

German Idealism and the philosophy of music

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ABSTRACT

German Idealism began with Leibniz and lasted until Schopenhauer, with a few central European after-shocks in the work of Husserl and his followers. That great epoch in German philosophy coincided with a great epoch in German music. It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that Idealist philosophers should have paid special attention to this art form. Looking back on it, is there anything of this prolonged encounter between music and philosophy that we can consider to be a real advance, and one that we should draw on? Many have thought so, not least because Idealism, as it matured in the post-Kantian period, inherited the adulation for art in general, and music in particular, that we find in the writings of the German Romantics, notably in Schiller, Tieck and Wackenroder. The post-Kantian Idealists connected aesthetic experience with their claims to reveal the secret meaning of things, in the infinite, the absolute, the transcendental, the ineffable or some other such object of a quasi-religious devotion. Such we find in the writings of Schelling, Fichte, Hegel and Schopenhauer, the last of whom made music not only an object of philosophy, but a prime example of it. Music, Schopenhauer wrote, is not unconscious arithmetic, as Leibniz had claimed, but unconscious philosophy, since in music the inner essence of the world, which is will, is made directly present to the intellect.

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GERMAN IDEALISM BEGAN WITH LEIBNIZ and lasted until Schopenhauer, with a few Central European aftershocks in the work of Husserl and his followers. That great epoch in German philosophy coincided with a great epoch in German music. It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that idealist philosophers should have paid special attention to this art form. Looking back on it, is there anything of this prolonged encounter between music and philosophy that we can consider to be a real advance, and one that we should draw on? Many have thought so, not least because idealism, as it emerged in the post-Kantian period, was prodigal of claims to reveal the secret meaning of things, and to relate our transient impressions to the infinite, the absolute, the transcendental, the ineffable or some other such object of a quasi-religious devotion. Such we find in the writings of Schelling, Fichte, Hegel and Schopenhauer, the last of whom made music not only a primary object of philosophy but an example of it. Music, Schopenhauer wrote, is unconscious philosophy, since in music the inner essence of the world, which is will, is made directly present to the intellect.

My own view is that the value of German idealism for the philosophy of music lies not in those vast claims, made on behalf of music or philosophy or both, but in an argument which begins with Kant's transcendental deduction, and whose influence is felt right down to the times in which we live. This argument is not about music, nor does it necessarily point in a direction that could be called 'idealist' – in the sense of that term as it was understood by Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. It begins from a specific premise, which Kant called 'the transcendental unity of apperception', taking the term 'apperception' from Leibniz via Wolff. All philosophical enquiry, Kant argued, begins and ends in the point of view of the subject. If I ask myself what I can know, or what I must do, or what I may hope for, then the question is about what *I* can know etc., given the limitations of my perspective. It is not a question about what God can know, what is knowable from some point of view that I could never attain to, or what is knowable from no point of view at all. To answer the question, therefore, I must first understand my own perspective – which means understanding what must be true of me, if I am to ask the philosophical question at all.

I know that I am a single and unified subject of experience. This present thought, this pain, this hope and this memory are features of *one* thing, and that thing is me. I know this on no basis, without having to carry out any kind of check, and indeed, without the use of criteria of any kind – this, I believe, is what Kant meant, in this context, by the term 'transcendental'. The unity of the self-conscious subject is not the conclusion of any enquiry but the presupposition of all enquiries. The unity of consciousness 'transcends' all argument since it is the premise without which argument makes no sense.

This transcendental unity contains also a claim to identity through time. I attribute to myself states of mind – memories, hopes, intentions and so on – which reach into the past and the future, and which represent me as enduring through time. How is this possible, and with what warrant do I affirm my self-identity as an objective truth about the world? Those questions underlie the argument of Kant’s ‘transcendental deduction’, and this is not the place to discuss them. More important is Kant’s expanded version of the transcendental subject, as he develops this in his ethical theory and also (although this is not often noticed) in his aesthetics.

