

## Appendix 2: Form and Void — Western and Eastern Perspectives — Dualism and Monism

This appendix lists the characterisations of form and void across music composition disciplines, as I understood these characterisations to be before starting to draft the dissertation.

The suppositions accord with the usual definition of “supposition” as something that is held as an opinion.<sup>1</sup> They are not presented as provable or disprovable positions. Rather, they are presented in two capacities. The first of these represents the concepts of *Westernness* and *Easternness*, as I have understood them in my experiences as a student of philosophy, science and music in Western and Eastern cultural environments. The second is the way Kramer characterises knowledge as it relates to music — that its purpose is not to be right but to “open up discussions, avenues of thought, and modes of perception”.<sup>2</sup>

The disciplines the suppositions relate to are ontological philosophy, epistemology, cultural mythology, science and empiricism, language and linguistics, mathematics, geometry, perceptual psychology, art theory and compositional aesthetics, and ethnomusicology.

Within each of these selected music-influencing disciplines, the suppositions summarise how the Western *mutually exclusive* concept of *form-versus-void* and the Eastern *mutually inclusive* concept of *form-void* manifest in the Western and Eastern characterisations of the selected disciplines.<sup>3</sup>

The background research for the current dissertation began here with this list of suppositions. The purpose of the list was to capture the concepts of *Westernness* and *Easternness* by examining the relationship between form and void, as it manifests in Western and Eastern musical forms and related disciplines that inform and influence Western and Eastern music.

The decision to try to capture the essence of the Western-Eastern distinction via examining the concept of form and void was considered appropriate for the following reasons.

The concept of form-versus-void is an essential and enduring one, albeit implicit, in *the experience of being a human in the world*. In the same way that Heidegger notes (as referenced in Chapter 3) that “temporality gets experienced in a phenomenally primordial way”, form and void are also experienced in a *primordial way*.<sup>4</sup>

To that extent, it is possible to examine the essential *Westernness* and *Easternness* of Western and Eastern paradigms through the lens of the contrasting way the concepts of form and void are represented. Thus, the ways in which Western and Eastern paradigms represent the concepts of form and void provides a conceptual mechanism for analysing Western and Eastern music.

Hoffman describes this relationship between culture and music as “the way in which a person knows music is not different from the way he knows in general”.<sup>5</sup> Because of its *primordial* nature, the way a

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<sup>1</sup> Merriam-Webster dictionary: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/supposed> Definition 2a.

<sup>2</sup> Kramer, *The Time of Music*, viii.

<sup>3</sup> The disciplines chosen are not intended to be an objective or definitive list of music-influencing disciplines. Rather, in the manner of Wittgenstein’s concept of *family resemblances* (quoted in Dupre, *50 Philosophy Ideas*, 147), the selected disciplines are proposed as belonging to a group or family of disciplines that inform musical composition in related but different ways. They are proposed as one of several such selections that may be considered reasonable for this purpose.

<sup>4</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 304.

<sup>5</sup> Hoffman, “Epistemology and Music,” 69, quoted in Clayton, *Time in Indian Music*, 10.

person *knows form and void* is the way a person knows *in general* and the way a person *knows music*. Thus, the distinction between Western and Eastern ways of seeing things is profoundly reflected in the distinction between Western and Eastern representations of the form-void relationship.<sup>6</sup>

In summary, the distinction may be characterised as follows: in the Western paradigm, the relationship between form and void is one of *mutual exclusivity* — the Western paradigm is *dualistic and materialist*. Conversely, in the Eastern paradigm, the relationship between form and void is one of *mutual inclusivity* — the Eastern paradigm is *monistic and idealist*.

## List of suppositions

***1-(i) Within the domain of philosophy, specifically ontology, an essential ontological difference between Eastern and Western dominant paradigms regarding form-versus-void is:***

**S1** [1-(i)-(a)]: Ontologically, Western philosophies are characterised by *materialism* — that is, by the proposition that an external universe exists, independent of one's perception of it.

