

Music between Ontology and Ideology

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Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing



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This book first published 2020

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-5275-4531-8

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-4531-1

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PREFACE.

ONTOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF MUSIC

Breaking conventions for the music and in the music gives direction to the texts in this book. The articles are centered around two main theme areas: the first one problematizes the **ontological unity** of music, philosophy, and mathematics (in the texts by Kristina Yapova and Ivan K. Yanakiev); the second one continues in the direction of **social ontology** or the being of the music—**the ideological debate** about style as part of the social ontology is documentarily recreated (in Angelina Petrova's and Milena Bozhikova's articles).

The authors, whose work emphasizes various areas and focuses on different types of problems—internal versus external—discuss aspects of the essence of music on the one hand, and on the other facets of its social legitimacy. In the comparative-analytical text *"Philosophy vs. Musical Aesthetics—On an (im)possible Dialogue in 19th Century"* Kristina Yapova interprets the unity of **music and philosophy**. She emphasizes that the relationship between Man and Music is stronger in philosophical systems than in the realm of music aesthetics, a fact that Yapova assesses as a surprising paradox in the 19th century. In this context the author marks out the ideas and compares the positions of three prominent representatives of the philosophical thought of the 19th century: Schopenhauer in his work *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Nietzsche in *Über Musik und Wort*, and Hanslick in *Vom musikalisch Schönen*. Yapova postulates that Man is a subject of science, whereas Music is the object: subject and object are facing each other; they move towards each other and look in each other's direction.

Music and Mathematics as another immanent form of unity is the subject of study by Ivan K. Yanakiev in his article *"Mathematical Devices in Aid of Music Theory, Composition and Performance."* He believes that the constant convergence and interconnectivity between music and mathematics is especially beneficial for music. Music as a creative process is being governed mainly by non-material and abstract impulses that are mastered by the toolbox of mathematics.

Music, in its organic external link with socio-culture, is the focus of the second part of this collection. The opportunity to openly discuss the ideological processes of art in Eastern Europe was made available three decades ago. The access to documents in official archives made it possible to gain insight into the real picture of the 1950s to 1970s. This research points at the legitimacy of certain musical expressivities, sound environments, and principles of aesthetics that have been forcefully imposed by the authorities or passionately fought for by small professional groups.

In the climate of strict ideological regulations, in her article “1962–1966: *De-Stalinization and the Protest Canon in Bulgarian New Music (A glimpse of the ideological discussions surrounding the twelve-tone modernism)*” Angelina Petrova looks at the “de-Stalinization” in Eastern Europe as a moderate liberalization of the political regime, in the framework of which the poeticism of modern music is being created. An authentic wave of modernism, “formalism” in the language of discussions, is being formed in music and it stands in direct opposition to the official evolutionary socialism. Petrova calls this opposition a “canon of protest” of modernism and says it is valid for the whole of Eastern Europe. It is a reaction to the political non-freedom and Zhdanov’s regime on one hand, and resonates with the ideologies and aesthetic content of the Western European model of dodecaphony and serial music on the other.

The non-canonic ideas of modernism arise in the conditions of totalitarianism and delineate the avant-garde aesthetic models of the 20th century. Seminal figures from Eastern Europe like Ligeti and Kurtág, later Schnittke, and finally some émigré-composers from Romania and Bulgaria among others, are the proof of this. This research has been conducted using sources from the Central State Archive and archives of other institutions.

In the situation in Eastern Europe that Roger Scruton calls “catacomb culture”, the figure of Dmitri Shostakovich and his music are part of the political doctrine around the middle of the 20th century. An intrinsically contradictory personality, Shostakovich caused a conflicting attitude towards himself but survived nevertheless. Milena Bozhikova’s article “1958–1968: *Shostakovich in Bulgaria—Aesthetic interactions and alternative artistic experiences*” studies and sums up the facts of Shostakovich’s real and indirect presence in the development of Bulgarian music.

The non-conformism of the 70s in the socialist block, as a sort of answer to the political and ideological monopoly, finds expression in the pro-Western orientation, establishment or rejection of avant-garde art, and resistance to

the official position, in search of a language of its own—whilst following another dictate: the one “of Darmstadt.” The opposition of the individual against power does not mean its discontinuation, rather a renewal of its dependencies—the subject ends up under a new pressure, regardless of its nature.

All articles and the ideas mentioned above have been published for the first time in this Cambridge Scholars Publishing book. These articles represent the project of “Contemporary Music Composition, Theory and Philosophy,” approved by the Scientific Research Fund attached to the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science. We would like to express our gratitude to the Fund for the opportunity we were given to carry out this research, to Cambridge Scholars Publishing for its decision to publish this collection, to the team of editors at the publishing house, James Baron for his proofreading and to the translators who translated the texts into English.