The fundamental question of practical reason is addressed to *me*, and it asks ‘what shall I do?’ I can answer this question only on the assumption that I am free. This assumption has a transcendental ground, since it is the premise of all practical reasoning and never the conclusion of it. Transcendental freedom, like the transcendental unity of apperception, belongs to my perspective on the world. It is not a perspective that could be adopted by an animal, since it depends upon the use of the word ‘I’ – the ability to identify myself in the first person, and to give and accept reasons for believing what I believe, doing what I do and feeling what I feel.

Fichte and Hegel developed those thoughts to provide a new form of insight into the human condition. The immediate awareness that characterizes the position of the subject is, Hegel argued, abstract and indeterminate. It involves no concrete determination of *what* is known or intended by the subject. If we were pure subjects, existing in a metaphysical void, as Descartes imagined, we should never advance to the point of knowledge, not even knowledge of ourselves, nor should we be able to aim at a determinate goal. Our awareness would remain abstract and empty, an awareness of nothing. But as transcendental subject, I do not merely stand at the edge of my world. I encounter others within that world. I am I to myself only because, and to the extent that, I am you to another. I must therefore be capable of the free dialogue in which I take charge of my presence before the presence of you. That is what it means to understand the first-person case. And it is because I understand the first-person case that I have immediate awareness of my condition. The position which, for Kant, defines the premise of philosophy and which is presupposed in every argument, itself rests on a presupposition – the presupposition of the other, the one against whom I try myself in contest and in dialogue. ‘I’ requires ‘you’, and the two meet in the world of objects.

The suggestion is illustrated by Hegel with a series of parables, concerning the ‘realization’ of the subject – its *Entäußerung*, or objectification – in the world of objects. Some of these parables (I am reluctant to call them arguments) are discussed in the literature of political science, notably that of the master and slave. Many of them convey profound truths about the human condition, and about the social nature of the self. But what interests me is the idea from which they begin: the idea of the subject. This idea, it seems to me, is the abiding legacy of German idealism in all its forms. And it is the clue to a philosophy of music. My considered view is that we should abandon the idealist doctrine that the ultimate substance of the world is mental, spiritual or in some other way emancipated from the constraints of space and time. But we should adhere to the idea concealed within that doctrine, which is the idea of the

subject, as the defining feature of the human condition, and the feature to which the mystery of the world is owed.

Kant argues persuasively in the *Paralogisms of Pure Reason* that we cannot know the subject under the categories of the understanding – that is, we cannot look inwards so as to identify the I as a substance, a bearer of properties, and a participant in causal relations. To identify the subject in that way is to identify it as an *object*. The subject is a point of view *upon* the world of objects and not an item *within* it. (Again, that is what the word ‘transcendental’, in this employment, means.) It was Descartes’s mistake to look on the subject as a special kind of object, and thereby to attribute to it a substantial and immortal nature of its own.

Nevertheless, even if the subject is not a something, it is not a nothing either. To exist as a subject is to exist in another way from ordinary objects. It is to exist on the edge of the world, addressing reality from a point that lies just beyond the horizon, and which no one else can occupy. This idea has been beautifully elaborated by J. J. Valberg in his book *Dream, Death, and the Self*, and I have tried to say a little more about it, both in *The Face of God* and in *The Soul of the World*.¹ The main points that I wish to emphasize are two: first, that we each address the world from a standpoint in which our thoughts and feelings have a special and privileged place. All that matters to us is *present* to us, in thought, memory, perception, sensation and desire, or can be summoned into the present without any effort of investigation. Secondly, we respond to others as similarly present to themselves, able to answer directly to our questions, able to tell us without further enquiry what they think, feel or intend. Hence we can address each other in the second person, I to you. On those two facts, I maintain, all that is most important in the human condition has been built: responsibility, morality, law, institutions, religion, love and art.

There is a consequence that is of vital relevance to the philosophy of music. I call it the ‘overreaching intentionality of interpersonal attitudes’. Not an elegant expression, for sure, but no worse, I guess, than the ‘transcendental unity of apperception’. What I have in mind is this: in all our responses to each other, whether love or hate, affection or disaffection, approval or disapproval, anger or desire, we look *into* the other, in search of that unattainable horizon from which he or she addresses us. We are animals swimming in the currents of causality, who relate to each other in space and time. But, in the I–You encounter we do not see each other in that way. Each human object is also a subject, addressing us in looks, gestures and words, from the transcendental horizon of the ‘I’. Our responses to the other person aim towards that horizon, passing on beyond the body to the being that it incarnates.

