The Emotional Illusion of Music: Contemporary Western Musical Aesthetics in Dialogue with Ancient Eastern Philosophy

Yin Zhang
The Graduate Center, City University of New York
THE EMOTIONAL ILLUSION OF MUSIC:
CONTEMPORARY WESTERN MUSICAL AESTHETICS
IN DIALOGUE WITH ANCIENT EASTERN PHILOSOPHY

by

YIN ZHANG

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Philosophy in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2021
The Emotional Illusion of Music:
Contemporary Western Musical Aesthetics
in Dialogue with Ancient Eastern Philosophy

by

Yin Zhang

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Philosophy in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Date

Noël Carroll
Chair of Examining Committee

Date

Nickolas Pappas
Executive Officer

Supervisory Committee:

Jesse Prinz

Thomas Teufel

Noël Carroll

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
ABSTRACT

The Emotional Illusion of Music:
Contemporary Western Musical Aesthetics
in Dialogue with Ancient Eastern Philosophy

by

Yin Zhang

Advisor: Jesse Prinz

This project aims to examine whether music has an emotional nature. I use the ancient Chinese text *Music Has No Grief or Joy* to construct three arguments for the illusion view, according to which music has no emotional nature and the emotional appearances of music are illusory. These arguments highlight representational inconstancy, expressive incapability, and evocative underdetermination as three ways to problematize the idea that music has an emotional nature. I draw on the Confucian tradition to formulate three responses to the illusion view from representational reliability, expressive sincerity, and evocative appropriateness. These responses are shown to be inadequate. To examine the illusion view in detail, I adopt a comparative approach to structure a dialogue between ancient Eastern philosophy and contemporary Western philosophy. Nine arguments are constructed from three prominent approaches in contemporary Western musical aesthetics on the evocation, expression, and representation of emotion. I argue that each of these arguments reads emotion into music. Nevertheless, three insights emerge from the comparative discussion. The autonomy of emotional enjoyment, the possibility of emotional communication, and the function of emotional language in musical experiences call for explanations. I argue that the illusion view are amenable to these insights. The illusion view allows us to claim full ownership of emotional responses, have emotional communication by recognizing
intended emotional meanings in music, and appreciate the practical value of emotional language in music industry and education. I formulate a possible objection on the basis of Charles Swann’s musical experience in Marcel Proust’s novel, according to which music has emotional agency in the formation of an emotion. This objection can be met and Swann’s musical experience can be integrated into the illusion view. The illusion view turns out to be experientially richer than it might appear at first. This project liberates musical listening and philosophical thinking from beliefs entrenched in the emotional illusion of music.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Graduate Center community has been my enduring source of inspiration. In particular, I owe three persons my deepest gratitude for their care, support, presence throughout this project.

Thomas Teufel, holding a slim white chalk while interpreting the concept of aesthetic idea, carried a purposive joy that led me to see a number of abstruse passages in Kant illuminated. In Thomas’s course *Kant’s Critique of the Power of Judgment*, my habit of transparency about meaning, in which I had taken textual analyses to yield the totality of textual meanings, was shattered. Thomas revealed the multiple layers of meanings from the textual surface to the textual substance in relation to philosophical issues for which analysis is only the beginning. Thomas nurtured my attentiveness to the philosophical potential in historical texts. Reading across philosophical traditions in this comparative project would have been much less exciting, if I were complacent with meanings derived from textual analyses without the awareness of interpretive possibilities. It is also through Thomas that I learned to observe my aesthetic experiences in light of Kant’s distinction between the agreeable and the beautiful, by means of which I learned to comprehend the depth of cognitivist pursuits in contemporary musical aesthetics. In supervising my First Qualifying Paper on the significance of judgments of taste for artistic genius, Thomas responded with heroic patience and sincerity to my trials and errors in search of the elusive path between under-explanation and over-explanation. Writing philosophically has become more purposeful, skillful, responsible thanks to Thomas.

Noël Carroll, strolling down the Fifth Avenue with a grayish schoolbag in the afternoon sunlight, radiated a polymathic, festive, childlike devotion to knowledge, which crystallized the form of a serene companion in a city filled with stimulating sounds through a lifelong self-
transformation that is sweetly philosophical. In Noël’s course *Classics in the Philosophy of Art*, my habit of tangentiality about art, in which I had taken the descriptive details of artworks to have little philosophical import, was shaken. Noël showed me how description, interpretation, evaluation are mutually saturated in art criticism, which got me to study philosophical descriptions of music as informed by emotional interpretations. It is also through Noël that I learned to appreciate the historical and institutional dimensions of art, which initiated my experiential openness towards art history and practice, without which I would have been discouraged by the emergence of confusing and sometimes frustrating experiences with music so that I would not have tried to embrace art as it is, recognize artistic intentions in styling emotional expressions, or make emotions in musical experiences philosophically significant. The enlightening conversations rendered possible by Noël’s hospitality have pointed me to theories of musical expression at the formative stage of this project. Thinking philosophically has become more communicative, constructive, comprehensive thanks to Noël.

Jesse Prinz, raising a heartfelt question in simple words after drawing a beautiful head during a labyrinthine talk, constituted a model of creativity that bridges philosophy and art. In Jesse’s course *Aesthetic Psychology*, my habit of transcendence about philosophy, in which I had taken the philosophical ideal to consist in abstract speculation, was smashed. The exercises of using artistic examples to test aesthetic theories motivated me to discern the philosophical potential in aesthetic experiences and embody philosophical ideas which had previously lived in my mind alone. In supervising my Second Qualifying Paper on the peak shift effect in aesthetic responses, Jesse inspired me to do an empirically informed philosophy by drawing on art and science, which opened philosophical horizons otherwise closed to me. It is also through Jesse that I enjoyed a personal space to grow at my own pace. At all stages of this project, Jesse was committed to
mentoring, which involved an availability that was nothing less than magical. Jesse vetted multiple revisions and, with extraordinary care and realistic hope, provided encyclopedic counsel: a more effective phrase for an idea, a more precise statement of a premise, a more poignant counterexample to an argument, a more charitable formulation of a theory, a more sensible organization of a chapter, a more profound vision of my thesis, and a more self-caring pace of work. Living philosophically has become more audacious, generous, melodious thanks to Jesse.
CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION........................................................................................................1

PHILOSOPHICAL DISPUTES........................................................................................................1
HISTORICAL REBOOTS.............................................................................................................5
DIALECTICAL MOVES.............................................................................................................10

CHAPTER TWO. SUBVERSION....................................................................................................13

THE ARGUMENT FROM REPRESENTATIONAL INCONSTANCY......................................................15
THE ARGUMENT FROM EXPRESSIVE INCAPABILITY.................................................................18
THE ARGUMENT FROM EVOCATIVE UNDERDETERMINATION..................................................25
REFLECTION..........................................................................................................................31

CHAPTER THREE. REACTION....................................................................................................32

THE OBJECTION FROM REPRESENTATIONAL RELIABILITY......................................................35
THE OBJECTION FROM EXPRESSIVE SINCERITY........................................................................37
THE OBJECTION FROM EVOCATIVE APPROPRIATENESS.......................................................41
REFLECTION..........................................................................................................................50

CHAPTER FOUR. EVOCATION...................................................................................................51

THE ARGUMENT FROM PROFUNDITY ENJOYMENT.................................................................51
THE ARGUMENT FROM TURBULENCE ENACTION....................................................................61
THE ARGUMENT FROM BRAIN SIMULATION............................................................................69
REFLECTION..........................................................................................................................73

CHAPTER FIVE. EXPRESSION...................................................................................................74

THE ARGUMENT FROM JUDICIOUS ARRANGEMENT .................................................................75
THE ARGUMENT FROM QUALITY RECOGNITION.....................................................................80
THE ARGUMENT FROM DRAMATIC PERSONA.........................................................................86
REFLECTION..........................................................................................................................100
Chapter One. Introduction

It rains outside. I say to you “The rain is sad.” I might mean many things by this sentence. It is possible that I feel sad and the rain is part of the atmosphere where I feel sad. But I do not mean that sadness is in the nature of rain. The rain is a natural phenomenon whereby condensed water droplets become heavy enough to fall from the sky. Even if the rain reminds me of a sad story, it would be sentimental, if not downright superstitious, to attribute an emotional nature to the rain.

Many believe that the way music is sad is different from the way the rain is sad. It seems that there is something sad in the nature of music. If we attend a concert today, the program will probably contain some descriptions of the music in emotional terms. We are encouraged to experience the fourth movement “allegro con brio” in Beethoven’s Symphony No.7 in A major op.92 as happy. Its bright melody seems to contain a magnificent high spirit that uplifts listeners to happiness. Similarly, we are encouraged to experience Erik Satie’s Gnossienne No.3 as sad. Its slow tempo seems to contain a solitary dejection that makes listeners quiet and downcast. Music has an emotional appearance recognizable for listeners. In this project, I will examine whether the emotional appearances of music are illusory.

Philosophical Disputes

Musicians have analyzed the emotional appearances of music by examining technical elements such as rhythm, pitch, tempo, movement, phrasing, volume, etc. British musician Deryck
Cooke, in *The Language of Music*, advocates for an emotional nature of music. Cooke draws on technical devices to explain how musical phrases in different scales might represent emotions such as joy and sadness.¹ According to Cooke, it is the emotional nature of music that grounds a musical vocabulary used by musicians to convey emotions. Such thoughts from musicians strengthen the belief that the emotional appearances of music are rooted in something like the emotional nature of music.

Not all musicians agree. Some musicians see the emotional appearances of music as our projection of emotions upon sounds. Thinking that there is emotion in music would be like thinking that there is tenderness in roses. Roses onto which lovers project tenderness have thorns which are anything but tender. Austrian pianist and music critic Eduard Hanslick, in *Vom musikalisch-Schönen*, advances an aesthetic theory called “musical formalism,” according to which music exists for itself and does not serve as sign for anything outside the music.² According to Hanslick, the thought that music symbolizes emotion only reveals that people lacking the aesthetic capacity to appreciate the beauty of music settle for thinking in place of listening. For Hanslick, the aesthetic value of music exists on the sensory level alone. To illustrate, Hanslick describes a live arabesque decorative painting that is constantly expanding “in perpetual self-formation.”³ Imagine the curve of the line in one part of the painting arising and unfolding. The “animated arabesque” can “surprise the eye ever anew” with the delicacy in the texture of lines and the proportion each line has with each other.⁴ Since it is a live painting, it unfolds in time like the flow of musical notes in

---

time. The experience of musical beauty is delicate. According to Hanslick, “the alteration of two notes” would deprive a musical piece of its beauty, making the music “dull.”

The disagreements among musicians tend to become polemic. While a follower of Hanslick might dismiss people who project emotions into music as lacking aesthetic sensibility, a follower of Cooke might call for a worshipful stance from the audience on the emotional power of music. This clash among experts on such a fundamental aspect of human life has attracted philosophical attention. Philosophers of music have puzzled over the emotional appearances of music. Philosophers sympathetic to Cooke’s perspective attempt to find out what it is about music that allows for the alleged representation of emotions. Representation is one possible way to establish an emotional nature of music: for music to be emotional is for music to represent emotions.

Not all philosophers approach the emotional appearances through representation. Some philosophers wonder at our tendency to hear music as expressing happiness or sadness. It seems that music is not the kind of beings capable of expressing emotions, which only sentient beings like humans can do. Stephen Davies, in *Themes in the Philosophy of Music*, voices this puzzle:

> Only sentient creatures can express emotions. Musical works are not sentient, so emotions cannot be expressed in them. Yet many of them do express emotions such as sadness and happiness. How could that be?"'

Here the focus is how to make sense of emotional expression in music. Philosophers have proposed expression theories, according to which for music to be emotional is for music to express emotions. Emotional expression is different from emotional representation. An email that reads “Happy New

---

“Year!” may express my wishes without representing anything. Expression is another possible way to establish an emotional nature of music.

Still, some philosophers approach the emotional appearances of music by focusing on what it is in the music that causes emotional responses in listeners. Jenefer Robinson, in *Deeper than Reason*, makes this observation:

It just does not seem possible that the state of extreme excitement that the music produces should be merely a physiological effect; surely something more powerful and profound must have caused it! When we experience structural high points, we are intensely stirred physiologically, but we cannot account for the way we feel. We interpret our emotional state in a way that seems to us commensurate with its power and its intensity.\(^7\)

Here the focus is on the causal influence between what it is in the music and what it is in the listeners. Emotional responses to music are well known. Philosophers have proposed arousal theories, according to which for music to be emotional is for music to arouse emotions. Emotional evocation is yet another possible way to establish an emotional nature of music.

The emotional appearance of music has assumed the status of an explanandum in contemporary philosophical discussions. For most philosophers of music, the mystery is not whether music is emotional, but how music is emotional. The philosophical approaches -- representation, expression, evocation -- can be seen as different ways of putting emotion into music. These approaches are not mutually exclusive. One of the three approaches can be put into the

driver’s seat to shed light on the other two perspectives. For example, an expression theory can be developed to explain arousal such that listeners are aroused by what music expresses. Philosophers vary in preferences over which approach is the most informative one. Together these philosophical theories are united by the belief that the emotional appearance of music has something real behind it, that music is indeed emotional in nature.

One problem for these philosophical approaches would be the view that music is not emotional in nature and the emotional appearances of music are illusory. Call this the “illusion view.” If the illusion view is right, the efforts to establish an emotional nature of music will be guilty of reading emotion into music. I will defend the illusion view in this project.

Historical Reboots

In search of a spokesperson for the illusion view, an ancient Chinese philosopher and musician comes into view. Ji Kang (嵇康), one of the “seven sages of the bamboo grove” (竹林七贤), lived in the 3rd-century China. His time was part of a period when “qingtan” (清谈 idle talk) was popular in ancient China. Despite the name, “qingtan” is nothing but idle. It was a way for thinkers at the time to discuss philosophical issues -- “xuanxue” (玄学 studies of profound mysteries). Ji Kang was one of the best “idle talkers” in his time. In a text titled Sheng Wu Ai Le Lun (声无哀乐论), Ji Kang attempts to undermine a traditional Confucian position, according to which music is emotional in nature. I will revive the dialectics in Ji Kang’s text and examine more closely what he has achieved.