Milena Bozhikova

PART I:

MUSIC IN ONTOLOGICAL UNITY

CHAPTER I

PHILOSOPHY VS. MUSICAL AESTHETICS— ON AN (IM)POSSIBLE DIALOGUE IN THE 19TH CENTURY

KRISTINA YAPOVA

“Music has barely had any luck with philosophy”¹—this thought of French philosopher Lacoue-Labarthe could serve as a starting point for this research. Indeed, the relationship of music and philosophy has historically been marked by “syncopation”: it starts out at that moment in time when the science of music gets differentiated as an independent discipline which, according to its subject and approach, assumes the shape of music theory. The decisive beginning was laid by Aristoxenus: his *Elementa harmonica* is precisely a discipline of this type. Albeit only part of the all-encompassing knowledge of music,² *Elementa harmonica* has since been its main component, the one of utmost significance. The syncopation begins to sound more and more loudly—a historical fact due to a bilateral development, namely of music theory itself and also of philosophy, which upholds the higher planes of metaphysics.

¹ Lacoue-Labarthe, Philippe. *Musica ficta: Figures de Wagner*. Paris: Christian Bourgois Editeur, 1991. Cited via the English translation *Musica Ficta: Figures of Wagner* (trans. by Felicia McCarren). Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995, p. 86. URL:

https://books.google.bg/books/about/Musica_Ficta.html?id=OeGUL1f5ewkC&redir_esc=yhttp://www.sup.org/books/title/?id=283.

² The knowledge of Harmonics “is only one part of the musician’s equipment, on the same level as the sciences of Rhythm, of Metre, of Instruments” (The Harmonics of Aristoxenus. Edited with translation notes, Introduction and index by Henry S. Macran. Published by Forgotten Books, 2013 [II. 31-32], p. 123 (Greek) p. 188 (Engl.) [Originally published by Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902]. URL: www.forgottenbooks.org.

The mismatch between the philosophical and private scientific interest in music during the Middle Ages has been highlighted by Joseph Dyer.³ He calls attention to the apathy that philosophers and music theorists have for each other. On the one hand, treatises on music focus on the study of “intervals, modes, psalmody, and (later) rhythm with a practical intent”⁴ and they rarely reflect the general trend in philosophy related to the increased influence of Aristotelianism; on the other hand, “philosophers would not have bothered to consult works devoted to music theory: their pragmatism would have rendered them unsuitable for philosophical purposes.”⁵ The mismatch still continues into the Modern Age—mathematically minded schools of thought in the 17th century prompted eminent philosophers, such as Leibniz and Descartes, to strive towards the return of music knowledge to its Pythagorean age and its place within the *quadrivium*, whereas musical theorists turn their interest to the relation of music with the art of speaking, i.e. the *trivium*, so as to construct the poetic and rhetorical doctrine of the Baroque era.

Syncopation also has its stamp on the musical dimensions of the 19th century, when the aesthetics of music became established as an independent (autonomous) discipline substantiating its own principles (αὐτο-νόμοι). At the same time, philosophy became represented through the viewpoints of various thinkers—highly systematic viewpoints bearing a pronounced authorial mark. In most of them music enjoys a special interest which is, however, secondary in terms of its genesis: music receives any attention as long as it is subservient to the viewpoint itself and as far as it can serve as a personification of some basic principle in the existence of the world and man. This research, nevertheless, does not aim to emphasize the presence of syncopation between the two fields. Conversely, by utilizing the tension generated and tracing the various directions in building up the knowledge of music in the 19th century, it seeks to gain access to the entirety of this knowledge—the kind of entirety that is not constructed in any direct dialogue of individual viewpoints, but rather rises up above them into a domain deriving its pulse through their metaphysical complementarity.

The ideas of three representatives of that century have been put forward as a testimony to such complementarity: Schopenhauer with *The World as*

³ Dyer, Joseph. The Place of *Musica* in Medieval Classifications of Knowledge. In: *The Journal of Musicology*, Volume 24, Number 1, Winter 2007, 3-71.

⁴ Ibid., 18.

⁵ Ibid.

Will and Idea (1818), Nietzsche with *On Music and Words* (1871), and Hanslick with *The Beautiful in Music* (1854). What brings these authors together are their endeavors to reach beyond conventional ideas of music—some of which have been established as academic postulates, whereas others have existed as *doxas* in the circles of professional musicians and larger intellectual communities. And it is from this point onward that the differences begin. They are due to the disparate horizons within which music is nested, i.e. philosophy in general and the specific science of music in particular.

