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METAL AS DEIXIS

What is This that Stands before Me?: Metal as Deixis

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Abstract
Metal holds an essential relation to the phenomenology of deixis, a relation modeled in the opening scene of metal's originary song, Black Sabbath's 'Black Sabbath,' in which indication is dramatized as pointing back on itself towards the one who indicates in such a way that the negativity of the question is restored to the negativity of the subject—the mystery, finitude, and acontextuality of their being—as its first and final ground. Neither a refusal of signification nor an attempt to signify, metal is a deictic art or indication production that points to the presence of its own pointing. Metal utilizes significative forms (music, words) and digests whole discourses expressly for this purpose, neither to express nor not to express things with them, but to make and indicate the making of the sonic fact of their expression into a significance preceding and exceeding all they could express.

Key Words: Deixis, indication, signification, presence, facticity, negation, questioning, ecstasy, negativity, sound, apophasis.

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Suppose someone hears an unknown sign, like the sound of some word which he does not know the meaning of; he wants to know what it is . . . [this] is not love for the thing he does not know but for something he knows, on account of which he wants to know what he does not know.[1]

[T]he significance of the *This* is, in reality, a *Not-this* that it contains; that is, an essential negativity. . . . The problem of being—the supreme metaphysical problem—emerges from the very beginning as inseparable from the problem of the significance of the demonstrative pronoun, and for this reason it is always already connected with the field of indication . . . *Deixis*, or indication . . . is the category within which language refers to its own taking place.[2]

[T]he work of art does not simply refer to something, because what it refers to is actually there. We could say that the work of art signifies an increase in being.[3]

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Were I medieval rather than medievalist, my paper would perform a heretical allegorical exegesis of the opening of Black Sabbath's 'Black Sabbath' as the appearance of Heavy Metal itself, personified by the mysterious figure who, escaping identification, points to the one who sees it, to *me*: 'What is this that stands before me? / Figure in black which points at me.'[4] Here metal, its authenticity or self-authorization emblematized by the tautological terms of artist, song, and album, would signify an event unveiling the negativity of the mystery of oneself, the unbelievable brutality of the fact that one is, as the original evil of the world. So metal's very advent, an unpredictable/anticipated revelation of a more profound origin, would constitute a messianic opening—think Sabbath's mystical fifth member—toward a world beyond this negativity, the experiential space for its seizure and sublimation. The lovely heresy of this reading is its flirting with refusal of the divine 'gift' of individuated being and its undermining of the impotent Judeo-Christian explanation for what is wrong with everything in terms of a collision between demonic and human agency, in short, Eve. This move, moreover, my medieval alter-ego would discover, is proportionally traced in the fate of Black Sabbath's 'Evil Woman,' a too-pop cover-song reluctantly recorded and released as their debut single with Sabbath's own 'Wicked World' on side B, included in the UK release of the first album, replaced with 'Wicked World' in the US release by Warner Bros., and since forgotten by a metal tradition which generally understands that the *problem* is not something in particular but world itself, the whole ungraspable fact of our being in what stands before us.[5] Or, as expressed in the following *catena* (a medieval exegetical device) from Bolt Thrower's *The IVth Crusade*: 'Insignificance is our existence . . . No escape, there is no way out . . . Existing in the present which surely cannot last . . . Lost on a voyage with no destiny . . . Our futile lives shall be no more . . . Just isn't how you planned . . . To survive we must comply . . . Faced by this total stranger . . . Take me far away—deep within the dream . . . Open our mind before it's too late.'[6]

Instead, I will pursue a similar argument in a different idiom, namely, that metal holds an essential relation to the phenomenology of deixis, a relation modeled in the opening scene of metal's originary song wherein indication is dramatized as pointing back on itself towards the one who indicates in such a way that the negativity of the question is restored to the negativity of the subject—the mystery, finitude, and acontextuality of their being—as its first and final ground.[7] As an expression of the experiential structure of metal, of what metal first feels like, this scene shows metal as founded on an ecstatic experience of deixis's essential negativity and so suggests that metal finds itself, becomes and stays metal, as an insistent performance of the fact that we encounter things, the real presence of the *this*, only through negation. At the level of language, the negativity of