One challenge in this project consists in traversing the linguistic barriers from ancient Chinese to contemporary English. Although the surface meaning can be translated, the
philosophical thinking is not always obvious. Robert Henricks has translated the text in *Philosophy and Argumentation in Third-Century China*. Henricks provides a smooth translation for English readers. But Henricks’ translation sometimes unintentionally obscures Ji Kang’s philosophical point. To take one example, in the Guest’s opening statement, there is a sentence “ài sī zhī qíng biāo yù jīn shí” (哀思之情表于金石). Henricks translates it thus: “feelings of grief and melancholy are expressed in metal and stone.” This translation makes sense until the part “metal and stone.” Although “metal” is an accurate translation of “jīn” and “stone” is an accurate translation of “shí,” “jīn shí 金石” put together is a phrase that means “musical instrument” in ancient Chinese. Later in the dialogue the Host says, “harmonious music is fulfilled by musical instruments” (克谐之音成于金石). That is another sentence where “jīn shí” means musical instrument. But Henricks translated it as “harmonious tones are produced from the metal and stone.” A minor issue is the way Henricks deals with “sī” in “ài sī zhī qíng.” To translate “sī” as “melancholy” is stretching the meaning of “sī” which literally means “thought.” Because of the contrast with “án lé” (peace and happiness), it is reasonable to treat “sī” as a distinct element to be juxtaposed with “ài” (sadness). Henricks is right to not translate “ài sī zhī qíng” merely as “the feeling of a sad thought.” But perhaps “mournfulness” is better in this context, because “mournfulness” suggests an object in mind, which would be true to “thought.” A further observation is that when the word “qíng” (情) shows up in Ji Kang’s text, Henricks translates it as “feelings” rather than “emotions.” Henricks might have chosen “feeling” to highlight the affective component of “qíng.” I think that both “feeling” and “emotion” can be adequate insofar as we focus on the emotional nature of music. “Emotion” might be better, because it makes sense grammatically to say listeners have an

---


emotional response to an emotional piece of music. I would translate “qing” as “emotion” and interpret the text as saying something about the emotional nature of music.

One might push for more terminological precision. Contemporary psychologists hold that it takes more for something to constitute an “emotion” rather than a “feeling.” According to Patrik N. Juslin and John A. Sloboda, terminological confusion is a major obstacle towards meaningful synthesis in studies of music and emotion. They propose that “feeling” should refer to the “subjective experience of emotions or moods,” whereas “emotion” should refer to “a quite brief but intense affective reaction that usually involves several sub-components -- subjective feelings, physiological arousal, expression, action tendency, and regulation” with a focus on some “specific objects.” Further nuances are believed to exist among “moods,” “feelings,” and “arousal.”

The distinction between emotion and feeling is not merely a verbal issue, but motivates a philosophical move made by Hanslick. Although Hanslick argues against “feelings” in music, the way Hanslick distinguishes “feelings” from other affective states suggests that Hanslick would argue against “emotions” in the sense explained by contemporary psychologists. According to Hanslick, specificity is what makes emotions different from other affective states. What gives specificity to an emotion is not how the emotion feels inside, for the “interior movement” of an emotion varies across different individuals and across different times for the same individual. According to Hanslick, the specificity of an emotion is anchored by its “conceptual core,” which consists of mental images and concepts. For example, “hope is inseparable from the mental

---

10 For a useful summary of the literature on emotion, see Saam Trivedi, Imagination, Music, and the Emotions: A Philosophical Study (Albany: SUNY Press, 2017), 9-14.
12 Hanslick, On the Musically Beautiful, 15.
13 Hanslick, On the Musically Beautiful, 15.
14 Hanslick, On the Musically Beautiful, 16.
image of an expected, happier condition and is compared with the present one.” 15 The “cognitive mechanism” of specific images and concepts “transforms” affective states into an emotion such as hope. 16 Without the conceptual core, affective states cannot “coalesce” into an emotion. 17 Likewise, “love cannot be conceived without the thought of a beloved person.” 18 With the conceptual core in place, the affective profiles can vary without losing the emotion. One can love more or less passionately, more or less happily. 19 Hanslick suggests that music can at most portray the “dynamic properties” of emotions by sounding “slow, fast, strong, weak, ascending, descending.” 20 But these dynamic properties of motion are inessential because they can be shared by different emotions. 21 Music cannot have an emotional nature because of its incapacity to hold concepts.

Hanslick’s philosophical move remains an insightful strategy that informs this discussion. I will examine whether the attribution of emotion in each argument involves a conceptual core, and if so, whether it is music itself that generates the conceptual core. Hanslick’s move is anticipated and illustrated in Ji Kang’s text. While Hanslick specifically argues against music’s capacity to represent emotions, Ji Kang comprehensively argues against music’s capacity to represent, express, and evoke emotions. This comprehensiveness makes Sheng Wu Ai Le Lun a good starting point to examine the emotional nature of music.

The title Sheng Wu Ai Le Lun (声无哀乐论) can be translated in at least two ways. Literally, the title means “sounds have no grief or joy.” Since music is the topic of the text, a straightforward

---

15 Hanslick, On the Musically Beautiful, 16.
16 Hanslick, On the Musically Beautiful, 16.
17 Hanslick, On the Musically Beautiful, 16.
18 Hanslick, On the Musically Beautiful, 16.
19 Hanslick, On the Musically Beautiful, 16.
20 Hanslick, On the Musically Beautiful, 18.
translation of the title would be “music has no sadness or happiness.” Translated this way, “ai” (哀sadness) and “le” (乐happiness) are read as two emotions that music does not have. The text would be interpreted as an attempt to show that emotions, specifically sadness and happiness, do not belong to music. In other words, wherever these emotions exist, they cannot reside in the music. On this translation, Ji Kang would be arguing against the claim that music has emotion in it. A less straightforward, but entirely sensical translation of the title would be “music is not sad or happy.” Translated this way, “ai” and “le” are read as two emotional properties that music does not have. Ji Kang would be arguing against the claim that music is emotional. These two translations differ more in letters than in spirit. I would adopt the translation that treats “ai” and “le” as emotional properties that music does not have. A vague yet functional translation can be “On the Emotional Properties of Music” or even “On the Emotional Nature of Music.”

It is worth pointing out that the Chinese word “乐” means “happiness” or “joy” only when pronounced as “le”. The same word, when pronounced as “yue,” has a narrow sense that is “music” and a broader sense that is an artform that integrates music, dance, and poetry. In Ji Kang’s text, the word “sheng” (声sound) is also used to highlight that it is the narrow sense of music. Since Ji Kang is dealing with the emotional nature of music, to interpret “yue” as music would not be problematic in our discussion of Ji Kang.22

---

22 One might worry that the ancient Chinese music tradition does not justify reading Ji Kang’s discussion of music in the narrow sense of pure music. It seems that Ji Kang’s conception of music would not be close enough to the concept of music in contemporary analytic philosophy, which centers on pure music as a result of the development in Western music in the 18th century, when orchestral music became prominent. In reply, Ji Kang’s text can be interpreted as centering on pure music. Apart from the fact that Ji Kang was a musician and the examples in the text (to be discussed in Chapter 2), there are broader philosophical concerns on Ji Kang’s part (to be discussed at the beginning of Chapter 3) that will make this interpretation less wishful than it might appear at first. Noël Carroll, personal communication, March 5, 2021.
Dialectical Moves

Here is the order in which this discussion unfolds. I will start by reconstructing Ji Kang’s text into three philosophical arguments for the illusion view. In a nutshell, music is not emotional, argues Ji Kang, because music cannot represent emotions with constancy, or express emotions with capable means, or evoke emotions in determinate directions.

Having reconstructed Ji Kang’s arguments, I will formulate possible responses to Ji Kang’s arguments from the Confucian tradition. Record of Music (乐记), a section in the Confucian classic Book of Rites (礼记), and Confucian philosopher Xunzi’s essay On Music (乐论) will serve as the conceptual basis. I shall draw on ideas from neo-Confucian philosophers in China and Western philosophers working on Confucian aesthetics. A Confucian thinker might respond to the illusion view by arguing for representational reliability, expressive sincerity, and evocative appropriateness. James Harold, for example, argues that music can bring about changes in moral character by influencing emotional dispositions. I will defend the illusion view against these responses and leave the debate open.

Having formulated possible responses from the Confucian tradition, I will consider arousal theories. Arousal theories put forward the idea that the emotions that music arouses in us reveal the emotional nature of music. Peter Kivy argues that the profundity of music can arouse an intellectual enjoyment in us. Robert Jourdain argues that listening to music can enact emotions in us. Tim Cochrane argues that music hijacks the simulation mechanism in our brains to cause emotions. I will examine whether arousal theories can be used to challenge the illusion view, by constructing arguments for evocative determination from enjoyment, enaction, and simulation. I will defend the illusion view against these arguments.
Having considered arousal theories, I will consider expression theories. Expression theories put forward the idea that emotions expressed by music reveal the emotional nature of music. Stephen Davies argues that music expresses emotions when composers carefully organize musical appearances with emotion characteristics. Peter Kivy argues that music expresses emotion through expressive qualities recognizable through cognitive inquiry. Jenefer Robinson argues that music expresses emotion by means of a persona in the music. I will examine whether expression theories can be used to challenge the illusion view, by constructing arguments for expressive capability from arrangement, quality, and persona. I will defend the illusion view against these arguments.

Having considered expression theories, I will consider representation theories. Representation theories put forward the idea that emotions represented by music reveal the emotional nature of music. James O. Young argues that music represents emotions by resembling human expressive behaviors. Malcolm Budd argues that music represents emotions by having aesthetic properties whose recognition calls for emotional terms as metaphors. Susanne Langer argues that music represents emotion by symbolizing emotions through temporal features that indicate permanence and change. I will examine whether representation theories can be used to challenge the illusion view, by constructing arguments for representational constancy from resemblance, metaphor, and semblance. I will defend the illusion view against these arguments.

The arguments to be constructed out of contemporary musical aesthetics are representative, though they are not meant to exhaust the potential in each theoretical approach. Each chapter can benefit from incorporating more sophisticated theories in the future. Having considered specific arguments, I will consider broader objections that can be marshalled against the illusion view from
the three approaches. I will defend the illusion view against three objections from emotional enjoyment, communication, and language in musical experiences.

Having defended the illusion view against these broader objections, I will consider a possible objection, which I call “the objection from sole cause as partial nature.” Drawing on Marcel Proust’s novel *In Search of Lost Time*, I will formulate the objection based on Charles Swann’s musical experience. It seems that emotional agency can be attributed to a music phrase, which alone is able to cause the affective components of Swann’s emotion. I will examine the philosophical significance of this emotional agency and argue that Swann’s musical experience can be integrated into the illusion view. The illusion view turns out to be experientially richer than it might appear at first.

It is time to start with Ji Kang’s arguments.
Chapter Two. Subversion

In this chapter I will present how Ji Kang subverts the view that music is emotional. Ji Kang wrote *Sheng Wu Ai Le Lun* in the form of a dialogue between “the Guest from Qin” and “the Host at Eastern Wilds.” The Guest takes a traditional Confucian perspective and the Host represents Ji Kang’s position. It seems that *Sheng Wu Ai Le Lun* records a historical debate that happened between Ji Kang and someone, although there is no consensus on this. Whether the dialogue reflects a historical debate, the interpretive task to reconstruct the dialogue remains. In the dialogue, the Guest claims that music is emotional in nature, because music can represent, express, or arouse emotions. The Host contends that music cannot do any of these.

Two clarifications are in order. Firstly, the Host adopts an epistemic strategy to argue against the Guest’s metaphysical position. The dialogue centers on whether it is possible to know, through the Guest’s examples and reasons, that music is emotional. The Host’s approach is not to argue directly for the metaphysical claim that music is not emotional, but to erode the Guest’s confidence that music is emotional. For example, at the beginning of the dialogue, the Guest says, “Confucius could know the virtue of Emperor Shun by listening to the music of Shao; Ji Zha could know the ethos of many countries by listening to the string music.”23 One might treat this sentence as giving two examples and get distracted by who Emperor Shun was, whether Emperor Shun composed or commissioned the music of Shao (a kind of classical music performed at royal court that combines poetry, dance, and music), where Ji Zha came from, etc. But the syntactical form highlights knowledge, even if the Guest uses two different verbs, “shi” and “zhi,” to say that both Confucius and Ji Zha know something. In response, the Host dismisses the two records as

---

23 My translation of the Chinese text: 仲尼闻韶，识虞舜之德；季札听弦，知众国之风
fabrications, even if earlier sages have not doubted them according to the Guest. In subsequent exchanges, the Guest uses different verbs to claim knowledge: “shen” (审 to check, to appreciate), “ming” (明 to apprehend, to understand), “shi” (识 to recognize, to detect), “zhi” (知 to know), “wu” (悟 to realize, to learn, to enlighten), “jue” (觉 to awaken). These verbs mean slightly different things in ancient Chinese, but all have the sense of knowing. The Host’s skepticism towards the Guest’s knowledge claims runs throughout the dialogue. This is most evident in the sixth round, where the Host repeats the challenge “how to know it?” for each proposed ground for an emotional nature of music. Nonetheless, the debate is about whether music is emotional, not just about whether it is possible to know whether music is emotional. The epistemic approach is a strategy the Host uses to argue against the Guest’s metaphysical claim. The Host does not end up with an agnostic position. Rather, the Host has a metaphysical position that music is not emotional.

Secondly, there is a difference between being emotional in a clear way and being emotional in an ambiguous way. Looking at a picture of Serena Williams’s face, people agree that she is emotional but disagree over whether it is anger or happiness. If all the information comes from the picture, the ambiguity might not be cleared. But this ambiguity can be cleared if we are able to observe Serena Williams’s bodily expressions and the celebratory context where the picture is taken. For music to be emotional, it must not be ambiguous in the sense that extra-musical information is needed to determine the emotional nature. Even if there is emotional ambiguity, it should be of the kind that can be clearly identified as a combination of multiple emotions. If there is reasonable disagreement over the emotional nature of music, it means that music has no emotional nature.
The Argument from Representational Inconstancy

The Host’s first attempt to argue against the Guest may pass unnoticed. It happened in a brief exchange as they greeted each other. The episode apparently contains only three components: one statement from the Host, one rhetorical question from the Guest, and one repetition from the Host confirming that the Guest has understood the point.\textsuperscript{24} Despite the argumentative minimalism, the Host delivers a strong point. Here is how the episode plays out. In the first round, the Host states

Musical sounds exist like scents. They can be good or bad. Even if they are affected externally, their substance remains the same, which does not change as a result of their being loved or hated, or as a result of our being sad or happy.\textsuperscript{25}

In the second round, the Guest asks rhetorically

Could it be that ideal listeners rely on information about regularities and rules of music to know the emotional nature of music?\textsuperscript{26}

In the second round, the Host confirms

\textsuperscript{24} The Host’s argumentative minimalism is thought-provoking, although this type of argumentative minimalism is not unique in Chinese philosophy. It happened in Mencius’ text and Zhuangzi’s text with even shorter exchanges. What is unique here is that the components are not organized into a back-and-forth exchange, but need to be identified in their remarks. Since the text is a complete writing by Ji Kang, the argumentative minimalism seems to be intentional omission. Ji Kang might have seen little point in belaboring what seems to him an obvious point.

