

MODERN EUROPEAN PHILOSOPHY

Music, Philosophy and Modernity

Andrew Bowie

CAMBRIDGE

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MUSIC, PHILOSOPHY, AND MODERNITY

Modern philosophers generally assume that music is a problem to which philosophy ought to offer an answer. Andrew Bowie's *Music, Philosophy, and Modernity* suggests, in contrast, that music might offer ways of responding to some central questions in modern philosophy. Bowie looks at key philosophical approaches to music ranging from Kant, through the German Romantics and Wagner, to Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and Adorno. He uses music to re-examine many current ideas about language, subjectivity, metaphysics, truth, and ethics, and he suggests that music can show how the predominant images of language, communication, and meaning in contemporary philosophy may be lacking in essential ways. His book will be of interest to philosophers, musicologists, and all who are interested in the relation between music and philosophy.

ANDREW BOWIE is Professor of Philosophy and German at Royal Holloway, University of London. His many publications include *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche* (2003).

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For James

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PREFACE

This is not a book about the ‘philosophy of music’ in the sense which that term generally has within academic philosophy. Rather than seeing the role of philosophy as being to determine the nature of the object ‘music’, it focuses on the philosophy which is conveyed by music itself. This idea is explored via the interaction between philosophy and music in modernity which is largely ignored, not only in most of the philosophy of music, but also in most other branches of philosophy. The consequences of my exploration are, I suspect, more important for philosophy than for the practice of music, but musicians, and especially musicologists – who these days seem increasingly interested in philosophy – may find what I say instructive. If they do, it will be because I want, via a consideration of music’s relationship to verbal language, to question some of the ways in which philosophy has conceived of the meaning and nature of music.

The ideas for this book have been a long time in germinating, beginning during work on Thomas Mann’s *Doktor Faustus* for my PhD in the 1970s (Bowie 1979), and continuing with my work on the relationship of German Idealist and Romantic philosophy to contemporary concerns in the humanities during the 1980s and 1990s and beyond, and the ideas are, of course, by no means exhausted by what I have been able to say. Such a book is necessarily interdisciplinary, and the attempt to cover all the issues touched on in it in any detail would have resulted in an impossibly large volume. As a consequence this is also one of those books where lots of people have had important things to say about its concerns who are either ignored, or dealt with in too summary a manner. For this I can only apologise.

Motivations for the book have come not just from talking to friends and colleagues, but also from playing music itself. Like most people

who write about music who are not primarily musicians I always have the doubt as to whether I have the right to say anything about it. It was probably late-night discussions of music in Berlin in the late 1970s with Stephen Hinton that first persuaded me that I might have something useful to say, despite my lack of musicological training (and terrible sight-reading, which has, sadly, not got any better). Playing with the Blue Bayou Jazz Band in Berlin at that time made me realise how important music was as a means of communication: friendships from that period have been very durable. During the writing of the book the opportunity to play jazz sax with a whole series of excellent musicians in Cambridge and elsewhere, from Scandinavia, to Australia, to Japan, has proved to be a vital way of exploring what I wanted to say. The list of musicians could go on for a long time, but Pete Shepherd, Paul Stubbs, John Turville, John Brierley, Pete Fraser, Peter Mabey, Jon Halton, Laurence Evans, Adrian Coggins, John Gregory, Derek Scurll, Simon Fell, and many others from the various bands at the Elm Tree pub and elsewhere in Cambridge, have offered invaluable musical and other insights, as has my old friend and relentless critic of my playing, Eddie Johnson. It is not that we always talked directly about the issues of the book, though we sometimes did that too, but rather – and this is a key theme of the book – that we were involved in communication about the issues via music itself. A final thanks to Jody Espina in New York, who makes and sells in an exemplary manner the saxophone mouthpieces which at last stopped me buying new ones (only another sax player can know just what this means).

The list of philosophical and musical colleagues and research students who were indispensable is also long, and I apologise to those who are not mentioned by name, but who also contributed. Karl Ameriks, Jay Bernstein, Arnfinn Bø-Rygg, Susan Bowles, Liz Bradbury, Tony Cascardi, Paulo de Castro, Stanley Cavell, James Dack, John Deathridge, Peter Dews, Richard Eldridge, Manfred Frank, Neil Gascoigne, Kristin Gjesdal, Lydia Goehr, Christopher Hasty, Zoe Hepden, Lawrence Kramer, Bente Larsen, Nanette Nielsen, Peter Osborne, Henry Partridge, Robert Pippin, Richard Potter, Alex Rehdig, John Rundell, Jim Samson, Robert Vilain, Nick Walker, and many others, all helped in a variety of philosophical and musical ways.

Talks given at, among others, the following universities: Loránd Eötvös Budapest, Cambridge, Columbia, Cork, East Anglia, Fordham, Harvard, Melbourne, Princeton, the New School, Oslo, Lancaster, and at the Internationale Hegel-Vereinigung, allowed me to test out the

ideas under ideal conditions, and I would like to thank the many people whose questions at these talks both made me see some of the problems inherent in what I was trying to say, and encouraged me in the idea that it was still worth saying.

The book would not have been possible without the financial support of the Arts and Humanities Research Board (now Research Council) Research Leave Scheme, and a Major Research Fellowship from the Leverhulme Foundation. I am very grateful indeed to both bodies for allowing me to complete a project that might never have been completed but for their assistance. I am also grateful for the chance they gave me to do some more serious study, practice, and performance on the saxophone, which proved vital to the crystallisation of the book's ideas. The German Department at Royal Holloway tolerated my extended absence, and I owe a special thanks to Ann White for her selfless leadership of the Department, to Maire Davies for her encouragement of my efforts, and to Jerome Carroll, who took my post for the duration of my leave.

INTRODUCTION

Philosophy and music

An ironic reminder of music's central role in many aspects of life in modernity was given not long ago by the report that 'music' had – albeit only temporarily – replaced 'sex' as the word used most often in Internet searches. The likelihood of 'philosophy' becoming the most popular word in Internet searches is, of course, pretty remote. This rather crude sign of the difference in the contemporary importance of these two elements of modern culture can also be read as an indication of a deeper issue. Why this is so can be suggested by the difference between two moments in the changing relationship between philosophy and music in modernity. The heroic period of modern philosophy in Europe epitomised by Kant's claims on behalf of self-legislation in opposition to obedience to traditional authority is contemporaneous with the development of the new 'autonomous' music of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert, as well as with the emergence of new ideas concerning music's connection to philosophy. Professional philosophy, particularly in the Anglo-American world today, has, in contrast, tended to become a more and more specialised academic activity with little direct bearing either on people's attitudes to or on the conduct of their lives. The idea that academic philosophy might now have a fundamental connection to music is, moreover, almost inconceivable in many areas. Music itself, on the other hand, has continued, in albeit sometimes problematic ways, to be a central feature of the everyday lives of people in modern societies.

One of the aims of this book is to show both that some recent directions in philosophy offer ways of re-establishing connections to music and that this is important for the future direction of philosophy. How far

such connections could affect the practice of music itself is a different matter, and the very difficulty of suggesting ways that they might is part of the theme of the book. ‘New musicologists’ have begun to use more resources from philosophy, such as the work of T. W. Adorno, in recent times, and this has led to some exciting new departures. It might seem, then, that what I propose would belong in the direction of new musicology, but this is not necessarily the case. In my view some of such work using philosophy to look at music puts rather too much faith in philosophy, and too little in music itself. This is a contentious – and somewhat indeterminate – claim, and it will take the book that follows to try to substantiate it. One example of what I mean by putting faith in music is suggested by Daniel Barenboim in a tribute to his recently deceased friend, Edward Said: ‘He wrote about important universal issues such as exile, politics, integration. However, the most surprising thing for me, as his friend and great admirer, was the realisation that, on many occasions, he formulated ideas and reached conclusions through music; and he saw music as a reflection of the ideas that he had regarding other issues’ (*The Guardian*, 25 October 2004). How this might be possible can be suggested by considering a few aspects of music’s relationship to philosophy in modernity.