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deixis, following Hegel and his commentators, is structured by the unutterability of the singular, by the fact that when we say *this*, a sign whose significance is wholly constituted by the contextual instance of its own event, what is said is in fact a *not-this*, a universal which annuls the singularity of what is meant.[8] What makes deixis work, then, what enables its function in discourse, is that it says by not saying, and more precisely, that it negates its own inability to signify by speaking language, that is, by referring to the actual event of our being in language, in the same manner that 'I' means 'the one who is saying "I".'[9] The negativity of deixis thus resolves to a deeper auto-deixis, its pointing to itself. And it is on this principle that the aesthetic empire of metal is built. This means that metal, being like all music something between language and art, discourse and making, is located at the intersection between the phenomena described in my last two epigraphs, that it takes place at the point where language's referring to its own taking place joins with art's presencing of what it refers to. Neither a refusal of signification nor an attempt to signify, metal is a deictic art or indication production that *points to the presence of its own pointing*. The ecstatic potential of such deictic self-presencing, literalized in the metalhead's tensionally vibrating devil horns, is explicable via George Bataille's definition of ecstasy as 'the opposite of a response of a desire to know', which traces a dialectical movement parallel to the opening of Black Sabbath's 'Black Sabbath':

> THE OBJECT OF ECSTASY IS THE ABSENCE OF AN OUTSIDE ANSWER. THE INEXPLICABLE PRESENCE OF MAN IS THE ANSWER THE WILL GIVES ITSELF, SUSPENDED IN THE VOID OF UNKNOWABLE NIGHT.[10]

In tune with this pattern, the exuberance of metallic deixis is a bearing forth of the abundance of its own presence, via qualitative and quantitative sonic plenitudes, into the absence of what it would indicate, an aesthetic production or actual making of precisely what can never be pointed to but which deixis, prior to and as the basis of all signification, always does: its own facticity, the fact *that* it is.[11]

      What makes metal deictic in this deeper way? How does it produce the presence of its own *that*? The simple and essential answer is noise, which metal fashions, not as such, but in and out of the significative structures of instrumental and vocal forms. So metal traces its circle of aural experience with a compass constructed from the two points of the unknown or unintelligible sonic sign: sound as the sign of an unknown *event* (something happening, capable of being shown and witnessed—*what was that?*) and sound as the sign of an unknown *meaning* (something being said, capable of being understood and interpreted—*what did he say?*), with the fluid

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boundary between them being marked by the scream. These two forms of significative noise are the magnetic poles of a being-with-music that, in keeping with Augustine's analysis of our experience of unknown signs cited above, instantaneously and continuously draws forth the *will* to know, our *what is this?*, while feeding the will solely and purely with its own inexorable dense presence, where *it* now means the phenomenon or event happening in the 'third area' of reality between subject and object, here nameable as the metalhead's willing of metal, the becoming-metal of his own head. [12] Wrestling with and against its own indication, in love with the sign as its fiercest enemy, metallic deixis is a noisy semiotic struggle to make itself what it points to. Before all signification or making of points, before all themes and purposes, metal indicates via the negativity of the unknown sign *that it is* indicating, that it is happening as indication. Indeed, metal utilizes significative forms (music, words) and digests whole discourses expressly for this purpose, neither to express nor not to express things with them, but to make and indicate the making of the sonic fact of their expression into a *significance preceding and exceeding all they could express*. From this perspective, metal's conceptual commitment to negative themes (death, apocalypse, void, etc.) is an absolute aesthetic necessity, ensuring that insofar as metal does signify beyond itself, that this beyond only expose metal's own inexplicability as significative event. Facticity emerges, is made present through metallic deixis the way it usually does, through suspension of the *what*, a suspension which belongs more generally to the experience of wonder, where not knowing *what* a thing is leaves us caught, fixed before the fact *that* it is. In this, metal bears an important relation to the avant-garde sublime, as explicated by Lyotard in relation to painting: 'The paint, the picture as occurrence or event, is not expressible, and it is to this that it has to witness. . . . The avant-gardist attempt inscribes the occurrence of a sensory now as what cannot be presented and which remains to be presented in the decline of 'great' representational painting.'[13] But what distinguishes metal within this relation is that metal achieves its sensory self-inscription not by standing apart from representational tradition (a move more proper to the avant-garde as such) but by wholly investing in it, by locating itself as a beyond *within* representation, within musical and linguistic form. Metal achieves itself as such a beyond not simply by simultaneously signifying and not signifying (a domain more proper to conceptual and ironic art), but more 'naïvely' and desperately by *signifying through the very refusal to signify*. Noisiness constitutes this refusal as sound's return from significance back towards itself.