\textsuperscript{25} My translation of the Chinese text: 音声之作,其犹臭味在于天地之间。其善与不善,虽遭遇浊乱,其体自若而不变也。岂以爱憎易操、哀乐改度哉?

\textsuperscript{26} My translation of the Chinese text: 夫数子者，岂复假智于常者，借验于曲度哉?
Ideal listeners should not rely on information about regularities and rules of music to know the emotional nature of music.\(^{27}\)

One challenge in understanding this episode is to see why the Guest agrees with the Host that regularities and rules of music must not be relied upon to know the nature of music. The regularities and rules of music refer to the aspects that remain conventional in music. As such, they seem to be helpful for knowing the emotional nature of music. Ji Kang seems to suggest that conventionality only masks the skepticism about the nature of music. The fact that we have agreed on the emotional vocabulary of a musical convention does not tell us anything about the nature of music.

One might object that the correlation between the nature of music and our emotions can be more robust than the Host indicates. Indeed, the Guest suggests that emotions can be grounded in qualities, as wise people are loved more. It seems that emotions can be similarly justified by the nature of music. In reply, the Host compares the kind of emotions such as love with the kind of emotions such as happiness. Emotions such as love have intentional objects and “come into being through contact with things.” Love implies some object of love.\(^{28}\) The intentionality of an emotion such as love makes appraisal based on qualities possible. Nonetheless, the emotions of the lover do not transfer into nature of the beloved. A wise person does not become essentially “lovely” by being loved. Likewise, the emotion of happiness does not transfer into the nature of music. According to the Host, it is wrong to believe that music can be just happy. Rather, emotions attributed to music are collected inside our hearts, only to be manifested and released upon

---

\(^{27}\) My translation of the Chinese text: 善听察者要自觉之，不假智于常音，不借验于曲度

\(^{28}\) To love everything is to generalize the object of love rather than to eliminate the object of love.
listening to music. The Host draws an analogy with wine. The wine makes someone drunk, who in drunkenness feels delightful or angry, but the wine does not contain emotions, nor can the nature of the wine justify having certain emotions. There is no constant correlation between the nature of music and the emotion to be released. In other words, any piece of music can correspond to a plethora of emotions, and any emotion can correspond to a plethora of music. Music cannot represent emotion, because the correlation between music and emotion cannot be fixed by the nature of music. The following argument can be constructed from Ji Kang’s text:

(P1) No constant representation holds between music and emotion.

(P2) If no constant representation holds between music and emotion, music is not emotional.

(C) Music is not emotional.

Two central words in P1 derive from different words in the text. The word “representation” derives from “ying” (应), which literally means “correspondence.” The word “constancy” derives from “chang” (常), which in contemporary Chinese means “regular” or “normal” as an adjective, but in ancient Chinese has a meaning stronger than mere regularity or normality. That stronger meaning is something unchanging. For example, Laozi wrote in *Daodejing*, “to be enlightened is to know the unchanging (chang).” This is the sense in which the Host claims that music has no constancy: “The same emotion gives rise to ten thousand music: is this not the
inconstancy of music?"^31 If the correspondence between music and emotion is not a one-one relation, music is inconstant with respect to emotion. Happiness can correspond to many musical works as a result of cultural diversity. P1 highlights the one-many phenomenon of correspondence.

P2 turns the one-many phenomenon into a one-many problem. If many musical works represent one emotion, the Host argues, music does not have an emotional nature. But this apparently does not make sense. If many musical works represent one emotion, what follows is that an emotional nature of music can be revealed in many ways, as all roads lead to Rome. But P2 cannot be refuted in this manner. Imagine how ten thousand musical works associated with happiness in one culture might partly overlap with ten thousand musical works associated with sadness in another culture. The overlapping works do not have one emotional nature. If aesthetic convention is the arbitrator, the nature of music is irrelevant. Since any musical work can be emotionally overlapping, the one-many problem implies a many-many problem, which will discredit the emotional nature of music.

The Argument from Expressive Incapability

The Guest proposes that the emotional nature of music can be established through musical expression. According to the Guest, it is generally agreed that facial expressions can betray inner feelings. Mild sadness gets expressed in a droopy face. Happiness gets expressed in a smile. If what we see can express emotions, presumably what we hear can express emotions as well. Even if it might be difficult for ordinary listeners to discern what music expresses, ideal listeners can recognize it. The Guest says, “a person’s body changes with inner distress, a person’s voice turns

---

^31 My translation of the Chinese text: 今用均同之情, 而发万殊之声, 斯非音声之无常哉
sad with inner grief. This natural manifestation cannot escape those who are excellent at knowing.” 32 The Host contends, however, that this would imply that happiness cannot be concealed from ideal listeners. 33 But apparently ideal listeners can be deceived. Whatever external criteria that ideal listeners rely on for emotional discernment can be manipulated to deceive them. A person can fake a sad scream while feeling genuinely happy. Ideal listeners can be inaccurate in discerning the genuine emotion, even if they give honest reflections of the sounds they hear. Likewise, a composer can fake grief in a musical form while feeling happy through the composition. Even if there is something in the music that can betray the genuine happiness, ideal listeners would not always be able to tell from the music. The following argument can be constructed from Ji Kang’s text:

(P1) Ideal listeners can be deceived.

(P2) If ideal listeners can be deceived, expressive means are incapable of matching emotional content.

(P3) If expressive means are incapable of matching emotional content, music is not emotional.

(C) Music is not emotional.

Among the three premises, only the first one is explicitly addressed in the text. Let us look at the implicit premises first. P2 is implicit in the dialogue. Ideal listeners are ideal because they are supposed to mirror the emotional nature of music. If ideal listeners are deceived, music will

32 My translation of the Chinese text: 心戚者则形为之动，情悲者则声为之衰。此自然相应，不可得逃，唯神明者能精之耳
33 My translation of the Chinese text: 心悲者，虽谈笑鼓舞，情欢者，虽拊膺咨嗟，犹不能御外形以自匿，诳察者于疑似也
not be emotional in the way reported by ideal listeners. One way to understand this is that emotional expression in music can be perverted by insincere expressions. If it is possible for musicians to manipulate ideal listeners into hearing music as emotional, it will become unclear whether the emotions heard in the music are genuine. The possibility of expressive insincerity suggests that music is merely an emotional tool without an emotional nature in itself. Expressive insincerity perverts emotional expression in music, because it makes it impossible to tell sincere expression from insincere expression. Whenever composers aim to sincerely express an emotion, they will have to avoid all the insincere ways of expressing that emotion, which is practically impossible.

P3 is another implicit premise in the dialogue. If expressive means mismatch emotional content, expressive means will not reliably deliver emotional content. Music is not emotional even if expressive means are artificially fixed for emotional interpretations. For example, if the minor key is fixed as the expressive means for sadness when in fact sadness cannot be reduced to the minor key and the minor key cannot be restricted to sadness, the minor key as an expressive means would not be adequate.

Given P2 and P3, one might expect the discussion of P1 to focus on sincere and insincere forms of expression. But that is not the direction taken by the Host and the Guest. Instead, they work through several examples to see if ideal listeners can discern the emotion in each case. Some examples the Guest raises in support of ideal listeners come from historical records which the Host dismisses as fabrications to mystify music. Some examples have to do with the way ideal listeners may rely on extra-musical factors such as language or personal acquaintance to discern subtle emotions in the music, which undermines the idea that it is music that expresses emotion.
I will discuss one example. The Guest observes an empirical principle that “when the feelings change on the inside, one’s expression corresponds on the outside.”\(^{34}\) We know the feelings of someone through face reading. Someone with a droopy face and a pensive look normally cannot be happy. Similarly, suggests the Guest, if ideal listeners attend to the tone, rhythm, and tempo of a person’s voice, they can tell the inner states of the person. The Guest says

A visually impaired person can see nothing even facing a wall. Yet Li Lou can discern the tip of a hair even 800 feet away … You cannot doubt the visual perception of Li Lou based on average measurements, or distrust the auditory perception of Zhong Ziqi based on ordinary faculties.\(^{35}\)

In reply, the Host maintains that ideal listeners project emotional interpretations into the behavioral expressions when trying to discern the inner states of people. For example, tears may arise because we eat spicy food, or because our eyes hurt, or because we laugh too hard, or because we cry. There are different reasons why tears arise. An excellent taster will not be able to distinguish, based on the taste of tears, the different emotions underlying tears. The Host maintains that emotions are too varied and nuanced to be accurately reflected by ideal listeners. Even if Zhong Ziqi’s story is not fabricated, it could be explained away as an exception where best friends understand each other’s expressive habits, because what Zhong Ziqi understands perfectly is just his best friend Boya’s music.

---

\(^{34}\) My translation of the Chinese text: 心变于内而色应于外

\(^{35}\) My translation of the Chinese text: 今蒙瞽面墙而不悟，离娄照秋毫于百寻，以此言之，则明暗殊能矣。不可守咫尺之度而疑离娄之察，执中庸之听而猜锺子之聪
The Host suggests that the test of ideal listeners is not to reflect the emotional character of music from a familiar friend, but to reflect the emotional character of music from an unfamiliar region. If we present many musical samples from a foreign land to ideal listeners, they have to rely on clues such as the ways in which musical instruments are “regulated” and test out tentative judgments. It is impractical to rely upon “unique perception” alone to discern all the manifestations of emotions in music. The Host proposes three options for an ideal listener in a foreign land: (i) to get “repeated contact and exchange” with local people who speak the language; (ii) to “blow the pipes” and “examine their music”; (iii) to observe their manners and examine their facial expressions. If it is (i), there is no point in being an ideal listener, because learning a language does not require one to be an ideal listener. If it is (ii), the listener is subject to deception, because there is no reliable system of reference on which the listener can base emotional attributions. If it is (iii), it is a case of knowing about people’s emotions “from air and appearance,” hence not a proper example for musical perception.

At this point, one might protest that the way the second option is treated is question-begging. What is at issue is precisely whether the ideal listener is able to tell the emotional character of music by listening to the music in the foreign land. It should not be assumed that the ideal listener cannot do that on the basis of musical perception. The Host can acknowledge that this point should not be subject to speculation alone. Still, the Host might maintain that what distinguishes ideal listeners from ordinary listeners is the former’s power to make perceptual distinctions to a fine degree. Yet apparently music might not be viewed as having parts that allow for perceptual distinctions. The Host says
It is true that a fine thread and a strand of hair each has its form that can be distinguished. Therefore, Li Lou and a blind man will have different results with their clear-sightedness and lack of vision. But if you simply ‘mix water with water’ who can tell the difference?36

The Host seems to suggest that musical works should not be divided into parts of different nature. The perceptual acumen of ideal listeners to reflect fine distinctions in music would be irrelevant for discerning the nature of music. Further, the Host seems to suggest that the ideal listeners’ ability to make fine distinctions backfires. If the nature of music is like water mixed with water, the emotion that ideal listeners recognize by means of parsing the water into different parts will not be the emotion in the music. The ideal listeners will fail the recognition task where they are supposedly most advantaged.

Let us think of an easier case where music does not have that misleading appearance of several emotional parts, each of which may be open to diverse emotional interpretations. It looks like the ideal listeners should be able to tell what emotion is in the music, simply by attending to the music. Even here the Host does not agree. Ideal listeners can still be deceived. To see how, let us focus on one passage in the dialogue.

Suppose emotions in the mind can be known by making sounds. Suppose further someone concentrates on a mental image of a horse, wants to say the word “horse” out loud but accidentally say “deer.” Ideal listeners should be able to discern “horse” instead of “deer,” if they discern the mind through sounds alone. Therefore, inner

36 Henricks, Philosophy and Argumentation in Third-Century China, 85.
emotions are not bound by words, and words are not enough to prove emotions in the mind.\textsuperscript{37}

The Host suggests that ideal listeners are unable to tell it is a horse that the speaker has in mind. One might protest that the verbal error likely happens as a result of the speaker being distracted the second before making the utterance. Perhaps the idea of a deer suddenly crosses the speaker’s mind. If the speaker keeps concentrating on a mental image of horse, both the distraction and the verbal error will not happen. But the possibility of distraction does not help alleviate the force of this case. The Host presents a scenario whereby it is possible for a sincere expression to conceal what is in the mind, perhaps even without the speaker’s awareness of the error being made. It does not matter for the Host whether the speaker makes this error because of a distraction. What matters is that ideal listeners fail to discern what is in the speaker’s mind. Although this case of verbal error involves language, by analogy it shows that ideal listeners are unable to discern emotions in music by means of music alone. This example grants as much as possible to the Guest. The utterance “deer” can mislead ideal listeners, not because of the speaker’s insincerity but because of an accident of verbal error.

The problem cuts deeper than one may recognize at first. It breaks the assumption that expressive means, when sincerely used, convey mental content accurately. The linguistic example is simple, because there is a way to check the speaker with a simple claim: “I thought you meant a horse, not a deer.” The speaker will say either that “Sorry, I meant a horse.” or “Did I say ‘deer’?” Either way, there is a procedure to check whether the mental content and the word used to express that content match each other. Still, emotion can compound the case. For example, I may feel

\textsuperscript{37} My translation of the Chinese text: 若吹律校音以知其心，假令心志于马而误言鹿，察者固当由鹿以知马也。此为心不系于所言，言不足以证心也
helpless and concentrate on this feeling. I do not know what words I can use to best express this “helpless” feeling. The way I end up expressing the feeling is “I feel threatened.” Feeling threatened is different from feeling helpless. Since my description of feeling threatened invites interpretation in the vicinity of my original mental state, ideal listeners will find the description of “feeling threatened” helpful to make sense of my other verbal reports and experiences. Ideal listeners would not be motivated to trace my mental content to a feeling of helplessness. But let us suppose that I do not feel threatened in fact. Feeling helpless is all there is in my mind. I would deceive both myself and ideal listeners sincerely and accidently.

If emotional backtracking looks daunting in a linguistic case, it is next to impossible in a musical case. There are no fixed rules in music, semantic or syntactic, to guarantee a correct correspondence between music and the expressive means. Just as one can use a smile to express helplessness, all musical phrases can be used to express helplessness. It is impractical, if not utterly impossible, for ideal listeners to backtrack all expressions to the feeling of helplessness. One might hold that musicians are responsible for expressing emotions in the most transparent way. But this will not reveal the emotional nature of music, but only solidifies the gap between music and emotion by upholding conventional standards of transparency. Expressive means associated with emotions through conventions would suggest that music does not have an emotional nature.