Musical aesthetics

Hanslick's contention is precisely scientific: laying the foundations for a new science of music, presenting its new method, grounding its subject, and differentiating it from that of the other sciences. This science is *specific*—it is musical aesthetics, but the reference point of its differentiation is the *common* body of knowledge whose boundaries have already been delineated. This is the aesthetics whose foundation was laid with Baumgarten's work of the same name (1750) and which was further developed in Kant's *Critique of Judgement* (1790). Although aesthetics is defined as the philosophy of art, it is distinguished from "pure" philosophy not gnoseologically, but in terms of its objective intentionality oriented towards the delineation of a scientific subject, scientific purposes, and a research algorithm. Thus, aesthetics in general and the aesthetics of music in particular are rather a theory of art.

Hence it becomes clear that the boundaries between philosophy and theory of art are sufficiently fluid as they remain open to the formation of common segments. One such segment is the classification of the arts—a basic part in the philosophical pursuits of the Modern Age in its capacity as a new version of the medieval classification of sciences. But these very segments allow for the possibility of noticing the distinctly different focus, different interest, and different perspective, i.e. the different *purposes* of aesthetics and philosophy.

Hanslick's purpose as a theorist of the art of music (a theory which acquires a concrete shape as an aesthetic theory, or aesthetics of music) is to carve out an autonomous locus for the science of music so that it can be justified by the specifics of the selfsame art studied by this science. As philosophers, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche pursue another goal when turning to music, namely reaching through it the primal beginnings of the

world and human existence. Even though this interest in music is not impartial but motivated by striving for something else, it is by no means fortuitous. It is prompted by the understanding that music is deeply interwoven with these primal beginnings, that its place in the world comes *before* all else in it, and that it, with its existential role for man, *precedes* any other form of human manifestation. Schopenhauer and Nietzsche manage to gain insights into the essence of music for the very reason that its connection to these primal beginnings is one defined by *essence*.

Thus, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Hanslick, while operating on different epistemological planes, build up the whole of musical knowledge—the more complex and internally contradictory, the stronger the individual authorial views. In other words, while Hanslick seeks to outline the specificity of music and make it amenable to research (thus closing it off in a world of its own), philosophers, echoing the stance of their distant Pythagorean forerunners, would rather see it as a principle or beginning of the entire universe.⁶

Hanslick and his work *Vom Musikalisch Schönen*⁷

The idea of the immediacy of music turns out to be fruitful for the purposes of Hanslick, who aspires to delineate the uniqueness of music by means of a unique science about it, and also for Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, who associate music with some other essence, principle, or fundamental nature. Despite all significant differences in interpreting immediacy, what the three have in common is *the locus* where music is connected with man, which precedes *the one* of rationality and words—hence, the immediacy of the very connection between music and man. However, the three authors interpret this connectedness differently: for Schopenhauer, music is the immediate manifestation of the Will; for Nietzsche, even the first beginning of human existence (which he calls *the Dionysian* and which precedes any reflection of thought, any order and

⁶ Here we should cite Kierkegaard: like Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, he views music as a personification of a specific principle. For him, it is the principle of the erotic which expresses something just as primeval and immediate, as in the case with the other two (See: Kierkegaard, Søren. *The Immediate Erotic Stages or the Musical Erotic*. Eider/Or, Part One [1843]).

⁷ Cited via the English translation: Hanslick, Eduard. *The Beautiful in Music: A Contribution to the Revisal of Musical Aesthetics*. Translated by Gustav Cohen. London: Novello and Company; New York: The H.V. Gray Co., 1891. URL: <http://www.archive.org/details/beautifulinmusicOOhansiala>.

rhythm coming along with *the Apollonian*) has been marked by immediacy; for Hanslick, the immediacy is solely a sensory one which first leaves its mark upon the musical work, and then through it, upon the art of music in general.

Hanslick is one of those authors whose role in history is above all defined by one single work, namely his *The Beautiful in Music*. This book shifts the basics of musical knowledge in such a way that the year of its first publication (1854) has also become known as the year when musical aesthetics was founded. Hanslick is not the creator of the idea to which this radical change is due, i.e. the concept of sensory knowledge ushered in by *general* aesthetics. What he does, though, is transfer it to the *specific* level of musical aesthetics.

The basic tenet of musical aesthetics states that: music is an art of sense perception whose specific phenomenon is the beautiful in music; musical aesthetics is the science of this art; in possessing the adequate conceptual apparatus required for it, musical aesthetics is in a position to study it and, at the same time, denounce and reject (as something alien, exterior, or at least secondary) *any other content* attributed to it outside what is purely musical. The word “purely” here is deserving of some attention: it acquires significance, safeguards the musical territory from deviations towards expressiveness (i.e. feelings) and figurativeness (i.e. images); what is more, it becomes a forerunner, often a synonym, for the absolute and autonomous art of music.

The change occurring in the wake of musical aesthetics unfolds on two levels: firstly, this discipline restructures and brings a new hierarchy to the entirety of musical knowledge; and secondly, it has enough strength to represent this entirety as it was represented by music theory in previous ages.