For instrumental sound, the noisiness of metallic deixis means sound's becoming substantial, dense, elemental, a thing and hence 'no longer' possibly the sound *of* something happening, nor the sound *of* music, but a happening in and of itself. As captured in its own weighty generic term,

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heavy metal takes sonic substantiality to its aesthetic limit: the reality of sound so loud it can hurt, the fantasy of sound so solid it can kill. Whence Doom, or, drowning under quaking mountains of sound: 'Shockwaves rattle the Earth below with hymn of doom' (Sleep, 'From Beyond,' *Sleep's Holy Mountain*). Thrash, or, hacking and being hacked to bits with finely ground axes of sound: 'The only way to exit / Is going piece by piece' (Slayer, 'Piece by Piece,' *Reign in Blood*). Death, or, being disembowled from within by chthonic rumblings of sound: 'We're turned inside out / Beyond the piercing cries' (Obituary, 'Turned Inside Out,' *Cause of Death*). Black, or, freezing to death in infernal ice wastes of sound: 'We are fucking ice' (Imperial Crystalline Entombment, 'Astral Frost Invocation,' *Apocalyptic End in White*).

  For vocal sound, the noisiness of metallic deixis means sound's becoming self, the embodied being of the one to whom voice belongs and hence 'no longer' the sound *of* being, nor the sound *of* language, but a being in and of itself. This may be understood as an inversion of the usual experiential relation between voice and language, whereby voice *disappears* via articulation into language and thus stands *behind* the word, informing it. In the metal lyric, voice *appears* via disarticulation from language and thus stands *between* us and the word, interfering with it.[14] Accordingly, metal vocals, especially of the black and death variety, are capable of producing the experience of hearing the word detached from vocal intentionality, the word as unsaid by the one who speaks, as exemplified by the self-indicating word of the demonically possessed: 'Jesus then asked him, 'What is your name?' And he said, 'Legion'; for many demons had entered him'(Luke 8:30).[15] Opening a space between sound and meaning where voice *teems* (cf. *legion* [*legio*, λεγιών] as simultaneously noun and name, both and neither), metal vocals similarly produce voice as a singular multiplicity, so that rather than hearing words spoken by voice (the one in the many), we hear voice spoken by words (the many in the one).[16] Vocal metallic deixis is the inside-out voice of a linguistic self-possession indicating the presence of what it says in the being who speaks. Thinking the metal vocal auto-deictically in these terms, as intensifying the presence of its producer such that (following Gadamer) the vocal does not merely speak something because what it speaks is actually there, in other words, as voice as *possessed* by what it says, coordinates with Agamben's ontological understanding of the negativity of deixis as grounded in the removal or dispossession of the voice: 'that which is removed each time in speaking, *this*, is the voice. . . . 'Taking-the-*This*' and 'Being-the-*there*' are possible only through the experience of the Voice, that is, the experience of the taking place of language in the removal of the voice.'[17] What the metal vocal enacts, then, is something like the return of the voice in vengeance against the event of language as what negates it and thus

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a repossession and being possessed by the voice as ontic exponent, a dialetheic pure will and pure refusal to signify.[18]

This reading of metal as deixis indicates, moreover, an important relation between metal and apophatic mysticism as a discourse-praxis radically invested in the experiential possibilities of facticity or the *that*. As captured by the Vedantic formula *neti neti* (not this, not this), the apophatic mystic deictically negates all presences in affirmation and realization of a divine Beyond. In the fourteenth-century *Cloud of Unknowing*, for instance, the contemplative 'treads all things down full far under the cloud of forgetting' and through a most intense psychic suffering of sorrow 'that he is' arrives at a divine ravishment defined as 'that joy which robs one of all knowing and feeling of one's being.'[19] Metal practices a different but symmetrical and thus potentially complementary craft with the same tool, held by the other end, as it were. Metal deictically *negates all absences* in affirmation and realization of itself as a Beyond.[20] This does not mean affirming the presence of what is absent or denying the absence of what is present. It means, quite simply, denying the absent, negating what is not present. In other words, metallic deixis operates as the inverse of Meister Eckhart's famous apophatic prayer: 'I pray to God to rid me of God.'[21] As explicated by John Caputo, this prayer, arising 'from an ongoing distrust of our ineradicable desire for presence,' is a movement toward God through the negation of the name of God, the denial of 'God' as the ultimate and most essential denial:

