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## ***The Art of Fugue* by Johann Sebastian Bach as an artistic expression of the juncture of beyng in Martin Heidegger's philosophy**

### **Abstract**

Listening and polyphony lead us directly to reflection on the musical form of the fugue. Starting with M. Heidegger's considerations about the juncture of beyng, we will phenomenologically ask about the essence of the fugue, and the musical work put under analysis will be *The Art of Fugue* by J.S. Bach. The article aims to show the convergence between Heidegger's philosophy and the essence of the musical form of fugue as an artistic mode of the essential occurrence of beyng as an event.

### **Keywords**

Art, Bach, Fugue, Heidegger, Phenomenology

### **Introduction**

Polyphony is not merely “sym-phonic,” a hierarchically structured concord, but assumes the multiplicity of voices of equivalent significance because of the essential autonomy of all individual voices. What belongs to the essence of polyphony is that each voice is autonomous and, at the same time, equivalent to all other voices. A representative polyphonic form in music is the fugue, and the artistic goal of this kind of form is to conjoin all the voices, which remain separate beings independent from each other. The most outstanding musical work with a polyphonic structure is *The Art of Fugue* BWV 1080—the artistic testament of Johann Sebastian Bach. The sheer artistry of

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this masterpiece and the composer's excellence in using the contrapuntal technique may already arouse admiration. However, apart from the exquisite musical beauty, the essence of the fugue itself as the coherent multiplicity of independent voices revealed through the work appears to be a lot more significant. Consequently, the analysis of *The Art of Fugue* by J. S. Bach highlights what is essential for this particular work and every fugue.

The art of music makes us especially sensitive to the phenomenon of listening. In particular, while listening to instrumental music, we are faced with the rather demanding task of understanding the musical sense of specific works and their performances (see Clarke 2002). Besides, listening to *The Art of Fugue* requires the knowledge of musical rhetorical figures typical of the Baroque, although relating them to J. S. Bach's works should be nuanced and delicate (see Demeyere 2013, 17-51). We should also mention that *The Art of Fugue* scores do not specify the instruments which should be used for its musical realization. Such open scores make a wide variety of performances possible, which—being all equally allowed by the composer—do not compete with each other in respect of the combination of sonoristic qualities. It should be added that every individual performance of *The Art of Fugue* may also differ regarding the realization of articulation, dynamic, and agogic elements, which might result from the idiomatic character of instruments and specific possibilities of sound emission and control depending on particular instruments. It should also be noted that the lack of an instrumentation specification also allows vocal performance, and the best example here is the arrangement of the last and unfinished *Contrapunctus* in *The Art of Fugue* by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach. For our analysis and reflections, we have chosen a CD recording of *The Art of Fugue*, published in 2002 by a world-famous British ensemble 'Fretwork' for Harmonia Mundi (catalog number HMU 907296). The homogeneous sound of *violas da gamba*, together with every voice being treated individually, make this interpretation explicitly disclose the essence of the form of the fugue as a conjoined polyphony, where counterpoint—here understood as the method of composing—lets each voice be itself (*Seiendes*) as they appear in coherence with the whole compositional structure of the work, i.e., its Being (*Sein*).

The analysis of the essence of the fugue will be made from the perspective of Martin Heidegger's philosophy and his thinking about art, mainly from the perspective of his work *The Origin of the Work of Art* and *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*, where we find his reflections on the juncture of beyng (*Fuge des Seyns*) and the conjuncture of the truth of beyng

(*Fuge der Wahrheit des Seyns*).<sup>1</sup> Further, this perspective will be extended by the thought of Jean-Luc Marion together with, crucial for his phenomenology, the category of givenness and the so-called “last principle.” We will also turn our attention to Michel Henry’s phenomenology of art and the revealing of the invisible dimension of life.

These initial philosophical reflections will then be transferred to the area of music and the fugue form. Following Georges Didi-Huberman’s path in the field of painting (see Didi-Huberman 2005, 11-52), in *The Art of Fugue*, we will analyze what is audible and the essence of audibility itself and the way it appears in a musical work.<sup>2</sup> The analysis of the dimension of audibility will lead us to the essence of the fugue as the event (*Ereignis*) and the essential occurrence of beyng (*Seyn*).