In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the relationship between music and philosophy could no longer be established solely in terms of what philosophy had to say about music, because the development of music itself influenced philosophical thinking, and vice versa. This two-way relationship has largely disappeared in most contemporary professional philosophy, and I think this is both regrettable and instructive. My reasons for this view are not only concerned with the failings of the so-called ‘philosophy of music’, because what is at issue cannot, as we shall see, be confined to the topic of music.¹ Discussion of music in analytical philosophy often takes the form of attempts to determine what constitutes a musical ‘work’: is it the score, all performances which ‘comply’ with the score, any performance that gets near to compliance, etc.; as well as attempts to establish whether music can be said to possess ‘meaning’ in the way verbal language does, to define the concept of ‘expression’, and to ascertain whether music ‘arouses’ emotions or just has ‘emotional properties’. Even though the very status of philosophy is itself these days widely seen to be in question,

1 In the analytical tradition there is sometimes a disagreement over whether what is involved here is ‘aesthetics’ or ‘the philosophy of music/art’. I shall ignore this distinction, because, contrary to the claims of some analytical aestheticians, like Arthur Danto, aesthetics was from the beginning not just concerned with beauty.

such approaches unquestioningly assume that the task of philosophy is to establish which concepts can appropriately be applied to music.

My worry about these approaches might, though, sound rather odd. Surely, it is obvious that this should be philosophy's task? There is, however, a growing sense these days that philosophy is actually not very good at establishing the 'real nature' of things, as opposed to exploring our different understandings of things and considering how the contrasting kinds of validity involved in those understandings relate to each other. One reason for suspecting ontological reflections is the simple fact that a useful criterion for valid scientific theories is that they allow one to make reliable predictions, and so do not necessarily raise ontological questions. Philosophical theories, in contrast, rarely allow one to predict, and are even more rarely widely agreed upon, though they may offer resources for re-interpreting an issue or a problem in a concrete situation. Doubts about philosophy's role in such matters can be suggested by asking what would happen if philosophy *were* to come up with the true theory of the nature of music. Would listeners then be able to hear Beethoven's String Quartet Opus 131 and *know* whether it meant anything or not, because philosophy offered irrefutable arguments that music without words does not 'mean' anything? But what if some listeners still thought it 'meant' something, even though they could not necessarily *say* what it meant? Furthermore, would such a philosophical theory invalidate all the ways in which this piece has been reacted to in the past – which from my point of view have to do with its meaning – that do not conform to the theory? Even though each of these ways will be inadequate in some respect, they may yet disclose something about the music.

Music's 'meaning' might lie precisely in the fact that we cannot say in words what it means – why does music exist at all if what it 'says' could be said just as well in other ways? The important issue is, therefore, the differing ways in which something can be construed as 'meaning' something. Gadamer suggests why in his remark that in the everyday use of language: 'The word which one says or which is said to one is not the grammatical element of a linguistic analysis, which can be shown in concrete phenomena of language acquisition to be secondary in relation, say, to the linguistic melody of a sentence' (Gadamer 1986: 196). The tone and rhythm of an utterance can be more significant than its 'propositional content', and this already indicates one way in which the musical may play a role in signification. Judgement on whether music possesses meaning in the way natural languages do would seem to presuppose an account of verbal meaning that allows it to be strictly

demarcated from whatever it is that we understand in wordless music. Analytical philosophers of music tend to assume that an account of verbal meaning has been established, and that this is what allows them to attempt to determine the status of musical meaning. However, there are good grounds for doubting whether such an account really exists in the form relied upon by these philosophers.

The reasons for some of these doubts are already apparent in early-modern thinkers, like J. G. Herder and the early German Romantics, who regard language and music as intimately connected, because both are means of revealing new aspects of being, rather than just means of re-presenting what is supposedly already there. The limitations of analytical approaches are often apparent in relation to the 'poetic', or literary use of language. In poetic usage something is inevitably lost when the particular form of words is paraphrased or translated into another language.² It is implausible to assume that what is lost has nothing to do with what is meant in a poem, unless one restricts one's sense of meaning to the idea of reference to concrete and 'abstract' objects (whatever the latter notion might mean). A related case is metaphorical usage, which causes difficulties for semantic theories which assume that words have specifiable 'senses'. Is it possible to establish context-independent criteria for identifying when a piece of language can be understood purely literally, so that metaphorical, performative, 'musical' and other dimensions of language can be separated from it? The assumption that this is possible relies on the claim that the representational aspect of language is the basis of other forms of language, and there are strong grounds for resisting this claim. The sheer diversity of ways in which communication actually takes place in real contexts can suggest why. None of this, one should add, requires one to give up the idea that there are true ways of talking about the world. What is at issue is rather the functioning of language as a social practice, where what one form of language cannot say or achieve may be sayable or achievable by another form, including in ways which cannot be construed in semantic terms.

Meanings and music

Questions which arise in analytical approaches to music and language are, then, connected to questions about the very nature and point of

² Arguably something can also be gained, but that is not the issue here.

doing philosophy that relate to important tensions between the main traditions of modern philosophy. One of the relatively few analytical philosophers to have extensively concerned himself with music, Peter Kivy, has claimed that ‘Music, of all the arts, is the most philosophically unexplored and most philosophically misunderstood where it has been explored at all’ (Kivy 1997: 139). Kivy’s claim is already undermined by his failure even to mention many of the most important writers on philosophy and music, such as T. W. Adorno and Carl Dahlhaus, or to consider philosophers, like Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Merleau-Ponty, or Davidson, who offer conceptions of language involving assumptions which contradict his own. Moreover, Kivy’s own manner of looking at music can be shown to rely on assumptions which seem likely to obscure the significance of music. In themselves the limitations of analytical approaches to music may not be particularly interesting; the motor of much of the analytical tradition was, after all, predominantly the success of the methods of the natural sciences. But if one regards analytical philosophy as a distinctive manifestation of modern culture, the questions raised by its problematic relationship to music can bring to light some major issues. The difficulty lies in how these issues are to be approached.

One of the main characteristics of modern philosophy has been a tension between two approaches to ‘meaning’. This tension relates to the tension between the analytical tradition of philosophy that begins with Frege, Russell, and the early Wittgenstein, and the European traditions of philosophy that emerged with Vico, Herder, Kant, and Romanticism, and are carried on in phenomenology, hermeneutics, and Critical Theory. The manifestations of the tension go right across the different disciplines in academic life, and across the different spheres of modern social life. In its more extreme forms – in some of the theories of the Vienna Circle, for instance – the first of these approaches takes as its starting point propositions which convey reliable knowledge in the natural sciences. These propositions are supposed to form the basis of what can properly be called meaning. The idea is that one can demarcate the forms of language which reliably connect with the world from those which do not, and can therefore employ the former to define meaning. The forms in question involve direct observation of objects and rely on a priori logical laws to order the sentences to which this observation gives rise. The other approach begins either with the endless diversity of ways in which people actually use language, or, more controversially, with the ‘world-disclosing’ aspects of literary language (see

Cooper 2003). It does so in order to explore meaning as the very substance of specifically human existence, and regards the natural sciences as just one, albeit understandably dominant, part of modern cultural practice, rather than as providing what Bernard Williams has termed the ‘absolute conception’ (on this see chapter 9 below). The reason the sciences could not in fact provide such a conception is that they rely on language in a manner which precludes them, on pain of vicious circularity, from using language to give an account of language in their own terms. We shall repeatedly return to this issue later. The assumption in the second approach is that if people understand a piece of articulation – which is apparent in terms of its effects in social contexts on behaviour, reactions, feelings, and so on – it must mean something. To this extent, as Bjørn Ramberg has argued in relation to Donald Davidson’s notion of ‘radical interpretation’, ‘We can, if we like, interpret all kinds of things as speaking’ if we can ‘correlate some identifiable complex state of our chosen subject with some identifiable state of the world’ (Ramberg 1989: 122).