> I pray God—that is, He Who is everything and none of the things this signifier names, *nomen omninominabile et nomen innominabile*—to rid me of 'God,' that is, all of these nominal effects which try to cow us into submission, all of those historic-cultural-linguistic effects which are collected together by the word 'God' (or any other sacred cow).[22]

As the inverse of this movement, the unprayer of metal is like a mirror-image asymptote, always-never arriving to the same place from the other side. Rather than emptying God of 'God' as God's final and most intimate veil, metallic deixis empties not-God (or world) of 'not-God' as world's ultimate covering, the illusory outside that renders here a place of absence, a ground for the desire of presence. But metal's unprayer, expressible as 'I pray to not-God (world) to rid me of not-God (world),' also touches the divine, for as Agamben says, 'What is properly divine is that the world does not reveal God.'[23] The divinity of experiencing the world as not revealing God is potentially identical to experiencing God emptied of 'God.' Metal's relation to such experience is accordingly defined by Scott Wilson in apophatic terms as a voiding of God:

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> metal is a music in which experience is privileged over knowledge or know-how as the path to joy that broaches, in headbanging heaven, the divine. This is especially the case in a form like black metal which generally favours low cost and low fidelity production values and a raw, cold sound. In black metal the ecstatic experience is reached in evacuating God, or indeed any other comforting name, from the space of the divine.[24]

As these words suggest, metal's atheological apophatic ecstasy is also explicable with reference to its capital rite, headbanging, the intimate opposite or countermovement of the head that bows itself in prayer. Where the mystic bows to God for the sake of his own God-performed decapitation, relinquishing the head that says 'God' as the final veil (ego) between the soul and God, the metalhead bows without bowing to nothing but metal, banging the head against itself, against its own abject presence.[25] Headbanging, the gestural expression of metallic deixis as unprayer, conventionally accompanied by the manual horns that point impossibly to metal itself, is the perfect inverse of final mystical consummation. It is the ecstatic realization, not of God, but of the non-realization of God, the iterative and unceasing *auto-decapitation* of the being at the threshold who as Bataille says 'must throw himself headlong [*vivant*] into that which has no foundation and has no head.'[26] Headbanging is the maddening becoming-divine of the one for whom there is none to bow to.[27] Headbanging manifests the ritual structure of metal as essentially self-sacrifical.[28]

But how does metal *deictically* negate absence, something that is not *there* to be indicated in the first place? How can deixis instrumentalize denial of what is not evident? Metallic deixis accomplishes this the only way it can be accomplished, by pointing to something absent in a manner that denies that there is anything to be pointed *to*, that is, by simultaneously pointing and denying that one is *pointing*, by pointing in denial of pointing's *significance*. In these terms, deixis is the essential mechanism of metal's frequently appreciated Nietzschean spirit, as a self-liberating movement away from all possibility of an outside towards which the world is ordered yet therefore also a movement which both remains in contact with the outside as impossible— 'God is dead'—and loves to forget that contact in the midst of its own presence. Metal's universal symbol, the sign of the horns, perfectly embodies this movement, pointing to what it negates and refuses, devilishly asserting itself as the divinity it denies, all the while signifying little more than *metal* per se. Or as Behemoth sing it: 'Rise thy horns / For I'm at one with the dark / Divine presence ascends / Touching the forehead ov god' (Behemoth, 'Horns Ov Baphomet,' *Zos Kia Cultus (Here and Beyond)*, Avantgarde Music, 2002). Metal-as-deixis is this touch, the rebellious appropriation of all

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significance for the irreducible event of its indication, as if the sign, forced to point back upon its own primal presence, would disclose a transcendent anti-ontotheological tautology, a heretically divine human tetragrammaton (I am who I am). So Nietzsche's Zarathustra says: 'For me—how could there be something outside me? There is no outside! But we forget this with all sounds; how lovely it is that we forget!' And the animals reply: 'In every Instant being begins; round every Here rolls the ball. There. The middle is everywhere. Crooked is the path of eternity.'[29] Forgetting that there is no outside, a special virtue of sonic experience, is not an enchanting illusion that there is an outside, but more simply and purely a suspension of the burden of consciousness that there is *no outside*, a putting down of the labor of negation, and hence an opening towards real experience of the principle that 'the root of all pure joy and sadness is *that* the world is as it is.'[30]

Notes

[1] Augustine, *The Trinity*, J E Rotelle (trans), New City Press, New York, 1997, X.1.2.

