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## **Fictions, Conceptions and the Intrinsically Transgressive Nature of Metal Music and Culture**

Metal music – and culture – particularly in its more extreme forms - examples of which are black metal, death metal, doom metal, funeral doom metal and drone metal - delights in confronting its audiences with sounds, concepts and conceptions that are neither physically nor symbolically associated with *human* thriving or just plain *human* survival. To name a just a few:

1. Sounds: Often grating timbres together with volume levels that are damaging to the unprotected ear.
2. Concepts: A symbol register in which corpses, decay, death, sickness, war and corporeal defilement figure prominently.

3. Conceptions: Non-condemnatory or even approving, endorsing and worshipful paeons to supernatural beings that belong to various satanic and demonic realms, or which have other sorts of decidedly non-human ontologies, such as Cthulhu. At best, these beings as posited could not care less about our thriving as humans; at worst, they are malevolently disposed.

In this paper, I explore some of what this repertoire of non-anthropocentric, misanthropic behavior and symbols accomplishes when we regard it as a means for probing what it would mean to adopt the – from a human perspective – radically decentered stance of worldviews where human thriving is not the be all and end all. Inspiration is drawn from Schopenhauer, a major figure within the tradition of philosophical misanthropy, but even more so from Vaihinger, for whom the strong influence of Schopenhauer's pessimism and Kant's discussion of antinomies turned out to be decisive for the formulation and development of his brand of *fictionalism*. The *locus classicus* for this approach is Vaihinger's *Die Philosophie des Als Ob*, first appearing in German in 1911, subsequently in English in C.K. Ogden's 1924 translation as *The Philosophy of 'As if'*. Vaihingerian fictionalism puts forth and examines a catalog of notions that, though they are arguably self-contradictory (such as the Cartesian dimensionless point), are useful precisely because of their falsity. A Vaihingerian fiction compares and contrasts interestingly with the notion of a *conception* as this notion is put forth by Samuel Levin in his 1988 book *Metaphoric Worlds: Conceptions of a Romantic Nature*. Inspired by Vaihinger's - and Levin's - frameworks, I will make the case that the tension between what is "good for us" with regard to human thriving and the character of 1-3 above allow for the

- intrinsically transgressive character of a significant part of metal music and culture

- intense freedom which many practitioners within metal music and culture experience as an integral part of their participation
- de-centered, non-anthropocentric world-view that signifies a break on metal's part with much of the received tradition within Western music, but also relates metal in a profound way to the misanthropy evidenced in various genres of dark Romanticism, science fiction, horror and weird fiction.

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