Musical aesthetics has a specific subject. Its formation is only possible when the concept of “music” has untied both of its sides, namely the one of science and the one of art, and only signifies the latter. In turn, aesthetics itself clarifies the content of this concept identifying it with the art of tones (*Tonkunst*). Underneath these two levels, though, there is a third one—more profound and concealed, where the change concerns the relation between music and the human soul. With the autonomization and separation of the aesthetic, ethical, and rational territories, the ties of music to the wholeness of man also get severed. And obscured remains the

horizon of that *human-as-microcosm musicality* which Boethius refers to as *musica humana* and which Leibniz describes as an exercise of the soul unwittingly counting.⁸ With the triumph of musical aesthetics there comes the end of the idea about involving the human soul in music, an idea brought to life with the Platonic *paideia*. This end is marked with a direction reversal: if until now music has been concurrent with man, i.e. if man and music have had a life together aspiring towards a common goal, now man turns *towards* music in order to face it with his sensory capability.

The other movement in aesthetics of music, represented in the 19th century by the *aesthetics of feelings* and in the 20th century by the *musical hermeneutics* of Kretschmar, Schering, and Schweitzer, is unable to provide an alternative of equal value to Hanslick's musical aesthetics, since it is not capable of overcoming the hiatus between music expressing *something other* and the *other* thing that it expresses, i.e. feeling, abstract idea, and image. Hanslick creates his work in polemics with, and even in protest⁹ precisely to, the postulates of the aesthetics of feelings very much at work in his time. He summarizes and reduces these tenets to two main ones: according to the first, "the aim and object of music is to excite emotions—i.e. pleasurable emotions,"¹⁰ and according to the second:

emotions are said to be the subject-matter which musical works are intended to illustrate.¹¹

Hanslick manages to refute both tenets with a single concept: the concept of *the beautiful*. He rejects the first one by referring to the Kantian purposiveness without purpose:

The beautiful, strictly speaking, aims at nothing, since it is nothing but a form which, though available for many purposes according to its nature has, as such, no aim beyond itself ... The beautiful is and remains beautiful though it arouses no emotion whatever, and though there be no

⁸ "Musica est exercitium arithmeticae occultum nescientis se numerare animi" ["Music is a hidden arithmetic exercise of the soul, which does not know that it is counting"] (Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm. Aus einem Brief an Chr. Goldbach, April 17, 1712. Quot. after: Schäfer, R. Geschichte der Musikästhetik in Umrissen. Mit einem Vorwort von Werner Korte. 2 Aufl. Tutzing, Schneider, 1964, S. 289.)

⁹ Hanslick, Eduard. Op. cit. (Preface to the 7th Edition), 9-11.

¹⁰ Ibid., 18.

¹¹ Ibid.

one to look at it. In other words, although the beautiful exists for the gratification of an observer, it is independent of him.¹²

In the place of the second one, he puts forward the thesis that music in its content is “a self-subsistent form of the beautiful.”¹³

Following the author’s negative theses, there come the positive ones, the first of which is related to the specificity of the beautiful in music:

The beauty of a composition is specifically musical—i.e. it inheres in the combinations of musical sounds and is independent of all alien, extra-musical notions.¹⁴

The beautiful in music is objective and independent of perception. As such, it is capable of producing a new, aesthetic universe, which is of necessity related to the nature of music having at the same time its own *artistic* nature. The whole fervor with which Hanslick opposes the subjectivism of feeling is due to his belief in the objective nature and objective laws of the beautiful in musical art. The beautiful in music opens up another kind of representation where there is already no distance between the two realities—the first being represented, i.e. the one of feelings, thoughts, and images, and the other, the one of music representing things. Reality is solely musical, i.e. a reality built upon the basis of the discreteness of tones. In the distances between tones there is to be nothing external; it is only beauty that will come out of there. Musical movement, which no longer imitates anything else, relies on two forces for its realization, both of which are musical: one of the unity of tone, i.e. sustaining the same tone pitch, and the other of the interval, i.e. the diastema between tones. In this movement of its own, the objectively beautiful in music reveals itself to perception, affecting, first of all, our senses.¹⁵ It becomes clear that the direction in which music emerges out of tones and appears before the sense of hearing is a contrary one—it runs opposite to the direction in which perception encounters it, firstly through the senses, and then on the level of consciousness.

Both the beautiful in music and the knowledge of it fall under the sign of objectivity. In the former case, it is due to the objective musical laws of

¹² Ibid., 18-19.

¹³ Ibid., 17.

¹⁴ Ibid., 12.

