

« SHÂNTI »

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*« ... man finally knows that he is alone in
the indifferent immensity of the Universe
from where he has emerged by chance ... »*

Jacques Monod
« Chance and Necessity »

When I began working at the Electronic Music Studio of the Cologne Radio, I intended to realise a short abstract « Study » of about ten minutes; a cautious attitude, since the way my life had progressed until then had hardly given me the chance to be in contact with electronics, much to my regret. [...]

Having done with the inevitable gropings at the start, I felt myself more at ease each day in the Studio and I was looking for ever more complex circuits.

I then noticed that the sounds I was making had a strange power ; every time I had searched for a long while and had decided to record a sound to build up a stock of « material » the clocks of the studio seemed to go mad ! I thought I was recording three or four minutes and when I stopped the tape recorders the clocks showed already ten minutes - sometimes more ... The phenomenon was revelatory to me : everything I had discovered in listening thoroughly to Oriental music (the elongation of time occasioned by the internal fluctuations of the acoustic element) was being exploded, multiplied, in the electronic studio ! This discovery led me to turn my perspectives upside-down.

In other respects, living afresh, cut off from all social contact, I buried myself in a strange spiritual climate composed of memory and discovery one and the same time. Each day I passed by the fantastic cathedral which even today shows its war wounds despite restoration. In front of this completely new city which embraces it, it was impossible for me not to conjure up the tragic ruins on which it stands ; the voices and the cries of agony of countless thousands of innocent people ; then silence and the crackling fire ...

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« ... Once inscribed into the DNA structure, the singular, and as such essentially unforeseeable accident will be mechanically and faithfully answered and translated ... »

Jacques Monod

[...] ... Some books accompanied me. I could sense the mechanisms of Albert Einstein's « Relativity » since each day I was making the psychological experiment directly in the strange temporal distortions of the studio. In the work of Jacques Monod on the theory of chance, I found there as well confirmation of my daily electronic experiment.

In effect it is out of the question to « foresee » everything, control and note everything. As soon as the circuits become complex and possess a great number of variable parameters, it is necessary to accept the fact of improvisation.

I realised very long improvisations of which I sometimes retained only very brief fragments. Even if such an *improvisation* was rigorously directed by the mind towards a preconceived or rather an intuited and very definite result, there entered nevertheless an inevitable accidental chance factor through this simultaneous action of the hands, the ears and the mind ; and this always remained whatever the modulations, filters and transpositions and operations of all kinds to which I consequently subjected these materials.

Monod's theory, discovered at the source itself of life, contributed therefore in no small measure in making me accept a situation against which I, as a composer of the written tradition, might have had some reservations. And if all the tapes of the materials and improvisations I had made for this work had to be put end to end, one week of continuous listening would not suffice to get to the end !

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Another book : « *The Yoga Guide* » by Shri Aurobindo. In this city which brought to my memory so many images of war seen when I was a very small child, I could read today these words of profound peace, of untiring search for the calm of the consciousness. These sentences seemed to inscribe themselves into the direct prolongation of the sounds with which I had just been working for hours on end and which were still resounding within me, vast and unlimited. Through the permanence of their relationship with the cosmic consciousness the texts of Aurobindo became also the reflection of the macrocosm studied by Einstein as that of the microcosm revealed by Monod.

This chain of echoes was prolonged further into the book « *California Canyon* » by Vincent Bardet. In the intense light of this book-poem, so many memory-bubbles surfaced in my mind and sight and also in my ears. I saw again the streets of Paris in diverse circumstances : the crowd and our untiring slogans. I heard again Eldridge Cleaver on the campus at Berkeley, shouting his anger at us, with all his just revolutionary violence, but also all his bonhomie and his sense of humour. I heard human masses . . . and saw once again the great deserts ! Women's faces, children's expressions becoming mixed in with the slow sound of the Pacific, with the rhythm of fire, with the clashing of a waterfall, with immense boulders, with thousands of gentle evening lights in the sky in cities.

From this moment I felt the irresistible necessity every day to mix in concrete material which possessed the power of psychic penetration with electronic sounds. [...] ... These slogans of hammered out violence were becoming imperceptible : a voice in the distance, resonances, then singing, then choruses, echoes of choruses to stretch into the limits of pure sound. I could make the slogans sing softly. But the waterfalls became yelling crowds ! [...] ... In some circuits, the softest, most humble or most profoundly meditative sound could become a multiplied organ, vertiginous abyss !

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« SHÂNTI » (which means « peace » in Sanscrit) is all this tissue of elements which intersect, oppose and complete each other in evolving from the most « abstract » sound right along to the « raw » realistic material. But it is also the fascination and the hypnosis of a sound which is never heard. To identify with the sound. To become lost in it. To integrate in this sound all the implosive force of the consciousness, never being at more than one with its multiple interior and serene pulse.

"SHÂNTI" does not impose this or that aspect of the world. From the sound masses as from the fragments of texts which find a place in this work I do not « choose » Shri Aurobindo for example « against » Eldridge Cleaver or Mao Tse-Tung : I put them in each other's presence as in your presence in just the same way as I put the most diverse sound forces "in each other's presence". « Everything concerns me ». As Mao Tse-Tung underlines it : « *Wai Tcheng, who lived in the Tang dynasty said ; 'Listen to all sides which enlighten you but listen to only one which plunges you into darkness'* ».

All these sounds, all these words are for me inseparable. As the Yin and the Yang are inseparable, day and night, fire and water, hate and love, prabhava and pralaya, the star and the atom, all the aspects of the Universe. As once again Mao Tse-Tung said : « *If one of the two opposed contradictory aspects gives out, the conditions of existence of the other aspect disappear also ... Without life, there is no death, without death, no life. Without height, no depth, without depth, no height ... it is the same for all opposites ...* ».

Jean-Claude Eloy, 1975

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(1) Proofreading note.

Today, I do not share anymore entirely this vision by Jacques Monod, even it is grounded on a very solid scientific argumentation. Of course, it is a probability that life, as we know it, is an exceptional phenomenon, very rare. Thus the particular care that we must give to this planet on which it was born. But in front of these billions and billions of stars, galaxies, and probably planets, how to think that such a phenomenon would be exclusive and unique through the whole universe ? ... (jce).