The Argument from Evocative Underdetermination

The Guest proposes that the emotional nature of music can be established through the emotions aroused by music. Our emotional responses to music are apparently determined by the nature of music. If a piece of music makes us happy, it suggests that the music is happy. To know
the emotional nature of music, we need only attend to our emotional responses. If our mental states make our musical reception biased, we can appeal to ideal listeners who are not biased. According to the Guest, ideal listeners are accurate in their emotional responses. Ideal listeners do not have to be always right. Ideal listeners need only be unbiased in the sense that they harbor no definite emotions inside before musical listening. For the unbiased listeners, the emotions they have while listening to different music will reflect the nature of music.

The Host replies that the Guest mistakes physiological responses for emotional responses. Musical instruments have different functions and properties. When instruments like *pi-pa*, *zheng*, and *di* are played, the intervals are close, the notes high, the shifts many, and the beats fast. This gives listeners high-level arousal. When the lute and the zither are played, the intervals are far, the notes low, the shifts few, and the sounds pure. If one does not first calm down to empty one’s mind, it would be hard to hear the sounds. This gives listeners low-level arousal. The songs from the Qi and Chu regions have many repetitive patterns and few changes such that listeners feel collected and concentrated. In contrast, ditties are “rich in substance and broad in effect,” which dispose listeners to feel jumpy and excited. The Host claims that these technical parameters make music relaxing or agitating. The corresponding physiological responses can be restful or restless. While these physiological responses might serve as the “incipient stages” of emotions, they are not full-fledged to count as emotions,\(^\text{38}\) which are read into the music later through interpretations. To illustrate, the Host makes an analogy. Food can be delicious in various ways. A sweet dish and a bitter dish can both be delicious. But the different tastes do not give the food different emotional natures or any emotional nature at all. Likewise, music can be beautiful in various ways. But the physiological responses to music do not give music different emotional natures or any emotional nature.

\(^{38}\) My translation of the Chinese text: 人情以躁静容端
nature at all. The Host claims that music and emotion are in two different realms such that they are “orthogonal” to each other.\textsuperscript{39}

The Host argues that unbiased listeners may exhibit disparities in their emotional responses, even if they are physiologically aroused similarly by the same music.

If music were emotionally one-sided and fixed, containing sounds all of one kind, the emotions released and manifested would in each case match the music. Then how can music simultaneously control different ideas and release many different emotions?\textsuperscript{40}

For music to have an emotional nature, it must reliably arouse a certain emotion in listeners. If different emotions arise in response to the same music, it is unclear which emotional response would establish an emotional nature of this music. If the Guest claims that different emotions are in the music as a result of different emotional responses, the emotional appearances of music will be illusory. What we know is not the emotion in the music, but the collection of emotional responses in listeners. The following argument can be constructed from Ji Kang’s text:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{39} My translation of the Chinese text: 声之与心，殊涂异轨，不相经纬
\item \textsuperscript{40} My translation of the Chinese text: 若资（偏）固之声，含一致之声，其所发明，各当其分，则焉能兼御群理，总发众情耶? The Host’s reply will be echoed by empirical studies in musical psychology. Patrik N. Juslin et al. have differentiated various mechanisms of the interplay between musical perception and emotional induction. The precise mechanisms involved in musical perception will vary across individuals and induce various emotional responses. A “happy” song might remind us of a sad story, which shows that the mechanism of “episodic memory” can induce an emotion different from the emotion allegedly expressed in the music. In contrast, when the mechanism of “emotional contagion” is at work, listeners will experience the same emotion allegedly expressed in the music. Alf Gabrielsson, reviewing the studies of Strong Experiences with Music (the SEM Project), proposes a descriptive system for categorizing varieties of emotional reactions to music. According to the data analysis, a mixture of factors such as the music, the person, and the situation all have a significant bearing on how a piece of music will be emotionally experienced. See Alf Gabrielsson, “Strong Experiences with Music,” in \textit{Handbook of Music and Emotion: Theory, Research, Applications}, eds. P. N. Juslin and J. A. Sloboda (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 547-574.
\end{itemize}
(P1) Emotional responses to music are underdetermined.

(P2) If emotional responses to music are underdetermined, music is not emotional.

(C) Music is not emotional.

The Guest objects to the Host’s observation in P1. Although different emotions arise in response to the same piece of music, each piece may still have an emotional nature, which will generate a definite emotional response in time. Evocative underdetermination might hold because it takes time for the emotional response to manifest. Since different listeners have different emotional temperament, the emotional effect is not equally obvious for all listeners. It might take longer for a carefree listener to feel despondent in response to sad music. Alternatively, it might take longer for a chronically depressed listener to feel any more depressed in response to sad music. Even if we do not know exactly how emotional temperament influences musical evocation, a certain emotional response can manifest quickly for some listeners and slowly for other listeners.

“The transformation brought on by music is slow to take effect,” says the Guest. The slow manifestation may temporarily conceal, but never cancel, the emotional response.

In reply, the Host considers a temperamentally sad listener as constantly exposed to “Bleating Deer” which is generally taken to be happy music. According to the Guest, the happy response will eventually become manifest, even if it may take longer for a temperamentally sad listener. The Host doubts that this is the case. According to the Host, it is possible that the listener will not only fail to feel happy, but also end up unhappier. The Host has not explained the psychological mechanism involved in this kind of reverse exacerbation. We might imagine that a sad listener feels unhappy about being aroused by “Bleating Deer” because the music appears to

---

41 My translation of the Chinese text: 声化迟缓
diminish her sadness. To illustrate, the Host makes an analogy. If a fire is put into an extremely cold room, the warmth of the fire may not make a palpable difference in the temperature of the room. But the fire by its warm nature should not magnify the coldness by making the room colder. The problem with music such as “Bleating Deer” is not that its emotional effect takes longer to manifest, but that it evokes the opposite emotion by making some listeners unhappy.

At this point, one might think the debate is over with the Host winning it. Yet the Guest raises a counterexample that seems to refute P2. According to the Guest, emotions can be generally categorized as either positive or negative. The positive emotions manifest mostly in laughs and the negative emotions manifest mostly in tears. When people listen to music from regions such as Qi and Chu, solemnity is the only response and no listener is ever seen to respond cheerfully. It seems that we have one solid case where there are no emotional disparities among listeners.

The Host replies that emotional responses to music differ not only in the direction of emotional contagion, but also in the manners of manifestation at varying emotional intensity. The most intense emotions manifest in different ways. The Host says, “the extremes of joy and extremes of grief do not show in the same way.”42 Mild happiness manifests in a face lighting up, yet utmost happiness manifests in a “quiet, natural, self-attained” expression.43 The outward manifestation of joy decreases as the inner joy increases. Mild grief manifests in a crestfallen look, yet utmost grief manifests in weeping. The outward manifestation of grief increases as grief increases. Magnified sadness is crying, whereas magnified joy is serenity. The Host says, “self-attainment results from a joyful response to music, whereas weeping results from a sorrowful

42 My translation of the Chinese text: 哀乐之极, 不必同致
43 There are interpretive choices Henricks made in this passage, particularly regarding the precise word that denotes the expression of utmost joy. According to one version of the text, the Host says “smile” is the expression of utmost joy. Commentators like Dai Mingyang thinks this is correct. Even so, the Host’s main point comes afterwards: the expression of utmost joy is quiet, natural, self-attained contentedness. In order to highlight the Host’s argumentative flow, Henricks has restructured the sentence and adjusted the order of meanings in translation. Since these interpretive issues do not in any way diminish the main argument the Host makes, I will not enter into the details here.
response to music.” To illustrate, if I win the lottery, I might be clapping hands and dancing on feet. But if my family are doing well, I will be extremely happy, albeit in a self-contained way. Although no listener smiles in response to the music from Qi and Chu regions, that can be interpreted as outward signs of either mild sadness or utmost joy. Since mild sadness and utmost joy are opposite, the Guest’s observation does not count against P2.

The Guest has no response to this thought. But the Guest could have argued that utmost sadness can be like utmost happiness in that both give little outward signs. When a person is extremely sad, a person can be mentally frozen so that not a tear is dropped. The Host might reply that people react to pain and pleasure differently. The more pain there is, the more we want to indicate the pain to others. The more pleasure there is, the more we want to remain within it, which would conceal the manifestation. In utmost happiness, people may not feel the need to signal it to anybody. In contrast, when we are in pain, we have a need to signal it to others in search of empathy.

Nonetheless, I wonder if this is true. It is possible that people in sadness choose to conceal the feeling, although they feel the need to signal it to others. It is also possible that sadness has a numbing effect whereby people in great pain adapt to the pain so well that they become somewhat oblivious. People in extreme pain might put away the pain to live on in sanity rather than constantly feeling a signaling need and facing the potential of the signal being ignored. People might also choose to live at home with sadness, not manifesting it, even if they are acutely aware of it. This happens when remaining inside the emotional pain has some rewards, whether it is political, artistic, or spiritual. For all these cases, there might not be too much manifestation on the outside even if one is in extreme sadness. It is an open question whether emotional evocation by music can show that music is emotional.

---

44 My translation of the Chinese text: 乐之应声以自得为主，哀之应感以垂涕为故
Reflection

I have reconstructed philosophical moves in Ji Kang’s *Music Has Neither Grief or Joy* into three arguments against that the thought that music is emotional. Representation does not seem to work. Although it is unnecessary to insist on one-one correspondence, it is necessary for representation to be constant. Expression does not seem to work. Although it is unnecessary to insist on expressive sincerity, it is necessary for expressive means to match expressive content. Evocation does not seem to work. Although it is unnecessary to insist on absolute determination in the emotional responses, it is necessary for some responses to count as right. The Host maintains that music has no emotional nature.
Chapter Three. Reaction

In this chapter I will consider objections to the illusion view that can be raised from the Confucian tradition. It is helpful to clarify a terminological point. I have mentioned that the Chinese word “乐”, when pronounced as “yue,” can mean music in a narrow sense. The Confucian tradition takes “yue” to include music, dance, and poetry. This did not become problematic in our discussion of Ji Kang. But it can raise interpretive worries now as we discuss Confucian ideas. One might worry how much of what Confucian philosophers say about “yue” applies strictly to music. Likewise, one might wonder how much of what Ji Kang criticizes about ideas of music reaches beyond music to “yue” conceived broadly as an integrated art form. In what follows I will set aside these worries and assume that it can be fruitful to interpret “yue” in Confucian texts narrowly as music and still move the debate forward.

Ji Kang’s position undermines Confucianism. The collaboration between “li” (礼) and “yue” (乐) is central to Confucian thinking. According to Confucian philosopher Xunzi, people are social animals with individual desires.45 Society cannot function if all individuals are left to pursue desires to the extreme. The fight to obtain resources and the competition to fulfill desires will engender chaos. In order to balance individual interests and social interests, clear demarcations must be drawn to define individual needs and duties. This idea of demarcation is “fen” (分 distinction). A Confucian society is marked by clearly defined roles for each individual. Confucian conceptions of personal and political progress hinge upon the role appropriate for each individual, which does not encourage members in the society to break the boundaries and ignore

---

the distinctions. For example, it is inappropriate for a state governor to participate in talent shows, even if the governor can sing and dance better than anyone in the show. With each social role comes clear expectations of proper actions and words.

The necessity to maintain divisions and distinctions is substantiated and summarized in the idea of “li” ( 礼). Scott Cook translates “li” as “ritual,” which is not wrong but reduces the idea of “li” to observable social customs. “Li” is more fundamentally about an inward acknowledgment of the divisions and distinctions in social life. Roger T. Ames’s translation of “li” as “propriety” captures that inwardness.46 Suppose that an Imperial Feast is only appropriate for a royal banquet and I hold an Imperial Feast to celebrate my graduation. I would be wrong not only to break, but also to disdain the distinction between the royal and the common. In the Analects, Confucius severely criticizes a local governor to use a group of 64 dancers, which is only appropriate for an emperor: “If someone has the heart to do even this, what can he not have the heart to do?”47 In Confucianism, the defiance of propriety is not only a crime, but also a character flaw. The spirit of “li” is to saturate distinctions in all people in a society and to safeguard social functioning by restraining individual desires.

Nonetheless, propriety alone cannot achieve that social purpose. A society that runs on social distinctions without a sense of togetherness would be cold and cruel. People need to live in harmony with well-defined roles and responsibilities. The well-functioning of society depends on the collaboration between the spirit of distinction and the spirit of harmony. The spirit of harmony is indispensable both in the moral education aiming at personal goodness and in the political regulation aiming at social goodness. Remarkably, art as represented by music is thought to

47 My translation of the Chinese text: 是可忍孰不可忍?
instantiate the spirit of harmony. For Confucianism, music brings harmony. The Confucian ideal for society is a perfect collaboration between propriety and music. In order for music to balance propriety instead of breaking it, excessively emotional music is discouraged in Confucianism. Excessively emotional music is thought to put people at risk of emotional abandonment. Just like consuming strong liquors makes people act without bounds, excessively emotional music is believed to set people off. Good music, according to Confucianism, brings people together just enough without breaking the distinctions.

The abstinence of emotional excessiveness as an artistic ideal is not uniquely Chinese. Music critic James Huneker commends Étude Op. 10, No. 3, which Chopin believed to be his most beautiful melody,\(^48\) as “simpler, less morbid, sultry and languorous, therefore saner, than the much bepraised study in C sharp minor.”\(^49\) Simpler melodies without excessive sentimentality are believed to be better. In the same spirit, Confucian aesthetics discourages excessive emotions in music, albeit for a social concern. Excessively emotional music poses a danger to society.\(^50\)

Ji Kang writes *Music Has No Grief or Joy* to argue against the Confucian tenet that music is emotional. The philosophical ambition in Ji Kang’s writing should be clear now. On the surface, the writing looks like an ancient text of musical aesthetics. But there is a subtext of social philosophy which would debunk Confucianism. In taking on the emotional nature of music, Ji Kang would be attacking the root of a Confucian tenet. But it is worth clarifying what is at stake for Confucianism. The social philosophy in Confucianism is not doomed, if the illusion view is right. It is possible to smooth the divisiveness of propriety by allowing for a multitude of

viewpoints. To devise rituals with this open-mindedness would not make rituals overbearing.\textsuperscript{51} Confucianism does not have to rely on music to bring about harmony.

It is beyond the scope of this discussion to thoroughly examine the history of Confucian thinking on music. There are many schools of Confucianism and their views on music differ. Such differences among Confucian schools need not concern us here. One useful source for us is the Confucian classic \textit{Record of Music (乐记 Yue Ji)}, which Ji Kang quotes in \textit{Music Has No Grief or Joy}. Another useful source for us is Confucian philosopher Xunzi’s essay \textit{On Music (乐论 Yue Lun)}, although it is debated whether Xunzi’s writing came before or after \textit{Record of Music}. The Confucian perspective represented by the Guest can be found in both texts. I will develop potential Confucian responses by drawing on these texts. My main purpose is to formulate potential responses in spirit with Confucianism.

