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Musical Expression: From Language to Music and Back

Eran Guter

Department of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences, The Max Stern Yezreel Valley College, D.N. Emek Yezreel 1930600, Israel; erang@yvc.ac.il

Abstract: The discourse concerning musical expression hinges on a fundamental analogy between music and language. While the extant literature commonly compares music to language, this essay takes the reverse direction, following Wittgenstein's approach. The discussion contrasts the theoretical underpinnings of the "music as language" simile with those of the "language as music" simile. The emphasis on characterization, performance, mutual tuning-in relationships, the interaction between language and music, and the open-ended effort to reorient ourselves as we draw in significance challenges the "informing paradigm" that has been paramount across contemporary philosophical theories of musical expression. One of the most promising philosophical avenues that emerges as we move beyond the "informing paradigm" is recognizing the inseparable relationship between musical expression and our power to shape our own language.

Keywords: musical expression; language; aspects; characterization; meaning; significance; physiognomy; understanding; language games; aesthetics

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1. Introduction

One of music's great wonders—transcending genre, type, period, or style—lies in its expressiveness, which often renders it meaningful and valuable to us. The standard treatment of musical expression in the contemporary analytic philosophy of music is typified by the tendency to render what we find meaningful about musical experience in terms of some sort of relation that obtains between the music and something else, either in the world or within ourselves. The idea that musical meaning consists in expressing, representing, conveying, or in some other way impinging upon extra-musical things is an important part of what makes musical experience significant for us.

The very idea that music possesses or pertains to content in some sense coincides with the equally prevalent thinking of music as akin to language, hence being prone to what we might call the "informing paradigm", for it is evident that language is essentially an information-carrying medium. Indeed, on many occasions, we do use music to inform others or to become informed: we employ music to signal, make statements, denote and connote things, events, or people, and to serve as decorum. However, in examining the notion of musical expression, I follow Ludwig Wittgenstein's contrary intuition that when considering "the way music speaks", we need to be reminded that "even though a poem is framed in the language game of informing, it is not employed in the language game of informing" [1] (§ 888). We would have been baffled, Wittgenstein avers, if we were to encounter "someone who had never having known music, who came to us and heard someone playing a reflective piece of Chopin, being convinced that this was a language and people merely keeping the sense secret from him" [1] (§ 888)[1].

Comparing music and language is a double-edged sword. Against the customary tendency to compare music to language, we can pitch a reverse, somewhat puzzling

comparison: trying to figure out how and why language is to be compared to music. These two directions reveal two ways in which music meshes with our lives. The point in this essay is not to trade one for the other, or to make a final verdict as to which is "right", but to offset one by means of the other. Since the "language as music" simile has been all but suppressed in the contemporary analytic philosophy of music, this paper takes an ameliorative approach in examining the discourse concerning musical expression.

My discussion unfolds through a series of contrasts. Sections 2 and 3 present the two contrasting master similes—"music as language" and "language as music"—examining their roles in musical expression. I highlight both points of friction and fundamental differences, showing how each perspective illuminates and obscures different aspects of musical expression. Sections 4 and 5 analyze and criticize two notable accounts exemplifying the "informing paradigm" of musical expression, using them to further explore the implications of the "language as music" simile. Finally, Section 6 presents what I consider one of the most promising philosophical avenues that emerges as we overcome the bias of the "informing paradigm": recognizing the ineliminable relationship between musical expression and our power to shape our own language.

2. Music as Language

The discourse concerning musical expression in the contemporary analytic philosophy of music hinges on what at least seems like an ineliminable analogy between music and language. This is hardly surprising in the aftermath of the "linguistic turn", although the explicit comparison between music and language in this context surely harks back to earlier times, e.g., the early modern *Affektenlehre*. The commonly asked question when considering the analogy between music and language is "How is music like language?" This question presupposes that in the analogy between music and language, the latter is the (relatively) familiar source, while the former is the (relatively) unfamiliar target, which needs explication. The desideratum is being able to spell out in what respects music is akin to language, if at all. Thus construed, the question about musical meaning, and about its relation to our emotions, takes understanding a musical passage, like understanding a sentence in ordinary language, to be by and large transitive, requiring that we can understand what it is about and its purported associations with objects, events, or properties, and to be able to identify such associations independently of their embeddedness in the music as heard or played.

The crucial importance of this master simile of music as language is in its being constitutive of the prevailing discourse. It is the presupposition of a question whose articulation regenerated the discussion of musical expression in what has distinguished itself as the analytic philosophy of music. It is an assumption to the effect that this general question can be raised and answered. Thus, looking back at the historical contour of the discourse, supporters and detractors alike—from Arthur Schopenhauer to Deryck Cooke on one side of the fence, and from Eduard Hanslick to Peter Kivy on the other—are committed to this ultimate presupposition, insofar as they share the same discourse at all. Much of the debate pivoted on the built-in limitations that the master simile of music as language reveals (as one would expect in the case of any other analogy stretched beyond a certain point). These include, among other things, overdrawing theories used to explain the structure of natural languages to account not only for the syntactic aspects of music but also its "vocabulary", as it were, and trying to negotiate between a need to attribute rule-guidedness to musical expression and the realization that rules in music are not usually conventions but rather post facto, context-dependent generalizations from a tradition of musical practice [2][2].

The contour of the discourse is shaped by a number of additional issues, which will be incorporated into my discussion in the following sections. For now, I offer a preliminary outline for them. First is the draw into what we might call "the vortex of ineffability". The idea, to borrow Reiner Maria Rilke's famous words from his poem *An die Musik*, is that music may well be "a language where languages end". As I argued elsewhere [3], this has a lot to do with the way that the interest in the relationship between music and an envisioned interiority pertaining to the listening subject has been handed down to the contemporary analytic philosophy of music from German Romanticism. A defining characteristic of German Romanticism is its view of musical depth as a boundless internal realm. This realm's contents are seen as irreducible, uncollectible, and incalculable, making it impossible to ever fully express or articulate them through spoken languages. Schopenhauer offered the definitive pronouncement of this idea: "The inexpressible depth of all music, by virtue of which it floats past us as a paradise quite familiar and yet eternally remote and is so easy to understand and yet so inexplicable, is due to the fact that it reproduces all the emotions of our innermost being" [4] (p. 264).

This leads to Rilke's oxymoron—music as an articulation of the inarticulate—and to the assertion of untranslatability as a feature of the language of music. Quite strikingly, these limiting ideas were articulated and upheld by rivaling, otherwise mutually exclusive parties from across the philosophical spectrum evinced by the master simile of music as language, albeit for very different reasons. For a full-fledged champion of the idea of self-subsisting musical content like Schopenhauer, this is an inevitable predicament due to the esoteric nature of the kind of content that music purportedly possesses, namely, the "inner nature" of human emotions or the "secret history" of the human will, while for a full-fledged formalist like Eduard Hanslick, this is the logical outcome of the inseparability of form and content in music. "In music", Hanslick wrote, "there is sense and logic, but musical sense and logic. It is a language that we speak and understand, but we are unable to translate" [5] (pp. 43–44).

The idea of untranslatability becomes acute when considering musical profundity. Schopenhauer's metaphysical framework elevates music to the pinnacle of artistic expression and depth. In his view, music holds a unique cognitive status for two key reasons. Firstly, it offers immediate insight into the "thing-in-itself"—the metaphysical will—providing the clearest and most vivid glimpse of ultimate reality. Secondly, music forges an unparalleled connection with the inner workings of human emotions, capturing their distinctive ebb and flow, their intensity, and their subtle fluctuations. This dual capacity allows music to convey profound truths about existence and human experience in ways that other art forms cannot match. As Wackenroder put it, "the human heart becomes acquainted with itself in the mirror of musical sounds" [6] (p. 191). Thus, facing the abyss of musical profundity, what I called above "Rilke's oxymoron" bifurcates into two diametrically opposite positions: either music is maximally informative, or else—if one takes the formalist stance—it is non-informative by definition, since, tautologically, music can only express itself [7] [3].