### **Philosophical Listening to the Juncture of Beyng (*Fuge des Seyns*)**

Martin Heidegger noticed in *Being and Time* that the existentially primary potentiality of hearkening (*Hörenkönnen*) is more primordial than listening (*Horchen*), which psychology initially defines as hearing (*Hören*). That means hearkening becomes possible only when the existentially primary potentiality of hearing is given because the primary potentiality precedes listening and hearing (see Heidegger 2001, 207-208).<sup>3</sup> Heidegger interprets this hermeneutically and—in the Heideggerian sense—existentially. Similarly, Paul Ricoeur interpreted this primary potentiality of hearkening as opening (disclosing or uncovering) towards the world and others (see Ricoeur 2016, 19) since hearkening as an opening allows and constitutes the phenomenon of understanding and discourse. It also opens the potentiality of the Being of

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<sup>1</sup> The archaic form of *das Seyn* (beyng) used by Heidegger is connected with his attempts to overcome metaphysics as well as subjectivity. Additionally, this indicates the pure dimension of the event (*Ereignis*) without reference to beings or entities (*Seiendes*) and their ways or modes of Being (*Sein*) (see Heidegger 2002, 239-240, 344). In order to stay compatible with authoritative English translations of Heidegger’s works—*Being and Time* translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson as well as *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)* translated by Richard Rojcewicz and Daniela Vallega-Neu—I consistently use the capitalised term Being for *das Sein* and the non-capitalised term beyng for *das Seyn* throughout the article.

<sup>2</sup> A reader of works by Didi-Huberman will easily see, that his distinction between “visible” and “visibility” directly corresponds to “audible” and “audibility” in my analysis.

<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the original German terms given in brackets show the gradation of phenomenon of listening and hearing better.

*Dasein* itself.<sup>4</sup> Ricoeur's interpretation seems to be confirmed in the Appendix to *The Origin of the Work of Art*, where Heidegger says that the entire essay revolves around the question of the essence of Being rather than the reflection on what art may be (see Heidegger 2002, 55). Let us recall that *The Origin of the Work of Art* was written between 1935 and 1936, and his *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)* between 1936 and 1938. The immediate nearness of these ponderings prompts an irresistible proposition: art may be a crucial vestibule for the reflection on beyng (*Seyn*) and its essence.

The question about artwork's origin is not one of its nature (*Wesen*), what and how it is, but instead asks about its nature's source (*Ursprung*) (see Heidegger 2002, 1).<sup>5</sup> Particular aesthetic and philosophical perspectives should not externally intrude on reflections about artwork's origin. They should result from returning to the Being of the work and thinking about its essence (*Wesen*) (Heidegger 2002, 12). In this perspective, the work's essence emerges from the bottom up and from itself, not through abstract and theoretical speculations. We also should not forget that the essence of art is the setting-itself-to-work of the truth of beings (Heidegger 2002, 16), which appears as an essential occurrence of beauty: "*Beauty is one way in which truth as unconcealment comes to presence*" (Heidegger 2002, 32). What is essential here is beauty's and truth's co-belonging or belonging together (*Zusammengehörigkeit*). Beauty in Heideggerian thinking is not something we like, but a way of Being the artwork. In the *Afterwords* to the same essay, we read: "Truth is the unconcealment of beings as being. Truth is the truth of beings. Beauty does not occur alongside this truth. It appears when truth sets itself into the work. This appearing (as this being of truth in the work and as the work) is beauty. Thus beauty belongs to the advent of truth" (Heidegger 2002, 52). Creating the work of art, as well as its perceiving and preserving, means allowing it to arise and happen due to its essential occurrence, which comes from unconcealment (*Unverborgenheit*, ἀλήθεια) (Heidegger 2002, 35-36; see also Harries 2009, 131-133, 136-137). Perceiving

<sup>4</sup> Although it could be interpreted as discursive understanding, Paul Ricoeur distinguishes between understanding and discourse.

<sup>5</sup> Although analyzing a particular musical work of art (*The Art of Fugue* by Bach) seems to be a contradiction, some artistic examples have to be taken if we aim at showing that art is capable of referring to the source or origin of Being—similarly when Heidegger analyzes *A Pair of Shoes* by Vincent van Gogh. It is worth mentioning, that there is a difference between the philosophical perspective that arises from a particular work of art and—on the other hand—the philosophical perspective that seeks to impute theoretical prejudices.

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artwork is an individual response to the call of its voice of Being, and even if interpretative differences appear in its aesthetic concretizations, the work as such is the saying of beyng (*das Sagen des Seyns*), whose nature is an essential occurrence (*Wesung*) as the appropriating event (*Ereignis*).