¹⁵ Ibid., 20.

movement; in the latter, it underlies the dynamics of forms perceived by the senses and the reflection of consciousness upon them. The mind reveals the beautiful in music, which, in turn, reveals itself to the mind as a musical phenomenon. Cognition is not just sensory; it is a form of knowledge acquired through the senses. The mind does not have direct access to the beautiful; it reflects what is perceivable by the senses in:

the things themselves, in order to determine what is permanent and objective in them.¹⁶

Having transferred their data to the mind, the senses do not cease their activity. They compel the constant and simultaneous reflection of the mind upon these data in immediate closeness. Such is the basis of musical aesthetics, which, for this reason, is a science of sense perception.

The general principle of all knowledge derives from the senses:

The word ‘*Anschauung*’ (viewing, contemplating) is no longer applied to visual processes only, but also to the functions of the other senses.¹⁷

In the sphere of music, the viewing is, “in fact, eminently suited to describe the act of attentive hearing which is nothing but a mental inspection of a succession of musical images.”¹⁸

However precise this correspondence, observation being borrowed from the domain of visual phenomena is always bound to operate in a direction *against*, i.e. the direction in which it encounters the beautiful itself. The metaphor, carrying the act pertaining to the eye, namely observation, also carries along the direction inherent in the literalness of this act.

In order to substantiate the self-dependence of the discipline of musical aesthetics, Hanslick needs to lay out its scientific method. And since the specific in music unfolds along the axis between the material and the senses, the first step is:

to penetrate deeply into the spirit of the works themselves, and to explain their effects by the laws of their inherent nature.¹⁹

¹⁶ Ibid., 16.

¹⁷ Ibid., 21.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 24.

The laws of music are absolute and govern its substance, which is purely musical. Even at the starting point towards clarifying this central issue, the principle of moving from the universal to the particular, and from general aesthetics to particular musical aesthetics, is already clearly manifest. At the core of the conceptual apparatus there lie the general aesthetic concepts of form and substance, which acquire their specifics in musical aesthetics as musical form and musical substance:

A philosophical disquisition into an art demands a clear definition of its subject-matter. The diversity of the subject-matter of the various arts and the fundamental difference in the mode of treatment are a natural sequence of the dissimilarity of the senses to which they severally appeal.²⁰

What brings together general aesthetics and musical aesthetics is also the principle of sense perception, as well as the relation between this principle and the content of the individual arts; henceforth, the path of the aesthetical study of each of them could only be a path of delineating the concrete which emphasizes what is distinct and specific. In music:

substance and form, the subject and its working out, the image and the realised conception, are mysteriously blended in one undecomposable whole.²¹

And in this:

no distinction can be made between substance and form, as it has no form independently of the substance.²²

The thesis of substance-form equivalence in music leads logically to the one of its inherent language. The beautiful in music can only speak in its musical language, and in no way can it be represented by another one that interprets it. The most significant point in Hanslick's aesthetic thinking arguably lies in the philosophical justification of the idea that there is no language difference between the thing being expressed, i.e. the pure musical thoughts, and the expression itself, i.e. the combinations of tones. It is the absence of such distinction that makes true knowledge possible, as any "translation" and mediated interpretation lead to wastage, loss, or change of content. When, however, it comes to scientific aesthetical

²⁰ Ibid., 32.

²¹ Ibid., 166.

²² Ibid., 167.

knowledge, the paradox is inevitable. Here, the beautiful in music is to be “expressed” through another medium, namely the language of concepts alien to the nature of music. It is the language of *music analysis*—the method which Hans-Heinrich Eggebrecht will later define as “a strict correlate of the aesthetical music.”²³ It is strict as far as it endeavors to utilize the identity between form and substance in music; it is a correlate inasmuch as it operates in the field of scientific rationality and not sensory immediacy; and at the same time it is utterly external to music with which it holds a dialogue from the outside, staying in a position of observation. Hanslick realizes that the language of science can only create a parallel of what is sensorially perceptible in a composition, and that it is as removed from the beautiful in music as any other language employed in its representation. He has repeatedly emphasized that musical meaning reveals itself and is perceived only in a musical way; but the discipline of musical aesthetics compels the aesthetician to speak in its scientific language, which for the purposes of constructing itself needs both general philosophical categories and specific terms from the field of music theory.

If it is certain that music is one of a kind, specific and unique, then the question arises of how far musical aesthetics can go in the process of revealing what is specifically musical. Jealously keeping for itself the domain of musical art, *Tonkunst*, this discipline not only separates music as an art from music as a part of nature, but it also separates music from human existence. The ability of music to transcend the boundaries of art and reveal itself as a principle of Being does not merely fall outside the scope of aesthetics, but it also contradicts its intentionality and its goals. For it, man always remains the subject in the act of aesthetic perception, always distinctly differentiated from the object against which he is situated in an opposite direction.