[2] G Agamben, *Language and Death: The Place of Negativity*, K E Pinkhaus and M Hardt (trans), University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1991, pp. 14-25.

[3] H Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, R Bernasconi (ed), N Walker (trans), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986, p. 35.

[4] Black Sabbath, 'Black Sabbath', *Black Sabbath*, Warner Bros, 1970.

[5] On 'Evil Woman,' see P Wilkinson, *Rat Salad: Black Sabbath, The Classic Years, 1969-1975*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 2006, pp. 37, 48-9, 52.

[6] Bolt Thrower, *The IVth Crusdae*, Earache Records, 1992.

[7] Cf. 'From a logical point of view, the openness essential to experience is precisely the openness of being either this or that. It has the structure of a question. And just as the dialectical negativity of experience culminates in the idea of being perfectly experienced—i.e., being aware of our finitude and limitedness—so also the logical form of the question and the negativity that is part of it culminate in a radical negativity: the knowledge of not knowing' (H Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, J Weinsheimer and D G Marshall (trans), 2nd ed, Continuum, New York, 1994, p. 362).

[8] As Hegel explains, 'the sensuous This that is meant *cannot be reached* by language, which belongs to consciousness, i.e. to that which is inherently universal. In the actual attempt to say it, it would therefore crumble away; those who started to describe it would not be able to complete the description, but would be compelled to leave it to others, who would themselves finally have to admit to speaking about something which *is not*' (*Phenomenology of*

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Spirit, ¶110, cited from *The Hegel Reader*, S Houlgate (ed), Blackwell, Oxford, 1998, p.85). Ferrarin comments: 'By saying 'this,' 'now,' consciousness experiences the universality of language. The singular is only opined or meant [*gemeint*] because all singulars can be indicated as a 'this' or a 'now.' The 'this' is 'neither this nor that, a *not-this*.' In other words, the 'this' cannot be identified positively with a singular spatiotemporal given; it abides as a constant in the vanishing of its being referred to. In sum, it is not an immediacy but a negation; the this is the negative proxy (demonstrative pronoun) for each singular given' (A Ferrarin, *Hegel and Aristotle*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001, pp. 182-3). Cf. 'The force and truth of language negate and pass beyond the singularity of the meant, a sheer sensuous Being, and thus raise it to the conceptual universality of the uttered or expressed. Language will thus annul the singularity that meaning intends to express with it' (T A Carlson, *Indiscretion: Finitude and the Naming of God*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1999, p.108).

[9] As D Heller-Roazen, commenting on Agamben, explains: 'Agamben argues that an analysis of the potentiality of language . . . leads to a solution, or more precisely, dissolution of the aporia of self-reference. 'The name can be named and language can be brought to speech,' we read in 'Pardes,' Agamben's essay on Derrida . . . 'because self-reference is displaced onto the level of potentiality; what is intended is neither word as object nor the word insofar as it *actually* denotes a thing but, rather, a pure potential to signify (and not to signify) . . . But this is not longer meaning's self-reference, a sign's signification of itself; instead it is the materialization of a potentiality, the materialization of its own possibility.' Hence the significance, for Agamben, of those parts of language whose connotative value can be determined only on the basis of their relation to an event of language . . . At issue in each case are parts of speech that, in themselves, bear no meaning; they are capable of functioning in discourse only because they suspend their own incapacity to signify and, in this way, refer to an actual event of language. . . . We have seen that Agamben's analysis of potentiality leads to the recognition that actuality is nothing other than the self-suspension of potentiality, the mode in which Being can *not* not be. The same suspension must be said of the potentiality constitutive of language: like all potentiality, it is not effaced but rather fulfilled and completed in the passage to actuality' (G Agamben, *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, D Heller-Roazen (ed & trans), Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1999, p. 20).

[10] G Bataille, *The Bataille Reader*, F Botting and S Wilson (eds), Blackwell, Oxford, 1997, p. 45. Cf. 'Being is dying by loving' (Meher Baba, *Discourses*, 6th ed., 3 vols, Sufism Reoriented, San Francisco, 1973, I.29).