It is this feature of our interpersonal responses that gives such compelling force to the myth of the soul, of the true but hidden self that is veiled by the flesh. And because of this our interpersonal responses develop in a certain way: we see each other as wrapped within them, so to speak, and we hold each other to account for them as though they originated *ex nihilo* from the unified centre of the self. You may say that, when we see each other in this way, we

¹ J. J. Valberg, *Dream, Death, and the Self* (Princeton, 2007). Roger Scruton, *The Face of God* (London, 2012). *The Soul of the World* (Princeton, 2014).

are giving credence to a metaphysical doctrine, maybe even a metaphysical myth. But it is not Descartes's doctrine of the soul-substance, nor is it obviously a myth. Moreover, a doctrine that is enshrined in our basic human responses, which cannot be eliminated without undermining the I-You relationship on which our first-person understanding depends, cannot be dismissed as a simple error. It has something of the status that Kant attributes to the original unity of consciousness – the status of a presupposition of our thinking, including the thinking that might lead us to cast doubt on it. Indeed, on one understanding of the matter, the adherence to this presupposition, and the practice that flows from it, is what Kant's transcendental freedom really amounts to.

So, why is this relevant to the philosophy of music? Kant notoriously had little to say about music, which he described as the agreeable play of sensations. In Schelling, Hegel and Schopenhauer, however, we encounter a growing recognition that the subject-object relation has something to do with the power of music, the power that was coming newly into the cultural foreground with the Beethoven cult, with the rise in Germany of academic musicology and with the theory, which was later to dominate musical thinking, that 'absolute' music – music without a text or an explicit subject-matter – is the true paradigm of the art. For E. T. A. Hoffmann (himself strongly influenced by Schelling) Beethoven's music unfolds a 'spirit realm', in which the subject is gripped by an infinite yearning. For Hegel music claims as its own 'the depth of a person's inner life as such: it is the art of the soul and is directly addressed to the soul'. The chief task of music, he writes, 'consists in making resound, not the objective world itself, but, on the contrary, the manner in which the inmost self is moved to the depths of its personality and conscious soul'.² Schopenhauer identified this 'inmost self' with the will, and saw music as a direct presentation of the will, which for him was the 'thing in itself' behind appearance. To see what such philosophers were getting at, however, we have to put aside the ambitious systems that commandeer their arguments and look directly at the phenomena.

The first wave of post-Kantian idealism treated the subject-object relation as marking a kind of metaphysical divide: objects on one side, subjects on the other. In Fichte and Schelling there is a kind of creation myth, according to which the world of objects is brought into being by a primeval sundering of the pure and integral subject. The subject remakes itself as object and so stands in opposition to itself in a condition of alienation. (I knows itself as not-I, to use Fichte's idiom.) This movement towards division is contained within the very essence of the real. And it brings about a separation of spirit from itself, comparable to that ascribed by St Augustine to original sin. In Schelling art in general, and music in particular, is engaged in repairing that primordial self-alienation. The Absolute makes itself perceivable through the objectification (*Entäusserung*) of the subject. In art, however, and especially in music, the Absolute is led back into its primal unity as self-identity and self-perception.

Poetic and suggestive though that narrative is, I find it impossible to translate into anything remotely approaching a literal truth. Nevertheless, I believe that there *is* an

² Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, tr. Knox (Oxford, 1975), vol. 2, p. 890.