The Objection from Representational Reliability

Confucian thinkers hold that music represents emotions. According to \textit{Record of Music}, music is used to imitate virtues (乐者，所以象德也).\textsuperscript{52} The word “象” (xiang) means “image” as

\textsuperscript{51} The Qian (谦) hexagram from \textit{Book of Changes (Yi Jing)} suggests that propriety are institutionalized by Qian. While “modesty” is a straightforward translation of Qian, it would miss the original meaning that comes from the two parts of this character. The left part is “word” (言) and the right part is to “harmonize” or “bring all together” or “coexist” (兼). The original meaning of this character is a mentality to make room for different voices to coexist. Neo-Confucian philosopher Lai Zhide (来知德) in the Ming Dynasty thus annotates the Qian hexagram understood as “institutionalizing propriety with different voices”: “If the institutionalized propriety is too strict, one section is completely segregated from another section. To hold different voices in the institution, harmony would ensue … Propriety, when too strictly devised and executed, falls short by being overbearing.” My translation of the Chinese text: “礼太严, 截然不同犯, 谦以制之, 则和而至矣 … 人之行礼, 若依其太严之礼, 不免失之亢”, 明来知德《周易集注》卷十四, accessed March 1, 2021, https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=213736&remap=gb.

\textsuperscript{52} Scott Cook, \textquote{\textquote{Yue Ji 業記 -- Record of Music: Introduction, Translation, Notes, and Commentary},} \textit{Asian Music} 26, No. 2 (1995): §4.6, 57.
a noun and “to symbolize” as a verb. But “to symbolize” would mask the sense of emulation in the word.

The balance of small and large is put into the pitches [of the bells in the temples], and the order [of the five tones] is aligned from beginning to end, in order to represent the affairs and actions [of society]. The principles (li) of the close and distant, the noble and plebeian, the old and young, and male and female are all made to take shape and appear in Music (yue).\textsuperscript{53}

Virtues manifest in various social relations. Specifically, music can represent virtues by representing emotions that are proper for virtues in these social relations.

The Host has objected that representation of this kind does not have constancy. A Confucian philosopher might reply that the debate takes the idea of representation too strongly. According to Record of Music, “the music of a well-governed age is peaceful … The music of a lost state is mournful.”\textsuperscript{54} It is too strong to interpret ideas like this as saying that peaceful and joyful music represents a secure and prosperous state. Rather, a Confucian philosopher can concede that there is no representative constancy, but insist upon a regular correlation between social mores and music popular in a society. For example, if the popular music in a state is tedious and repetitive, it is likely that people living in the state feel tired. The music is popular for its power to reflect the population’s lived experiences.

\textsuperscript{53} Cook, “Record of Music,” §5.2, 58. 使亲疏、贵贱、长幼、男女之理皆形见于乐
\textsuperscript{54} Cook, “Record of Music,” §1.3, 29. 治世之音安以乐，其政和。乱世之音怨以怒，其政乖。亡国之音哀以思，其民困
In response, there are two points to consider. First, the idea that people in turbulent times prefer music with violent emotions is not empirically accurate. It is natural for people in turbulent times to long for peace. The musical preferences might come out as the opposite of the emotional tone of the ethos. The peaceful music in violent times can be therapeutic by counteracting the gloomy moods. Likewise, people in peaceful times may prefer violent music to release energy. Second, the way musical preferences reflect characters reaches beyond the scope of representation. People prefer music that seems to express or evoke emotions that are important to them. Even if the preference for peaceful music reflects a peaceful character, such reflection assumes some account of expression or evocation that explains the preference in the first place. If the Confucian reply boils down to reflection as such, it would collapse into an account of expression or evocation at the more basic explanatory level. It remains an open question whether emotional representation in music can challenge the illusion view.

The Objection from Expressive Sincerity

Confucian thinkers hold that music expresses emotions. “In all cases, the arising of music (yin) is born in the of hearts of men.”\textsuperscript{55} This is the opening sentence in Record of Music. As something originating from the mind, music is thought to express mental states. “Emotion is stirred within and thus takes shape in sound.”\textsuperscript{56} Different emotions have different manifestations in music. Record of Music lists manifestations of such emotions as sadness, serenity, joy, anger, awe, and

\textsuperscript{55} Cook, “Record of Music,” §1.1, 24. 凡音之起，由人心生
\textsuperscript{56} Cook, “Record of Music,” §1.3, 29. 情动于中，故形于声
love. Music has different formal features when expressing different emotions. For example, joyful music will be expansive and span a large range of notes.\textsuperscript{57}

Later development in Confucianism would confirm this idea of mental outflow. Neo-Confucian philosopher Zhang Zai (张載) synthesizes an ontocosmology with the idea of “qi” (气/energy). On this view, everything is made up of energy and things influence each other through this energy. The energy can be important for moral growth.\textsuperscript{58} This concept of energy can be applied to musical expression. When composers and performers make music, their mental energy will be dispersed in the composition and performance. A pianist who has just won the lottery will have a happy mood, which will come through the performance even if the performer tries to calm down. There is no way to hide the influence of “energy” for a keen observer, as the Guest has suggested.

Recall that the Host charges that expressive means are incapable of matching the expressive content. For a Confucian thinker, this might sound bizarre. If what generates the music is a mental state, and if the outward manifestation of the mental state is not distorted or stunted by any force, the musician’s sincerity of expressing an emotion would suffice to guarantee a match between expressive means and emotional content. The match may not be perfect, but it should be recognizable. For example, a starting composer may try to express an emotion. Imagine that the composer has a rather limited set of resources. There are only three notes in C major for the composer to use. The Host might say that the expressive means are incapable of expressing any emotion. But the Confucian thinker would contend that the composer might use the three notes in

\textsuperscript{57} Cook, “Record of Music,” §1.2, 27-8. Here is the complete original text for the different emotions and their expressions: 是故其哀心感者，其声噍以杀。其乐心感者，其声噍以缓。其怒心感者，其声噍以厉。其敬心感者，其声噍以廉。其爱心感者，其声噍以柔

\textsuperscript{58} Mencius claims to be good at keeping the “noble energy” (吾善养吾浩然之气).
creative and exciting ways to express joy. One might even say that it is enviable that the starting composer can enjoy composition with simple notes. Rather than having a large set of resources at the disposal and suffer from a wide range of choices, the composer has a limited set of goals and resources to work with.

The Host may rehearse the worry that there is no way to tell if the composer is expressing joy sincerely with just three notes in one key. But the Confucian thinker can resist such an Unrealistic standard on what counts as sincere. In fact, there is reason to believe that the ideal of pure sincerity is all but a fantasy. In *A Composer’s World*, Paul Hindemith vividly details how everyday distractions make pure sincerity unrealistic:

Let us suppose a composer is writing an extremely funereal piece, which may require three months of intensive work. Is he, during this three-months period, thinking of nothing but funerals? Or can he, in those hours that are not devoted to his work because of his desire to eat and sleep, put his grief on ice, so to speak, and be gay until the moment when he resumes his somber activity? If he really expressed his feelings accurately during the time of composing and writing, we would be presented with a horrible motley of expressions, among which the grievous part would necessarily occupy but a small space.59

It would be absurd to think that in order to compose something sad, the composer fails to be sincere just because of having other mundane emotions at the time of composition. If expressive sincerity

---

is unrealistic, to accuse a composer with limited compositional devices of expressive insincerity would be misplaced.

The Confucian thinker can loosen the requirement on sincerity. The process of sincere expression might be conceived as a process of crystallization. The end product does not have to express exactly every psychological detail that was once in the composer’s mind. Rather, as long as the end product is affirmed as a crystallization of the composer’s emotion, the work succeeds in expressing an emotion. In fact, because the work crystallizes the emotion, it is fine to say that the work is emotional in that sense. In The Language of Music, Cooke speaks of the mental states in which Beethoven wrote “Eroica.” Beethoven was under the influence of liberal ideals in the French revolution. He would want to get into the composition a sense of grief for the heroes that would die in the revolution. There were many thoughts that got into this grief. It was impossible to detail all of them in the composition. As long as Beethoven succeeded in crystallizing the emotions in the C minor theme of the work, Eroica succeeded in expressing that sincerely.60

Let us grant that crystallization yields a more realistic conception of sincerity. Still, the Host might point out the incapability of expressive means to match the emotions that musicians sincerely aim to express. The Confucian thinker needs something more objective than the sincerity of musicians. Otherwise, crystallization remains mysterious. The question is not whether musicians can sincerely express emotions, but whether music can successfully express emotions.

Nonetheless, the Confucian thinker might contend that expressive sincerity is enough to differentiate an emotion from another. This might be sufficient to establish an emotional nature of music. The requirement for recognition of which emotions are expressed is not that each expressive means accurately matches each expressive content. Rather, it suffices that expressive means are

---

60 Cooke, The Language of Music, 17.
different from each other to allow for emotional differentiation. Suppose the major key is used to express joy and a minor key is used to express sadness. It is not necessary that the major key matches joy in some essential way, or that the minor key matches sadness in some essential way.

The problem with this reply is that the expressive means do not allow for such a straightforward differentiation of emotions. Happy music has been composed in minor keys and sad music has been composed in major keys. Even if emotional differentiation is made possible by expressive sincerity, that is not enough to put emotion into music. To establish an emotional nature of music, it is necessary for the expressive means to match specific emotional content. It remains an open question whether emotional expression in music can challenge the illusion view.

The Objection from Evocative Appropriateness

Confucian thinkers hold that music arouses emotions. According to Record of Music, “the root [of music] lies in the touching off of [human] hearts by [external] things.”\(^6\) The Host has challenged this position by raising the problem of evocative underdetermination. But the Confucian thinker can protest that not all emotional responses are appropriate. Even if different listeners might be aroused differently, that does not mean that music is not emotional. It might happen that some listeners are not well equipped to discern the emotional nature of music. Their aesthetic judgments will have to be dismissed. It means that the mere diversity of emotional responses is not sufficient to denounce the Guest’s view. Neo-Confucian philosopher Wang Fuzhi has criticized Ji Kang’s view on emotional disparity:

---

\(^6\) Cook, “Record of Music,” §1.2, 27. 其本在人心之感于物也
Those who sigh at a feast are not happy. Those who sing at a funeral are not sad …

It often happens that an object mismatches an event and that an emotion mismatches an object. This mismatch does not diminish the object … the music of Huaishui is inherently happy. Some listeners feel sad by themselves after listening to it. The happiness in the music and the sadness in the listener have no contact. The happiness does not become manifest. But the sorrow in the listener’s heart does not diminish the music, nor does the happiness in the music diminish the sorrow in the listener’s heart … when the cloud moves to hide the sun, it is wrong to doubt that the sun is shining.62

Recall that the Host claims that even if a fire may not make a room warmer, it should not make a room colder. Ji Kang argues that some allegedly happy music can make people sad, which is impossible. Wang Fuzhi’s point is that Ji Kang misreads the case. It is not a case where music makes people both happy and sad, but a case where people have inappropriate responses to happy music. The fact that emotional disparity arises in response to music does not deprive music of its emotional nature. Apparently, the Host gives undue credit to the inappropriate emotional responses. For example, if a piece of salsa music makes some listeners somber, their emotional responses

62 My translation of the Chinese text from “On Drum and Bell” in On Poetry: “当飨而叹，非谓叹者之亦欢也；临丧而歌，非谓歌者之亦戚也 … 事与物不相称，物与情不相准者多矣，未能如之何，而彼固不为之损 … 然则，‘淮水’之乐，其音自乐，听其声者自悲，两无相与，而乐不见功。乐开奖结果其心之忧，忧果害于其乐之和哉？ … 云移日蔽，而疑日之无固明也，非至愚者不能。”《诗广传》卷三《论鼓钟》In the second last sentence, I have translated “harmony” as “happy.” Harmony is the function of music according to Confucian classics. As a function of music, “harmony” covers happy music and sad music. But “harmony” can also refer to a peacefully joyful state of mind. In this context it means the function of music because of the syntactical contrast between “the sorrow of heart” and “the harmony of music.” But since it is happy music that Wang Fuzhi speaks of, it is not stretching the text too far to interpret the harmony of happy music, which brings people together in a happy way, as happiness. Translating it literally as “harmony” is not wrong, but might obscure the meaning of the passage. Ye Lang, An Outline of the History of Chinese Aesthetics (Shanghai: Shanghai People’s Press, 1985), 197.
mismatch the jubilant rhythm. The Host would say that the salsa music is not jubilant, because emotional responses vary. But this sounds absurd. In the presence of salsa music, the somber responses would be inappropriate.

But the Host might reply that things will be different if the salsa music is played at a community where tempo is heard as the predominant feature of music and fast tempo is heard as an indicator of anxiety. Upon listening to salsa, listeners in that community would immediately recognize anxiety. The listeners expect to be affected by the anxiety in the music. To prepare for the onset of anxiety, they listen through the anxiety to feel peacefully somber in the way Buddhist followers reach inner peace by seeing through the illusory appearances. Some listeners in that community would feel jubilant, but their responses would be locally discredited as failing to exhibit good taste.

The Confucian thinker can reply that even if the emotional responses are different, the initial bodily responses are the same. Listeners from the somber community initially feel the rhythm of salsa. Some get carried away by it. The somber feeling is a higher-level emotional response to that universal bodily response. If the bodily responses are the same, they can refute the illusion view by sidestepping emotion in cases where emotional underdetermination arises.

It can be doubted that bodily responses are the same across individuals. There is evidence that differences in brain states and sonic backgrounds make people hear different things and have different responses. A popular example is the “Yanny or Laurel” illusion, whereby some hear the name as “Yanny” while others hear it as “Laurel.” Still, some people hear both pronunciations, albeit at different times. The perception of sounds is not universal. Another example is our different responses to certain lullabies. The ancient Finnish lullaby “Nuku Nuku” and the Russian lullaby

---

“Tili tili bom” are two cases in point. While some people feel soothing and relaxing, others find it creepy and even fearful. Perhaps babies would have a more universal response. But adults exhibit different bodily responses to these lullabies.

A deeper problem is that it fails to consider the ways emotion influences bodily perception. The influence between bodily perception and emotion is not one way. Emotion can frame bodily perception. Listeners in the somber community may have a different way of responding to fast tempo because of their emotional disposition towards somberness. Whenever anxiety is about to arise, listeners would normally experience an emotion like embarrassment. They may feel embarrassed about not being able to maintain mental composure. This high-level embarrassment would further structure the bodily responses in a way that minimizes agitation. For example, the listeners might readjust their breathing patterns. Even if they are somewhat excited, the bodily excitement is not enough to deliver joy. Since bodily responses are laden with emotions, bodily responses are not sufficiently neutral to establish an emotional nature of music.