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[11] Amy Hollywood explains the relationship between facticity, its specific form in the arbitrariness of identity, and Bataille's understanding of ecstasy: 'Bataille not only questions the meaning of his own existence and that of human existence (why live in the face of death?) but also continually brings himself face to face with the sheer contingency of his own existence *as the individual he himself is.* Chance is the hook on which existence falls. It is without meaning and offers no answer other than its own sheer facticity. The abruptness and impudence of this facticity, the absence of response in the response, is/engenders ecstasy' ('Bataille and Mysticism: A "Dazzling Dissolution",' *Diacritics*, vol. 26, 1996, pp. 74-85). Cf. 'The burning corpse of god shall keep us warm in the doom of howling winds / For we are a race from beyond the wanderers of night' (Xasthur, 'Doomed by Howling Winds,' *Xasthur*, Moribund Records, 2006), i.e. facticity as heat transfer from absence to presence.

[12] '[This] topology . . . has always been known to children, fetishists, "savages," and poets. It is in this "third area" that a science of man truly freed of every eighteenth-century prejudice should focus its study. Things are not outside us, in measurable external space, like neutral objects (*ob-jecta*) of use and exchange; rather, they open to us the original place solely from which the experience of measurable external space becomes possible. They are therefore held and comprehended from the outset in the *topos outopos* (placeless place, no-place place) in which our experience of being-in-the-world is situated. The question "where is the thing?" is inseparable from the question "where is the human?"' (G Agamben, *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture*, R L Martinez (trans), University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1993, p. 59).

[13] J Lyotard, 'The Sublime and the Avant Garde', Lisa Liebmann (trans), in *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, A Benjamin (ed), Polity Press, Cambridge, 1991, pp. 93, 103.

[14] Cf. 'what is common to most death, doom, and black metal is the anti-melodic, non-natural treatment of the voice . . . . If, as Deleuze and Guattari assert, "the first musical operation" is "to machine the voice" [*Thousand Plateaus*, B Massumi (trans), University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1987, p. 303], that is, to deterritorialize the voice from its ordinary, "natural" speaking function, then death, doom, and black vocalists are fundamentally—indeed, primarily—musical in their anti-lyrical non-singing, in that their growls, screams and grunts simply push music's de-naturalization of the speaking voice to extremes' (R Bogue, 'Violence in Three Shades of Metal: Death, Doom, and Black', chapter 3 of *Deleuze's Way: Essays in Transverse Ethics and Aesthetics*, Ashgate, Burlington, VT, 2007, pp. 45-6).

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[15] Eugene Thacker has explored the shared phenomenology of the Gerasene demoniac's plural name and black metal vocals in his analysis of sonic swarms, 'Pusle Demons', *Culture Machine*, vol. 9, 2007, <http://culturemachine.tees.ac.uk>.

[16] Cf. 'the demons blaspheme the theological relation between the One and the Many. What is noteworthy here is that the demons first announce their presence through voice. We are not told whether the infamous answer "Legion" (more commonly translated as "I am legion") is uttered in chorus or as a single voice. The word "legion" itself denotes some sort of an organized quasi-military unit, and thus a more rigid, disciplined mode of organization. But it is spoken – or rather, "resounded." We might even imagine that Jesus hears this demonic swarm before it is seen. But in fact, *it is never seen as such*. For, during the exorcism, the demonic swarm is immediately and invisibly transferred to a herd of swine. The iconography of the passage is striking—the true nature of the demons, we presume, is revealed by the choice of their receptacle in a herd of "dumb," lowly animals. But, throughout the parable, the only real indication we have of a swarm of demons is this enigmatic resounding of the word "Legion"' (Eugene Thacker, 'Pulse Demons'). So metal is symbolically invested/infested with swarmic self-images, e.g. 'Howling our metal we light up the world, / And the banner of Ungol is proudly unfurled. / Raising our legion, and now you belong, / And the point of the blade will be screaming our song' (Cirith Ungol, 'Join the Legion', *Paradise Lost*, Restless Records, 1991). On the horde-concept in Black Metal, via Darwin, Freud, and Deleuze, see Valter, 'Horde,' *Documents* < http://surrealdocuments.blogspot.com/2008/05/horde.html>.

[17] G Agamben, *Language and Death*, pp. 32-3.

[18] Cf. Agamben reading of Augustine's analysis of the experience of the dead and/or unknown word: '[Augustine] isolates an experience of the word in which it is no longer mere sound (*istas tres syllabus*) and it is not yet meaning, but the *pure intention to signfty*. This experience of an unknown word (*verbum incognitum*) in the no-man's-land between sound and signification, is, for Augustine, the amorous experience as a will to knowledge: the *intention to signify without a signified* corresponds, in fact, not to logical understanding, but to the desire for knowledge' (*Language and Death*, pp. 33-4, my emphasis). Agamben's 'intention to signify without a signified' intersects with the structure of metallic deixis.