Philosophy

Hanslick’s musical aesthetics plays an important part in the historical course of ideas on music, both with its negative theses with which it opposes the aesthetics of feelings with its images ever-receding from musical essence, and with the positive theses laying the foundations for modern scientific knowledge. Its greatest significance lies in that it

²³ Cited via the Bulgarian translation: Eggebrecht, Hans-Heinrich. *Granizi na muzikalnata estetika* (The Limits of Musical Aesthetics). In: *Musical Horizons*, 1980, No. 7, 121.

corresponds to the musical art of the Classical and Romantic eras, and that its method is optimal for studying this type of art. Its limitations, from the perspective of the historical immanence of music, become more noticeable later on, when tonality and harmony reach their new forms for which neither the method of musical analysis (as a correlate of the aesthetical idea) nor the idea itself can be completely adequate.

However, apart from the viewpoint of immanence, there is another one. In focus are the philosophical systems existing prior to or concomitant with musical aesthetics, which in being fundamentally incompatible with it point out its limitations. For the history of musical knowledge, the most significant among them are those which arrive at a revelation, bring forth a novel idea, or validate a new principle. But they are not immune to paradoxes either and have their limitations, too. In attempting to capture, adopt, and frame music within the framework of their philosophical systems, their authors cannot bear to gaze into its essence to the very end. Rather, they look away from it, feeling torn apart, mocked and abandoned by the evasive nature of music in relation to which concepts always arrive way too late, always trying to explain in their succession the contradictions whose simultaneous co-existence is a determining factor for this nature.

Among the thinkers who have achieved the greatest adhesion between music and their own views are Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, the former during the blossoming of authorial philosophical systems associated with the German idealism of the 19th century, and the latter at the close of the same century. In the search for the “very first” in the world, they encounter music. Making sense of its beginnings, they give shape to their idea, concept, or principle by means of which they seek to express and describe these beginnings.

Schopenhauer and his work *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (1818)²⁴

For Schopenhauer, this “very first” beginning of the world is the Will—a never-ending wellspring. It is out of this source and through the various manifestations of the Will that the world emerges, and it emerges as an idea/representation:

The world is my idea: this is a truth which holds good for everything that lives and knows, though man alone can bring it into reflective and abstract consciousness.²⁵

All that “belongs or can belong to the world is inevitably thus conditioned through the subject, and exists only for the subject.”²⁶

The separation of subject and object gets introduced immediately. The subject is “the supporter of the world”²⁷; it is:

that condition of all phenomena, of all objects which is always pre-supposed throughout experience; for all that exists, exists only for the subject.²⁸

At the same time, man is situated in the world as an object, a phenomenon, which as any other object:

lies within the universal forms of all knowledge.²⁹

Consequently, the world:

has two fundamental, necessary, and inseparable halves³⁰ [an object and a subject].

²⁴ Cited via the English translation: Schopenhauer, Arthur. *The World as Will and Idea*. Vol. 1. The Project Gutenberg Ebook, URL:

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/38427/38427-pdf.pdf>. Release date: December 27, 2011 [Ebook 38427] (After the Edition: *The World As Will And Idea* by Arthur Schopenhauer. Translated from German by R. B. Haldane and J. Kemp, Vol. I. Seventh Edition. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co, 1909).

²⁵ Ibid. [I. 1], 25.

²⁶ Ibid, 26.

²⁷ Ibid. [I. 2], 27.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

The introduction of the subject–object opposition helps to localize the essence of the world, i.e. the Will. Its locus *precedes* the separation between the two sides of the opposition, and since the idea (or representation, *Vorstellung*) is itself this separation, the Will comes before the representation. The Will is the most intimate and innermost: as such it is *the very first entity*, the one essence of the world.

This primeval essence has its first manifestation in music. It is precisely in its capacity as an immediate first stage in the objectification of the Will (preceding all other stages) that music justifies its presence in Schopenhauer's metaphysics. Within the system of the author's view, however, music plays a dual role due to the fact that, on the one hand, it is understood as the first manifestation of the Will, and on the other, as a kind of art. And it does not cease to be art although Schopenhauer expressly states that music:

stands alone, quite cut off from all the other arts³¹, as in it we do not recognise the copy or repetition of any Idea of existence in the world.³²

Hence, the two statuses of music (the one of manifestation of the Will and the one of art) enter into a relationship which can be defined as synecopation.

Situated metaphysically, music is “the copy of the Will itself,”³³ and viewed in light of its objectified forms, it draws an analogy with ideas, which are also objectifications of the Will. The transition from the metaphysical level of examination to the level of objectification occurs by change of perspective: either *from the viewpoint* of the Will (whose immediate representation is music) or *from the side of* objectification. Ultimately, music can perform the role of such a “copy of the Will” only through its structural elements, forms, and composition rules, all of which pertain to the physical domain of music:

I recognise in the deepest tones of harmony, in the bass, the lowest grades of the objectification of will, unorganised nature, the mass of the planet.³⁴

³¹ Ibid., 334.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 336.