*Subsequent definitions of form and void:*

**S2** [1-(i)-(a)]: In Western philosophies, *form* (that which exists) has independent material existence. *Void* (that which does not exist) does not have independent material existence.

**S3** [1-(i)-(b)]: Ontologically, Eastern philosophies are characterised by *idealism* — that is, by the proposition that an internal universe exists, and that this universe is the same as one's perception of it.

**S4** [1-(i)-(b)]: In Eastern philosophies, *form* (that which exists) is perceived or experienced by the perceiver to exist. *Void* (that which does not exist) is not perceived or experienced.

***1-(ii) Within the domain of philosophy, specifically epistemology, an essential epistemological difference between Eastern and Western dominant paradigms regarding form-versus-void is:***

**S5** [1-(ii)-(a)]: Epistemologically, Western philosophies are characterised by *materialism* — that is, by the proposition that the properties of the (external) universe exist independently of an observer's perception.

*Subsequent definitions of form and void:*

**S6** [1-(ii)-(a)]: In Western philosophies, *form* (that which exists) has independent stable external properties that are independent of their perception by a perceiver. *Void* (that which does not exist) does not *externally* exist and does not have independent stable external properties that are independent of their perception by a perceiver.

**S7** [1-(ii)-(b)]: Epistemologically, Eastern philosophies are characterised by *idealism* — that is, by the proposition that the properties of the (internal) universe are the same as one's perception of such properties.

*Subsequent definitions of form and void:*

**S8** [1-(ii)-(b)]: In Eastern philosophies, *form* (that which exists) has properties that are the same as the perceiver's perception of such properties. *Void* (that which does not exist) is not experienced or perceived and does not have such properties.

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<sup>6</sup> See <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/paradigm>

**2. Within the domain of cultural mythology, an essential difference between Eastern and Western dominant paradigms regarding form-versus-void is:**

**S9** [2-(a)]: Western cultural mythologies are characterised by *dualism* — that is, by the proposition that the universe exists in two distinct forms: (i) a form that is *self* and (ii) a form that is *not-self*. In other words, Western cultural mythologies are characterised by the proposition that the universe exists in two distinct forms — the form of *self* and the form of *other*.

*Subsequent definitions of form and void:*

**S10** [2-(a)]: In Western cultural mythologies, *form* (that which exists) exists in one of two forms: either (i) in the form of “self” or (ii) in the form of “not-self”. *Void* (that which does not exist) does not exist in either of these forms — neither (i) as self nor (ii) as not self. Void is thus separate and distinct from form.

**S11** [2-(b)]: Eastern cultural mythologies are characterised by *monism* — by the proposition that the universe exists in a *single form only*.

*Subsequent definitions of form and void:*

**S12** [2-(b)]: In Eastern cultural mythologies, all is form. Void is contained within form and is not separate from form.

**3. Within the domain of science and empiricism:**

**S13** [2-(a)]: In Western science and empiricism, the essential difference between Western and Eastern perspectives regarding form-versus-void is that Western science, being founded on the principle of *objective extrospective verification*, uses *objective extrospection* to verify the properties of a universe presupposed to exist external to the observer.

*Subsequent definitions of form and void:*

**S14** [3-(a)]: In Western science and empiricism, *form* is verifiable by objective extrospection to exist external to the observer. *Void* is verifiable by objective extrospection to *not* exist external to the observer.

**S15** [3-(b)]: Eastern empiricism (i.e., Eastern science), being founded on the principle of *subjective introspective verification*, uses *subjective introspection* to verify the properties of a universe presupposed to exist within and be *synonymous with the existence of* the observer’s perception of this universe.

*Subsequent definitions of form and void:*

**S16** [3-(b)]: In Eastern science and empiricism, *form* is verifiable by subjective introspection to exist within the observer’s perception. *Void* is verifiable by subjective introspection to *not* exist within the observer’s perception.