The relevance of this view of language to music is apparent in the question of whether a series of acoustic phenomena is mere noise or is music: if it is the latter, it possesses a kind of ‘meaning’ that noise does not. This is in part because we may inferentially relate it to other things which we have interpreted as music. Our understanding of music depends on correlations between hearing the production of noises and an awareness that what is produced is not merely arbitrary and so is susceptible to and worthy of interpretation and evaluation in the widest senses, which can, for example, include dancing to the noises. Any noise can become music if it occurs in the appropriate contexts, rather in the way that non-literary language can change its status when incorporated into a literary context, or an object becomes a work of art if put into the right context. We can, furthermore, sometimes think that we hear language when what we hear is not language, and vice versa, because of the context in which we hear it, and the same applies to music. There is no need in these cases to rely on a fundamental division between the musical and the linguistic, because their very status as such depends in both cases on their intelligibility. The basic idea here is, then, that any form of articulation that can disclose the world in ways which affect the conduct and understanding of life can be regarded as possessing meaning. The deliberately open-ended nature of this claim does not preclude the examination of differences between putatively semantic and non-semantic forms of articulation, but it leaves open the question

of how fundamental this difference should be seen as being for the ways in which language and other communicative forms actually function. What *is* fundamental here is the sense that intelligibility in both language and music arises via connections between noises and marks, and states of and processes in the ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ worlds.

The founders of the analytical tradition increased the precision of some kinds of argument and got rid of certain confusions regarding the logical status of a number of issues in philosophy. However, they did so at the expense of restricting the scope of what was considered worthy of, or even amenable to, philosophical attention. In the process a great deal was staked on using the analysis of language to obviate traditional metaphysical problems. It is therefore easy to see how absurd speculation in Romantic philosophy about the significance of music as, for example, ‘the archetypal (‘*urbildlich*’) rhythm of nature and of the universe itself’ (Schelling: 1/5, 369), would appear in that perspective. We shall see later, though, that it may not really be quite so absurd. Plausible as the analytical strategy seemed to be in the light of the predictive and technological power of the natural sciences, the project of setting up a theory of meaning in this manner is now widely regarded as decisively flawed, and this has led to a new relationship of some analytical thinkers to the European traditions of philosophy.

The problem for the analytical project is that, even with regard to the exact sciences, the relationship between words and the world cannot be *explained* as a relationship between fixed items in the world and linguistic meanings which mirror or ‘re-present’ – in the sense of ‘present again what is already there as such’ – those items. The relationship between ‘extension’ and ‘intension’, or between ‘reference’ and ‘meaning’ or ‘sense’, has, so far at least, proved to be impossible to characterise in a manner which specifies the role of each in isolation. This has led to greater attention being paid to the second approach to meaning. What things are understood to be depends here upon the kind of relationships in which they stand to other things, and something analogous applies to the meaning of words. Instead of the world being seen ‘atomistically’, as a series of discrete objects, it comes to be seen ‘holistically’, as an interconnected web, in which what things are also depends on how we speak about them and act in relation to them and to each other. A crucial point about this shift for the present book is that it involves the revival of the ideas of thinkers in European philosophy, like Schelling, Hegel, and Schleiermacher. These ideas were both rejected by the founding fathers of analytical philosophy, *and* accompanied and

were sometimes influenced by the emergence of the greatest Western music. We shall return to a more thorough examination of what I have had to caricature here in the coming chapters. For the moment I want to suggest a possible initial response to the consequences of the holistic understanding of meaning that can illuminate questions of philosophy and music.

Subject and object

A key element of holist conceptions is that they question attempts to fix what belongs on the subject- and what belongs on the object-side of what is intelligible to us. This doesn't mean that such conceptions regard objectivity as impossible, but a philosophical understanding of objectivity does not depend on a characterisation of how the objective 'content' provided by the world is organised into reliable cognitions by a subjective 'scheme' provided by the mind or language. The holist model is often seen as open to question with regard to the physical sciences because there the content is supposed to consist in what John McDowell has called 'bare presences that are supposed to constitute the ultimate grounds of empirical judgements' (McDowell 1994: 24), that is, in pure data that do not require interpretation. There are, though, as McDowell and others argue in the wake of German Idealist and Romantic philosophy, good reasons for suggesting that we don't have access to any such ultimate grounds because we don't apprehend pure sense-data anyway, but rather apprehend tables, trees, chemical elements, notes, etc. Separating the conceptual from the non-conceptual content in perception is seen as involving a misapprehension of what perception is, because perception is of a world which is always already intelligible, not of some intermediary between us and reality, such as sense-data.

Interrogation of the idea of a fixed line between the subjective and the objective depends on the notion that we inhabit a world that cannot in principle be reduced to what it supposedly is prior to any understanding of it. Some of the problems which most concern analytical philosophers of music are themselves generated by the model of a spectatorial subjective mind confronting an objective world of which music is a part. A recurrent issue in such thinking is how to get from the description of a sequence of organised sounds in terms of physics – thus of frequencies, durations, etc., as objective properties of acoustic phenomena – to the characterisation of the same sequence as music. Whereas the former might be seen as the description of an identifiable object, the latter

makes no sense in these terms: what sort of ‘object’ is the music that is objectively manifest as frequencies, etc.? Is there a further property possessed by the frequencies which is lacking in sound-sequences that are not music? The problem is that the criteria for identifying something as music are of a different order from the criteria for measuring frequencies. Davidson (2001) points out that one can give any number of different numerical descriptions of something’s weight which express the same facts, because they will all rely on the relationship of the weight of one thing to other things. The metric one applies does not change the weight, and the same applies to frequencies. The assumption might therefore seem to be that something’s being music is irredeemably ‘subjective’, because it is just constituted ‘in the mind’ of a listener.

In one sense this is trivially true: there would be no music without listeners and players, whereas frequencies arguably exist whether we apprehend them or not. However, the apprehension of sounds as music also depends upon learning-processes which are not merely subjective, because they originate in the objective world of social action inhabited by the subject. This world is constituted partly in terms of socially instituted norms relating to, but not wholly determined by, the causal pressure of nature. This is the crucial point, because issues such as the ‘location’ of emotions with regard to music, which often lead to fruitless disagreement if one tries to show how a musical object has ‘affective properties’ in the way that physical objects have physical properties, look different in this perspective. A vital element in social learning-processes is language itself. Language is, though, also manifest as a physical object, in the form of frequencies, pitches, or marks on pieces of paper, etc. Significantly, the objectifying model has something like the same problem with meaning as it does with music: what makes these particular physical objects into comprehensible signs? The purely physical description of something which we understand as music and of something which we understand as language has to be complemented by an interpretative aspect. In both cases the supposedly purely objective turns out not to be separable from the supposedly subjective because it is inextricably bound up with human action. Ultimately this means that even judgements about physical facts that are available to us via causal interaction with the world involve interpretation because they are couched in a language which has to be understood. This does not, however, lead to subjectivism: the basic point is simply that all kinds of language use involve what Davidson and Habermas refer to as a ‘triangulation’

between the subjective, the intersubjective, and the objective. What is *true* about either music or language is independent of the vagaries of interpretation, but this does not mean that there is a reliable method for arriving at that truth which can avoid interpretation.

Foundational philosophy, and the musical alternative

These are still contentious points, and a serious defence of them here would require an examination of many issues in contemporary philosophy, which would prevent us even getting to the main themes of the book. This very situation is, though, central to what I want to say. The requirement to arrive at a philosophically reliable location before dealing with music might seem to make a discussion of philosophy and music effectively impossible. I want to claim that the consequence ought really to be the opposite. The very difficulty of arriving at this location is actually what is most revealing.