Let us examine *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*, or more precisely, fragment no. 219, titled “The Conjunction of the Question of Truth,” where the question about the conjunction (*Fuge*) of the truth of beyng (*Seyn*) appears. Heidegger says: “Beyng essentially occurs as event. The essence of truth is the clearing-concealment of the event” (Heidegger 2012, 272). First, it should be noted that already in *Being and Time*, i.e., in 1927, we find the interpretation of the phenomenon of truth as unconcealment (*Unverborgenheit*, ἀλήθεια), which, according to Heidegger, is a more primordial phenomenon of truth than the traditional concept of truth as agreement or *adaequatio intellectus et rei* (see Heidegger 2001, 256-269). In the primordial phenomenon of truth, a true statement uncovers beings in themselves. In other words—a true statement should be understood as one uncovering the same way of Being of beings (see Heidegger 2001, 260-261).<sup>6</sup> Heidegger says that Being-true understood as Being-uncovering, is a manner of Being for *Dasein*—and also a way of Being-in-the-world (see Heidegger 2001, 261)—which is open to its most primordial and authentic (*eigentlich*) disclosure understood as the truth of existence (see Heidegger 2001, 263-265). In *Contributions to Philosophy*, however, there is a reorientation of the anthropological, subjectivistic, and individualistic reflection of ecstatically open *Da-sein* (see Heidegger 2012, 233) towards alethic considered *physis* (φυσίς). The critical change is noticeable in writing *Da-sein* instead of *Dasein*, which Heidegger explains as follows: “Da-sein is the properly self-grounding ground of the ἀλήθεια of φυσίς, the essential occurrence of that openness which first opens up the self-concealing (the essence of beyng) and which is thus the truth of beyng itself” (Heidegger 2012, 234). This means, that *Da-sein* should not be considered only with the human being, although the human being is still essentially related to *Da-sein*, which belongs to “clearing of beyng” and is thought as “groundless” ground of the possibility of the human Being as *Dasein* (see Heidegger 2012, 234; see Harries 2009, 109-112). “*Da*” in *Da-sein* means clearing of beyng itself rather than metaphysically thought “here” or “yonder,” and for that reason, Heidegger says, “*Da-sein*, as the essential occurrence of the clearing of self-concealing, belongs to this self-concealing itself, which essentially occurs as the appropriating event” (Heidegger 2012, 235).

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<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that Heidegger considering the truth refers to Presocratic thinkers, mainly to Parmenides and Heraclitus.

Let us return to the note no. 219 in *Contributions to Philosophy*, again, where we can also read: “Truth is what is originally true. What is true is what *is* most eminently. More eminently than any being is *beyng* itself. What *is* most eminently ‘*is*’ no longer but, instead, essentially occurs as the essential occurrence itself (event)” (Heidegger 2012, 272). The most originary and true *is* the event (*Ereignis*), in which the Being of all beings essentially occurs, and the event itself is a clearing-concealment of the essential occurrence of *beyng* (*Seyn*). This clearing-concealment essentially occurs as the grounding *Da-sein* and lets being be a being (see Heidegger 2012, 272). It is worth noting that what is important here is not a specific being but rather the origin or source (*Ursprung*) of this being within *Da-sein*, in which the appropriating event of *beyng* essentially occurs. We already found in *The Origin of Work of Art* that it is not the particular being (i.e., artwork) that is crucial here, but the way how the truth ( $\alpha\lambda\gamma\theta\epsilon\alpha$ ) settles-in-the-work. Being (*Sein*) of the work of art in the way of uncovering occurs essentially the clearing of the appropriating of *beyng*. From that perspective, the role of the creator and perceiver of the work of art is not reduced to a mere sensory perception of being, together with its specific way of Being and all its acoustic or optic qualities, but being able to hear what remains acoustically inaudible and optically invisible, i.e., hearing the hidden voice of *beyng*, which essentially occurs as the event.<sup>7</sup>

It is noteworthy that such a philosophical perspective corresponds to “the last principle” of phenomenology, formulated by Jean-Luc Marion, which proclaims: “so much reduction, so much givenness” (see Marion 2002, 14-18). In this last and *notabene* reversible principle (i.e., so much givenness, so much reduction), the apparatus of appearance and perception is consumed—as in a trial by fire—to let the appearance itself arise. Furthermore, the only goal and legitimacy of phenomenology is the attempt to transgress every perceived impression through the intentionality of the thing itself (see Marion 2002, 7-8).<sup>8</sup> Experiencing the intentionality of the thing itself is called

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<sup>7</sup> Staying in Heideggerian context obliges us to operate with the original terms in order to avoid the risk of losing the original meaning. However, we could try to paraphrase this long sentence in such a way: firstly, sound is not music and this difference shows the transition from the ontic to the ontological way of Being of the work of art; secondly, if we go further this is music not sounds, that discloses the essential occurrence of *beyng* (*Seyn*) as the event.