³⁴ Ibid.

The law of harmony according to which:

only those high notes may accompany a bass-note which actually already sound along with it of themselves (its sons harmoniques)³⁵

is analogous to the natural law which states that:

the whole of the bodies and organisations of nature must be regarded as having come into existence through gradual development out of the mass of the planet.³⁶

The analogy principle arrives at a bare and schematic representation:

Bass is thus, for us, in harmony what unorganised nature, the crudest mass, upon which all rests, and from which everything originates and develops, is in the world. Now, further, in the whole of the complemental parts which make up the harmony between the bass and the leading voice singing the melody, I recognise the whole gradation of the Ideas in which the will objectifies itself. Those nearer to the bass are the lower of these grades, the still unorganised, but yet manifold phenomenal things; the higher represent to me the world of plants and beasts.³⁷

In fact, the analogy between music and the objectification degrees of the Will works as an allegory: the means of expression in music speak of something else (*ἄλλο ἀγορεύω*), i.e. of the varying grades of the Will manifestations. Among these, melody is of the highest order, as it speaks of the ultimate grade—the life of man:

Lastly, in the melody, in the high, singing, principal voice leading the whole and progressing with unrestrained freedom, in the unbroken significant connection of one thought from beginning to end representing a whole, I recognise the highest grade of the objectification of will, the intellectual life and effort of man. As he alone, because endowed with reason, constantly looks before and after on the path of his actual life and its innumerable possibilities, and so achieves a course of life which is intellectual, and therefore connected as a whole; corresponding to this, I say, the melody has significant intentional connection from beginning to end. It records, therefore, the history of the intellectually enlightened will. This will expresses itself in the actual world as the series of its deeds; but melody says more, it records the most secret history of this

³⁵ Ibid., 337.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

intellectually-enlightened will, pictures every excitement, every effort, every movement of it, all that which the reason collects under the wide and negative concept of feeling, and which it cannot apprehend further through its abstract concepts. Therefore it has always been said that music is the language of feeling and of passion, as words are the language of reason ... Now the nature of man consists in this, that his will strives, is satisfied and strives anew, and so on for ever. Indeed, his happiness and well-being consist simply in the quick transition from wish to satisfaction, and from satisfaction to a new wish. For the absence of satisfaction is suffering, the empty longing for a new wish, languor, ennui. And corresponding to this the nature of melody is a constant digression and deviation from the key-note in a thousand ways, not only to the harmonious intervals to the third and dominant, but to every tone, to the dissonant sevenths and to the superfluous degrees; yet there always follows a constant return to the key-note. In all these deviations melody expresses the multifarious efforts of will, but always its satisfaction also by the final return to an harmonious interval, and still more, to the key-note.³⁸

There is no dearth of objections which any musician could raise to assertions that are: 1) improper from the viewpoint of music theory, and 2) restricted to harmony, tonality, and form (only valid within the Classical and Romantic idioms of expression) from the viewpoint of music history.

The assertions arousing opposition are also joined by others reiterating well-known notions from history which have reached the highest possible degree of triviality, e.g. the notion that music is capable of expressing innermost desires and contents of emotion. Things do not get any better by specifying that feeling is a negative concept, and that music does not convey any specific feelings, but rather their essence before the moment of definiteness, that it:

never expresses the phenomenon, but only the inner nature, the in-itself of all phenomena, the will itself,³⁹

and that it:

does not therefore express this or that particular and definite joy, this or that sorrow, or pain, or horror, or delight, or merriment, or peace of mind; but joy, sorrow, pain, horror, delight, merriment, peace of mind

³⁸ Ibid., 338-339.

³⁹ Ibid., 341.

themselves, to a certain extent in the abstract, their essential nature, without accessories, and therefore without their motives.⁴⁰

The parallelism, or analogy, existing between melody and man is based on their common root: the Will. As far as knowledge is concerned, this is crucial. A consequence of the fact that the Will precedes the world of ideas and concepts and cannot be comprised by them is that even in its highest art forms music remains rationally unknowable, as does its creator, the composer, inasmuch as it is his Will that does the creating within them in a non-mediated way:

The composition of melody, the disclosure in it of all the deepest secrets of human willing and feeling, is the work of genius, whose action, which is more apparent here than anywhere else, lies far from all reflection and conscious intention, and may be called an inspiration. The conception is here, as everywhere in art, unfruitful. The composer reveals the inner nature of the world, and expresses the deepest wisdom in a language which his reason does not understand; as a person under the influence of mesmerism tells things of which he has no conception when he awakes. Therefore in the composer, more than in any other artist, the man is entirely separated and distinct from the artist. Even in the explanation of this wonderful art, the concept shows its poverty and limitation.⁴¹