Schleiermacher suggested the difficulty involved in connecting aesthetics to the rest of philosophy in his *Aesthetics*. The normal assumption is that one requires a generally agreed system of philosophy in order to be able to establish aesthetic judgements on a firm foundation. Schleiermacher asserts, however, that ‘this would mean deferring the matter to infinity’ (Schleiermacher 1842: 48), because such a system requires universal consensus. He regards this consensus as a regulative idea, not as something actually realisable, and therefore thinks that aesthetics must get by without firm foundations. Even in the contemporary philosophical situation, where grand foundational systems have largely been abandoned, the problem for the ‘philosophy of music’ is that it must rely upon whatever other philosophical assumptions are adopted by the person producing it. Such philosophy is therefore likely just to confirm the non- or extra-musical assumptions that precede its application to music; indeed, if it did not, it would be incoherent. Given the wholesale lack of consensus about positions in philosophy, this leads, though, to the uninviting situation in which the ‘philosophy of music’ inevitably just limps behind whatever philosophical bandwagon happens to be running at a particular time or is adopted by the philosopher of music. There seems to be something mistaken about accepting the result of this situation, even though it is in one sense inescapable: am I myself not just following the bandwagon of contemporary pragmatism, phenomenology, and hermeneutics in my rejection of subject–object-based analytical models in relation to music? It might appear, moreover, that

the ultimate implication of my stance is that the very idea of a 'philosophy of music' is mistaken. This will indeed be what I want to claim, but that does not render concern with philosophy and music superfluous. So what is the alternative?

One possibility is to regard the 'philosophy of music', not as the philosophy whose job is conceptually to determine the object 'music', but rather as the philosophy that emerges from music, that is, to interpret the phrase in the subjective, rather than the objective genitive. Friedrich Schlegel once characteristically asserted that 'One has tried for so long to apply mathematics to music and painting; now try it the other way round' (Schlegel 1988: 5, 41). If one substitutes 'philosophy' for mathematics, the approach I want to develop begins to emerge. Schlegel suggests the basic problem for philosophy by the following remark, which brilliantly encapsulates the problem of philosophical foundations: 'Demonstrations in philosophy are just demonstrations in the sense of the language of the art of military strategy. It is no better with [philosophical] legitimations than with political ones; in the sciences as well one first of all occupies a terrain and then proves one's right to it afterwards' (Schlegel 1988: 2, 111). Gadamer suggests what Schlegel's inversion of the role of mathematics and music points to when he argues that, although the natural sciences are indispensable to human survival, 'this does not mean that people would be able to solve the problems that face us, peaceful coexistence of peoples and the preservation of the balance of nature, with science as such. It is obvious that not mathematics but the linguistic nature of people is the basis of human civilisation' (Gadamer 1993: 342). That linguistic nature relies on forms of communication which cannot all be mapped out in advance in a theory, and have instead to be engaged in via a constant negotiation which has no foundational certainties. For Gadamer, encounter with the other in the form of coming to understand their languages, including the language of music, can tell us more about what we are than many of the objectifying forms of studying human behaviour. It is when we *don't* understand and have to leave behind our certainties that we can gain the greatest insights. Given that this situation is in one sense almost constitutive for music, which we never understand in a definitive discursive manner, it is worth taking seriously the idea that such non-understanding might be philosophically very significant.

The approach to music proposed here seeks to avoid merely confirming the philosophical and methodological presuppositions that one

adheres to before engaging with music. It is, in one sense, an appeal to the importance of learning really to listen and play. This is by no means easy, and may itself even be no more than an unattainable regulative idea. The problem of merely confirming one's presuppositions arises, for example, when the assumption is made that philosophy's role is to decide which properties can, and which cannot, be ascribed to music. In the history of music what is said about music, including by philosophers, does have substantial effects on the practice of music. As Dahlhaus comments: 'The language "as" which music appears is not independent of the language "in" which music is talked about' (Dahlhaus 1988: 322). However, the effects on music of talking about music, and vice versa, are, as Dahlhaus shows, rarely direct. More crucial in my view is the complex two-way relationship between music and what is said about it (a relationship which Dahlhaus sometimes looks at rather too much from the side of language). Consider, for example, the question of the 'properties' of music.

A first step towards developing the approach I am interested in involves looking at the issue of properties in normative terms. Rather than thinking of properties in terms of concepts which represent attributes of things, one thinks of concepts, as Robert Brandom has argued, in terms of their inferential roles. The concept 'red' is understood such that applying it, which is a form of social practice answerable to others, means that what it is applied to is 'coloured, not a prime number, and so on'. This differentiates concept use from what a computer does, and depends on the *propriety* of the inferences in question. A musical note can be registered in terms of differential response to its frequency, but it only becomes a note via its relations to a series of other things heard in other contexts, so that it is defined by its function in a whole. This inferential approach seems to me to offer some vital resources. However, music and other forms of art also pose certain instructive difficulties for it, which will be considered in more detail in chapter 4.

Even the relational functions of a note are accessible to a differential response of the kind which a computer could perform in relation to a score. What makes the note into part of a piece of *music* is, therefore, not adequately grasped either by the idea that we know the significance of saying that it is such because it relates to other notes in a rule-governed manner, or even by the idea that we know it is music because we grasp the conceptual content of the term music. It is not clear that the content in question can be arrived at by thinking in terms of music's being sound,

not being painting, for example. Music has to be heard as such, and this hearing cannot be fully explained in inferential terms. At a basic level one can make the inferential judgement that music is such because of its being sound, its occurring in the sort of contexts that other things called music occur in, but that misses something essential. At some level the conceptual judgement depends on norms which are not based on raw, unconceptualised feeling (the idea of which is probably a myth anyway), but which are also not fully explicable in inferential terms.

Stanley Cavell says that the giving of reasons for aesthetic judgements will often end in the situation where ‘if you do not see something, *without* explanation, then there is nothing further to discuss’ (Cavell 1976: 93), because one is appealing to something which cannot be inferentially articulated. The acceptance of the norms such judgements involve, which rely on a shared, but non-objectifiable understanding of the world, suggests why Schlegel’s inversion may be significant in making us ask what music can tell us about philosophy. In one respect the answer to this must be ‘nothing’, because music without words is not propositional (though it can function in a manner akin to propositional language when used in performative ways, for instance, as a signal to get people to do things). What interests me is how music’s resistance to philosophy is understood, and why this might matter to modern culture.

This is not an arcane question: it is already implicit in people’s puzzlement at why it is that what they experience or understand in music is ‘hard to put into words’. Although we may not be able positively to *state* what music’s resistance means, by explaining that music actually doesn’t mean things in the way language does, we might be able to suggest ways in which the limits of philosophy in relation to music could be *shown*. The question is what significance such a demonstration has for philosophy. Although there are major philosophers, like Schopenhauer, Wittgenstein, and Adorno, for whom music is a vital issue, many other philosophers never mention music, even when their central concern is with human communication and with the normative content of human social existence. In the following chapters I want to explore whether the commitment to or the neglect of music by philosophy is a significant factor both in assessing the role of philosophy in modernity and in thinking about the future of philosophy.

It is worth making clear, finally, what this book will not be trying to do, as the issues it addresses have so many ramifications. The book will not be of immediate interest to those seeking illumination of specific

works and types of music, not least because I have not used detailed musical examples. This is in part because what I would have to say about such examples would generally not warrant my attempts being included. One implication of what I say is that there are good reasons for those who think philosophy vital to our engagement with music to learn from some of the most interesting writers on specific music, like Dahlhaus, Maynard Solomon, and Charles Rosen, rather than thinking that what has been missing from writing on music is ‘more philosophy’ (though there are circumstances where this can be the case). My focus is largely on German philosophy and music, simply because I think this is where the important issues are most effectively confronted.³ I could, of course, add to the list of the things I fail to discuss at all, or do not discuss in any detail. These include, in the theoretical realm, such topics as Hanslick, the specifics of the analytical philosophy of music, the relationship of post-structuralism to music, and many different genres of music in the practical realm. Although the experience of jazz improvisation has revealed itself in the course of writing to be more fundamental to what I have to say than I originally realised, I do not give a specific account of it, preferring to take up those aspects of philosophy concerned with music which relate to the intuitions I have gained from playing jazz. The very fact that it is hard to translate from the practice of jazz into a discursive account should, though, be seen as part of my argument. The underlying reason for many of the gaps in my agenda is the somewhat paradoxical one that the book is more interested in questioning philosophy via music than vice versa. Because the book is aimed more at philosophy, it becomes itself more philosophical than musical, while in many ways wishing to be the opposite. As a way of counterbalancing this consequence, I also want to suggest that one of the best philosophical things one can do is to listen to and play more good music.