That latter stance sent Peter Kivy [8] in the years to come into a spiraling skepticism concerning the very idea that music could ever be rightly called profound. In general, the analytic philosophy of music struggles with the concept of musical content's fundamental inexpressibility, particularly when exploring the depths of musical profundity. This challenge arises partly because the field still relies to some extent on a notion of meaning rooted in propositional knowledge, akin to that found in the natural sciences [9] [4]. The very thought that music is a sort of language where languages end problematizes the conviction that language needs to connect reliably with the world.

In effect, the discourse concerning musical expression has been split in two: the debate about musical profundity, initiated by Kivy's skeptical challenge, carries on separately from the debate concerning the relation of music to what Kivy dubbed "the garden-variety emotions [10][5]". The latter debate relies entirely on the problematic assumption that a passage or piece of music is expressive of a single, fairly stable emotional content: perceived qualities of the musical sounds. This view portrays emotions as discrete, nameable states, overlooking their nature as intricate processes with nuanced variations and transitions. Allegedly, the stability of the content permits a reasonably clear identification of it. Yet, it fails to recognize that the specific methods we use to express emotions may actually shape their definitiveness and character. In the last analysis, this presupposes—too conveniently, I contend—that our psychological concepts are semantically rigid[6].

Hence the "informing paradigm" inevitably reveals itself as a philosophically truncated position. It loses sight of what needs to be taken into account for the language of music to operate—all the culturally situated capacities for the myriad, enormously complex techniques needed to communicate musically. It assumes, and eo ipso exempts itself from further reflection, that all the arbitrary correlations at the bottom of our culturally acquired reference scheme of, say, Western tonal music, and the ways we make sense of it, have already been fixed once and for all. This would make sense, perhaps, when one is performing experimental psychology and needs to ask the test subjects to inform in the artificial setup of an experiment in a laboratory whether one musical segment sounds sadder or happier than another. Scientists really have no choice, for they need to start their experiments somewhere. But that is very different, I argue, from giving voice to an experience. The point is, as Bowie put it, that "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" [11] (p. 25).

It is hardly surprising, then, that the "informing paradigm" also yields the compatibility of a broad spectrum of theories of musical expression—from the resemblance theory [10] through the persona theory [12,13] and make-believe theory [14] to the contagion theory [15][7]—with what Sloboda [16] calls the "pharmaceutical model" of music listening. This perspective significantly tends to prioritize listeners over performers as the primary focus of philosophical inquiry [17][8]. This is the idea that music listeners "are the passive recipient of musical stimuli which have the psychological effect they do because of the way that the human brain is constructed, on the one hand, and the way that music is constructed, on the other" [16] (p. 319). Sloboda argues that the "pharmaceutical model" offers a limited perspective on musical experience, neglecting the complex and varied ways in which listeners actively construct musical meaning. This model underestimates the listeners' agency in choosing how to engage with music, what meanings to derive, and how to use music as a tool for building relationships and shared experiences. Furthermore, it fails to account for the pervasive role of music and musicality in daily life, and how they influence our communication and interpersonal connections. By focusing solely on music's effect on passive recipients, the "pharmaceutical model" misses the dynamic, interactive nature of musical engagement and its broader sociocultural implications.

3. Language as Music

While there is no doubt that we may use music to inform others about all kinds of things, asking how music is like language may not be the only way to take the analogy between music and language. The converse question, namely, "how language is like music?", may also present itself as philosophically significant, if taken non-circularly. This converse question presupposes that in the analogy between music and language, the former is the (relatively) familiar source, while the latter is the (relatively) unfamiliar target, which

needs explication [18–20][9]. The inverted simile of "language as music", indeed a road less traveled in the contemporary philosophy of music, propelled Wittgenstein's paradigm shift, as I called it elsewhere [19], and in more recent times, it was taken up by Cavell [21,22], albeit in rudimentary fashion. Wittgenstein, in his later philosophical work, put the inverted simile into remarkable use, seeking out sensibilities and possibilities that pertain to, are imaginable through, or are enhanced by making music together, a musicality in language, as I call it [19], and thus also a release from the need to be held captive by certain pictures of language. This perspective allowed him to highlight the fluid, non-mechanical aspects of language that are deeply rooted in our ways of life, emphasizing elements that are incalculable and indeterminate—particularly gesture and expression—which informed his inquiry into meaning and understanding, and most significantly, the communicability of aspects.

Taking the "language as music" simile non-circularly inevitably requires acknowledging that the convenient line that we are used to drawing in ordinary language between language and music cannot be underpinned by a philosophical theory. For that can be carried out only by means of the informative function of language, whose resources may be insufficient and are precisely those that need to be approached or disclosed by other means in ways language cannot circumscribe. Wittgenstein was adamant about this, saying that "the [musical] theme is a new part of our language, it becomes incorporated in it; we learn a new gesture. The theme interacts with language" [23] (pp. 59–60). This is an upshot of his exploration, in his later philosophical work, of interrelations between language games [24–27][10].

Wittgenstein posits that language games operate on different logical levels, with some games requiring familiarity with others for comprehension. He suggests a vertical relationship between these games, where understanding a move in a secondary game depends on grasping its counterpart in a logically prior game, that is, in another game which is already familiar to us. Wittgenstein illustrates this concept using musical themes as an example. He notes that when we describe a musical theme as drawing a conclusion, confirming something, or responding to an earlier part, our understanding relies on our familiarity with conclusions, confirmations, and responses in non-musical contexts. This vertical relationship between language games creates a logical impossibility: one cannot explain a secondary move without first having acquired the primary one. In such cases, Wittgenstein argues, we can only resort to comparisons, using verbal definitions or paradigmatic examples from the presupposed language game.

Strikingly, Kivy [28] makes a very similar point, although without driving home its implications. Kivy denies that musical phenomena such as quotations and repetitions can be interpreted semantically in a non-question-begging way. He makes the important point that when we say that the music "quotes", "suggests", "repeats", etc., the use of such words in musical contexts actually presupposes familiarity with their ordinary use. Of course, this equally covers all our uses of words to attribute expressiveness in musical contexts[11]. Wittgenstein, however, does not shy away from ultimate implications: "Doesn't the [musical] theme point to anything beyond itself? Oh yes! But this means: the impression it makes on me is connected with things in its environment—for example, with the existence of the German language and its intonation, but that means with the whole field of our language games" [23] (pp. 59–60). That is to say, the specificity of the expression that the musical theme wears is due to our deepening attention to its manner of characterization within the whole range of our language games, which is its relevant, patently indeterminate system of possibilities. By moving beyond the inner/outer distinction in this way, Wittgenstein can coherently assert that while there is no paradigm

other than the musical theme, "yet again there is a paradigm other than the theme: namely the rhythm of our language, our thinking & feeling" [23] (p. 59).

This way of construing the relationship between music and content gives rise to a fundamental difference compared to standard theories in the analytic philosophy of music. According to Scruton [29], it also explains why the analytic philosophy of music developed in a way that is so inimical to Wittgenstein's insights. In the previous section, I pointed out that musical meaning has typically been understood as a relation between music and something else. However, from the perspective opened up by the "language as music" simile, musical meaning can be seen as what Wittgenstein called an "internal relation"—a relation that denies the separateness of the things it joins [30][12]. The nature of internal relations cannot be determined by simply examining the related elements, as these elements cannot be identified independently of their relationships. Rather than thinking of these elements as discrete parts that "fit" together, we should understand them as inherently connected through use and understanding. Internal relations are creatures of our practice, since they are evinced by the way we characterize and identify things. In other words, the relationship is to be found in grammar.