The relation between concepts, music, and the real world has been specifically explained:

The concepts contain particulars only as the first forms abstracted from perception, as it were, the separated shell of things; thus they are, strictly speaking, abstracta; music, on the other hand, gives the inmost kernel which precedes all forms, or the heart of things. This relation may be very well expressed in the language of the schoolmen by saying the concepts are the *universalia post rem*, but music gives the *universalia ante rem*, and the real world the *universalia in re*.⁴²

Here, the axis of outside (concepts) versus inside (essence) represents what from the viewpoint of the primeval is seen as *before* and *after*. It is precisely this moment in Schopenhauer that speaks of music far more than the statements focusing on a concrete historical state of musical elements or rules, and attempting through their description to reach back towards the will they express. The idea of the specific disposition of concepts, such

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 339-340.

⁴² Ibid., 343.

as *universalia post rem*, music as *universalia ante rem*, and the actual world as *universalia in re*, outlines the boundaries of a peculiar species of knowledge residing outside of the conceptually knowable, but being, nevertheless, some kind of knowledge. It is a knowledge of the inner essence of the world, different from and preceding conceptual knowledge. The very fact that Schopenhauer refers to music as language bears witness that it carries with itself a cognitive potentiality through the realization of which it is capable of expressing:

in a perfectly universal language, in a homogeneous material, mere tones, and with the greatest determinateness and truth, the inner nature, the in-itself of the world, which we think under the concept of will, because will is its most distinct manifestation.⁴³

Thus, while *music as the first manifestation of the Will* is deprived of knowledge (for it is still on that low level of its objectification where *principium individualis* has not yet come into effect, i.e. the level before that of man), *music as language* speaks in an exceedingly definite and truthful manner. And if it is true that music is perceived:

apart from the influence of the knowledge of causality, thus without understanding,⁴⁴

it does not mean that it has been denied any cognitive capacity, but rather that this capacity is different from conceptual knowledge. In relation to the latter, which resides in the realm of reason, musical knowledge is on the other side, i.e. the one pointing *inward*, towards the essence, and also back, towards the moment before the phenomenon has taken shape and before its shape has been captured and crystallized in the concept.

Among the most significant of Schopenhauer's ideas on music is the one regarding its relation to time. A question repeatedly raised throughout history, namely that music only exists in the modality of the present, gets tackled by the thinker in a manner which aims to take it further into the domain of the more complex relation between music, man, time, and existence:

Above all things, we must distinctly recognise that the form of the phenomenon of will, the form of life or reality, is really only the present,

⁴³ Ibid., 344-345.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 347.

not the future nor the past. The latter are only in the conception, exist only in the connection of knowledge, so far as it follows the principle of sufficient reason. No man has ever lived in the past, and none will live in the future; the present alone is the form of all life, and is its sure possession which can never be taken from it. The present always exists, together with its content.⁴⁵

If we were to compare Hanslick's interpretation of time with Schopenhauer's, we might notice an important difference. For the former, time is solely musical time, the one within which aesthetic, sense-perceivable music unfolds. For the latter, time is inseparable from man; it is human time. But when Schopenhauer's music is nested within the world of idea/representation (*Vorstellung*) and rationalized in terms of this world (where it only exits through its artistic forms), it can no longer manifest its metaphysical status to which it can only relate in an allegorical way. Thus, music, which is initially an allegory of the Will, becomes an allegory of itself—its means of expression, rules, and forms *speak of* its metaphysical essence as a first manifestation of the Will.

“On the Metaphysics of Music” is the chapter from the original second volume of *The World as Will and Idea*,⁴⁶ which presents additions expanding on the main ideas of the first volume. In its initial version, the text of the book was completed in 1818 and published a year later, with the second volume being released in 1844. The quarter of a century gap does not in essence change the theses on music advanced in the first edition. As the author notes at the beginning of the chapter, he adds here “some fuller particulars with regard to this parallelism,”⁴⁷ i.e. to the distinct parallelism that exists between music and the world as ideas.

It is paradoxical that on a metaphysical level music is examined in greater depth in the work of 1818, where the author expounds the uniqueness of music, which, albeit seen as an art among the others, differs markedly

⁴⁵ Ibid., 359.

⁴⁶ Cited via the English translation: Schopenhauer, Arthur. On the Metaphysics of Music. *The World as Will and Idea*. Vol. 3 [39]. The Project Gutenberg Ebook, URL: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/40868/40868-h/40868-h.html>. Release date: Sept. 26, 2012 [Ebook #40868]. According to the edition of: *The World As Will And Idea* by Arthur Schopenhauer. Translated from German By R. B. Haldane and J. Kemp. Vol. III. Sixth Edition. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co, 1909, 231-244.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 231.