³ Richard Taruskin has objected to my failure elsewhere to highlight the fact that I think the most important thinkers in the area of music and philosophy are German (in his review of Samson 2002 (Taruskin 2005)), so I do it here. Suffice to say, I find his objection tendentious, not least because he offers no serious alternative agenda for the topics that interest me, dismissing them as involving a concern with ‘the ineffable’. As will become apparent, I regard this term with some suspicion. A gesture, a musical phrase, or a dance may articulate something unsayable, without it being ineffable.

FORM, FEELING, METAPHYSICS, AND MUSIC

Form, meaning, and context

Philosophical writers on music who argue that wordless music does not mean anything sometimes refer to it as ‘pure form’. Peter Kivy says of Beethoven’s *Eroica* Symphony, for example, that ‘it has no content to reveal, no message to decode’, and that in the teaching of the work ‘few instructors, trained in the modern analytical and musicological traditions as they are, will be tempted to attribute any *meaning* to it’ (Kivy 1993: 29), it being, ‘in a sense . . . pure contentless abstract form’ (ibid.: 30). Kivy’s second claim is, of course, simply untrue: many professional ‘new musicologists’ would indeed attribute meaning to the *Eroica*. The sense in which it is supposed to be ‘pure contentless abstract form’ is not clear, but from the rest of Kivy’s arguments it would appear to have to do with the idea that the *Eroica* does not designate anything. The idea that a form, especially a musical form, can be ‘pure’ should, though, already be doubtful on the basis of what was argued in the Introduction. For a form to be a significant form at all, it has to be understood as such, rather than merely registered as a series of unconnected data. Contextual and background factors that do not belong to the data themselves must come into play here, and so must the inferential apprehension of patterns of identity and difference, of the kind required for language use. It is only when there are such patterns that we need to interpret, so the very notion of form relies on the sense that there is something to be further understood. Forms are therefore always open to re-description when new contexts arise in which they take on a different significance.

If such contextualisation is required to make sense of any phenomenon, philosophical claims about ‘pure’ form must look decidedly

unconvincing. The *Eroica*'s massive expansion of symphonic form is, in the terms suggested in the Introduction, part of what the *Eroica* means, part of its 'content'. Apprehending this content relies on background knowledge and language, but so does apprehending anything as music at all, and, of course, so does understanding any linguistic utterance. Once one begins to take seriously the necessary role of context in the understanding of all meaning, it becomes easy to see that there can be no definitive division between verbal language and other forms of articulation. Eduard Hanslick's objection to regarding Gluck's aria 'Che farò senza Euridice' as expressing intense grief, because it could be heard as expressing joy, can just as easily apply to someone's misunderstanding verbal and other expressions of grief from a culture with which they are not familiar. The fact is that we have to learn both language and music, and we are always capable of misinterpretation if we attach a piece of symbolic expression to the wrong contexts.¹

Claims about pure form often rely on analogies between mathematical and musical form. The temptation that results from these analogies is to limit what is said about form in music to the technical level, as Kivy claims musicologists do. This limitation has, however, proved to be notoriously difficult to achieve, not least because the relationship between mathematics and music is anything but direct. It is not just 'new musicologists' who have in recent times moved beyond analysis towards a more hermeneutic stance. The move is also made because analysis often comes up against undecidable ambiguities that resist 'objective' description and demand 'extra-musical' understanding. In composers like Schubert or Wagner, for example, who employ enharmonic changes as an essential part of their musical language, or in a lot of jazz, that resistance can be precisely what is most significant about the music. Musicologists therefore also adopt a more interpretative stance because analysis without interpretation cannot do justice to its object.² Attention to form is evidently essential to understanding music, but Adorno's dictum that 'Form is sedimented content' suggests a more productive approach to form because it incorporates the sense that form is inherently 'impure'.

1 See Cook 2001, who tries to circumvent models which see musical meaning as being either wholly inherent in the piece or wholly socially constructed. Cook also makes illuminating distinctions with regard to the aspects of music that are more likely to be cross-culturally comprehensible.

2 Adorno claims that it is impossible to perform a piece adequately without some kind of analysis: the question is the extent to which this can be 'purely objective'.

Although many of the same points concerning the contextuality of the understanding of form can be made about the dependence of verbal meaning on context, this is not a reason simply to equate ‘music’ and ‘language’. It is precisely the kind of thinking which draws consequences in this manner that I am concerned to question. Either/or approaches, of the kind present in the familiar question ‘Is music a language?’, repeat a problem suggested in the Introduction: they assume that we already know what a language is, and can just apply the theory of language to music. Given that Donald Davidson has famously claimed that ‘there is no such thing as a language’ (Lepore 1986: 446), this could well be a mistaken short-cut. Davidson elucidates his remark by adding ‘if a language is anything like what many philosophers and linguists have supposed’ (ibid.). What they have supposed is that a language is something of which a philosophical description can be given, in terms of functions, rules, etc., rather than a series of ever-changing practices bound up with other human activities and affected by interaction with the world. One just needs to ask the question of when something begins to be language and when it ceases to be language to see the reasons for being careful here. Davidson regards understanding language as beginning with the mapping of someone else’s noise onto the sort of noises one makes oneself to see if they can correlate with anything one is familiar with in the world, and even this characterisation may be too restrictive in some respects. David Cooper suggests, for example, that understanding is already in play if something in the world is related to a context in some manner: ‘to explain an item’s meaning . . . is to connect the item to something outside or larger than itself’ (Cooper 2003: 29–30). The key issue is the appropriateness of the connection and the effects of that connection on the practice of life.

Instead, then, of working with the assumption that the best thing to do here is draw a line between language and music, the idea is to develop a conception in which these terms are not even assumed to require any kind of definitive explanation. If there is no such thing as a language, there need also be no such thing as music either. This might seem to be leading towards a completely implausible position. However, all I am claiming is that the idea that the distinction between language and music involves some generalised match between these terms, and language and music as entities in the world, is likely to lead in unhelpful directions. Of course we employ the distinction in many situations, but that does not mean it needs to be underpinned by a philosophical theory based on the drawing of a specific line. The problem with such a

line is that what is supposed to be on each side of the line cannot be said to be stable. Furthermore, the resources for drawing the line, that is, language itself, may not be sufficient to describe the musical 'side' of the line, which has to be experienced in ways language cannot circumscribe. The fact that attempts to describe music in other than technical terms almost invariably rely on metaphor can help to suggest what I mean. One uses metaphors, as Davidson maintains, to make people notice things, and one can use music to do the same in contexts where verbal language may not do the job adequately. Unlike the possibility of using a different metric for the same facts about weight, where the context can be reduced to an infinite, but in principle determinable series of numerically different relationships which express something identical, in the case of music the context, in the form, for example, of a series of normatively constituted practices and of human emotions, is part of the phenomena themselves.