**4. Within the domain of language and linguistics, an essential difference between Eastern and Western perspectives regarding form-versus-void is:**

**S17** [4-(a)]: Reflecting a philosophy of *dualistic materialism*, Western language, rather than being absolute, is comparative and referential (i.e., *relative*). This means that descriptive parameters (adjectives) conceptually have opposites (big exists relative to small, light to dark, good to evil etc.).

*Subsequent definitions of form and void:*

**S18** [4-(a)]: In Western language and linguistics, *form* (that which exists) exists relative to void (form being the relative absence of void). *Void* (that which does not exist) exists relative to form (void being the relative absence of form).

**S19** [4-(b)]: Reflecting a philosophy of *monistic idealism*, Eastern language (in particular, Sanskrit) is *absolute* such that descriptive concepts exist independently of a comparative reference (e.g., इन्फिनिते [infinite], एन्लिच्तेनेद [enlightened], दिविने [divine]).

*Subsequent definitions of form and void:*

**S20** [4-(b)]: In Eastern language, *form* (rather than being relative to void) contains and accommodates void. *Void* (rather than being relative to form) exists within and is accommodated by form.

**5. Within the domain of mathematics and geometry, an essential difference between Eastern and Western perspectives regarding form-versus-void is:**

**S21** [5-(a)]: Reflecting a philosophy of dualistic materialism, the dominant paradigm in Western mathematics and its associated geometry is one of *binary* mathematics.

*Subsequent definitions of form and void:*

**S22** [5-(a)]: In Western mathematics and geometry, *form* is that which is not void, and *void* is that which is not form. (Reflecting a philosophy of *dualistic materialism*, form is representable mathematically by the binary digit “1”. Void is representable by the binary digit “0”).

**S23** [5-(b)]: Reflecting a philosophy of *monistic idealism*, the dominant paradigm in Eastern mathematics and its associated geometry is one of *unitary mathematics* (i.e., mathematics and geometry are characterised by an indivisible whole).

*Subsequent definitions of form and void:*

**S24** [5-(b)]: In Eastern mathematics and geometry, *form* (rather than being distinct from void) contains and accommodates void. Reflecting a philosophy of subjective monism, in Eastern mathematics and geometry, form is representable by the number “infinity”. *Void*, being contained within form, does not have a separate mathematical representation; rather, void is accommodated within the mathematical representation of form as the number “infinity”.

**6. Within the domain of perceptual psychology, an essential difference between Eastern and Western perspectives regarding form-versus-void is:**

**S25** [6-(a)]: Reflecting a philosophy of *dualistic materialism*, Western perceptual psychology seeks to explain the properties of (objective, external) form — that is, the properties of the external world in terms of the *influence of external stimuli upon perception*, particularly the mechanisms by which external stimuli “distort” the perception of the “true” properties of the external world.

*Subsequent definitions of form and void:*

**S26** [6-(a)]: In Western perceptual psychology, *true void* (external, objective) begets *true form* (external, objective). In other words, the (conscious and actively perceived) perception of true (objective, external) form is contingent upon the (unconscious and passively perceived) perception of true (objective, external) void. Form cannot be accurately perceived (in the *external* world) unless it is perceived within the context of true void (i.e., in the absence of *externally* distorting influences).

Concomitantly, it follows that (unconscious and passive) perception of true void (objective, external) is contingent upon (active and conscious) perception of true form (objective, external).

**S27** [6-(b)]: Reflecting a philosophy of *idealistic monism*, Eastern perceptual psychology seeks to explain the properties of (subjective, internal) form (i.e., the properties of the internal world) in terms of the *influence of internal stimuli upon perception*.

*Subsequent definitions of form and void:*

**S28** [6-(b)]: In Eastern perceptual psychology: *true void* (internal, subjective) begets *true form* (internal, subjective). In other words, the (conscious and active) perception of true (subjective, internal) form is contingent upon the (unconscious and passive) perception of true (subjective, internal) void — that is, form cannot be accurately perceived (in the *internal* world) unless there is true void (i.e., no *internally* distorting influences).

