excerpt
The tempo undergoes changes throughout the entire piece, indicated by a tempo diagram; the rhythmic proportions as well are marked by these tempo changes

Another work composed using this technique was the *Seven Haiku* (1951-52), a chance determined piano work, where each Haiku is dedicated to significant figures in the composer's life. Cage used the same charts he had previously used in his *Music of Changes*, as well as the same method of notation. As in other compositions, silence is of utmost importance.

Conclusions

The Asian influences in the works of John Cage are different from the oriental inspiration that guided Western composers in the late 19th century and early 20th century to compose works that contain discernible oriental sounds. His precursors or contemporaries might have used oriental influences to obtain novel sounds and structures, however, Asian culture and thought influenced first and foremost the philosophical and aesthetic vocabulary of John Cage.

The sources that Cage used belong to Southern and Eastern Asia: India on one hand, China, and Japan, on the other. The ideas expressed by Coomaraswamy, and the works of Sri Ramakrishna would later be associated

with various East Asian sources, from Buddhism, Zen, Taoism, and I-Ching. These philosophical orientations provided the composer with a specific terminology and would influence his perspective on composition and the purpose of art. The idea of unpredictability and indeterminacy had a profound impact on his works.

Certain ideologies had a greater impact on the compositional methods employed by Cage, such as the *I-Ching*, which would become the technique used to produce his compositions beginning with 1951. Other philosophies would influence his outlook on life or his thoughts on art, such as Buddhism and Zen, as Cage's frequent use of paradox indicates. In his writings, Cage cites ideas from Buddhism or Taoism, often reproducing the structure of his textual model.

Despite these influences and Cage's interest in the philosophies of Southern and Eastern Asia, he never clearly defined himself as Buddhist, Taoist, or Hindu. Similarly, his works seldom contain precise Asian influences. He studied various texts and selected those ideas that could express his point of view and could be related to the composition of his works. Cage payed great interest on the seemingly irrational and illogical aspects he encountered in certain Asian philosophies. This could confirm the Western stereotype regarding the Orient perceived as irrational. Because Cage strived to discover these ideas even within those works where such themes were of lesser importance, his perception and ideas erased the philosophical differences between the various traditions he had borrowed his thoughts from, thus reinforcing some of the concepts related to orientalism.

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