What I am proposing is, as I suggested in relation to Schlegel, a heuristic inversion of the philosophical procedure encountered in the 'philosophy of music', where success is seen as resulting from conceptual clarification and from the refutation of supposedly untenable theories. The reason for such an inversion is that the price of that success – a success which seems anyway to be remarkably elusive – can be to obscure too much of the significance of the social and historical manifestations of music. Is it so informative for the implication of a theory to be, for example, that if the Nazis had possessed a correct theory of musical meaning – for example, that it has none – they would not have needed to ban '*entartete Musik*' and music by Jewish composers? This would obviously be a desirable consequence of conceptual clarification in this particular case, but it also suggests the extent to which philosophical theories can render crucial dimensions of the significance of cultural phenomena invisible. We need to understand how such perverse understandings as those of the Nazis are possible, and why music may generate what leads to them. To this extent, what people think they understand music to mean must itself in some way be part of what music does mean as part of the real historical world. If music is better understood as a practice than as an object, this claim should, though, not be controversial. Obviously one wants to say that the Nazis are wrong, but the important thing is to establish a way of doing so that reveals more than it conceals.

Unlike theories such as Ptolemaic physics, which can no longer be said to be true of anything, understandings of music cannot, in certain

respects at least, be wholly mistaken. They are anchored in something which cannot be denied, namely the feelings and associations that people have in relation to music, as well in bodily and other kinds of relationship to the movement of time, the shape of sounds, and so on, in the music. Gadamer suggests the kind of thing I mean in his notion of a 'fusion of horizons' between a work and its recipients. He, however, insists that one can only talk of different understandings, not better and worse ones, given that all understandings which are in any way worthy of the name form part of the life of a work of art. I think, in contrast, that it is possible to claim that understandings are open to criticism without giving up Gadamer's justified avoidance of an overly objectifying approach to art. Even if musical understandings are based on feelings, which are, in one sense, immune to criticism, because one does not generally choose to have them, music still involves objective aspects derived from the public world of symbols, and so can be the location of legitimate cultural conflict. It is this dual status of music that is crucial to the argument. Music can give rise to affective states which transcend conceptual reflection in a manner that constitutes a valuable new dimension of experience of the world, but it can also just entail the surrender of rational justification to emotions that are derived from mere socially conditioned prejudice. The question is how to sustain the aspect of aesthetic value based on the immediacy of feeling, at the same time as finding ways of being critical when this source of value becomes perverted. If the symbolic associations which dominate a society are those of Nazi Germany, people's understanding of music and their very manner of feeling must be shown to involve distortion.

Despite the difficulties occasioned by the inseparability of feeling and what helps articulate it in the objective world, questions of rightness and truth in music are inescapable. Analysis of the social functions of music must, for example, rely on the idea of norms which are not being adequately fulfilled. Such norms are, though, a further case where a subjective/objective split makes no sense. The norms are socially transmitted and therefore have an objective existence, but they have to be understood and, above all, found compelling by individual subjects, often on the basis of how they *feel* about them. The peculiar status of norms in this sense is the source of Cavell's remark, cited in the Introduction, that communication about art is not wholly encompassed by explanation. At the same time, in a world where forms of communication are increasingly dominated by transnational media concerns, analysis of how the objective pressure of those media structure

subjective responses in reductive and impoverishing ways becomes very important. Coping with this complex mix requires one to extend the kind of norms relevant to music, and this is where things get interesting. One of the major reasons why music poses a challenge to philosophy is that it is not possible to offer a definitive theoretical model to deal with the relationships between the physical, and the cultural and psychological dimensions of music, relationships which are also involved in verbal language. The lack of such a model becomes particularly apparent with regard to music and emotions. The issue will recur in the rest of the book, but some aspects of it are best dealt with here.

Emotions and music

There is a sense in which emotions are private to the person who has them, because they cannot be directly communicated. I shall use ‘emotions’ here in a sense which can include what are sometimes referred to as ‘feelings’: the line between mere feeling, which supposedly has no cognitive content, and emotion, which does, seems to me less clear-cut than is often thought. If cognitive content is supposed to be exclusively propositional, for example, too many non-propositional states will be excluded which can tell us much about ourselves and the world.³ The private aspect of emotions is evident in the fact that you can’t actually feel my pain, or my delight (see Wellmer’s remarks in chapter 8 on Wittgenstein’s view of such privacy). On the other hand, the articulation and the communication of emotions affect their content, and depend, among other things, on the resources of intersubjectively acquired language and other tools of articulation. Theories of emotion range from those which deny the internal dimension altogether, regarding emotions solely in terms of objectively manifest emotion-behaviour, to those which regard emotions as intrinsically private. I shall for the moment just consider the question of where the emotions with which music is often associated are said to be located.

The first problem here is that a definitive answer would again have to presuppose some agreed description, this time of what emotions are. The facts in this case are, however, once again not like facts relating to

3 Bennett and Hacker maintain: ‘It is perhaps tempting to suppose that the term “feeling” (as in “feeling angry, afraid, proud”) is confined to emotional perturbations, while “being” (as in “being angry, afraid, proud”) earmarks the emotional attitude. But that would be a mistake. *For the most part*, “feeling angry” and “being angry” are intersubstitutable’ (Bennett and Hacker 2003: 202). One does not have to know that one is angry to be it.

the weight of an object. The behaviourist and the believer in the radically private status of emotions ought to have difficulty even beginning to discuss the issue, because the former takes emotions to be something objective, the latter something subjective. More plausible theories, like that of Martha Nussbaum, regard emotions as judgements of value which emerge in relation to aspects of the world which are central to our flourishing but which we cannot control. This approach, which may somewhat overload the notion of judgement – perhaps one should think of what is at issue as ‘proto-judgements’, in order to avoid the sense that our primary relationship to things is propositional – already establishes a relationship between a subject and that which is valued in this particular way in the objective world. The underlying issue can therefore be understood in terms of the triangle of subjective, intersubjective, and objective. The point of triangulation is to avoid the situation where the failure to take account of one of the sides of the triangle leads to a split between self, others, and objective world that involves privileging one of these, at the cost of making it unclear how it connects to the others.

Such a split is evident when Kivy claims that there is a growing consensus for the idea that music is ‘expressive of the garden-variety emotions, such as sorrow, joy, fear, hope’, and that these are ‘perceived properties’ of the music itself (Kivy 2002: 31), rather than of a subject which has the emotions. The term ‘perceived properties’ is already strangely equivocal, involving the subject’s perception, but trying at the same time to suggest that what is perceived is somehow objectively there.⁴ Emotions, though, pertain to subjects, so how can they intelligibly be said to be properties of music? The problem is that Kivy obscures the differences between primary meanings of the life-world in which the mode of existence of things involves their relationship to a subject and is often inherently connected to subjective feelings, and forms of description used in the sciences, which attempt to establish the existence of properties independently of subjective apprehensions of them (see Merleau-Ponty 1945: 32–3).

Kivy analogises the idea of the perceived emotional properties of music to the idea that dogs’ faces can appear sad, that yellow is a ‘cheerful’ colour, whose ‘cheerfulness just *is* a part of its perceived quality,

4 It is worth remembering here Kant’s insistence that beauty should not be regarded as a *property* of the object, because it only exists via the object’s occasioning of pleasure in the subject.

inseparable from its yellowness' (Kivy 2002: 33), as well as to a billiard ball possessing roundness as a 'seen property' (ibid.: 89). In doing so he ignores the fact that the perception of the dog and the colour depend upon a series of contexts, without which encountering these things as significant in such ways would be impossible. What is at issue here is what Wittgenstein explores with the notion of 'aspect seeing', of 'seeing as' or 'hearing as'. Aspect seeing is not merely subjective. It is concerned with the ways in which things in the world are manifest as something intelligible at all, and so are the possible objects of true judgements. Seeing the billiard ball as round is seeing it in terms of the primary mode of perception in the life-world. We don't need to know about the geometrical properties of a sphere to see it as round: children learn about roundness by feeling and seeing it. However, at a more reflective level, the ball can also be shown to be round by geometrical demonstration. Here there is also a different reason for ascribing the property, namely the fact, which concerned Kant in his account of 'schematism', that we pre-theoretically understand the existence of geometrical shapes that can subsequently also be theoretically expressed in non-perceptual, mathematical terms. In the case of the colour's supposed affective properties, however, the same does not apply: the spectrum location of yellow has no objective, cross-culturally valid connection to cheerfulness. Is the bright yellow colour that suffuses some nightmare sequences in films, or appears in some of Van Gogh's more disturbing paintings, 'cheerful'? If it isn't, the *context* of something in the world relating to emotions is inseparable from the emotion that occurs: even the dog may not appear sad in some circumstances. The alternative – and this is what invalidates the way Kivy makes the point about emotional *properties* – is to assume that there are as many different kinds of 'perceived qualities' of yellow as there are different emotions 'perceived in' it in different contexts. This assumption makes the notion of perceived properties empty, because there is no reason not to think that the different emotions depend on the subject and on the context, as much as on the object.