The Confucian thinker, like the Guest, can insist that it takes a long time for the genuine emotional response to manifest. The Host has treated this idea cursorily in the dialogue. To do justice to this point, we need to allow the listeners a longer period of time and see if time may solve the problem. Confucian aesthetics values the way art might transform the moral character. The transformative process can take a long time to accomplish and maintain.64

One way that music can be thought to exert a long-lasting effect is by influencing the way people make moral judgments. Angelika Seidel and Jesse Prinz have used Japanese noise music

64 The word in ancient Chinese to convey stimulation or arousal is “gan” (感). As a noun, it literally means feeling. As a verb, it means to arouse feelings. Etymologically, “gan” means to be hurt in the heart, although that dimension of vulnerability is obscured in contemporary usage. In contemporary Chinese, “gan” can be combined with other characters to convey a sense of emotion. “Gan-Dong” (感动) means to move or touch emotionally. “Gan-Hua” (感化) means to transform emotionally. “Gan-Zhao” (感召) means to awake or inspire emotionally.
and Edvard Grieg’s “Morning Mood” to show that musically induced affective states can amplify moral judgments. When irritated by music, people are more likely to judge actions as wrong. When uplifted by music, people are more likely to judge helping behaviors as good and obligatory.\textsuperscript{65} If music can affect moral choices in the empirically controlled environment in a short period of time, it is arguably possible for the musically induced affects to build up and gradually shift people’s moral character in a certain direction over time. Suppose I am exposed to uplifting music constantly, I might be much more likely to endorse helping behaviors than otherwise. My moral character may change as a result in the long term. As Cyril Scott writes, in \textit{Music and Its Secret Influence}, about the spiritual effects that Indian music can have on the mind:

It is true the effect wears off after a while, but the experience is repeated the next time we hear music of a similar kind. And suppose that we are constantly hearing music, day after day, week after week, year after year, will those constantly repeated emotions leave no imprint upon our character, our emotional nature?\textsuperscript{66}

It is important to note that the musically induced affective states may be morally significant without being full-fledged emotions. Although the pieces of music are described as angry and happy and the responses are described as anger and happiness in the experiments, the authors “take no strong stance on the mood/emotion distinction” insofar as the musically induced states “lack manifest moral content.”\textsuperscript{67} Emotions can be sidestepped as long as music can be shown to impact moral judgments. To refute the illusion view, Confucian thinkers need to provide a causal story

\textsuperscript{67} Seidel and Prinz, “Mad and Glad,” 635.
about how musically induced affective states may have a causal impact on the emotions that are relevant for morality. Music must be shown to facilitate moral education by working on morally relevant emotions.

One way to achieve this is to examine the emotions involved in the development of moral characters. In the article “On the Ancient Idea that Music Shapes Character,” James Harold draws on Confucian philosopher Xunzi to argue for a “causal link between exposure to art (or entertainment) and character development.” Since music can temporarily induce affective changes, the question is whether those affective changes last long enough to be morally significant. According to Harold, whatever effects these affective changes might have on virtues will be “pre-reflective and autonomous,” giving us “proper models but give no precepts.” Listeners need complementary beliefs to internalize transitory affective changes as morally significant dispositions. For example, Harold holds that a long-term effect of watching violent media is “the adoption of new beliefs,” which disposes people towards aggressive characters.

But the adoption of new beliefs is probably due to the representational content in media. The parallel with music does not hold, because music lacks the representational content which can ground belief formation. Without a source for cognitive input, the affective changes generated by music is not enough to form new beliefs. The analogy with visual media is insufficient to show that music can shape moral character by forming new beliefs in listeners.

---

69 This is not an exclusively Confucian concern. Plato writes in Book III of Republic, “The education in music and poetry is most important … because rhythm and harmony permeate the inner part of the soul more than anything else, affecting it most strongly and bringing it grace, so that if someone is properly educated in music and poetry, it makes him graceful, but if not, then the opposite.” Plato, Complete Works, eds. John M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), Republic, 401d.
Harold proposes that repetition of certain “disconfirming experiences” can affect our stereotypical judgments in the long term. For example, if I hold the wrong view that introverts are not capable of public speaking, my stereotypical view will be changed by my repeated exposure to introverts who speak well in public. The repetition of disconfirming experiences will “mitigate the role of stereotypes in deliberation.” Likewise, Harold suggests that music can moderately affect the development of moral character by exposing us repeatedly to disconfirming experiences. When we find a piece of music pleasant, music can confirm our preferences. When we discover our enjoyment of a piece of music which we did not enjoy previously, music disconfirms our preferences. Insofar our aesthetic preferences can be stereotypical, music can change our aesthetic stereotypes. For example, constant exposure to peaceful music can make me gradually feel aversion to raucous music. Harold suggests that the dispositional changes induced by music does not happen positively but negatively. The value of music consists in its power to curb emotions rather than to form emotions. In the article “The Values of Music,” Eric L. Hutton and James Harold quote Xunzi:

As for people’s dispositions, their eyes desire the utmost in sights, their ears desire the utmost in sounds, their mouths desire the utmost in flavors, their noses desire the utmost in smells, and their bodies desire the utmost in comfort. These “five utmosts” are something the dispositions of people cannot avoid [desiring].

Recall that the Host acknowledges this Confucian observation at the beginning of the dialogue:

---

It is known that emotions should not be unbridled and desires should not be exhausted. Music is limited according to its use such that sadness does not turn into harm and happiness does not turn into the licentiousness.\textsuperscript{75}

Hutton and Harold use this passage as evidence for the view that “people are unavoidably disposed toward desiring the ‘utmost in sounds.’”\textsuperscript{76} Consequently, it is necessary to restrain the pursuit of pleasure. Xunzi wrote:

And so music is the means to guide one’s joy. The instruments made of metal, stone, silk string, and bamboo are the means to guide one’s virtue. When music proceeds, then the people will turn toward what is correct.\textsuperscript{77}

The authors point out that for Xunzi, “a crucial element of being virtuous is having the right dispositions in feelings and desires.”\textsuperscript{78} A major source of that disposition comes from being immersed in good music. Good music carries listeners through an audible shape of what good emotional temperament sounds like. One reason why moral confusion arises is that people have lost their sense of what proper emotional responses are. When one engages in self-harming behaviors, some feel concerned, some feel eager to help, some feel indifferent, and some feel contempt. An individual may feel a mixture of these emotions. It is unclear which one is the

\textsuperscript{75} My translation of the Chinese text: 人知情不可恣，欲不可极故，因其所用，每为之节，使哀不至伤，乐不至淫
\textsuperscript{76} Harold, “Music Shapes Character,” 277.
\textsuperscript{77} Harold, “Music Shapes Character,” 278.
\textsuperscript{78} Harold, “Music Shapes Character,” 278.
extreme and which one is the moderate. People immersed in good music will have first-hand experiences of what virtuous emotions feel like. When these people are put into moral contexts, they can apply the emotional dispositions formed through aesthetic practice to moral challenges. The upshot is that “the right kind of music can improve individuals morally by influencing their dispositions.” Specifically, this moral influence from music works negatively by restraining people from pursuing extreme pleasures.

Nonetheless, the Confucian view is psychologically inaccurate. It is unclear whether restraining people from pursuing the most pleasing music will have the intended benefit. Extremely pleasing music may relieve pain and restore health. Emotionally intense and deep experiences can help listeners regain emotional balance in chaotic times. Harold assumes that the long-lasting effects on people’s dispositions are operating in the same direction of dispositional traits that are beneficial for the listeners. But the opposite seems equally probable, at least for many people. The long-lasting effects of emotional restraint can be suffocating. Many people who are deprived of the means of emotional outlet may experience the deprivation as a loss of autonomy and suffer as a result. It remains an open question whether emotional evocation in music can challenge the illusion view.

---

79 Harold, “Music Shapes Character,” 278.
80 Compare this discussion to Aristotle’s concept of catharsis, which has been interpreted to be either homeopathic or allopathic as a therapeutic process. See Elizabeth S. Belfiore, Tragic Pleasures: Aristotle on Plot and Emotion (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 267.
Reflection

In this section I have explored possible responses to the illusion view from the Confucian tradition. The objection from representational reliability does not deliver representational constancy. The objection from expressive sincerity does not explain expressive capability. The objection from evocative appropriateness does not determine emotions over time. These possible objections mitigate, yet ultimately fail to refute the illusion view. It remains to be seen whether representation, expression, and arousal theories in contemporary musical aesthetics might establish an emotional nature of music.
Chapter Four. Evocation

In this chapter I will examine arousal theories. Various accounts have been given to explain how music arouses or evokes emotion. I will use evocation and arousal interchangeably. The fact that music can evoke emotion may be mobilized to debunk the illusion view. But the Host has raised the problem of evocative underdetermination. Different or even opposite emotions can be aroused by the same piece of music. To see whether this problem can be settled, I will examine three versions of arousal theories. They are not necessarily the most sophisticated versions. But they serve to foreground issues from various perspectives. More advanced arousal theories tend to synthesize elements from expression or representation. In this chapter I will focus just on the idea of evocation, leaving issues about expression and representation to later chapters. I will be paying attention particularly to the move in each version from the evocation to the attribution of emotion into music. The aim is not to criticize each theory, but to draw on these theories to answer the question whether music is emotional.

The Argument from Profundity Enjoyment

Peter Kivy, in Music Alone, argues that musical enjoyment is one aspect of musical cognition. The enjoyment derives not from sensory stimulation, but from musical understanding. The enjoyment derived from understanding is qualitatively different from the pleasure derived from taking music as a sonic drug. Sensory pleasure is not what distinguishes listeners with musical understanding from listeners without musical understanding. As Kivy claims in analogy, “the pharmacologist who is profoundly versed in the ways in which heroin affects the brain does
not get a different or more enjoyable ‘high’ from it than the neighborhood addict who knows
nothing at all about how the substance works.”81 Kivy postulates a “reciprocal relation” between
understanding and enjoyment,82 whereby “the degree of musical enjoyment increases as the detail
and extent of the musical object perceived and (thus) available for appreciation.”83

For Kivy, music must have a formal structure in order to be an object for cognition. If
musical cognition is not directed at a formal structure, musical appreciation would degenerate into
undifferentiated sensation of the indefinite, which amounts to sensory pleasure. The formal
structure is not characterized by the length of musical materials, but by a sense of life in the
dynamics of music.

When someone plays a note musically, whether on a violin, piano, woodwind
instrument, or even a drum, the note is given a “life”: it begins, and it ends, and
something happens to it in between, both dynamically and with regard to its tone-
quality.84

Accordingly, a formal structure can be instantiated even in a single note, which can serve as an
object for musical cognition and provide musical enjoyment. Kivy says, “even in so minimal a
musical object as a half note played with musicality on the G-string, there is formal structure to be
consciously perceived and enjoyed.”85 The musical understanding of formal structures is not
esoteric. Musical understanding is available to experts and amateurs alike. To cognize music,
listeners need to pay attention to inner movements within the music. To illustrate, Kivy takes listening to fugue as a model for musical understanding.

One of the things I do when I listen to a fugue, of course, is to listen for the entrances of the theme. Sometimes I get it right, sometimes I miss an entrance because it is in an “inner voice” or otherwise disguised, sometimes I am fooled into thinking there is an entrance when, in fact, it is only a scrap of the theme in an “episode.” That is something I enjoy when I listen to fugues. I presume others enjoy it too. Certainly, “finding the theme” is one of the musical enjoyments the fugue is meant to afford … This special case of musical enjoyment can be generalized for all musical enjoyment.86

For Kivy, “finding the theme” is central to all musical experiences. It keeps listeners attentive with a cognitive challenge. Musical enjoyment may grow as musical cognition expands. In Kivy’s discussion of Josquin’s setting of “Ave Maria,” musical cognition expands in several stages.

[M]y single belief that these sounds are very, very beautiful has now begun to expand into a system of beliefs about the features of that sound: the freedom of the part-writing, the wonderful voice-leading, the masterful preparation of cadences, the building up of musical climaxes … [P]art of this seemingly effortless, freely moving combination of melodic lines has been achieved under … a canon at the

86 Kivy, Music Alone, 73.
fifth with the voices only one beat apart … As perception, understanding, the extent of the musical object, and enjoyment of it increase … so too does emotion.\textsuperscript{87}

Kivy holds that “understanding … is the only game in town.”\textsuperscript{88} Musical enjoyment is strictly in proportion with what Kivy perceives and understands about the music.

The more I understand a work, the more I hear in it; and the more I hear in it, the more opportunities do I have for liking or disliking it, being bored by or fascinated with it, enjoying or not enjoying it.\textsuperscript{89}

Formal structures can be conceived as general objects for musical cognition. The ultimate object of musical cognition is what Kivy calls “musical profundity.” Musical profundity is the utmost embodiment of the inherent possibilities within musical structures. According to Kivy, music is profound just in case it exhibits exemplary craftsmanship, which lies in contrapuntal composition. Counterpoint refers to a compositional strategy where two melodic lines independent of each other are brought into interdependent harmony. For Kivy, counterpoint is profound as it anchors musical cognition to music itself. The profundity is manifested in the sonic possibilities inherent in a musical structure. Finding the theme would be the best way to approach and enjoy musical profundity. The following argument can be constructed from Kivy’s writing:

(P1) Finding the theme yields enjoyment of musical profundity.

\textsuperscript{87} Kivy, \textit{Music Alone}, 160.
\textsuperscript{88} Kivy, \textit{Music Alone}, 117.
\textsuperscript{89} Kivy, \textit{Music Alone}, 115.
(P2) If finding the theme yields enjoyment of musical profundity, music is emotional.

(C) Music is emotional.

P1 is questionable. It is by no means obvious that finding the theme is a universal feature of all musical cognition. Hearing the same sounds, listeners with various degrees of cognitive sophistication regarding music will be cognizing different objects, all of which derive from the music. To address this worry, we need to see if all listeners are cognizing music more or less similarly. Kivy suggests that musical enjoyment is based on musical cognition that can be described. “When someone is enjoying music, he or she is … enjoying some sonic quality of a piece of music perceived under a certain description as doing something the listener enjoys.”90 For Kivy, the ability to describe music is an accurate measure of musical cognition. Importantly, all musical descriptions converge such that different musical cognitions can be compared and assessed. “We customarily take a person’s musical understanding to be evidenced by, to be constituted, really, by, his or her ability to describe the musical happenings perceived, thought about, enjoyed.”91 For an average listener, “she can enjoy the way a theme appears, and she can enjoy a stretto. She just does not enjoy them under music-theoretical descriptions.”92

Kivy holds that the most advanced cognition is the best model to assess all musical enjoyment regarding a musical work. An amateur’s cognition can be assessed in terms of how closely it stands to the most advanced cognition. Whether listeners can describe their musical cognition in a way that aligns with the activity of finding the theme will be the test we need to see

90 Kivy, Music Alone, 78.
91 Kivy, Music Alone, 98.
92 Kivy, Music Alone, 78.
if all listeners cognize music similarly. As Mrs. Munt, an average listener imagined by Kivy, listens to Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, “she does possess some concepts under which she perceives and enjoys the return of the themes, or, I submit, she would not able to perceive the return of themes and enjoy the symphony at all.” Mrs. Munt will be denied the ability to enjoy the symphony, if she fails to follow the cognitive process of perceiving the return of the themes.