<sup>8</sup> We also observe the same transgression from impression to intentionality of the thing itself in phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger (e.g. in Heidegger’s analysis of *A Pair of Shoes* by van Gogh; see Heidegger 2002, 13-16).

counter-experience, and Marion provides listening to music as a privileged example of such an experience. The musical phenomenon in its coming exceeds mediatizing sounds and directly affects pure givenness in its musical offering without or beyond the sounds it produces (see Marion 2002, 216).

Abstracting from the substance of the world and its sensory perception is even more evident in the phenomenology of art of Michel Henry, who was primarily inspired by the artworks and theoretical writings of Wassily Kandinsky. According to Henry, the essence of art is the revelation of invisible life, which is phenomenalized in the immanence of the individual and, at the same time, absolute Self (*Soi*) thanks to the transcendental affectivity (see Henry 2012, 35-37). In *Seeing the Invisible*, Henry writes: "The initial theme of art and its true interest is life. At its outset, all art is sacred, and its sole concern is the supernatural. This means that it is concerned with life—not with the visible but the invisible" (Henry 2009, 126-127). Life never appears externally, in the world, i.e., in the physical material of the work of art—and for that reason, it can be experienced (*pathos*) only immanently in absolute subjectivity. Although art reveals life, its true essence remains a mystery, and experiencing this mystery, thanks to the affective pathos of a phenomenological matter of artistic works, makes life present in art. For this reason, art is a mode of life, and the work of art itself, which comes from and belongs to life, is a way of its auto-affection (see Henry 2009, 121-122). It is also worth mentioning that although Henry's phenomenology was shaped as a polemic with Heidegger's philosophy, Henry argues that Life—as he understands it—can be viewed as beyng (see Henry 2012, 128).

What is the essence of the fugue, then, understood in a phenomenological way? A fugue as a juncture conjoins. At the same time, it is a kind of clearing "between the inbetweenness" (*Zwischen*) (see Heidegger 2012, 381). In the conjunction of the fugue, the voice of Being is disclosed. Beyng (*Seyn*) essentially occurs in *Da-sein* as the event, and in this appropriating of *Da-sein* the Being of *Dasein* and particular beings essentially occur. Furthermore, the fugue as the clearing (*Lichtung*) leads to the open realm (*Offene*) of alethic appropriating. The essence of fugue is a concealed essential occurrence of the essence of beyng as the event, and opening up *qua* clearing, in which not only art (see Heidegger 2012, 201) but also *Da-sein* find shelter. Thanks to *Da-sein*, *Dasein* essentially occurs historically, not only historiologically (see Heidegger 2012, 387-389). It should be emphasized now that *The Art of Fugue* as a masterpiece of music notably discloses this conjunctured appropriating event (*Er-eignis*) of beyng (*Seyn*). *The Art of Fugue* discloses not only

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itself as a compositional structure but also discloses its essential occurrence, and in this respect, it is convergent with the category of the event in the philosophy of Heidegger.

### ***The Art of Fugue* by J. S. Bach as the Essential Occurrence of the Polyphony of Beyng**

First, let us look at the very phenomenon of audibility, not the specific audible properties of the performed work, but what appears through the work itself and thanks to it. Processuality, the variable intensity of aesthetic qualities and dynamism, is understood as the direction of developing internal tensions of these aesthetic qualities revealed through the work's audible material. The essential aesthetic content of the work is created through the development of this inner dynamism, and it can be accessed not so much thanks to the sense perception of the sound of the work but essentially—as Roman Ingarden claims—thanks to the aesthetic concretization of a specific performance of a musical work (see Ingarden 1986, 13). Each aesthetic concretization is individual, and this remains true not only in the case of listening to different works or performances of the same work but also in the case of listening to the exact (identical) performance of the same work. The work's audibility dimension is concealed in the aesthetic qualities' inner dynamism. They are revealed by an individual aesthetic concretization founded on the acoustic material's perception, the work's sound foundation. However, audibility and acoustic material should be considered separately. What is crucial while considering the dimension of the audibility of the work is not the sound material itself, but the aesthetic content revealed because of this sound material and its aesthetic concretization, i.e., a specific and individual aesthetic object. Consequently, what interests us most at the moment is the inner sound or the meaning (*Klang*) of the work (see Kandinsky 2008, 63-96) rather than its outer sound apparel. Referring, with the term "*Klang*," to the philosophical and artistic works of Wassily Kandinsky, we could mention that Kandinsky saw the essential coherence between the art of music and painting. His friendship with Arnold Schönberg—in the context of relations between painting and music—is not irrelevant here (see Schönberg and Kandinsky 1980, 19-100).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> It is important to introduce the philosophy of art by Kandinsky here because of his universal claims about the "*Klang*" or the inner sound of the work of art, which applies not only to paintings or music, but to all disciplines of art.