Kivy is rightly seeking to avoid the idea that musical emotions are located in the subject in a manner which would make them merely contingent. Someone may, after all, feel cheerful every time they listen to the last movement of Mahler's Ninth. We can legitimately object on the basis of widely accepted interpretative norms if they then claim that the *music* is cheerful, and in that sense Kivy is right. The decisive point is the relationship between the differing 'subjective' and

‘objective’ aspects. In trying to get away from an invalid subjectivism, Kivy, though, tends just to invert the problem to which subjectivism gives rise. His use of the term ‘perceived properties’ therefore confuses the issue, as Wittgenstein’s reflections on aspect seeing suggest. Why not just talk of ‘hearing the music as sad’, which does not require one to feel sad on hearing it, but, crucially, does not preclude the possibility that one could? Dahlhaus sums this up well: ‘Someone who feels a piece of music to be melancholy does not mean that it “is” melancholy, but that it “has that effect”. And it seems melancholy without the listener himself having to be in a melancholy mood . . . Melancholy appears as an – intentional, not real – determination of the object . . . The expressive character inheres, looked at phenomenologically, in the object, but exclusively in the actual relationship to a subject’ (Dahlhaus 1988: 331).⁵

Kivy’s world is one of subjects with internal states and of objects with properties, but he does nothing to say how it is that they are connected. If one did not, for example, already have a non-inferential, non-objectifiable familiarity with emotions as part of one’s world – ‘world’ conceived of as what is never fully objectifiable, and not as something separated from one’s being a subject with feelings – how would one ascribe them as ‘properties’ to music? The prior aspect must be the need for modes of expression that articulate our evaluation of things. The need and what fulfils it can, though, never be separated, as this leads precisely to the objectification which mars Kivy’s account, or to an equally implausible subjectivism. In these terms it is clear that the relationship can go in both directions, such that a particular piece of expression can give rise to new forms of emotion. This possibility would be excluded if one perceives emotion as a property: how in that case would one do anything but register an already familiar emotion as embodied in the music? As Dahlhaus aptly puts it: ‘Music is not the more determinate expression of stirrings which are also linguistically graspable, but rather the “other expression of other feelings”’ (ibid.: 333).

A remarkable amount of the recent debate in the analytical philosophy of music (e.g. Kivy in nearly all his work; Ridley 1995; Sharpe 2000; Matravers 2001) seeks to establish whether it is right to say that

5 The Husserlian vocabulary, which tends to reintroduce a split between the subjective and objective – how do we get from the real determinations of the object to the intentional ones? – might be avoided here by talking of differing kinds of perception in the manner of Merleau-Ponty.

music ‘arouses’ emotions.⁶ It seems obvious to me that there is no general answer to this question. Some people may become unbearably sad when they hear the last movement of Mahler’s Ninth, others may hear it as sad, but be more interested in its structural features. If they heard it with no emotional awareness at all it may, though, be worth asking if they could be said to be hearing it as music. The question is a normative one, but that does not mean that the claim that they are failing to hear it as music could not legitimately be made. The main point is that nothing is gained by advancing a general philosophical theory which ends up attempting to tell people that they don’t really feel what they may actually feel. Once one drops the idea of a subject confronted with an object called music, and sees the issue in such a way that subjects are affected by their relations to the object, and vice versa, this whole debate starts to look redundant. Why can there not be an indefinite number of ways in which people relate to music? The phenomenology of these ways is an important topic of discussion, but the participants in the analytical debate still seem largely unaware of the existence of phenomenology. The point Kivy should be making is made by Merleau-Ponty (1945), who rejects the objectifying language of perceived properties in favour of the idea that the perceived world, including music, is already full of meanings. These are of a kind which cannot be reduced to being ‘perceived properties’ because what they *are* depends both on the context in which they are encountered and on those encountering them.

The subjective need for expressive means is, then, itself inseparable (1) from the repertoire of possible means (a repertoire to which the subject can add), (2) from the objective possibilities offered by those means, and (3) from the need for both intersubjective, and individual, acknowledgement of the value of such means. If subjects are thought of as always already in a world to which they relate in affective ways, the ‘objective’ world affects the subject’s emotions: hence, of course, one of the roles of music. Subjects can, though, in turn, use objects to articulate their emotions, so changing the nature of the objects, as in the case of the sounds in music, which are something else when heard as music, rather than as mere noise. However, the important point concerning what can be understood both as a series of noises and as music is that the

6 This chapter was initially written before Ridley (2004), in an admirable act of self-criticism, announced his rejection of this whole approach. Those requiring more detailed arguments against the analytical approach are referred to Ridley’s outstanding volume.

objective aspect is only made objective by reflection. In the life-world we don't start with something objective, we start with music which has to be bracketed so that the merely objective sounds come to the fore. There could be no music if whatever is heard as music were not always already part of a pre-theoretically available world of human significances.

By enjoining one to hear any sounds in the life-world as music, John Cage revealed the derivative nature of the conception of music as involving the imbuing of sounds which are mere frequencies (but which also have life-world significances) with significance. If we were not always already able to hear something as music we could not reflexively extend this ability to ambient noise. There is, then, an interplay between the two notional sides, which makes them impossible to isolate from each other, not least because intersubjective means of communication and articulation are themselves both objective – they exist as marks and frequencies in the world – and 'subjective', in that they have meaning for subjects. The mystery which results from the question of how objective aspects of the world can give rise to emotions results because one has separated the inner and outer worlds a priori, rather than seeing how most, though possibly not all, emotions cannot be separated from intentional relations to an already meaning-imbued world. Brandom sums up the essential point here when he rejects the subject-object split, maintaining that in all areas of human practice 'The way we understand and conceive what we are doing affects what we *are*, in fact, doing' (Brandom 2002: 15). When we think we are 'doing music' this affects what we are actually doing.

Kivy argues that emotions heard as expressive properties of music occur in much more overwhelming ways in real life. He therefore asks why, if the emotions we purportedly experience when hearing music were as real as those in everyday life, we would deliberately wish to submit ourselves to emotions of sadness, etc. Consequently people are supposedly not saddened by hearing sad music. The opposite case of joyous music already makes his position questionable: don't many people often feel real joy when they hear such music, and employ music to change their mood? I do: try Wagner's *Meistersinger* prelude before embarking on something you are apprehensive about. Kivy again gets the phenomenology of listening to and performing music wrong because he fails to discuss the differing kinds of contexts in which the question arises. He also relies on a conception of emotions as states that can be given a name, rather than as processes with complex shadings and transitions that may depend on the particular means via which we

articulate them for their determinacy. Think of Wittgenstein's discussion of gestures as affective responses to aspects of one's world (see chapter 8 below) which are needed because words do not do the same job.