If you ask Mrs. Munt what she enjoys just now, in the symphony, when she starts beating her foot, perhaps she will say: “I love that place where that other tune, not the one in the beginning, comes back again, sort of different, comfortably – like coming home to tea.”

For Kivy, the likelihood that Mrs. Munt can give such a description suggests that Mrs. Munt would not find the “return of themes” too mysterious a concept if the concept is fully clarified. Mrs. Munt would find her descriptions map onto some advanced descriptions of the music. Even if different listeners enjoy different musical objects, the musical objects might still correlate with each other in a hierarchy.

But this correlation sounds mysterious. It is a mystery for every musical object enjoyed by the ordinary listener to map onto some musical object enjoyed by the sophisticated listener. In Mrs. Munt’s possible description about the Fifth Symphony, Kivy’s interpretation has shaped how we are supposed to read the description. Recall Mrs. Munt’s description: “I love that place where that other tune, not the one in the beginning, comes back again, sort of different, comfortably – like

---

coming home to tea.”95 It is unclear from this description itself how much emphasis Mrs. Munt is placing on the “coming back” of the tone. Mrs. Munt’s description might be non-selective regarding “back again,” “comfortably,” “home,” “coming home to tea.” The music might call to Mrs. Munt’s mind a faint memory of her childhood when her grandparents came home to tea. There is no way to rule out these alternative interpretations beforehand. Given the many options to interpret what brings Mrs. Munt musical enjoyment, it would be question-begging to pick out “coming back” of the tone as the singularly important component in Mrs. Munt’s description. To make that interpretation, we would assume that finding the theme is something all listeners do.

The central problem is how to interpret Mrs. Munt’s description. If Mrs. Munt’s description can be read as a variation of “finding the theme,” Kivy would be justified to claim “finding the theme” as the quintessential musical enjoyment. But if Mrs. Munt’s description has a meaning independent of “finding the theme,” there would be no way to prioritize Kivy’s musical cognition over Mrs. Munt’s cognition. Kivy might protest by trying to establish “finding the theme” as the standard source of musical enjoyment. We need to examine more carefully the thought that Mrs. Munt’s description might be drawn out by Kivy.

Kivy echoes the Platonic thought that the philosopher serves as an intellectual midwife by posing questions and drawing out innate ideas that are already in other people. Kivy attributes innate musical concepts to average listeners. Musical concepts are innate ideas “to be actualized under the appropriate conditions”96 by a “midwifery Socrates” in every listener.97 Kivy distinguishes two senses of innateness, one where I can make whatever concepts plain to myself but have trouble making them plain to others, the other where I cannot make it plain even to myself.

95 Kivy, Music Alone, 79.
96 Kivy, Music Alone, 106.
97 Kivy, Music Alone, 108.
To illustrate, Kivy differentiates two scenarios where someone cannot come up with a detailed description.

In the *Navigating* scenario,

You are standing on West 4th Street and 7th Avenue and are asked, “How do I get to Carnegie Hall from here?” Well, you know perfectly well how to do it. You have done it a hundred times … But now try to describe that to a tourist … You have it on the tip of your tongue, but your tongue just won’t cooperate.  

In the *Walking* scenario,

Suppose someone were to ask you to describe walking. Well, you have been doing it every day of most of your life … Your problem here, unlike in the previous case, is that you don’t have an “innate” description in your head at all, because walking is … second nature to you.

Kivy suggests that an average listener “is like the person who has trouble telling you how to get to Carnegie Hall, not the person who has trouble giving you a description of walking.” The average listener faces a problem of sharing what she knows only vaguely, not a problem of describing what she feels so natural as to be a second nature. The average listener is not someone who has been listening to music most of her life. Her knowledge of musical objects and enjoyment is not the

---

kind of knowledge based on familiarity. Kivy suggests that we ask Mrs. Munt, “you know what the music was like: now just relax, think back on it, and describe it in your own words. What was happening in Beethoven’s Fifth when you started tapping your foot?” Kivy maintains that “she is able to describe the music, only haltingly.” Mrs. Munt might answer “the place where the theme goes dum-dum-diddle.” That description from Mrs. Munt, for Kivy, would suffice to align her musical cognition to the more advanced cognition under the description “the place where the theme descends in seconds and thirds.” Given that listeners are open to take suggestions from an advanced listener, it is likely that listeners might come up with what the advanced listener understands about the music.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Munt may not be able to provide something as simple as “the place where the theme goes dum-dum-diddle.” Kivy’s midwifery Socrates cannot put words into Mrs. Munt’s mouth. The midwifery Socrates has to remain informationally neutral by posing open-ended questions. A question like “Have you noticed that that’s when the melody goes dim-dim-diddle?” is not allowed in the questioning period, if the questions are supposed to draw out knowledge already in Mrs. Munt. Kivy might reply that we should always encourage Mrs. Munt to say more than a mere mood. If she cannot provide something concrete to draw out technical descriptions, we might discard her responses to the music as not having a cognitive object at all. If Mrs. Munt does not know what she is feeling about, she might feel that way towards any other object, not necessarily Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony.

This reply does not do justice to the subjectivity involved in Socratic questioning. Ideally, the midwifery Socrates would focus on the similarities between Mrs. Munt’s descriptions and more

101 Kivy, Music Alone, 108.
103 Kivy, Music Alone, 121.
104 Kivy, Music Alone, 121.
technically advanced descriptions. But the act of drawing out descriptions out of Mrs. Munt is pedagogical and interpretive. It involves interpreting Mrs. Munt in the direction of technical sophistication. The interpretive direction depends on the questioner. Mrs. Munt can insist that only Beethoven’s Fifth can make her feel that way without describing it in any way that sounds as if she were trying to “find the theme.” Mrs. Munt can refuse to let the meaning of her bodily reaction be located and interpreted within a specific musical phrase. Even if Mrs. Munt has the relevant understanding, she might not feel the cognitivist enjoyment such as wonder and awe at musical profundity. It is also possible for one to have all the technical understanding of the music without the feeling of awe. The profundity itself is not inherently awe-inspiring. The emotions such as awe and excitement towards musical profundity are not universal. They are likely emotional responses felt by advanced listeners with the level of musical cognition described by Kivy.

Let us take a look at the second premise in the argument. P2 aims to establish an emotional nature of music upon an intellectual pleasure. All forms of musical cognition, according to Kivy, are directed at one subject matter, which is the profundity of music. The emotional nature of music derives solely from the enjoyment of musical profundity. This seems odd.

One might defend P2 by expanding the conception of musical profundity to include more emotions proper for the enjoyment of musical profundity. One might suggest that musical profundity can be manifested in a myriad of ways. The creativity in musical profundity deserves certain emotional responses such as awe and wonder. For example, Stephen Davies compares musical profundity to a profound move in the game of Chess. Davies holds that a profound move in chess reveals ingenuity, creativity, and understanding about what the game could be.\footnote{Stephen Davies, “Profundity in Instrumental Music,” \textit{British Journal of Aesthetics} 42, No. 4 (2002): 351. For Kivy’s response, see Peter Kivy, \textit{Music, Language, and Cognition} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 158-163.}
Similarly, if performers are able to show ingenuity, creativity, and understanding of music, listeners develop emotions in response to that profundity.

Nonetheless, P2 makes emotional responses a matter of responding to an exemplary object in cognition. If this could establish an emotional nature of music, it would also establish an emotional nature of chess, for both have profound subject matter to evoke intellectual enjoyment that requires cognitive labor. But that would prove too much. Even if there is an emotional nature of chess, P2 makes it unclear what the difference between the emotional nature of music and the emotional nature of chess would be.

The argument from profundity enjoyment cannot refute the illusion view. It restricts emotional evocation to amazement at musical profundity. Although musical enjoyment as amazement is a kind of evocation, it is far from the concerns that drive the debate between the Guest and the Host in Ji Kang’s dialogue. Moreover, the argument shows at most that music is enjoyable in an intellectual way. Even if all listeners feel the enjoyment by following Kivy’s method of finding the theme, this unanimity will not resolve emotional underdetermination in less cognitive modes of listening. Kivy’s account gives the appearance that musical enjoyment can be determined by musical profundity. But this would be unhelpful, for sadness and happiness supposedly in music cannot be simply categorized as enjoyment, let alone enjoyment at profundity. Kivy’s account does not establish an emotional nature of music.

The Argument from Turbulence Enaction

The difficulty of establishing the emotional nature of music through evocation partly consists in specifying the level of emotions. It seems that music is particularly equipped to evoke
fine-grained emotions. One might think, for example, that there is a particular shade of happiness that can be aroused only by Mozart’s Piano Concerto No. 21 in C major, K. 467 - Andante. Robert Jourdain, in *Music, the Brain, and Ecstasy*, observes an infinite specificity of music that allows for “great precision” in evoking “interior feelings.” Interior feelings are less characterizable in language, as they are “structured differently” from events that happen in the external world. The main difference between interior feelings and exterior events is this. The world of exterior events consists of objects “arrayed in particular positions in space and time,” whereas the world of interior feelings consists of “turbulent flows” of “diverse intentions” in our neurological systems. For example, a car is racing towards me as I cross the road. To describe this event as an exterior event, we need to locate where the car is coming from, where I am in relation to the car, how long it might take for the car to hit me. Since the objects such as the car, my body, and the road are trackable in space and time, we can use language to describe the exterior world. It is more difficult to describe what happens in my mind with language. When I realize that a car is racing towards me, I feel a sudden shock and cannot believe that a car can be racing towards me. I feel confused because the traffic light indicates my turn to cross the road. I hesitate whether to stand still and wait for the car to avoid me or to run aside to avoid the car. I remember an omen about cars trying to hit pedestrians. I worry that how my family will be informed if I get hit and become unconscious. These feelings, like turbulence, arise in me in a second and make me unable to think clearly. Even if I have just described some of the components in my interior world, it is hard to locate them in space and time. Their coexistence and interaction are hard to capture in language.

---

107 Jourdain, *Music, the Brain, and Ecstasy*, 296.
108 Jourdain, *Music, the Brain, and Ecstasy*, 296.
The term “turbulence” may suggest an agitated state of arousal, yet the concept of turbulence is not limited to agitated emotions alone, for the interior turbulence is characterized by the specific way it feels. There can be a “turbulence” of serenity, if the serenity is aroused in a concrete way in the neurological system. For example, one may be calmed by a cup of coffee roasted from a particular type of coffee beans at a definite temperature. The cup of coffee would calm the nerves in a specific way. Presumably this calmness would count as “turbulent” on Jourdain’s account.

Because turbulent systems lack stable subdivisions, we can’t point and say “that is a blah,” for a moment later the blah will become bleh, and then a pleh. We’re able to reduce interior experience only to broad categories that are stable enough to deserve a name like “wrath” or “whimsy.”

In a similar vein, German composer Felix Mendelssohn notes the specificity of emotion:

People often complain that music is too ambiguous, that what they should think when they hear it is so unclear, whereas everybody understands words. With me it is exactly the opposite … The thoughts that are expressed to me by music I love are not too indefinite to be put into words, but on the contrary too definite.109

Jourdain claims that the inadequacy of linguistic representation can be observed not only regarding interior turbulence, but also regarding exterior turbulence. It is next to impossible to describe, for example, “the swirling patterns of water in a stream … when someone asks us to describe the stream, we would explain that verbal description isn’t up to the job, and instead would simply show the animation.”

The way music evokes emotion, according to Jourdain, is through “enaction.” Enaction is a direct and immediate manner of evocation by instilling emotional effects in the perceptual organs of listeners. This instillation involves an emotional reproduction that “replicates the temporal patterns of interior feeling, surging in pitch or volume as they surge, ebbing as they ebb.” Jourdain conceives enaction as a kind of “muscular representation” in the neural system responsible for motion. Despite the term “representation,” enaction is a concept in arousal theory, because the representation happens precisely in the body of listeners. Enaction provides a “notation system in which we momentarily inscribe features of music” to “amplify our experience of music.” “We use our bodies as resonators for auditory experience. The listener becomes a musical instrument, places himself in the hands of the music, allows himself to be played.” The muscular representation preserves the immediacy of arousal. Specifically, the muscular representation transforms listeners momentarily by “possessing” them through the musical patterns that move to bear emotion. “Such possession is most evident when a piece seems to take hold of our bodies and make us move. We ‘get into’ the music’s rhythms and harmonic cadences and feel compelled to see them through.”

---

111 Jourdain, *Music, the Brain, and Ecstasy*, 296.
112 Jourdain, *Music, the Brain, and Ecstasy*, 296.
113 Jourdain, *Music, the Brain, and Ecstasy*, 326.
114 Jourdain, *Music, the Brain, and Ecstasy*, 326.
115 Jourdain, *Music, the Brain, and Ecstasy*, 328.
possession within the framework of experiential anticipation. “Music arrives in our nervous systems and causes our brains to generate a flood of anticipations by which we make sense of melody and harmony and rhythm and form by eliciting these anticipations, music entrains the deepest levels of intention, and so takes us over.”

Music enacts turbulent experiences through temporal and tonal tensions. Music can present a world of movements that bodily movements in the external world hardly match. Ennio Morricone’s *Enduring Movement*, for example, enacts such a turbulent interior world of feelings that hardly corresponds to bodily movement in the external world.

Physically, we fumble through a world of inelegant, discontinuous activity. For instance, it would be all but impossible to turn the act of cooking dinner into an artful dance. The motions are too varied and discontinuous. But well-crafted music creates the very world it travels through, meeting every anticipation with a graceful resolution, and raising new anticipations at every turn. While physical movement is choked with starts and stops and stumbles, music establishes a continuous flux, and does it in perfect proportions.