The appearance of certain aesthetic qualities should be accepted as a fact, and the only difficulty lies in demonstrating the essential relation between them and the specific work in which they were realized. Since an aesthetic concretization is individual by nature, it is not uncommon for the same performance of a musical work to evoke different aesthetic experiences in individual perceivers. However, this state of affairs should not be perceived as a flaw in the work, performance, or aesthetic concretization. Instead, this potentiality (*potentia*) of a specific artistic work understood as a possibility of being realized in various concretizations (*actualitas*) of an aesthetic object should be acknowledged. In this aesthetic pluralism, however, individual concretizations must not lose their relationship with a specific work and result from it. For example, the theme in *Contrapunctus I* in *The Art of Fugue* by J. S. Bach can be interpreted—based on the analysis of the direction of the melody, rhythmic movement, and harmonic tensions—as a bold question about Being itself asked in wonder, but also as a humble acceptance of fate. These interpretative differences result mainly from performing the scores and thus how it is performed in terms of articulation, dynamics, agogics, and sonority. However, for the very musicality of the theme, i.e., its aesthetic essence, the choice of an emotional or metaphorical linguistic description is, in fact, of secondary importance because this theme can also be understood directly, i.e., without the mediation of a linguistic description. It is possible to analyze the works of J. S. Bach in a numerological way. Alternatively, one may also find the echoes of Leibniz's metaphysics in *The Art of Fugue* (see Göncz 2013, 20-57; see also Milka 2017, 240-246). However, these methods of analyzing the work are not its ekphrasis (ἔκφρασις). They do not make the work itself come to life. Thanks to a hermeneutical description, they appear before the perceiver (see Boehm 1995). The ekphrastic description aims to bring to light the musical sense of the work, which eludes a definitive interpretation of some emotional character, usually defined as a specific mood. It should be emphasized that psychological moods (seriousness, sadness, mystery, etc.) that might be attributed to the content of a musical work are grounded only in what is initially revealed in the pure musical matter, in the form of aesthetic qualities. This revelation means that assigning specific moods to a musical work, for example, based on the symbolism of numbers, the hidden meaning of musical rhetorical figures of arbitrary emotions, or other psychological contents during its perception, violates the work's autonomy, i.e., its musical essence. Admittedly, the ekphrastic description sometimes signifies the internal musical content by referring to commonly experienced emotions, but—significantly—it does not reduce the musicality of the work and the emerging aesthetic qualities to emotionality.

We pose the question then: what does *The Art of Fugue* itself reveal? In each *Contrapunctus* of this work, we can hear the sounds that create the internal dynamism of individual and independent voices, and those in a polyphonic configuration enter into the discourse with each other. The solemnity of the theme of *The Art of Fugue* corresponds to what Wassily Kandynski said about a solemn work, namely, that each serious work sounds like the calm (*ruhig*) and lofty (*erhaben*) spoken words "Here I am," and the sound of these words is eternal (*Der Klang dieser Worte ist ewig*) (Kandinsky 2009, 145). The message "Here I am" is a mystery that subsequent voices approach to reveal its essence. The intuition of this mystery reaches the dimension of absolute transcendence, which we face wordless and astounded. When the theme's original inner sound (*Klang*) resounds in *Contrapunctus I*, the same voice still essentially occurs as its counterpoint to the initially given theme that has just been taken up by the upper voice (soprano). The counterpoint of the first voice (alto), thanks to its autonomy, exists for itself, but it is also co-present with the second voice (soprano), with which it intertwines and on which it comments. Let us add that the voice that takes up and reveals the same theme does not so much repeat it but presents it anew. Although initially the same, the theme is always placed in a different context from the other voices. Therefore, we get a full view of the theme's inner sound (*Klang*) only after the entire fugue resounds. Thus, the fugue not only conjoins the individual voices, essentially occurring to the double bar line, but also brings to light what exists *in potentia* in the initially given theme and only awaits its full concretization (*actualitas*).