One way of overcoming the deficiencies in approaches like Kivy's is by using the idea that music can be understood in terms of what it *evokes*, in the sense of 'calls forth' or 'discloses'. As well as evoking emotions, we talk of music as being 'evocative' of landscapes, historical eras, memories, and so on.⁷ Here it is clear that the location of what is evoked is neither simply 'subjective', nor simply 'objective'. With regard to Kivy's worries about arousal of emotions, it is evidently the case that some of our emotions in relation to music are nowhere near as intense as those relating to some real-life events, and they generally have a different quality because of the differing intentional relations involved. Feeling sad about the departure of a loved person is obviously not the same as feeling sad when listening to music like Mahler's Ninth. The latter clearly *is* about departing in some sense, but there need be nothing to which the sadness it evokes immediately attaches. Many people do tend, on the other hand, to link the feelings evoked by the music with personal associations. I find it hard to listen to the third act of *Tristan* without associating it with personal feelings and fears about irreparable loss. I don't think this is an aesthetically inappropriate response, though it is only one aspect of such a response. As Dahlhaus maintains: 'That a type of aesthetic experience can be driven to an extreme in which it turns into the opposite of itself – non-aesthetic perception – is, though, not a sufficient reason to reject the type as a whole' (Dahlhaus 1988: 330).

The sadness evoked by some specific music may, then, become a vital shading of our apprehension of the world, rather than something just located as a 'property' of the music in question. We can, for instance, come to appreciate this shading as informing the loss of our youthful hopes that the world could become a happy place, a loss which might be evoked by the music of Schubert. Furthermore, the possibility that one might also have musical experiences which are *more* emotionally intense than much of what goes on in the rest of our affective lives

7 Ivan Hewett (2003: 244–5) points to the danger that music can easily become seen as a mere commodity used to evoke some arbitrary bit of world culture, and so lose its autonomy from words. However, great music can evoke things in ways which are not reducible to what we say about them, its evocative aspect being only part of its identity as music.

is excluded by Kivy's argument. The mixture of elation and sadness evoked by music can be more intense than all but the most devastating negative and positive emotions directed towards external non-musical events. Kivy's position makes it just too hard to understand the depth and complexity of affective investment in art. It is trivially true, for example, that music can 'express' everyday emotions. However, it is actually very hard to give the word 'express' a really productive sense. Adorno says of the term expression that 'where it was used for the longest time and the most emphatically, namely technically, as a musical marking, it does not demand that something specific, particular psychological states (*'seelische Inhalte'*) be expressed. Otherwise expressive would be replaceable by the names for the particular thing to be expressed' (Adorno 1997: 7, 160). In Kivy's case what is expressed would be 'garden variety' emotions, and what Adorno is pointing to would be lost. Making Kivy's idea of emotion the dominant focus of the relationship between music and its recipients does little to account for the intensity that can go into the development and reception of new forms of expression in the history of music. The scenario, suggested by Kivy's approach, of listening to the last movement of Mahler's Ninth and thinking 'That sounds pretty sad, but it has nothing to do with the real sadness that I felt when my partner left', because the music just possesses the 'perceived property' of being pretty sad, really does not get to the heart of the last movement of Mahler's Ninth. Something is obviously missing.

Mahler's symphonies inaugurate new dimensions of musical possibility which absorb, articulate, and evoke other dimensions of emotion from their historical context besides 'garden variety' sadness (on this, see chapter 9 below). Furthermore, his symphonies can give rise to new kinds of feeling in their listeners. Think of the moments of barely controlled panic in the Sixth Symphony in a world that will turn out to be spiralling towards the First World War, or the symphonies' sense of saying an ironic but melancholy farewell to forms of music which can no longer be naively employed in the face of the way the world is moving. We need an approach that allows us to appreciate the depth and complexity involved in important music as a cultural phenomenon, not one whose main aim is to settle the philosophical problem it sets itself by limiting the scope of the issue in the hope of making it more tractable. Music is world-disclosive: the world itself can take on new aspects because of it, and an adequate approach to music must be able to respond to this.

In seeking to establish a philosophical theory in the manner he does, Kivy gives too little space both to the specificity of particular music and to the significances it makes possible by that very specificity. Questions concerning the affective and other significances of the *formal* constitution of the work are effectively excluded by his model, even though he seeks to advance a ‘formalist’ position. If the sadness of Mahler’s Ninth were ‘garden variety’ sadness, it would be on the same level as the sadness of a banal pop ballad: garden varieties are, after all, supposed to be very common, and they do not vary much. The moods evoked by the symphony also have a temporality which cannot just be dealt with by trying to establish what emotion-states are being instantiated. A theory of heard properties might seem able to allow for the difference between Mahler and banal pop music, but it could only do so by moving away from the restrictive notion of emotion it entails. This move would, though, tend to obviate the point of the theory anyway, because the theory is based on recognising emotions with which we are already familiar from elsewhere. If that is all we get from Mahler on the affective level, it becomes hard to know why anyone bothers to engage with his music at a more than trivial level. It makes more sense, then, to argue that their engagement is generated precisely by the new ways in which Mahler’s music discloses the world and by the responses this can generate. My early experience of listening to Mahler was of a puzzled frustration, which resulted from the sense that nothing in the music ‘said’ things in the way other Romantic music ‘said’ them. Understanding why this was the case opened up a new dimension of experience that could not exist without this specific music.

Kivy advances his theory in the name of a formalism for which the ‘turbulence . . . in Beethoven’s symphonies no more denotes turbulence than does the turbulence of the Colorado river’ (Kivy 2002: 100). Not many philosophers these days would claim that music generally denotes anything – that idea went out in the second half of the eighteenth century – but how is it that we can understand the music as being turbulent at all, if it does not connect to our understanding of turbulence in the world we inhabit? If emotions are construed as forms of judgement there must be connections between the ability to apply the word ‘turbulent’ to a river, and the fact that we can hear and feel music as turbulent, or that music evokes turbulence. Much more important, though, is the fact that Beethoven’s specific articulations of turbulence offer new ways of experiencing and understanding turbulence, not just other instantiations of an already familiar ‘perceived property’. The context of that

turbulence in the music and culture of his era helps to give Beethoven's music its specific power. The power of art to disturb and restructure our habitual sense of the world that is exemplified by Beethoven is essential to its role in modernity. Why, moreover, do people use music in films if its inability to denote states like turbulence, as opposed to its ability to evoke and disclose, is what is most significant?⁸ One cannot construct a defence of formalism on the basis of denying basic facts about our capacity both to understand the world and to transform understandings of it (on this, see Ridley's devastating critique of Kivy in Ridley 2004).

The problem is that Kivy tends to locate the issue of musical emotions on the objective side of the triangle, and his approach depends on the assumption that music is a specifiable object. To the extent that the physical entity that is a performance of Beethoven's Fifth is not verbal it can't denote anything and could be regarded as belonging on the objective side, but that tells us almost nothing about what it is for it to be music. Essential aspects of music, such as mood and emotion, cannot be derived from the objective side, even if they are also inherently connected to it. Any approach to music that is to avoid the insufficiencies of Kivy's approach needs, for example, to attend to the ways in which music can, as the word 'evoke' suggests, make something which has been repressed or has failed to reach adequate articulation available to an individual or a social group. Why is music therapy sometimes successful if, as Kivy suggests, one only perceives the 'garden variety' feeling in the music as a 'musical feeling', rather than as something which can affect the overall economy of one's affectively laden world?

At the end of his essay 'Aesthetic Value, Objectivity, and the Fabric of the World' John McDowell asks 'how can a mere feeling constitute an experience in which the world reveals itself to us?' (McDowell 1998: 130). Kivy's position offers no answer to this question: this is underlined when he asserts that 'Music, alone of the fine arts, makes us free of the world of our everyday lives' (Kivy 2002: 256), because it has no 'content'. This last claim makes it impossible for us to understand in Kivy's own terms how music could have properties relating to feelings at all, given that such understanding derives from the world of our everyday lives, even if it is not reducible to feelings we have already experienced. Furthermore, even the enjoyment of musical form must relate

8 When such music becomes more and more standardised, it actually comes closer and closer to denoting in a schematic manner, as Adorno will suggest (see chapter 9).