important truth to be glimpsed, refracted and distorted, in the glass of idealist philosophy. Properly understood, the subject–object relation implies that we approach the world of our experience in two quite different ways. To objects we apply the canons of scientific explanation, seeing them as held within the spatio-temporal nexus, and moving according to laws of cause and effect. Towards subjects we exhibit the ‘over-reaching intentionality’ that goes always beyond the object, in search of the place of freedom that lies on its edge. There is a philosophical question as to how the two approaches can be reconciled, and how one and the same thing – the human being – can be the target of both. But that question is not specific to aesthetics, and demands a general answer that does not depend upon anything we might say about music. The case of music is interesting largely because music attracts the overreaching intentionality that we direct towards the world of persons, even though it does not represent that world but lives and moves in a space of its own. That, so far as I understand him, is the feature of music that occupies Hegel in his far from lucid remarks in the lectures on aesthetics. The same feature underlies Schopenhauer’s far more systematic, if ultimately untenable, theory of music as the non-conceptual presentation of the will. But it is a feature that is hard to explain in terms acceptable today.

Here is how I see the matter. I endorse the view, made central by later German Romantics, that music is an abstract (or, as they put it, an ‘absolute’) art.³ But it is a view that must be cautiously stated. For one thing, music, as it is considered by the idealist philosophers, is only one part of a larger cultural phenomenon, one that is to a certain extent the outcome of a transient social order, and indelibly marked by that order. The idealists were writing about the listening culture that emerged in modern times, in which the concert hall began to be the central venue, with chamber music understood as an ‘intimate’ and peculiarly intense version of a larger public event. The listening culture demands concentrated attention to pure sound, in a place set apart from everyday life, and ringed round by silence. The central event, the concert, has a character that is best understood through the comparison with religious ritual: a collective focusing on an event that is not explained but repeated. (I consider some of the implications of this comparison in the last chapter of *The Aesthetics of Music*.)

While we can only guess at the origins of music in human society, it is plausible to suggest that it began with collective dancing and spontaneous singing, in which the whole tribe joined, and that the musician, the rhapsode and the solo singer came later. Some people make a lot of this thought, arguing that the concert hall is a fleeting and soon to be replaced phenomenon, and that listening, as opposed to dancing, singing along or overhearing on an iPod, is a transient and unimportant episode in the history of music, one that is peculiarly associated with ‘bourgeois’ society and therefore due to be overthrown in any truly revolutionary order.⁴ Those suggestions are exaggerated, as we can see from reading ancient

³ For the emergence of the concept of ‘absolute music’ in the period of German Romanticism, see the meticulous study by Carl Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, tr. Roger Lustig (Chicago, 1989).

⁴ The yawn-inducing attack on the ‘bourgeois culture of listening’ can be found in Hanns Eisler, ‘Musik und Politik’, in *Schriften 1924–1948* (Leipzig, 1973), discussed in Chapter 1 of Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*. You find similar stuff in Ernst Bloch, who was perhaps the last idealist in the

treatises on music, all of which make listening central to the phenomenon. But we must always bear in mind that the emphasis on the intrinsic meaning of music, as an object of attention for its own sake, is itself a historical phenomenon, not to be fully understood in isolation from the culture that produced it.

Secondly, we must be wary of drawing too sudden and precipitous a conclusion from the fact that instrumental music is an abstract or non-representational medium. Architecture too is such a medium; but the idealists were not inclined to see architecture as having that special relation to the subject of consciousness that they attributed to music. Music, as we know it, is a non-representational art form. But it is not *this* that enables music to put us in contact with subjectivity, or ‘the absolute’, or the ‘infinite’, to use the language of Schelling and Hoffmann. An art form may be abstract and yet purely decorative, like the art of the carpet-weaver or the lace-maker. Common to Schelling, Hegel and Schopenhauer, however, is the thought that music reaches *beyond* abstraction in some way: it contains messages which have a special significance since they are not expressed in concepts, and are maybe inexpressible in concepts since they touch in some way on those areas of consciousness which we cannot put into words, but which nevertheless have immense significance in our interpersonal lives.