The polyphonic discourse of fugue is created through audible material, but it is possible only because of the strife that intrinsically essentially occurs as a concealed inbetweenness (*Zwischen*). From this inbetweenness, the essential occurrence as the event's appropriation is cleared, which is undertaken and sheltered by the autonomous voices, which are specific ways of Being of the work. The ways of Being of the theme, together with its contrapuntal expansions, revealed in the fugue by autonomous but co-present voices, are the ways of bringing to light the origin from which, aletheically, *The Art of Fugue* essentially occurs as the appropriating event. The fugue conjoins what is separated and gathers what is scattered. This essential intrinsic relation between simplicity and complexity, finiteness and infinity, gives reason to reflect on the unity of what is different and on the origin and essence of the way of Being of a particular being. This truly philosophical questioning essentially occurs in the depths of what is heard in the sounds of *The Art of Fugue*, and this essential occurrence reveals the essence of beyng

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(*Seyn*) as the event, which cannot be reached by numerological and symbolic analyses, although they also sometimes attempt to indicate the *logos* of this event.

However, are we not mistaken in following this path of thinking and interpreting *The Art of Fugue*? Moreover, if so, is it not still following a path, even if it might sometimes be rough and off the beaten track? Experiencing such a path of thinking is also a kind of *Erfahrung*, i.e., experiencing as the entering (*einfahren*) into the essential occurrence (see Heidegger 2012, 227), which is not only appropriated by beyng as the event but is also appropriating from the theme, that is the origin of the work. This kind of surmising of beyng becomes the origin and the opening theme of *The Art of Fugue*, and as the event, it essentially occurs its own mystery for the perceiver as its witness. In *The Art of Fugue*, the beyng is concealed, but the clearing of appropriating the event allows thinking of its essence.

Let us pose the following question: Does *The Art of Fugue* theme arbitrarily reveal the essence of beyng (*Seyn*), or does it reveal its essence with notable clarity? After all, in music literature, there are many fugues with various themes (e.g., by Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Stravinsky, Shostakovich, and many other composers). Furthermore, it is worth considering—referring to the corpus of rhetorical terms—whether the element of *inventio* is more critical than *dispositio* and, therefore, whether the specific form of the theme is more important than the structure of the whole fugue as an ordered, understandable and at the same time affective expression.<sup>10</sup> Every form of the theme has its way of Being (*inventio*), which can be undertaken in various ways through *elocutio* and *actio* (*pronuntiatio*) in an individual performance of the work. Also, the perception of musical performance, i.e., entering into the essential occurrence of the originary experience of the fugue, is an individual taking, preserving its alethic truth. Telling this alethic truth is, in turn, dependent on the way the listener perceives it. What remains immanent in the fugue is the *dispositio* element, which makes the essence of the fugue the same in every composition (see Harrison 1990, 4-8). Then, let us ask again from the phenomenological perspective: what determines the significant

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<sup>10</sup> We should take into account two ways of understanding an affective expression of the fugue. In the foreground we hear the fugue ontically and this perceptual material transgress to intentional affective expression of the artwork. But afterwards the work of art may appear (*Erscheinen*) something more or something other, and this “other” may be further hermeneutically interpreted (or uncovered) as expression of the event of beyng (*Seyn*). In the first sense—ontological, not ontical—affective expression means the appearing of the aesthetic content, but in the second sense it means rather emerging this appearing that comes from the event as the essential occurrence of beyng.

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meaning of the theme of *The Art of Fugue* interpreted as the saying of beyng, i.e., the appropriating event? The solemnity, calm, sublimity, and mystery mentioned before sound in *The Art of Fugue* in an extraordinarily pure way, i.e., without the admixture of commonly understood emotionality, resulting from the typical characteristic of major or minor tonality (see also Kandinsky 2009, 49–53).