What this means is that we recover, as Hagberg puts it, "a full-blooded sense of practice-focused embodiment against the abstractions of a disembodied idealism (of a kind that, given the inducements of certain linguistic forms, remain ever-present in aesthetics)" [31] (p. 73). Bowie [11] points out that Kivy's attempt to pull away from invalid subjectivism ends up by inverting the problem to which subjectivism gives rise by means of interpreting musical expression as "perceived properties" of the music[13]. Wittgenstein's paradigm shift—see [23] (p. 54)—amounts to rendering music as a relational field, broaching the multifarious interrelated language games that constitute "the rhythm of our language, of our thinking and feeling"—the living, embodied "origin" of, say, a melody, which in itself is not yet a melody—and the gesture that is incorporated into our human lives as if in a ceremony—the "role" that the melody plays, which is a melody no more but part of the lived, embodied realities of musical intelligibility. This brings forth the centrality of Wittgenstein's notion of aspects, that is, the centrality of the ways in which we draw in significance as we reveal something in a particular way, rendering a physiognomy distinct[14].

The emphasis on musical intelligibility is geared toward resurfacing from the linguistic undergirding of syntax, semantics, and rule following at the interface of human interaction. From the perspective of the "language as music" simile, the discourse does not need 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. This does not preclude an inquiry into differences between putatively semantic and non-semantic forms of articulation, but it does leave open the question of how fundamental this difference should be seen as pertaining to actual communicability in various instances. Bowie notes that "the basic idea here is [. . .] 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" [11] (p. 6).

This affects the scope of the discourse from the perspective of "language as music". It ranges not from formalism to narrativism, namely, from a denial of the very possibility of extra-musical content (emotional or other) to an unabashed attribution of extra-musical content, but rather from what Wittgenstein calls "speaking with tongues" [32] (§§ 528–535)—a language-like phenomenon in which the mere play of sounds or intonation can be conceived as laden with meaning, to a language "in whose use the 'soul' of the words played no part". Users of such a "soulless language" would be blind to any necessitation of characterizing, which is not fully derived from the position of words in accordance with explicit rule and tables[15]. Wittgenstein's upshot is this: "I want to apply the word

'understanding' to all this" [32] (§ 532). The "language as music" simile is a mediator, or a median, between these two in the sense that musicality, seen broadly as the ability or willingness to experience the necessitation of a particular manner of characterizing, to let a gesture "creep into my life ... make it my own" [23] (p. 83), is taken as a ligature to understanding [33][16].

As Scruton [29] pointed out, the thrust of Wittgenstein's paradigm shift in the philosophy of music was the displacement of the notion of musical meaning by the notion of musical understanding. "Meaning", Wittgenstein wrote, "is like going up to someone" [32] (§ 455, 457). The point is that if music has meaning, then that meaning must be understood by those who hear with understanding, and that understanding is part of a complex social process, which hinges on musicality in the aforementioned extended sense. Constraints on understanding are therefore constraints on meaning. According to Scruton, "we have no idea what musical meaning might be, until we have some grasp of the distinction between the one who hears with understanding and the one who merely hears" [29] (p. 34). The directionality of the "language as music" is evinced in the acknowledgment that musical understanding is not revealed in performance in the way that linguistic understanding is revealed in speech. Consider the case of a "soulless language", in which a person could speak stiffly, with no feeling, without attention to phrasing, yet may nonetheless show that he understood what he was saying. That would be a limiting case for music: think of a perfect execution of a musical piece composed solely by means of purely mathematical procedures with no dynamics whatsoever, to be played with utmost precision on an instrument which has no timbre. In contrast, short of that limiting case, a person who performs everything prescribed by the musical score of a common-practice-era piece—but stiffly, with no feeling, without attention to phrasing or style—will nevertheless show that they have understood very little, if anything.

The resistance of the musical gesture to paraphrasing and explication does not denote a tension between the knowable and the unknowable, as Romantic thinkers believed and contemporary analytic philosophers concurred, but rather the tension between different kinds of understanding. Yet, such recalcitrance is not a deficiency unless one insists on the absolute validity of the "informing paradigm". The communicability of musical gestures is physiognomic, intransitively transparent to human life through a myriad of interrelated language games. "The question is really", says Wittgenstein, "are these notes not the best expression for what is expressed [in the musical phrase]? Presumably. But that does not mean that they aren't to be explained by working on their surroundings" [1] (§36). An understanding of what the phrase means is available to us, but "this understanding would be reached by saying a great deal about the surroundings of the phrase" [1] (§34). But this means that the structured face of the music, as it is being characterized, phrased, and rephrased, reveals the ineliminable uptake of interrelations between language games, evinced by multiform ways of characterizing, ultimately broaching "the whole field of our language games" [23] (p. 59).

4. Kivy's Aboutness Criterion

Kivy's position is an extraordinary exemplar of the "informing paradigm" precisely due to its unflinching formalism. It serves as a limiting case in its quest to load all musical meaning onto musical form. In particular, regarding Kivy's skepticism about musical profundity, which he construed as the failure of music to be about profound things, his defiant position can be seen as problematic. As I argued elsewhere [3], this position represents a fully realized philosophy of music held captive by a picture of musical meaning as a relation between music and something else. Kivy took the prevailing conception, which has been handed down to the analytic philosophy of music from Romantic thought on

music, to a logical extreme, ultimately demonstrating its inherent fragility. He showed how the paradigm cannot sustain its own weight when undercut by applying rigorous skepticism to the supposed relationship between music and the world.

According to Kivy, since pure instrumental music is a quasi-syntactic structure "without text, title, programme, dramatic setting, or any other extraordinary music apparatus" [34] (p. 157), devoid of meaning, or reference, or representational features, it cannot be about anything. Kivy often freely uses the term "absolute music" for it (for the sake of simplicity, I shall follow his use in the following exposition without judgment). While some of its features are expressive, he maintained, music is still not about emotions. Hence, he offered the resemblance theory, which introduced also the split in his discussion, as I noted above, between music's expressiveness of the garden-variety emotions and what he conceived as the ecstatic, morally uplifting experience of absolute music (in the aforementioned sense), which resembles nothing that could be identified outside of the music.

According to the "aboutness criterion", works of art (including works of music) are about something, or at least, the question of what they are about may legitimately arise. Works of art not only possess content but also express something about that content. Kivy [28] located the effort to categorize absolute music under the "aboutness criterion" in music's historical connection to the representational arts since the Enlightenment era. However, Kivy expressed doubt regarding the actual process by which absolute music was purportedly incorporated into the fine arts classification system, importantly, because the "aboutness criterion" is not just a semantic criterion but also pertains to the acquisition of knowledge. When we ask regarding a musical work, "What is it about?", there is something that we wish to know, be informed of, or inform others. The desideratum is a unique item of knowledge, which we are supposed to be able to justify and ground.

Kivy's rejection of "emotional aboutness"—that is, the thesis that musical expression consists in the music being about the emotions—is most pertinent to my discussion. According to Kivy [34], "emotional aboutness" is a form of narrativism. Narrativists are literary interpreters of absolute music. They employ a literary analogy to attribute meaning to pure instrumental music, perhaps even to render absolute music as akin to literary art. Kivy [28] contended that "emotive aboutness" erroneously assumes that attributing perceptual qualities to music necessarily implies assigning semantic or representational properties, or "content", to it. Kivy was particularly critical of such narrativist accounts as the "persona theory" (see 12–13). Such theories postulate some sort of indefinite persona in the music, which is supposed to serve as a hinge for our deeply felt interest in pure instrumental music. Such theories attempt "to give absolute music a fictional content that is supposed to account for its artistic substance and interest, at least in part" [34] (p. 101). The idea is that just as narrators in literary works express beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and emotions by means of the words of the text, so to do musical personae express emotions (feelings, attitudes) by means of the sounds (or "gestures") of the music. So, listeners' experiences, like those of readers, involve something like recognizing and responding to another person, one who experiences and expresses the emotion in question. From a formalist perspective, Kivy argued that persona theorists were taking an overly simplistic approach to the problem of absolute music [34,35][17]. He pointed out that the analogy with literature breaks down because literary personae are interesting due to their individuality, concrete nature, rich personal histories, and detailed circumstances. In contrast, musical personae are abstract entities or "empty suits", as Kivy termed them. Ultimately, Kivy maintained, musical personae may have very little literary resources to hold our interest or to move us emotionally. In other words, they are uninformative.