Similarly, a “truly” red apple only *appears* as a red apple if its void (in this case, the background *internal* psychological state of the perceiver) is true void (empty and without influence upon perception). If the void for instance is not true void (e.g., the mind is angry), the apple is not perceived as having true form (simply redness); rather, its appearance includes the projections and distortions that the perceiver projects upon and assigns to the object. The perceiver thus sees the apple in a subjectively distorted way (e.g., as being a gratification of hunger, a symbol of temptation, a potential weapon etc.). The same applies to aural perception within musical composition, to be elucidated later.

Concomitantly, (unconscious and passive) perception of true void (subjective, internal) is contingent upon the (active and conscious) perception of true form (subjective, internal).

**7-(i) *Within the domain of art theory and compositional aesthetics, an essential difference between Western and Eastern perspectives regarding form-versus-void is:***

**S29** [7-(i)-(a)]: Western art theory, reflecting a philosophy of dualistic materialism, conceives of art as a creation (art) by a creator (artist) whose nature (self) is different from the nature of the art created (not-self). The creation of art as something that is “not self” is thus metaphorically consistent with the Western artist’s own cultural mythology.<sup>7</sup>

*Subsequent definitions of form and void:*

**S30** [7-(i)-(a)]: In Western art theory, *form* is that which, within an artwork, is the perceivable consequence of the active and deliberate action of the artist to impose within the physical space (visual-spatial or, in the case of music composition, sonic-temporal), before creating the art, an action that has the intent of being creative and original.

*Void* is the physical empty space or *tabula rasa* (spatial or aural/temporal or both) within which art can be created by an artist.

**S31** [7-(i)-(b)]: Eastern (specifically Indian) art theory, reflecting a philosophy of *idealistic monism*, conceives of art not as a creation (by an individual of *something* new and original) but rather, as a *distillation* of a new variation from a pre-existent and perfect source.

*Subsequent definitions of form and void:*

**S32** [7-(b)-(i)] In Eastern art theory, form is *manifested void*. Void is *unmanifested form*. Form is thus that which is distilled from a pre-existent source into a (humanly) perceivable form. In so doing, it manifests the previously invisible (void) as apparent (form). Void *existing within* form is unmanifested form (and not apparent to the senses).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Refer to **S9** [2-(a)].

<sup>8</sup> Refer to **S20**.

**7-(ii) Within the domain of art theory and compositional aesthetics, an essential difference in compositional aesthetics between Western and Eastern perspectives regarding form-versus-void is:**

**S33** [7-(a)-(ii)]: Western compositional aesthetics (particularly formalist aesthetics — Kant, Gerard, Beardsley etc.<sup>9</sup>) consider the aesthetics of an artwork to be the aggregate of its contributing aesthetics-determining parameters.

*Subsequent definitions of form and void:*

**S34** [7-(a)-(ii)]: In Western compositional aesthetics, *form* is the perceivable consequence of the artist's deliberate intention to impose on the physical space (visual-spatial or, in the case of music composition, sonic-temporal), before creating the art, an action that, relative to the space left empty (i.e., void), is proportionate. The balance between form and void, for each of the artwork's aesthetics-determining parameters, produces artwork of maximal aesthetic quality. See Beardsley's, "three criteria for aesthetic value".<sup>10</sup>

Void is that which is (intentionally) left to remain (spatially or, in the case of music, sonically) empty such that the balance between form and void, for each of the aesthetics-determining parameters, produces an artwork of maximal aesthetic quality.

**S35** [7-(b)-(ii)]: Eastern (in particular) Indian aesthetics considers the aesthetics of an artwork as the artwork's power to induce in the observer or listener (transcendental) "spiritual or philosophical states".