[19] *The Cloud of Unknowing*, P J Gallacher (ed), Western Michigan University Press, Kalamazoo, MI, 1997, 43.1520, 44.1557, 44.1560-1, my translation.

[20] Wormed's explanation of the their first album literalizes this movement vis-à-vis space: 'WORMED is a mental state in which the human being dwells inside this immense universe, like a small 'worm' inside an

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'intestine,' (the Universe). And how he feels when realizes that he cannot get outside of it. The necessity of crossing to beyond, something as being caught in a pre-dimension. It isn't anything material, it is simply a way of naming a deep human emotion, we call this feeling WORMED. All lyrics concept [*sic*] in 'Floating Cadaver in the Monochrome' explain the 'chapters' of this confused space and what [*sic*] this space can compress all dimensions in one to create a hole in the universe. The Geodesic Dome is the 'ne plus ultra' point in space that is able to make that dimension portal. . . . This is only the concept of the MCD 'Floating Cadaver in the Monochrome.' WORMED´s brand new full-length will be the threshold to this dimension' (<http://www.wormed.net/concept.htm>).

[21] R. Schürmann, *Meister Eckhart*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1978, p. 219.

[22] J Caputo, *More Radical Hermeneutics: On Not Knowing Who We Are*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2000, p.257.

[23] G Agamben, *The Coming Community*, Michael Hardt (trans), University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1993, p.90.

[24] Scott Wilson, 'From Forests Unknown: "Eurometal" and the Political / Audio Unconscious', in this volume.

[25] On traditional mystical meanings of decapitation, see A K Coomaraswamy, 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: Indra and Namuci, *Speculum*, vol. 19, 1944, pp. 104-125. On beheading as representation of the impossible, see N Masciandaro, '*Non potest hoc corpus decollari*: Beheading and the Impossible,' in *Heads Will Roll: Decapitation in Medieval Literature and Culture*, L Tracy and J Massey (eds), University of Florida Press, forthcoming.

[26] G Bataille, 'The Obelisk', in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, Allan Stoekl (trans), University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1985, p. 222.

[27] Of this Meher Baba's repeated banging of his head on a stone during the period of self-realization provides a striking example: 'Once when Merwan was banging his head on the floor at home, his mother heard a thudding sound coming from his room. . . . Merwan had blood all over his face. Crying she asked, "Merog, have you gone mad? Are you totally mad?" Wiping the blood off with a towel, he said, "I am not mad! I have become something else!"' As he later explained, 'This constant *hammering of my head* was the only thing that gave me some relief during my real suffering of coming down—which I have repeatedly said is *indescribable*'" (B Kalchuri, *Meher Prabhu: The Biography of Avatar Meher Baba*, 14 vols., Manifestation, Myrtle Beach, SC, 1980, 1.251-2, 234, first italics mine).

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[28] As explored in Jamerson Maurer's ontopoietic adventure for this volume, metal ritually sacrifices the normative, everyday structures of experience, 'violently disrupting & transgressing this *perceptory*-illusion with a ritualistic assassination of stasis, stagnation & ontophysiological inertia.' At the same time, headbanging must be understood, not as a ritual proper or reenactment of some originary significance, but rather, following Joseph Russo's exuberant analysis, as a 'ritual of ritual itself.' That is, the only significance of headbanging, as ritual, is *that* one bangs one's head, such that it is extremely meaningless to ever be concerned how one bangs one's head or whether or not one bangs one's head. Metal ritually compels headbanging, but headbanging remains essentially aritualistic, the antithesis of compulsory.
[29] F Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, A Del Caro (trans), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006, 'The Convalescent', p. 175. Nietzsche's characterization of Zarathustra in *Ecce Homo* is most relevant with regard to apophasis: 'The psychological problem in the type of Zarathustra is how he that says No and *does* No to an unheard-of degree, to everything to which one has so far said Yes, can nevertheless be the opposite of No-saying spirit' (*Ecce Homo*, 'Thus Spake Zarathustra', ch.6, cited from *On the Genealogy of Morals* and *Ecce Homo*, W Kaufman (trans & ed), Vintage, New York, 1967, p. 306).
[30] G Agamben, *The Coming Community*, p. 90, my emphasis.

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