Kivy's frustrating denial of musical profundity followed nilly willy from his rejection of the "aboutness criterion" in the case of music. According to Kivy, "for a work to be profound, it must fulfill at least three conditions: it must be able to be 'about' (that is, it must possess the possibility of a subject matter); it must be about something profound (which is to say, something of abiding interest or importance to human beings); it must treat its profound subject matter in some exemplary way or other adequate to that subject matter (function, in other words, at some acceptably high aesthetic level)" [8] (pp. 203–204). If music cannot be about anything, then ipso facto it also cannot be profound [3][18]. As I pointed out before, the resemblance theory can account only for musical expression which purportedly has a distinct, linguistically describable physiognomic counterpart. This is not the case in regard to the kind of elusive emotion that, pursuant to Romantic thought, we would want to associate with profundity.

Kivy's rejection of "emotive aboutness" takes the form of skepticism about reading emotive content from the perceived properties of the music. Yet, the concept of skepticism has room only where there is also room for the appropriate concept of knowledge. Skepticism merely undercuts the promise of knowledge. The promise of knowledge in this case rests on a twofold assumption. First, the relevant perceived properties are objective. This objectivity relates to forms of description used in the sciences, which attempt to establish the existence of properties independently of subjective apprehensions. Secondly, the concept of "evidence" is tantamount to the concept of "proof". This twofold assumption is jettisoned when we reverse the analogy between language and music and step outside of the inner/outer divide.

As Scruton [29] noted, musical understanding is a form of aesthetic understanding. It is manifest in the conscious search—by the composer, the performer, and the listener—for the right phrasing, the right dynamics, the right tempo, and so forth. Entering what Schütz [36] called "mutual tuning-in relationships", we strive at conveying the specificity of such experiences by articulating possibilities that serve and instance further possibilities for the characterization of what may be heard and played. According to Floyd, "this sense of 'acquaintance' requires comportment, discernment, attunement, response, experience, sensitivity to context, some elements of convention [. . .] It involves looking and response, acknowledgement of another who is expected to respond back with a look" [37] (p. 371).

As I noted in Section 3 above, the specificity of the musical gesture marks a shift in the interrelated language game played, becoming "a *new* part of our language", in Wittgenstein's words. The moment of getting it right consists in an interrelated move in a language game, which can only be understood within the context of correlate, logically prior moves in "the entire field of our language games". Thus, gesture and experience are inseparable—they are internally related. The one who hears with understanding "resonates in harmony", as it were, with the thing understood [23,38][19]. This "resonating in harmony" is the hallmark of the aesthetic experience of a fitting characterization—our attention is drawn to something that can now assist us in recovering a sense of necessity in the given situation. It is as if in the moment of "getting it right", we are caught, or we catch ourselves, in the act of characterizing.

Thus, in such a moment, we find what I call "game incorrigibility" [39]. Primary physiognomic language games, such as pain expression, are thoroughly incorrigible in the sense that the natural expression of pain and the accompanying sensational language, which also involves other people's reaction to these expressions, are grammatically inseparable from the experience of pain. In other words, we cannot question the way such language games work while still operating within them. Doing so would require assuming there is a direct connection between our language and the world that exists outside of these language games themselves. "The way music speaks", to borrow the phrase from Wittgenstein,

differs from such primary physiognomic language games in that it becomes incorrigible only at its apex, as we "get it right", admitting into the game psychological concepts that are based on what Wittgenstein [32] (p. 240) calls "imponderable evidence", that is, "sufficient evidence [that] passes over into insufficient without a borderline" [40] (§614), which typifies our recognition and appreciation of genuine expression.

The way music speaks distinguishes itself from both the primary physiognomic language game and the language game of informing. Unlike the physiognomic game, musical expression is not inherently incorrigible—if it were, there would be no meaning in trying to get it right. With pain, when we get it, we neither get it right nor wrong. In musical expression, however, the very possibility of becoming aware that we got it wrong is crucially what would instance a move to get it right. The interrelated language games that broach musical gesture and experience inherently evince elements of misunderstanding (in the sense of "not yet understanding", requiring further exploration), along with elements of choice and risk taking. When we encounter moments of failure, lack, or disorientation, we must actively work to draw in significance. The game becomes incorrigible only when our efforts are rewarded by "getting it right".

If musical expression can be incorrigible, it fundamentally differs from the language game of informing. When we reciprocate a soulful musical expression with genuine conviction, we achieve what Moyal-Sharrock [41] terms "third-person objective psychological certainty"—a type of hinge certainty. This achievement represents a dissociation of the concept of "certainty" from the concept of "proof". The incorrigible game excludes both doubt and discursive knowledge about matters of fact. In this context, a lack of proof does not indicate a deficiency in the game. When we (finally) get it right, we are not addressing or rectifying a gap in knowledge. Rather, the revelation emerges from seeing anew and appreciating the ways in which what has been exposed to view all along fits together or rises to meaningfulness, rather than in the discovery of new information.

5. Peacocke's Exploitation Criterion

Peacocke's metaphor-based view [42,43] consciously sets itself apart sharply from "those who wish to explain the emotional content of music by saying that there is a musical language-like system that stands in semantic relations to various types of emotional state" [42] (p. 268). Still, it remains an exemplary instance of the "informing paradigm", complete with frequent allusions to the "music as language" simile—maintaining a gap between gesture and experience that must be filled by the workings of the mind.

At the core of Peacocke's metaphor-based view there is the idea that when a piece of music is heard as expressing the property of, say, sadness, then some feature of the music, possibly some relational feature, is heard metaphorically-as sadness. In other words, to account for the perception of sad music, we should recognize a distinctive kind of experience, an experience with metaphorical content. The relevant isomorphism between domains in perceiving metaphorically-as is the one that is psychologically real and drawn upon (though, of course, drawn upon unconsciously) by the musically competent. According to Peacocke, in this experience, the metaphorical mapping is *exploited* rather than thought about or represented.

The first thing to note about the "exploitation criterion" in the context of our present discussion is that it introduces a standard of correctness for musical perception, which hinges on an external relation between what we hear and certain postulated psychological facts. This, in turn, calls for the problematic introduction of the concept of "proof" into aesthetics [42,43][20]. According to Peacocke, it is a fact that there are correct and incorrect, better and worse ways of hearing the emotional content of a piece of music: "What the correctness or incorrectness of a musical claim (or even an individual perceptual experience)

rests upon in each case is ultimately founded in facts about the psychological reality of hearers, corresponding to a level of competence. Misconstrual of a note as coming on a strong, rather than a weak, beat, and misconstrual of a passage as jaunty, rather than as anxious, are both cases of construal that do not fit in with the way the piece is perceived by the competent" [43] (p. 1038)[21].

This immediately relegates our characterizations of melancholy in, say, a reflective piece of Chopin squarely to the realm of the informative function of language. For, presumably, whatever we may come up with in language to characterize what we hear, to give voice to our experience, can be either correct, if it exploits the relevant real isomorphism (firmly instilled at the back of competent hearers' minds), or incorrect, if it fails to do so. Strangely, this turns Wittgenstein's quip (mentioned in my Introduction) about the unenculturated person who was convinced that the reflective piece of Chopin was a language, whose sense was kept secret from him, into a realistic scenario. Since that person is a thoroughly incompetent hearer, he may have been right in his complaint, in Peacocke's view. But this sort of turnaround in the story, I contend, is indicative of some shortcomings of this variant pertaining to the "informing paradigm". These shortcomings are important as a foil for my exploration of musical expression under the purview of the inverted simile of "language as music".

First, as a standard of correctness, the "exploitation criterion" falls short of securing the complementary notion of incorrectness. According to Boghossian [44], since metaphorical perception always depends causally on exploiting real isomorphisms, we can at most say that a given metaphorical hearing of a musical passage is incomplete, not incorrect. Moreover, even if we could conceive of a metaphorical perception based on no real isomorphism, this would still not render that perception incorrect in any obvious sense, if we grant that metaphorical perceptions do not report on isomorphisms' existence but rather *exploit* them.