*Subsequent definitions of form and void:*

**S36** [7-(b)-(ii)]: In Eastern compositional aesthetics, *form* is that deliberate *action* within an artwork that, via its state of compositional balance with void, serves the purpose of inducing (transcendental) spiritual or philosophical states.

Void is that deliberate *absence of action* within an artwork that, via its state of compositional balance with form, serves the purpose of inducing (transcendental) spiritual or philosophical states.

**8. Within the domain of ethnomusicology, an essential difference between Western and Eastern music regarding form-versus-void is:**

**S37** [8-(a)]: Reflecting a philosophy of materialistic dualism<sup>11</sup> and a cultural mythology that presupposes the fundamental duality of nature between the creator and the created — refer to propositions S9 [2-(a)] and S10 [2-(a)] — and thus the separation between self and other (and between artist and art) ethnomusicologically, Western music may be characterised as an expression by a creator (artist/composer) of a creation (art/composed music) such that the creation (art/composed music) is fundamentally different in nature and separate from the creator/composer.

*Subsequent definitions of form and void:*

**S38** [8-(a)]: *Form* in Western music is the musical invention of a composer, materialised in the external world, as musical art. *Void* in Western music is the physically empty (or *tabula rasa*) sonic-

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<sup>9</sup> In the case of Gerard, the aesthetics of an artwork is the aggregate of its simplicity, variety, and uniformity (uniformity being defined as the "similarity of its correspondent parts"). See <http://faculty.philosophy.umd.edu/jhbrown/Uniformity/index.html>

In the case of Beardsley, an artwork's aesthetics are the aggregate of its three canons of aesthetics (i.e., its intensity, complexity, and unity). William C. Child, "Monroe Beardsley's Three Criteria for Aesthetic Value: A Neglected Resource in the Evaluation of Recent Music," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 34, no. 2 (2000): 49–63.

<sup>10</sup> William C. Child, "Monroe Beardsley's Three Criteria for Aesthetic Value: A Neglected Resource in the Evaluation of Recent Music," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 34, no. 2 (2000): 49–63.

<sup>11</sup> Refer to propositions **S1** [1-(i)-(a)], **S2** [1-(i)-(a)], **S5** [1-(ii)-(a)], and **S6** [1-(ii)-(a)]

temporal space within the external world, into which music can be physically materialised after its invention by a composer.

**S39** [8-(b)]: North Indian classical music reflects a philosophy of *idealistic monism*<sup>12</sup> and cultural mythology that presupposes the *singularity* of the nature of the one who creates (with the form of “self”) and what is created (also with the form of self, but appearing as other).<sup>13</sup> It may be characterised ethnomusicologically as a *distillation* by an artist from a pre-existing source of, or *potential for*, manifested music (whose fundamental nature is *the same as* the artist’s) of a new manifested variation from within what *pre-exists its apparent creation* (albeit unmanifested).<sup>14</sup>

Eastern (particularly North Indian classical) music, when being played by an artist, be that by composition or improvisation, is thus not (in the Western sense) an *invention*. Nor is it a creation manifested into an external realm separate from the realm of self. Rather, it is a *discovery* discovered in an existing singular universe. This singular universe is common to and includes both the self (creator/artist) and the music (creation/art).

*Subsequent definitions of form and void:*

**S40** [8-(b)]: *Form* in North Indian classical music is manifested musical variation, *discovered* by the composer/musician from within an existing singular universe that includes both the artist (composer/musician) and the art (composition/music) during the process of composition or improvisation.

*Void* is unmanifested musical variation, yet undiscovered.

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<sup>12</sup> Refer to propositions **S3** [1-(i)-(b)], **S4** [1-(i)-(b)], **S7** [1-(ii)-(b)] and **S8** [1-(ii)-(b)]

<sup>13</sup> Refer to propositions **S11** [2-(b)] and **S11** [2-(b)]

<sup>14</sup> “A rag is pre-existent” — Clayton, *The Time of Music*, 14.