I take from the idealist discussions two further ideas about music, concerning musical movement, and first-person awareness. Schelling and Hegel both emphasize the special relation of music to time. Musical works unfold in time, but they also contain movement, organized by rhythm and melody into definite episodes. More – and this is an observation that Hegel comes near to making but never does quite make – musical movement takes place in a dimension of its own, in which there are places and relations that have no physical reality. I argue that nothing *literally* moves in musical space, but that in some way the idea of space cannot be eliminated from our experience of music. We are dealing with an entrenched metaphor – but not a metaphor of words, exactly, for we are not talking about how people describe music: we are talking about how they *experience* it. It is as though there were a metaphor of space and movement *embedded within* our experience and cognition of music. This metaphor cannot be ‘translated away’, and what it says cannot be said in the language of physics – for example, by talking instead of the pitch and timbre of sounds in physical space. Yet what it describes, the musical movement, is a real presence – and not just for me: for anyone with a musical ear.

It should not surprise us that the terms that we apply to music place it firmly in the arena of personal life. It moves as *we* move, with reasons for what it does and a sense of purpose (which might at any moment evaporate, like the purposes of people). It has the outward appearance of the inner life, so to speak, and although it is heard and not seen, it is heard as the voice is heard, and understood like the face – as ‘visitation and transcendence’, to use the words of Levinas.⁵ Unlike us, however, music creates the space in which it moves. And that space is ordered by fields of force that seem to radiate from the notes that occur in them.

philosophy of music, profoundly influenced by the Hegelian idea of the subject.

⁵ Emmanuel Levinas, *Humanism of the Other*, tr. Nidra Poller (Chicago, 2003), p. 44.

Consider the chord: perhaps the most mysterious of all musical entities. Not every collection of notes makes a chord – not even if they are notes from the same consonant triad. (Consider the ‘Hostias’ of Berlioz’s *Grande Messe des morts*, in which a B flat minor triad on flutes is separated by four octaves from the B flat on trombones, which seems not to belong with the flutes at all, even though it is the root of the triad.) A chord, whether consonant or dissonant, fills the musical space between its edges. And it faces other musical objects from those edges. You can stuff more notes into it, but in doing so you are making it more dense, not occupying space that is not already occupied. And here is another peculiarity of musical space: that two objects can be in the same space at the same time, as when contrapuntal voices briefly coincide on a single pitch or when two chords are superimposed and each retains its separate *Gestalt* character, as in polytonal music. Chords have distinctive relations to the fields of force in which they are suspended. They can be soft and sloppy, like thirteenth chords in jazz – and that regardless of their dissonance. They can be hard and tight, like the final chords of a Beethoven symphony – and that regardless of their consonance. They can yield to their neighbours, lead into them or away from them, or they might stand out as sharp and unrelated.

It is a great weakness in the idealists that they make so little effort to identify particular works of music and particular musical phenomena, in order to say *what is going on* in them. They do not confront directly the question that troubles me, which is how we understand musical space, and what *kind* of movement occurs in it. Hoffmann gives concrete descriptions of the Beethoven masterpieces, and his remarks are both inspiring and informative. But he does not tackle the philosophical question, how we can hear in sequences of sounds those bursts of emotion that he describes so well. Schelling seems to be aware of the philosophical question, but he gives us no concrete example through which to comprehend it. Thus he emphasizes that tone (*Klang*) is neither noise nor mere sound but ‘the body’s intuition of the soul’ (*die Anschauung der Seele des Körpers selbst*),⁶ and that this feature derives from the fact that music is organized by the principle of temporal succession. Hence music is ‘the art that most discards corporeality by representing *pure* motion as such, abstracted from the object, and is borne by invisible, almost spiritual, wings’.⁷ So far, however, this is all metaphor. When it comes to building the observation into a philosophical argument, Schelling takes from Kant the theory of time as the ‘form of inner sense’, and stirs this into his observation concerning the subjective nature of tone to produce the following soup:

the necessary form of music is *succession*, since time is the general form of the implantation (*Einbildung*) of the infinite into the finite, in so far as it is intuited as form, abstracted from the real. The principle of time in the subject is self-awareness, which is the implantation of the unity of consciousness into the diversity in the ideal.⁸

⁶ *Schriften zur Philosophie der Kunst und zur Freiheitslehre* (1802/3), §76.

⁷ *Ibid.*, §83.

⁸ *Ibid.*, §77.