Second, the notion of musical competence cannot anchor the purported standard of correctness. According to Peacocke, "the relevant isomorphism in perceiving metaphorically-as is the one that is psychologically real and drawn upon (though of course drawn upon unconsciously) by the musically competent" [43] (p. 1038). But while Peacocke acknowledges the overall richness and looseness of the notion of musical competence, he still restricts it to no avail to what Cook [17] calls "a society of listeners", as if aesthetics is for listeners only, viewed from a "presentist" stance—"the emphasis is on how 'we' experience music here and now, regardless of where and when it came from" [17] (p. 1062), [29,45][22].

Peacocke further restricts the notion of musical competence by casting the listener as a passive recipient of metaphorical content. In his view, this content always depends causally on real isomorphisms, regardless of the listener's chosen metaphors for describing what he hears. According to Krueger [46], such a narrow view of musical experience fails to recognize how dynamically musical meanings are constructed, a process evident even in infancy. In their relationship with music, listeners possess remarkable perceptual autonomy—determining not only how they listen and what meanings they derive, but also how they harness music to create connections and shared experiences.

However, if we lift such unwarranted restrictions on the notion of musical competence—to the effect that not only is the listener's situated active participation acknowledged, but also the inclusion of the much more varied competence involved in music making in the broadest sense, and the cultural embeddedness of how we come to learn and appreciate what we may understand as the "musical qualities" of that which is presented to our ears—then we end up with Schütz's [36] very broad idea of entering "mutual tuning-in relationships", which, as I already pointed out above, is precisely the notion of musicality

extendable to our ways with language. But such an inclusive notion of musicality proves far too broad and dynamic to anchor Peacocke's "exploitation criterion".

Third, even if we grant him the constrained notion of musical competence, Peacocke's "exploitation criterion" fails to account for the musical expression of emotions on purely musical terms—even in the simplest cases. I avail myself of Peacocke's own example: a minor chord, sounded by itself, outside any other context, sounds sad [42] (p. 262). The problem begins with the qualification "outside any other context". One cannot escape context when one speaks of a minor chord, or a minor mode or a minor triad. The context is ineliminably entrenched in the theory and practice of Western music. A minor chord sounding by itself is just a sound and, hence, is patently unrelated to other such sounds as a major chord, which Peacocke requires as a comparand for his argument. In other words, without the context and practices of tonal music, one cannot even begin to compare the two entities as major and minor. Other difficulties follow.

Fourth, the assumption that one is predisposed to retrieve an unheard major chord for comparison presupposes that one has acquired a professional ability for analytic inner hearing. This presupposes that rigorous musical training in Western music has taken place, and this, in turn, presupposes additional context.

Fifth, from the perspective of music theory, a minor scale is not a version of its corresponding major scale. There are other differences in their respective diatonic arrangements than just the flattened third of the minor scale. Saying that we hear the minor scale metaphorically-as a more subdued version of the unheard major scale ultimately begs the question. This undercuts the claim for isomorphism here.

Sixth, given the varieties of music as demonstrated and practiced in Western culture, the purported sad/not-sad–minor/major isomorphism amounts to a false dichotomy. But even when taken to be true, there remain counterexamples. One can consider György Ligeti's *Musica Ricercata* no. 3 (Allegro con spirito) as a decisive laboratory experiment for the efficacy of the dichotomy, significantly outside any tonal context. In this piece, as the music unfolds, the comparison between the two corresponding triads sounding by themselves strikingly cancels them out altogether. You simply cannot tell which triad is subdued or sad, and which is not. And it has no point.

It is now possible to highlight the significant points of departure from this version of the "informing paradigm". They concern a set of concepts that do not come up too often in the extant philosophical literature concerning musical expression: characterization, necessity, illumination, and significance. In Peacocke's view, characterization is separate from and antecedent to experience [42][23]. It is invariably a matter of verbal description (utilizing metaphorical assertions, perhaps inevitably) and aims at narrowing down to an optimal pronouncement of the exploitation of the relevant isomorphism. This differs from exploring, trying out, and establishing mutual tuning-in relationships, calling attention to details, and making comparisons—all of which bring what is there to be seen and heard into focus, for ourselves and for others, and significantly so in ways that transcend the verbal. These are very different kinds of labor.

Boghossian [44] observes that Peacocke has relatively little to say about the aesthetic question: What is it for music to be sad or to express sadness? This is precisely the question that is being tackled head on from the Wittgensteinian perspective. It seems that Peacocke takes aesthetic questions to be fully reducible to and contained within "the resources of our current philosophy of perception and cognition within contemporary philosophy of mind" [42] (p. 257), and ultimately answerable based on what he alternately calls the "psychologically real", "psychological truth", "psychological facts", and even "brute psychological facts" [43] (p. 1037, 1046). Cook [17] notes that Peacocke does not seem to acknowledge that psychology does not stand outside culture. This narrows the scope of the

discussion to the effect of failing to acknowledge that one appreciates one's own aesthetic responses as changeable and unfixed. Aesthetic experience is more a matter of seeing possibilities than having a special kind of episode in consciousness which was triggered by certain stimuli. According to Noë, "far from its being the case that aesthetic experiences are conscious events triggered inside us, we need to enact our aesthetic experiences, and we do so not only over time, with others, against a historical background, but sometimes also with the greatest of effort. We need to achieve aesthetic response" [47] (pp. 174–175).

Peacocke's approach puts an unwarranted "economic cap" on the need to achieve an aesthetic response. It is as if aesthetic conversation is not supposed to be open indefinitely, at least in principle, since characterization should optimally stop when it is allegedly correct and proven so by subsequent intellectual reflection. Narrowing down to an optimal pronouncement of the exploitation of the relevant isomorphism becomes "a redundancy closing device", as Scruton [48] called it, but not one whose goal is to build or reaffirm a shared environment in which we can all be at home, but rather to secure a causal, that is, external relation to facts about the psychological reality of hearers. Thus, aesthetic necessity is strictly defined in terms of causality, rather than as a matter of "game incorrigibility", as I call it in Section 3 above. But this is ultimately challenged by Wittgenstein's [49] elaborate argument against confusing causes (hypotheses) and reasons (representations) in aesthetic explanation. The very idea of an apt characterization being nothing more than a causally dependent "redundancy closing device" explains away too much. According to Wittgenstein, the "criterion of correctness of aesthetic analysis must be agreement of person to whom I make it. [. . .] [A]esthetics does not lie in finding a mechanism" [42,49] (9:46)[24]. Whether or not psychology may serve as a sort of ground truth, Wittgenstein contended that even if we suppose, for the sake of argument, that all our judgments proceed from the brain via particular kinds of mechanisms, the question "whether this is the sort of explanation we should like to have when we are puzzled about aesthetic impressions" remains open [50] (III:8).

This impinges directly on the way we want to understand what is illuminating or significant about our characterizations of musical expression. For Peacocke, a characterization is illuminating insofar as it corresponds to the "psychological real", that is, the real isomorphism at the back of our mind, rendering it distinct. The very best that we can do is to labor to be able to consciously bring it to the fore, although, Peacocke notes, "it is a hard and demanding matter to make explicit the character of the mapping from one domain to another in any metaphor" [43] (pp. 1034–1035). What is thus revealed are properties which, according to Peacocke, are "a fundamental source of meaning, or as I would prefer to say, significance in music" [42] (p. 1036). Yet, if we are to take the case of the sad minor chord as basic to Peacocke's theory, then I beg to differ. The simple truth is that the mere correspondence to the "psychological real" is unilluminating from a musical point of view. It remains inert to both musicological analysis and musical performance, and it can account for only a fraction of how the attentive listener shows musical understanding. As Kivy aptly put it, "'Only connect . . .' is the operative principle here as elsewhere. For it is what goes on in Symphony Hall, not Psychology Hall, that concerns me" [51,52] (p. 317)[25].