The first three notes create a minor chord, but the rhythm of quarter notes maintained in a calm *quasi-Andante* tempo gives this chord the character of not so much sadness as the impassive flow of temporality. The leap of a perfect fifth upwards, and after that a humble return through the third to the root of a D minor chord is a kind of reconciliation with something simple and in a way necessary, as well as receiving the originary givenness, and only the melody of the theme scarcely descending by a semitone to the C♯ the next moment, causes a crack in that static original solemnity and sublimity. This quarter note, C♯, contrasting with the theme, becomes the beginning of a lively, ascending movement of eighth notes, which in wonderment stop at the very harmonic core of the theme, i.e., the third of the D minor chord (an F). This rising melodic figure (from C♯ to F) already takes up the first part of the theme, but in the form of a question that stops on a dotted quarter note and holds the question in suspension, and this time the F takes on a different meaning. First, the F tied the range of a perfect fifth, giving solemnity to the minor chord, but now it has been caught again and taken into another hearing or examination—its initial impassive dignity unexpectedly violated. Maintaining the duration of this F in the rhythmic value of a quarter with a dot gives the impression of prolonged waiting as if for an answer that finally does not come—with the long F, we face a mystery. What follows this culminating F is already the taking up of the musical consideration of the theme—the consideration that essentially occurs as a counterpoint in the alto voice. The reappearances of the theme in particular voices make the form of fugue more consistent, but they also illuminate anew the essential occurring polyphonic discourse that emerges from the original theme and repeatedly returns to its origin. The various figures of the theme in *The Art of Fugue* in subsequent parts of the work (i.e., in its *Contrapuncti*) recall its original revelation, which is the origin that feeds the entire masterpiece. *The Art of Fugue's* theme—its first revelation at the beginning of the work—uncovers the hearkening (*Hörenkönnen*), a background for the essential occurring of a discourse between the voices are ontically heard in acoustic perception. At this moment, hearkening denotes or indicates occurring's possibility in the piece, namely the category of the event.

The inscription at the end of *Contrapunctus XIV* in the last version of *The Art of Fugue*'s autograph—probably written by Johann Christoph Friedrich Bach—says: “and another fundamental plan” (*und einen andern Grund Plan*). Musicological interpretations of this note, first of all, bring to light the evolution of the structure of the work as a whole. Nevertheless, is the evolution brought to an ultimate end, or does it remain open to other ways of essential occurrence from the primordial origin? Although, while answering this question, we will not go beyond hypotheses and speculations, it is worth considering the philosophical possibility of *The Art of Fugue*. Entering the appropriating event opens the potentiality of perceiving the essential occurrence of Being, which belongs to the event understood as the essence of beyng (*Seyn*). Taking up the same musical theme repeatedly, many times, and in different ways is an artistic reflection on the essence of the same theme. From this perspective, *The Art of Fugue* is a meditation and contemplation of the essential occurrence, and polemics over the completion or non-completion of *The Art of Fugue* by J. S. Bach become of little importance since the essence of this work is the appropriating event.

Fugue is also a musical form that requires particular attention while being listened to. This focus on the essential occurrence of fugue is necessary so as not to overlook any detail of its complex polyphonic structure. Intense listening to the essential occurrence of fugue also reveals the clearing of the essence of beyng (*Seyn*), in which the occurrence always allows the possibility of “another fundamental plan” (*andern Grund Plan*). The concealed essential occurrence as pure givenness reaches its disclosure in *The Art of Fugue* thanks to the ultimate phenomenological reduction, that is, thanks to reversing intentionality and becoming the witness of the occurrence (*Geschehnis*), which is not so much disclosed in the sensuousness of the work, as revelation itself as the extrasensory essential occurrence of the essence of beyng, i.e., the appropriating event. What is also revealed through the fugue analysis is the essence of music as such. Namely, music's essence is not its sensuousness but what occurs apart from sounds (in the dimension of aesthetic qualities) or even beyond and without them (in the philosophical dimension).<sup>11</sup> *The Art of Fugue* provides an example of how a musical work may go beyond the artistry and sensuous aesthetics, reaching the philosophically understood origin ( $\alpha\rho\chi\eta$ ), and as such, it may be recognized as not only an artistic

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<sup>11</sup> Similarly, we could claim that the sound of spoken words is not the essence of language (*Sprache*) and the vibration of acoustic waves is not the same as the meanings of the words.

work but as a philosophical work as well. Finally, it is worth asking whether we would come to the same conclusions if we analyzed another *Contrapunctus* instead of the chosen *Contrapunctus I*. Undoubtedly, the detailed ekphrastic analysis of individual parts of *The Art of Fugue* would significantly differ since the internal dynamism of musical elements of particular *Contrapuncti* varies. However, *The Art of Fugue* as a whole appeals to us as clearly preserving its unity not only of its polyphonic structure but also of its multi-part construction. Hence, it can be inferred that a detailed analysis of individual parts of the work would reveal varied internal content (*Klang*) of subsequent *Contrapuncti*, which still constitute an integrated, consistent, and mutually strengthening unity.