The least that can be said is that it is hard to disagree with Schelling, for it is equally hard to know what it would be to agree with him. And, without putting too fine a point on it, I would say that it is a general weakness of idealist philosophers that they do not present arguments that can be engaged with from outside their own systems.

However the subject/object distinction might be put to effective use in a more modern, and I hope more lucid, form. The overreaching intentionality that we direct to the world of persons is not confined to that world. In a religious frame of mind we look on the whole of reality as though it were the revelation of a first-person viewpoint: the viewpoint of God. We see things, then, not in terms of the laws of cause and effect, but rather in the terms that we use of people, when we call them to account for their actions. We look for reasons and goals, rather than causes and laws of nature. This is something more than animism, and something less than theology. But it is a human universal, and lies at the heart of our experience of the sacred and the numinous. Whether it is ever a *veridical* experience is, of course, the great question that theologians have to answer, and not a question for my argument here. But the idealist enterprise was precisely to show that this intimation of reason at the heart of the natural world is indeed veridical. Fichte, Schelling and Hegel wanted to provide a substitute for theology in the form of a philosophy that gives access to the viewpoint of God – the ‘absolute’ perspective which is also the subjectivity of the world.

That ambitious enterprise showed itself to be futile, and it is not my concern to demolish it. But it points to a more circumscribed and more fruitful application of the subject–object relation in the understanding of music. The listening culture that formed the background to the speculations of Schelling and Hegel was based on the transformation emphasized by Schelling of sound (*Laut*) into tone (*Klang*). This is a transformation in the ear of the beholder, and comes about, I argue, when we adopt an ‘acousmatic’ posture towards the sound world, hearing sounds not as events in physical space but as events occurring in a space of their own, related to each other by the forces that govern musical movement. The acousmatic way of hearing brings with it the overreaching intentionality of our interpersonal attitudes. We are listening for the subject beyond the object, the point of view that harbours the reason, and not just the cause, for what we hear. In representational works of art, such as pictures and poems, the subject is presented to the imagination as something separate from the work – the woman in the picture, the poet who speaks the words. In an abstract art form like music the subject has no identity separate from the work. The subject that we hear, and whose voice this is, lies *in* the notes, a discarnate and incorporeal being who confronts us from a horizon that lies at the edge of these very sounds. And that is what moves us in the great works of the listening culture: works like the quartets of Beethoven and Schubert, which address us from a realm that is entirely emancipated from physical reality.

This suggestion gives rise to another: namely, that through music we can in some unique way *enter into* a subjectivity that is not our own, and indeed not anyone’s. This is the suggestion that we find in Schopenhauer, and in conclusion it is worth visiting his account of the metaphysics of music. Schopenhauer was the only post-Kantian who regarded the

problem of music and its meaning as a test-case for his philosophy, and his theories had a profound impact on Wagner, whose reading of Schopenhauer fostered his conception of a drama that would unfold entirely through the inner feelings of the characters. These feelings, hinted at in words, would acquire their full reality and elaboration in music. Developing under its own intrinsic momentum, the music would guide the listener through subjective regions that were otherwise inaccessible, creating a drama of inner emotion framed by only the sparsest gestures on the stage – gestures which, for this very reason, would become so saturated with meaning as to reach the limits of their expressive potential.

Schopenhauer saw music as a unique form of knowledge, with a status among the arts that was both exalted and metaphysically puzzling. Unlike poetry or figurative painting, music employs no concepts, and presents no narrative of an imaginary world. Its meaning is contained within itself, inseparable from the ebb and flow of its abstract lines and harmonies. Yet listening to a great work of music we feel that we are gaining insight into the deepest mysteries of being – although it is an insight that lives in the music, and defies translation into words. Schopenhauer's theory offers both to explain and to vindicate this feeling, and at the same time to exalt music to a metaphysical position matched by no other art form. Music, Schopenhauer tells us, 'is the most powerful of all the arts, and therefore attains its ends entirely from its own resources'.⁹