What needs to be acknowledged is that significance is not something we discover, but rather something we draw in. We do this through characterization—by drawing illuminating comparisons. A comparison articulates possibilities and invites further exploration through new comparisons and rephrasings. Each serves as an instance of what is possible in characterizing what can be seen or heard. Each requires both choice and effort: we strive "to get it right" within the space of possibility, showing others and enabling responses that may bring new possibilities or aspects to life. This mode of aesthetic engagement maintains its open-endedness through what we might call, following

Wittgenstein [49], "verifying phenomena" among the involved parties—these being manifold, nuanced, and perpetually evolving rather than fixed or stable. These verifying phenomena provide pathways through which we initiate and promote the essential elements of aesthetic inquiry: looking, interrogating, comparing, noticing, and reminding.

6. Facing Musical Expression

"The [musical] theme", Wittgenstein reminds us, "no less than a face, wears an expression" [23] (p. 85). When we ask about the point of expressiveness, not just in music, we need to hark back to the face, our prime site for our expression concepts, its logical home, if you will. McNeill notes that "the face is an uncanny semaphore. We rely on these signals constantly and willy-nilly, for almost none of us can define them. We are reading a language we cannot articulate and may not consciously notice" [53] (p. 8). According to Floyd [37], a face is a dense field of significance, but to be acquainted with it, some mode of characterization—verbal or gestural or otherwise—must occur, entering a field of valence, possibility, and contrast. This was Wittgenstein's point in the analogy with the sketcher's face, as I noted in Section 3 above. Getting to the particularity of that which is characterized, that is, rendering a physiognomy distinct, requires attending carefully to the specific way and manner of its characterization, and in particular, to the relevant system or systems of possibilities in which it inheres. Again, the point is that characterization requires a choice, an effort to get the initial steps right, to find the right level and combination of elements so as to succeed in illuminating something definite within the space of possibility that is there to be seen and developed.

Interestingly, in relation to my criticism of Peacocke's account of the sadness of the minor chord, Wittgenstein paid close attention to the comparison between major and minor in the context of his consideration of aspect perception. Wittgenstein argued that "it is quite wrong to speak generally of a character belonging to the minor" [23] (p. 96). Although we tend to say that the minor mode is "sad", he points out, "in Schubert the major often sounds sadder than the minor" [23] (p. 96). In Peacocke's view, this characterization is downright incorrect, since it fails to exploit the real isomorphism in the back of the competent hearer's mind. Yet, this characterization nonetheless makes perfect musical sense and would be quite important not only for the competent listener, but also for the competent performer.

We can surely use the words "major" and "minor", Wittgenstein contends, "purely to describe a perceived structure" [32] (p. 220). This is the alpha and omega of Peacocke's view. For Wittgenstein, such a view toward the minor chord is "purely acoustical": he describes it as "a description that applies when you can reproduce exactly what you've heard, leaving all other [non-acoustical] relations out of it" [54] (§749). In such a limited sense, "'major' and 'minor' are compared here with 'acute-angled' and 'right-angled', for instance" [54] (§740)[26]. However, Wittgenstein's important point about aspect dawning is that it is holistic. As Baz argues, "the internal relation [is] between [the aspect's] elements, wherein the perceived significance of any element of the perceptual field is not independent of the perceived significance of other elements, and of the perceived significance of the whole" [55] (p. 8).

Within this sort of open-ended texture, what emerges is not an object, fact, or concept, but rather an expression or a gesture, a total field of significance. Such is the face. Saying that "in Schubert the major often sounds sadder than the minor" is analogous to saying "I can think of this face (which gives an impression of timidity) as courageous too" [32] (§536). The former cannot be simply dismissed (for empirical reasons) as being incorrect for very much the same reasons that the latter cannot be so dismissed. Both characterizations may have a point, and both may yield further characterizations. Wittgenstein's conclusion is that

"the reinterpretation of a facial expression can be compared to the reinterpretation of a chord in music, when we hear it as a modulation first into this, then into that key" [32] (§536).

This underscores Wittgenstein's point about the communicability of aspects. Wittgenstein describes an instance of looking at a painting of a running horse in a cavalry with a friend. One may exclaim "it's running!" or react to such a picture by a movement of the hand and a shout of "Tally ho!" Wittgenstein underscores that we do this "not in order to inform the other person; rather this is a reaction in which people are in touch with one another [*sich finden*, meaning 'to find one another']" [1] (§874). Ultimately, in giving voice to the sadness of a Schubert melody in a major key, we normally seek not to "inform the other person" but rather to come into contact with, or "find", the other [1s] (§874). Musical expression, then, is all about making a physiognomy distinct. The significance of that physiognomy is drawn in by characterizing, evincing the dawning of an aspect. As Baz notes, this "makes for a particular type of opportunity for seeking intimacy with others, or putting it to the test" [55] (p. 6). This resurfacing to the interface of human interaction, as I called it in Section 3 above, means not only that we must rely on what lies before us in the open, but also on reciprocity, which undercuts the customary distinction between a listener and a performer, as well as the distinction between language and music. This is "understanding without meanings", as Cavell called it, which "suggests a particular form of communication, of revelation, one in which the demand for expression is put to the test [. . .] To say that music puts expression to the test is to ask wherein lies my conviction in my own understanding if I cannot justify it to others (which is not the same as convincing others)" [22] (p. 254).

Far from falling into the trap of a resemblance theory of musical expression, this crucial analogy with facial expressions suggests that, in a sense, the persona theory of musical expression contains merit, though not in a way vulnerable to the formalist's objection regarding the "aboutness criterion". Cavell [21] contended that understanding art requires examining why and how we treat certain objects as we typically treat persons. While these objects are known only through feeling, Cavell emphasizes that this differs from claiming that the object expresses feeling or that the aesthetic response is merely emotional. The musical theme wears an expression, not some indefinite persona that serves merely as a theoretical hook for hanging a face for the expression. Just like in the case of facial expressions, we become acquainted with the specificity of the musical expression by characterizing it, drawing on an abundance of culturally embedded resources.

Yet, such intimacy is forever at stake, and if taken for granted, it is bound to be lost. It needs to be continually restored by actively seeking out an articulation of possibilities, an increase in the range and density of possibilities, a richness of character that characterization yields, and new, untapped possibilities for further characterization. As Floyd [37] points out, when we manage to find one another, the "face" of what is characterized shines through in a comprehensible and communicable way, affording us ways to see likenesses and differences and ways to go on discussing and drawing out from the articulation further aspects of what is characterized that are there to be seen in and by means of it.

This affords a reason, and also a sense of urgency, why we need to treat music as we typically treat a person. This reason is notably absent—as Kivy correctly observed—from the external relation that the persona theory posits between the listener and what Kivy called an "empty suit". Following Cavell [21], we may dub this reason "the burden of unshared knowledge". Cavell's point, I take it, aligns with Floyd's emphasis on the comprehensibility and communicability of aspects, the "shining through" of the "face" of what is characterized. To behold what is characterized, we need, Cavell avers, to be anxious, to communicate the experience. "Only I find that I can't tell you", Cavell continues, "and that makes it all the more urgent to tell you. I want to tell you because the knowledge, unshared, is a burden [. . .] It matters, there is a burden, because unless I can tell what I

know, there is a suggestion (and to myself as well) that I do not know. But I do—what I see is *that* (pointing to the object). But for that to communicate, you have to see it too" [21] (pp. 192–193).

This is the mark of significance that has been drawn in. A gesture calling for reciprocation. And for that, we must enter mutual tuning-in relationships, even when we are (physically) alone with the music [23,36][27]. The very idea that intimacy (of the kind that is being attempted, approximated, established, or regained in the experience of aspects) alleviates "the burden of unshared knowledge" points to the fragility of what I have been calling "game incorrigibility"—the apex of the interrelated language games of musical expression and musicality—as one reaches for a certain word, or a certain gesture, as the only possible way in which to give expression to one's experience of a possibility that necessitated itself. The measure of success spells out this fragility: we strive to the point that "the [musical] theme is a *new* part of our language, it becomes incorporated in it; we learn a new *gesture*" [23] (pp. 59–60). This is also where we begin to see how musical expression relates to our power to shape our own language.