### Conclusion, discussion, and projection

Starting from Martin Heidegger's philosophical interpretation of the essence of the juncture of *beyng* as the essential occurrence and the event, we progressed to the analysis of *The Art of Fugue* by J. S. Bach, in which we disclosed the essence of the fugue as a musical form. Ekphrasis is a specific type of linguistic description of what essentially remains unexpressed. It exposed what is audible in sense perception and the exact dimension of audibility. Having made a phenomenological reduction while listening to the musical work, which means putting aside all the interpretive presumptions and prejudice (*Vorurteil*), we intently listened to what the sounds themselves had to reveal.<sup>12</sup> The analysis of *The Art of Fugue* by J. S. Bach conducted this way reveals the essence of the fugue and the concealed essence of *beyng* (*Seyn*) as the event.

Let us remember that the essence of the primordial phenomenon of truth, or alethic occurrence, is not only—as Hans Urs von Balthasar (1987) claims—“symphonicity,” but also, and foremost, polyphony which essentially occurs through the many-voiced fugue. In the form of the fugue, there are two aspects intertwined together, i.e., necessity and freedom, since the given theme may be contrapuntally realized in various ways. The fugue form makes the multiplicity of autonomous voices coherent, providing unity in their dialogue, which essentially occurs as the event. While conjoining indi-

<sup>12</sup> Putting aside prejudices (*Vorurteile*) is a Husserlian transcendental postulate connected with a series of reductions, and such a non-personal perspective is ultimately impossible to reach, which Gadamer showed very clearly. But as a phenomenological method of researching the phenomena it is a very fruitful way of aiming at the thing itself (*die Sache selbst*).

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vidual voices, mutually independent, the fugue sets them in creative discourse. Additionally, the fugue form has the character of a philosophical (or in some cases also theological) meditation, whose theme is musically considered and co-considered by each voice.

On the one hand, this musical consideration differentiates what is homogenous but, on the other hand, unifies what is varied. This unifying and differentiating essence of the fugue does not contradict the fact that individual voices enter the dispute among them, and thanks to this dispute, a particular way of Being essentially occurs and is disclosed by *Dasein* (see Harries 2009, 112-120). This Heraclitan hidden strife ( $\pi\circ\lambda\epsilon\mu\circ\varsigma$ ) precedes the primordial phenomenon of hearkening (*Hörenkönnen*), which conditions speech and response, and makes a many-voiced discourse possible.

Disclosing the essence of listening and polyphony was possible thanks to transdisciplinary philosophical and aesthetic analysis within the art of music. We attentively listened to the theme of *The Art of Fugue*. However, it is also worth asking whether, for example, the theme of *Musical Offering* BWV 1079 by J. S. Bach or the theme of fugue no. 1 in C-major, no. 4 in E-minor, no. 16. in B-minor, no. 20 in C-minor or no. 22 in G-minor of the set of 24 *Preludes and Fugues* opus 87 by Dmitri Shostakovich have a similar internal tone (*Klang*), to the theme of *Contrapunctus I* BWV 1080. Indeed, they are not opposing themes, although each of the mentioned examples has its unique musical substance, which essentially occurs in its way of Being. All the works mentioned above have in common the very essence of the fugue, i.e., a conjunctured essential occurrence of polyphonic discourse. However, the dynamism of all the musical elements—melodics, rhythm, harmony, articulation, dynamics, agogics, and sonority—remains individual and unique in each case.

The last and probably the most problematic question to be asked here is: Could the conclusions we have made be applied to the same extent to other musical forms, or even forms belonging to other artistic disciplines? The theories mentioned before—by Martin Heidegger, Wassily Kandinsky, Michel Henry, Jean-Luc Marion, Georges Didi-Huberman—seem to confirm the possibility of extending the philosophical theory of fugue to include other musical forms and also other artistic disciplines. However, a detailed answer to this question would require further investigations within individual disciplines based on particular examples of works created in different epochs and styles. The method and direction of further research presented in this article make a valuable path for contemporary aesthetics since philosophical analysis from such a perspective substantially broadens our understanding of art and enhances its value and significance in human life.

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