Simply put, Schopenhauer's theory tells us that music acquaints us with the will, which for Schopenhauer is the Kantian 'thing-in-itself', the indescribable reality behind the veil of human perception, whose operations we know through our own self-awareness. The will cannot be known through concepts, since they provide us merely with representations, and never with the thing-in-itself. Our inner knowledge of the will is therefore non-conceptual, a direct and unsayable access to the metaphysical essence. This non-conceptual knowledge is offered also by music. Unlike painting and literature, music is not a form of representation, nor does it deal in Platonic Ideas, which are the common resource of all the other arts. Music exhibits the will directly. And this explains its power: for it also *acts* on the will directly, raising and altering the passions without the intermediary of conceptual thought. Through consonance and dissonance music shows, in objective form, the will as satisfied and obstructed; melodies offer the 'copy of the origination of new desires, and then of their satisfaction';¹⁰ suspension is 'an analogue of the satisfaction of the will which is enhanced through delay'¹¹ and so on. At the same time, because music is a non-conceptual art, it does not provide the objects of our passions but instead shows the inner working of the will itself, released from the prison of appearances. In opera and song the words and action provide the subject-matter of emotion, but the emotion itself is generated in the music. And 'in opera,

⁹ *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, tr. E. F. J. Payne as *The World as Will and Representation* (Indian Hills, 1958), vol. 2, p. 448.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 455.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 456.

music shows its heterogeneous nature and its superior intrinsic virtue by its complete indifference to everything material in the incidents.¹²

As it stands, Schopenhauer's theory succeeds in vindicating the expressive power of music only by linking music to his conception of the will as 'thing-in-itself'. Moreover, the theory is in danger of self-contradiction. Schopenhauer denies that music represents the will; but he also says that music 'presents', 'exhibits' (*darstellt*), even offers a 'copy' (*Abbild*) of the will, and what these terms mean is never explained. Moreover, if it is really true that the will is the thing-in-itself behind appearances, then nothing can be said about it. All meaningful statements concern representations and Ideas (the Platonic essences exemplified by individual things). Music belongs in the world of appearance and is, indeed, nothing more than an appearance, which exists only for those with ears to hear it. Hence it is strictly meaningless to speak of an analogy between the movement that we hear in music and the striving of the will itself.

Nevertheless, those philosophical difficulties do not affect the core of truth in the theory. Schopenhauer tells us that the non-conceptual awareness that we have of our own mental states is really an awareness of the will; he also tells us that the will is objectively presented to us without concepts in the work of music. In these two statements we can 'divide through' by the will, to use Wittgenstein's metaphor:¹³ reference to the will is an unwarranted addition to another and more intelligible theory, which tells us that in self-knowledge we are acquainted with *the very same thing* that we hear in music. To put it in another way: music presents subjective awareness in objective form. In responding to expressive music, we are acquiring a 'first-person' perspective on a state of mind that is not our own – indeed which exists un-owned and objectified, in the imaginary realm of musical movement.¹⁴

So understood, Schopenhauer's argument can be detached from his metaphysics of the will, which, like all the metaphysical theories of the idealists, is open to the fatal objection that it assumes a point of view on the world that is strictly unobtainable, and which indeed Kant had shown to be unobtainable in *The Critique of Pure Reason*. Combining the two lines of enquiry that I have followed, we can present a single, plausible and comprehensive theory of musical understanding towards which all the idealists were working, hampered by their gross metaphysical ambitions on the one hand and their musical incompetence on the other, but defensible in other terms than those they appealed to. According to this theory, sounds become music when they are organized in such a way as to invite acousmatic listening. Music is then heard to *address* the listener, I to you, and the listener responds with the overreaching attitudes that are the norm in interpersonal relations. These attitudes reach for the subjective horizon, the edge behind the musical object. The music invites the listener to adopt its own subjective point of view, through a kind of empathy that shows the world from a perspective

¹² Ibid., p. 449.

¹³ See *Philosophical Investigations*, Part 1, section 293.

¹⁴ I have defended this view at length in *The Aesthetics of Music*, and assume, for present purposes, an intuitive understanding of what it means.

that is no one's and therefore everyone's. All this is true of music in part because it is an abstract, non-representational art, in part because it avails itself of temporal organization in a non-physical space.

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