The very idea that the musical theme interacts with language is the crux of understanding musical expression from the perspective of the "language as music" simile. It stands in sharp contrast to the common separation of language and music, which typifies the perspective of "music as language" with its distinctive manifestations of the "informing paradigm". It brings to the fore what Noë [47] calls "the aesthetic work". Aesthetic work is the apt collaborative achievement of a perspicuous representation by means of coming up with illuminating comparisons. It is the effortful reorientation of ourselves, enacting ourselves in relation to others in the world, so that we may attain "game incorrigibility", and, in that sense, see and know. In Noë's view, engaging in aesthetic work is transformative and creative, operating with the values that we take for granted in sustaining our relationships to objects, people, and our world, and prone to revising our sense of what is right, or in the context of our present concerns, of what musical expression demands of us, through the adjustment of our values, skills, expectations, and understandings. In this sense, aesthetics is interested in the work of adjustment itself. "Our initial responses are starting points", says Noë, "they are not conclusions [. . .] Openness and undecidability of the aesthetic is [. . .] its *very modality*" [47] (pp. 171, 174).

The analogy between musical expression and facial expression proves particularly potent in this context of openness and undecidability. The point of the analogy is that human physiognomy is fundamentally fluid, non-mechanical, variable, irregular, and unpredictable. It cannot be recognized or described by means of rules, and it introduces an indefiniteness, a certain insufficiency of evidence, into our physiognomic recognition. But this indefiniteness is not a flaw or a gap in our knowledge—it is actually an essential part of how we understand both facial and musical expression. Thinking about how a musical phrase becomes a gesture for us, Wittgenstein notes that "life's infinite variations are an essential part of our life. And so precisely of the habitual character of life. Expression consists for us <in> incalculability" [23] (p. 83). Wittgenstein's crucial point here concerns concept formation—how our concepts relate to general facts of nature or human nature and how they are embedded in our lives, connected with what interests us, with what matters to us—particularly the formation of psychological concepts.

According to Wittgenstein, the natural foundation for the formation of psychological concepts is the complex nature and variety of human contingencies. Such concepts—for example, hope, grief, sorrow, and joy—are constituted by indeterminate nuances of behavior and physiognomy, which are grounded in what Wittgenstein calls "patterns of life [54,56–58][28]". These are recurring and recognizable, yet ever shape-shifting, indeterminate, variable, and, in some cases, incomplete patterns of facial and verbal

expressions. They are innumerable and interwoven with a myriad of other such patterns, which we apprehend as structuring regularities within our life, and thus are designated by using certain words.

Such dynamic interweaving of language games, actions, customs, and situations implies that our psychological concepts are anything but semantically rigid. They are inherently elastic; their boundaries are not sharp. Thinking of the sadness of a minor chord, for instance, we need to acknowledge that there are actually innumerable occasions that we might refer to as sad that are interwoven with a thousand other patterns. Thus, the concept allows for an endless multiplicity of expression. It cannot be understood independently of both human biological–animal life and, most significantly, human social and cultural life and the circumstances in which it occurs. These spheres permeate one another. Acknowledging this elasticity stands in sharp contrast to the common tendency among champions of the "informing paradigm" to treat psychological concepts as if they stand for discrete states with fairly stable emotional content. Furthermore, our psychological concepts, by which we refer to patterns of life, cannot be deformed randomly and without resistance, as their elasticity allows for the kind of "looping down" which Noë [47] places at the heart of what he calls "the aesthetic predicament" or "the aesthetic blind". Like other human concepts, psychological concepts (expressions of the mental) are creatures of what he calls "the entanglement". The point, also suggested in Floyd [37], is that characterization can change us in return: the act of rephrasing or recharacterizing can have a profound impact on our perception and understanding. Noë emphatically generalizes this idea: "We are not fixed, stable, defined, and known; the very act of trying to bring ourselves, our consciousness, our worlds, into focus, reorganizes and changes us. We are an aesthetic phenomenon" [47] (p. 97).

According to Noë, at the site of "entanglement", we cannot sharply distinguish between what we do by nature, or by habit, from the second-order ways that we think about and experience our own performance. There is no first order without the second, Noë argues, and the second loops down and affects the first. We are entangled, and we ourselves are products of this entanglement. Characterizations by which we refer to patterns of life belong to the level of habit, consisting not only in regularities and customary manners and styles, but also in disrupting and adjusting them. Noë's important point in this regard is that sometimes habit fails us. According to Noë, "sometimes we lack the categories, skills, background abilities, and affective orientations to make sense of or even to discern or individuate or care about what we encounter" [47] (p. 99). On other occasions, what we encounter resists labeling and intelligibility.

In such moments of disruption, when facing musical expression, characterizations allow us to address this poverty of concepts by putting expression to the test (to use Cavell's locution) in the sense that we need to find manners of characterizing that surpass what any norm-laden use of language could capture. These belong to the type of cases which Agam-Segal [59] usefully classified as "non-preparatory aspect perception". According to Agam-Segal, what all these cases share grammatically, and what such instances of in-betweenness of musical expression showcase distinctly, I contend, is that the kind of attention we give to things is most naturally expressed by what he describes as "stretching language", that is, by employing ways of expression that deliberately go beyond, if not violate, accepted linguistic norms. The language game of informing capitalizes on accepted linguistic norms. Going beyond it, in a sense even violating it, amounts to a vertical shift in interrelated language games [59][29]. A new gesture has crept into our lives.

Agam-Segal's important point, I take it, is that in non-preparatory characterizing, there is a distinct reason for drawing in significance: we are attempting to capture our non-routine meaningful life with something. According to Agam-Segal, "the very point

of appealing to foreign concepts in such cases is to set the object apart. By this sort of attention, that is, we are able to exclude the object from its routine life and usage, and treat it as special" [59] (p. 11). This becomes clear, for example, in Wittgenstein's suggestion that "in Schubert the major often sounds sadder than the minor" [23] (p. 96). Rather than being a case of characterization mishap or falling back on the customary pigeonholing of the "garden-variety" emotion, this can be seen as a refusal to find a way into a norm-soaked routine with what can be heard.

The measure of success in non-preparatory cases like this is, as I mentioned before, a willingness to follow games which admit concepts based on imponderable evidence; to enter mutual tuning-in relationships. As Agam-Segal puts it, "what we hope for is rather a signal of a shared sense that the object under discussion escapes conceptualization—that the normal conceptual tools we have will not do. And we also hope for an agreement on the particular way in which the object escapes conceptualization: we hope that our interlocutor will feel the need to use the same—or similar—'inappropriate' concepts and figures of speech to describe their experience. When they do that, it signals that they share our experience" [59] (p. 12). This is how characterization alleviates the "burden of unshared knowledge", as Cavell called it.

Thus, the purpose of facing the conceptually disruptive in-betweenness of musical expression is complementary to the routineness and convenience of our adherence to the "garden-variety emotions". The whole point is that, at least at times, we want none of the latter, as we draw out a fresh canvas, indeterminate yet full of possibilities, so we can draw in significance once again, finding one another in music.

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Notes

[1] It should be noted right at the outset that the general term "music" cannot be used interchangeably with "works of music". However, from within the prevailing paradigm, the question about the meaning of music tends to morph into quite a different one concerning the purported meaning of a certain work of music. The first question concerns music as a relational field unto itself. The second makes it necessary to search for external relations between "the work" and "the world" that we could explicate independently in generalized terms. Here, theories abound. Yet, I contend, Wittgenstein clearly resists the trap of reification: he is unwilling to buy into thinking in terms of abstractions or ideals that supposedly underpin and suffuse musical expression. Following his footsteps, I suggest in this paper considering the converse paradigm. Hence, what might seem like an inconsistent use of these terms in my exposition of the ideas throughout this essay is just a symptom of yet another aspect of the difference between the two paradigms, to be addressed on another occasion.

[2] See an excellent discussion on these issues in [2] (Ch. 7).

[3] According to Appelqvist [7], this nonetheless allows a formalist like Hanslick to reformulate the very idea of musical profundity in a transcendental idealist manner, as the musically beautiful (i.e., the tonal movement of musical forms) may be said to reveal the spatio-temporally moving forms of the universe.

[4] Dodd [9] offers a nuanced rebuttal to Kivy's skepticism, challenging the primacy of propositional knowledge in understanding musical profundity. He argues that music can convey thoughts through non-propositional means, suggesting that profound musical works exhibit their properties by evoking specific, warranted responses in attuned listeners. This perspective posits that a work's profound content is intrinsically woven into its unique musical fabric, and grasping this content requires engaging with the piece's particular structure and elements. However, Dodd leaves the door open to the idea that this profound content could, theoretically, be communicated through alternative methods, implying that one should still be able to articulate, in non-musical terms, what a piece of music is fundamentally about.

[5] The contemporary debate originated in Kivy's book *The Corded Shell* [10].

[6] This will be the focus of my discussion in Section 6 below.

[7] The resemblance theory maintains that musical expression consists in a relation of resemblance which obtains between some features of the music and the natural expression of emotions. The persona theory maintains that musical expression requires that we postulate a hypothetical persona, to whom we attribute the expression. The make-believe theory maintains that whatever the music represents, including emotions, is the product of our acts of imagination. The contagion theory holds that music elicits emotion through a process of emotional contagion, defined as a "mirroring" response in which the listener is moved to feel the emotion that the music expresses.

[8] Cook [17] notes that the traditional focus of music-philosophical, analytical, and critical writing on musical works seems to assume that aesthetics is for listeners only, taking "a kind of upstairs-downstairs quality, with performers serving a society of reflective listeners rather than being members of it" [17] (p. 1062).

[9] This converse question has an interesting lineage that goes back to Rousseau's *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, where he challenged philosophers to consider how human passion or moral sentiment gives rise to speech, song, or music in the first place. Gasparov and Goehr [18] note that Rousseau challenged the later view, which is still prevalent, that the musicality of any musical work may be constructed by melody, harmony, and rhythm formally and finally entirely independently of language. According to Gasparov and Goehr, "Rousseau prefigures what becomes a constant complaint among those (Arthur Schopenhauer, Richard Wagner, and even Eduard Hanslick) who believe that the autonomy, abstraction, or civilization of such a constructed or formal language of music has gone too far, by which they mean that it has become too 'artificial' or 'detached' from the natural and moral movement of human passions that once gave, and at 'first' gives, human expression its very reason to exist. If music is made of 'tonal forms', then the forms must still 'move' in a way that is 'musical'" [18] (p. 258). The last point prefigures Wittgenstein's own response to musical formalism in the aftermath of what I [19,20] explicated as his onetime elision of musicality at the time of the *Tractatus*.

[10] See detailed discussions in [24–27].

[11] It is safe to say that none of our musical terms can be taken literally in any straightforward sense, except for some highly technical terms, and by this I mean terms that pertain to the physical properties of sound (e.g., the instruction "senza sordino") or to chronometry (e.g., metronome markings).

[12] Internal relations play an important role in Wittgenstein's exploration of aesthetic puzzlements in his 1933 and 1938 lectures on aesthetics. For a further discussion, see [30] (pp. 191–197).

[13] A similar criticism can be applied to Christopher Peacocke's position. I discuss Peacocke's view in Section 5 below.

[14] This will be at the focus of my discussion in Section 6 below.

[15] Imagine this spectrum, if you will, as ranging from Kurt Schwitters's "Ursonate" to total serialism, with everything you would normally call music in between.

[16] It is important to bear in mind that this notion of musicality extends beyond the mundane image of musical talent. Primarily, it encompasses the ability to become musically enculturated. This is most spectacularly evinced in the ethnomusicologist's liminal ability to learn anew how to hear music in the soundscape of an unfamiliar culture by unlearning to hear his own. Charles Myers put this succinctly: "We have [. . .] to banish to the margins of our field of consciousness certain aspects of music, which, were it our own music, would occupy the very focus of attention" [33] (p. 249).

[17] See [34] (pp. 101–117); [35] (pp. 113–119).

[18] Kivy's skepticism generated a great deal of criticism. His major critics complained that his "aboutness criterion" is too restrictive, being essentially propositional, gravitating toward systematic or conventional relations of reference or denotation, and misconstruing its subject matter. Without exception, they offered ways to repair it. Thus, they all share the same discourse, which hinges upon the notion of musical meaning as a relation between music and something else, as I pointed out in Section 2 above. For a survey of the critical responses to Kivy, see [3].

[19] See [38] (p. 79); [23] (p. 51).

[20] According to Peacocke [42,43], it should be possible for someone who enjoys the mental state with metaphorical content to consciously work out, by means of intellectual reflection, what the relevant isomorphism is.

[21] Regarding the second claim, I should add in passing that it is far from clear that the two categories of cases of misconstrual are on par. And at least in regard to rhythmic misconstrual, there are famous counterexamples where the misconstrual actually fits in with the way the piece is perceived by competent hearers (as long as they do not have the score before them). Such is the case in the opening of Schumann's Third Symphony and in Beethoven's piano sonata op. 7, second movement. In the latter counterexample, looking at the score would even convince the competent hearer that the composer mistakenly cast the music in the wrong meter. I thank Inbal Guter for these examples.

[22] Peacocke is not alone in maintaining the primacy of listening over performing as well as "presentism". Scruton contended that since most of us are not performers, and ours is a listening culture, "it is in listening, not playing, that the average musical person exhibits understanding, and without listeners performance would lack its raison d'être (even if sometimes the only listeners are the performers)" [29] (p. 37). I find this to be a very weak argument for underplaying the importance of the manifold aspects of music making in human cultures. This sort of intellectual attitude faced fierce rebuttal in [45].

[23] Peacocke holds that "we have metaphors in language only because we need a device for expressing these mental states whose content involves metaphor. [. . .] There would be no metaphorical language if there were no mental states whose contents involve metaphor" [42] (p. 260). This, it seems to me, reverts to an early modern perspective of language as an inert conduit of mental content. One may recall Karl Kraus's repartee, underlying much of Wittgenstein's linguistic turn: "Language is the mother of thought, not its handmaiden".

[24] It is noteworthy, albeit in passing, that while Peacocke's [42] intriguing suggestion concerning a possible mechanism for comparing mental contents at the sub-personal level may indeed need to be "further elaborated by empirical investigations," that in itself might not save the argument from spiraling back into the "beetle in the box" scenario—this time with boxes within boxes and the presumed means for comparing beetles with beetle types.

[25] It is noteworthy that in his response to Boghossian, Peacocke [52] willingly expands his understanding of what is illuminating in characterization in a way that makes context paramount. However, he does so to curb Boghossian's skepticism about the idea of the correct ways of perceiving a musical work. According to Peacocke, we should be able to designate a condition on an isomorphism so that "it is an isomorphism meeting the designated condition that must be exploited in a way of hearing the work if that way is to be correct . . . The designated isomorphism is the one exploited in the most illuminating way of hearing the work" [52] (p. 191). I contend that given how the notion of illumination is to be extended, the suggested relation between illumination and designation becomes circular.

[26] Presumably, this is akin to Peacocke's resolute notion of real isomorphism. The very notion of "isomorphism" presupposes a logical relation of mapping that obtains between two things, which are presumed to be of identical or similar form, shape, or structure.

[27] Schütz [36] argues that mutual tuning-in relationships obtain also when we listen to a recording of music, or even when one attends to music in one's mind. Wittgenstein makes a similar point about music boxes. See [23] (p. 84).

[28] See, e.g., [54] (§211). For a discussion of the notion of "patterns of life" and its relation to "forms of life," see [56–58].

[29] Agam-Segal [59] makes a specific reference to Wittgenstein's notion of secondary uses of words, which is a prime example of an interrelated language game.

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