It is noteworthy that “well-crafted music creates the very world it travels through.” The way music revives interior feelings does not involve a distance from the feelings. Rather, it seems that music itself is the world of those feelings. One might write a novel to create a world of interior feelings. But words hardly have the same level of intensity as sounds do. Even if they are just as intense,

---

118 Jourdain, *Music, the Brain, and Ecstasy*, 302-3.
the reception on the part of audience is not guaranteed to replicate that intensity. Rainer Maria Rilke’s *Elegies* might be intense and present a turbulent world of feelings, but as a reader, I am limited by my reading speed and understanding to keep up with that turbulence. Music can almost force a reliving of interior feelings through its “continuous flux … in perfect proportions.” The turbulence, prior to cognitive evaluation, is implanted in listeners.\(^{119}\) Music apparently carries listeners into emotional worlds regardless of their wishes. Even if listeners are involuntary to experience the music, as long as they pay attention, they will be apparently led to feel the emotional turbulence in music. The following argument can be constructed from Jourdain’s writing:

\[(P1)\] Music enacts emotional turbulence.

\[(P2)\] If music enacts emotional turbulence, music is emotional.

\[(C)\] Music is emotional.

In support of P1, Jourdain discusses Henry Mancini’s “The Pink Panther”:\(^{120}\)

Mancini directs melody, harmony, and rhythm toward a point of high tension at the start of the third bar as the tune plateau on a long, accentuated dissonance. This note violates several kinds of anticipation. Melody suddenly stops accelerating and freezes. Melodic contour ends its overall rise. Harmony veers from the prevailing

---

\(^{119}\) Oscar Wilde makes this observation: “After playing Chopin, I feel as if I had been weeping over sins that I had never committed, and mourning over tragedies that were not my own. Music always seems to me to produce that effect. It creates for one a past of which one has been ignorant, and fills one with a sense of sorrows that have been hidden from one’s tears. I can fancy a man who had led a perfect commonplace life, hearing by chance some curious piece of music, and suddenly discovering that his soul, without his being conscious of it, had passed through terrible experiences, and known fearful joys, or wild romantic loves, or great renunciations.” Jourdain, *Music, the Brain, and Ecstasy*, 322.

\(^{120}\) Jourdain, *Music, the Brain, and Ecstasy*, 322.
tonal center. Meter pounces on a strong accentuation. And phrasing that is formed largely by melodic contour ends its accelerating pattern of stealthy footsteps, first in twos and then in fours. For a moment the music becomes motionless, much as a stalking cat might.\textsuperscript{121}

The movement of music enacts stealth by “a rising sense of apprehension.”\textsuperscript{122} This sense of stealth cannot be reduced to linguistic terms. “None of the usual monikers from our inventory of emotions – joy, grief, triumph, whatever – make a good match for what we feel when we listen to this passage.”\textsuperscript{123} Jourdain holds that something like stealth “overlays” the movements and calls “stealth” an “emotion” in light of the resonance listeners have with the music.\textsuperscript{124} For Jourdain, the justification of naming “stealth” an “emotion” comes from our bodily resonance through sounds.

It makes perfect sense to call the experience of stealth “emotion” even though we don’t normally think of it that way. We’re quite accustomed to feeling the emotional content of stealth when we have occasion to sneak around. We make motions that alternate between jarring restraint and sudden overreaching, all the while violating the normal pacing of physical movement. And so we experience little bouts of the pain of constriction and the pleasure of leaping. Notice that we feel stealth by moving in certain ways with certain timings; when music follows

\textsuperscript{121} Jourdain, \textit{Music, the Brain, and Ecstasy}, 322-3.
\textsuperscript{122} Jourdain, \textit{Music, the Brain, and Ecstasy}, 323.
\textsuperscript{123} Jourdain, \textit{Music, the Brain, and Ecstasy}, 323.
\textsuperscript{124} Jourdain, \textit{Music, the Brain, and Ecstasy}, 324.
similar patterns, it *sounds* stealthy, just as the pink panther’s slinking around *looks* stealthy.\textsuperscript{125}

The problem with P1 is that the emotions enacted come from projections based on the aim of “The Pink Panther” to accompany images on the screen. Although the music might fit with the images aesthetically, the feeling of stealth can come from observing the panther’s movement and be projected back into the music. An emotional label can be assigned to the musical piece and the panther’s movements can be invoked to make sense of that label. Nevertheless, the experience of stealth does not reveal an emotional nature of the music. To characterize the feelings aroused by this musical piece as an emotion of stealth involves an interpretative act that focuses on certain features of the music. While music enacts bodily turbulence, it does not enact emotional turbulence.

P2 is also problematic. Emotions can be enacted even if music is not emotional. The concept of enaction suggests that the musically represented emotion is not in the music, but in the bodies of listeners. Consider an analogy. Suppose I wake up to a heavy snow after a month’s sunshine. I may feel that it is a cold world and there are cold feelings in my chest. But the snow does not contribute to the formation of an emotion yet. Even if I emotionally resonate with coldness of the snow, it is implausible to think of the snow’s coldness as emotional. One might contend that in this analogy the snow is a natural phenomenon. The snow does not bear traces of intentional orchestration. But it is unclear if adding intentional orchestration would break the analogy. Suppose that instead of seeing a heavy snow, I get to enjoy a firework show that is carefully orchestrated. The fireworks instantly get me into an emotion of hope through its patterns and sounds. But it is hardly plausible to think of the fireworks as hopeful. My emotional responses,

\textsuperscript{125} Jourdain, *Music, the Brain, and Ecstasy*, 323.
even in the form of muscular representation with all the anticipations of patterns in the sky, do not show that the fireworks are emotional.

The argument from turbulence enaction does not refute the illusion view. In the example used to illustrate how enaction works, the piece of music chosen does not rule out the possibility that emotions are projected into the music. Moreover, the enaction of emotion does not reveal an emotional nature of music. Emotional terms may be convenient to label an aesthetic experience for listeners, but that does not make the music itself emotional.

The Argument from Brain Simulation

In the article “A Simulation Theory of Musical Expressivity,” Tom Cochrane develops a causal theory for emotions to be attributed to music. The theory itself is a synthesis of various theories about music and emotion. Cochrane draws from perceptual theories of emotion, according to which emotions are constituted by patterns of bodily changes and their experiences are characterized by the feelings of those bodily changes. Bodily changes in the respiratory, circulatory, digestive, musculoskeletal, endocrine systems and the neuro-transmitters released in the process report to us perceptions of the world. “Bodily changes such as increased heart rate, or even overt behavior, like running away, can represent danger because they are set up by evolution or learning to be causally initiated by dangerous situations.” On this view, emotion is impossible without bodily changes reporting our perceptions to us. Emotions are just “bodily changes that feel

---

a certain way.” Consequently, the regulation of bodily changes and their neurological bases will in effect regulate emotions.

Cochrane draws on Antonio Damasio’s concept of the “as-if” loop. On this view, we would be able to react faster to the environment if we could act as if we have felt bodily changes. Felt bodily changes can be “anticipated or simulated in the absence of physiological changes.” For example, just as my hand is reaching into a fire, I can anticipate the burning feeling. I feel bodily changes even before the bodily changes happen. My bodily changes are felt as if my hands were burned. This enables me to draw back my hands faster than drawing back after experiencing the burning pain. The simulation mechanism in our brains makes it possible for emotional evocation to happen in the absence of physiological changes.

One might wonder what is necessary for an emotion to be evoked in the absence of bodily changes. To address this, Cochrane draws on Derek Matravers’ arousal theory. According to Matravers, the arousal of an emotion does not need the full-fledged bodily changes that “overwhelm the listener,” but need only be built on “an immediate impression, sometimes of an extremely vivid nature, of an occurrent emotional state.” Cochrane proposes that this immediate impression, which serves to arouse an emotion, needs only exist minimally to initiate a causal chain in the brain to arouse emotions. The initiating event needs only be a simulation of felt bodily changes in the brain. According to Cochrane, music simulates what it is like to be in an emotional state and emotions can be aroused just by that simulation. To recognize the emotion, listeners need

---

only “be aroused by either attenuated bodily changes or, which is more primary, a neural simulation of such changes.”133

Cochrane illustrates the simulation mechanism with the human capacity for empathy. When we empathize with others, we do not go through a whole process of inference from their outward expressions to their inner feelings. Rather, we can “get a direct impression of the feeling in their face or body.” We get this impression by feeling the same thing in ourselves. The immediacy in our ability to perceive emotions outside suggests an activation of our simulation mechanism. Cochrane suggests that the simulation mechanism is similarly activated in musical experiences. Music “hijacks” the simulation mechanism to arouse listeners into certain emotional states. Once we get an immediate impression of the feeling in the music, we can anticipate and form bodily changes based on the initially felt bodily changes. Insofar as music can simulate felt bodily changes to generate emotions, there seems to be an emotional nature of music. The following argument can be constructed from Cochrane’s writing:

(P1) Music simulates felt bodily changes in the brain.

(P2) If music simulates felt bodily changes in the brain, music is emotional.

(C) Music is emotional.

P2 is problematic. Felt bodily changes are not robust enough to generate determinate emotions, because bodily changes can be interpreted differently. Higher-pitched sounds are heard as spatially higher, but we also hear “deep booming sounds from the sky.”134 There is no reason to

rule out the association of high positions and low sounds. A deeper explanation is needed to deliver emotions from simulation.

One might suggest that a deeper explanation can be achieved in a “double-safety” way. If an emotion is generated by two perceptual systems, the emotion would pass the test of double-safety. On this suggestion, emotional underdetermination arises only in cases where emotions have not been subject to the double-safety check. Cochrane calls attention to intermodal connections across different perceptual pathways. Specifically, the auditory perception and the tactile perception are intermodally connected. “Physical movements, as well as the textures of surfaces, are often presented to us visually, audibly and in tactile form.”135 According to Cochrane, auditory perception makes sounds resonate with the body in a way different from visual perception. To hear sounds, ears have to physically experience the vibration of air. The intermodal connections between hearing and touching can be invoked to solve the problem of emotional underdetermination. Music can simulate felt bodily changes in two perceptual modes, thereby double-hijacking our simulation mechanism.

Nevertheless, the double-safety strategy offers little assurance that music is emotional. The intermodal connection can be used for an intermodal projection of emotion into music. The fact that the auditory pathway and the tactile pathway in the brain cross and feed each other does not explain the origin of emotional arousal. The two perceptual systems can coordinate with each other to confirm a projected emotion. What appears doubly safe would be doubly illusory.

The argument from brain simulation does not refute the illusion view. It might look promising with an objective appeal at first glance, as it draws on the neurological systems in the brain. But it has not moved beyond individual listeners’ brains to the nature of music. The fact that

---

135 Cochrane, “A Simulation Theory,” 199.
music provides sonic materials to hijack our simulation mechanism does not show that music is emotional.

Reflection

I have constructed three arguments from arousal theories in contemporary Western musical aesthetics. The argument from profundity enjoyment is too restrictive. Musical profundity can only arouse an intellectual wonder. The argument from turbulence enaction is too permissive. The enacted emotions do not come from music, but from interpretations of music. The argument from brain simulation is too wishful. The intermodal simulation of felt bodily changes does not yield determinate emotions, but reinforces emotional projections. While I have defended the illusion view against these specific arguments, I will consider broader challenges from the perspective of evocation in a later chapter.
Chapter Five. Expression

In this chapter I will examine expression theories. Various accounts have been given to explain how music expresses emotion. To express something means to press out something that is within. As Mozart comments on Belmonte’s aria in A major:

“Allie in angstlich, O wie feurig” – do you know how it is expressed (ausgedrückt)? – even the throbbing of his loving heart is indicated (angezeigt) – the two violins in octaves … One sees the trembling – the wavering – one sees how his swelling breast heaves – this is expressed (exprimiert) by a crescendo – one hears the whispering and the sighing – which is expressed (ausgedrückt) by the first violins, muted, and a flute in unison.\(^{136}\)

Mozart calls attention to the means that press out the emotion. This sense of pressing out is clear in German. The verb “express” is “ausdrücken,” which means “to press out.”\(^{137}\) Expression theories aim to illuminate how music presses out emotions.

The Host has raised the problem of expressive incapability, according to which expressive means are not capable of pressing out expressive content. In this chapter I will construct three

\(^{136}\) This is from Mozart’s letter to his father, Vienna, September 26, 1781, concerning The Seraglio. Cooke, The Language of Music, 13.

\(^{137}\) Thomas Teufel has offered an analogy which at once illustrates the sense of pressing out and opens a new path for the illusion view. Consider the lemon juicer. It presses out lemonade, but the lemonade is not in the nature of the machine. Still, there seems to be a non-accidental connection between the lemonade and the lemon juicer, which might be seen as corresponding to John Locke’s distinction between primary and secondary qualities. Consequently, the emotional qualities of music might be conceived as secondary (or even tertiary) qualities of music. Thomas Teufel, personal communication, March 5, 2021.
arguments from three expression theories. Let us see if expression theories might establish an emotional nature of music.

The Argument from Judicious Arrangement

In *Themes in the Philosophy of Music*, Stephen Davies differentiates two ways emotions get expressed. Emotions can be expressed “through” music or “in” music. To give a visual analogy of this distinction, queer pride can be expressed in a rainbow flag, as the color diversity in the rainbow directly reflects a core value in the pride. Queer pride can be expressed through making a thousand tweets about gender politics in a day. But the act of twittering is not inherently expressive of queer pride. Likewise, emotions might be expressed through all kinds of music in a way that does not establish an emotional nature of music.

Davies holds that emotions can be expressed in music, not just through music. Emotional expression in music is achieved, according to Davies, by composers’ deliberate arrangement of musical appearances with emotion characteristics in composition. Emotion characteristics are seen in everyday life. The depression of a forlorn figure at a bus stop can be seen in the way the person dresses, stands, walks, and talks. Davies holds that emotion characteristics can also be heard in music when carefully arranged into an order. Emotion characteristics are not able to express emotions until composers carefully arrange them. According to Davies, carefully arranged emotion characteristics will give rise to emotional appearances. An emotional appearance of music offers the impression of an emotion rather than fragments of emotion characteristics. Note how arrangement is set at a remove from the expressed emotion. It is indirect, as the focus is not on

---

138 Davies, *Themes in the Philosophy of Music*, 144.
how music expresses emotion, but how musicians express emotion by doing something about musical appearances. The expression is not as much an outflow of emotion as a commentary on emotion characteristics “worn” by musical appearances.\(^{139}\)

One might wonder if only emotions directly wearable on the appearances can be expressed in music. But Davies thinks that the range of emotions possible for musical expression is broader. For example, it is possible to express the emotion of hope, although it is hard to find a musical appearance that directly wears the characteristics of hope. The expression of hope involves putting together emotion characteristics that combine a sense of longing to move out of misery, a sense of optimism that things are looking up, and a sense of patience to wait for the fulfillment. By arranging tonal tensions in specific tempos, composers can “judiciously order” the musical appearances in sufficient length and complexity to express a sense of hope, even if it is not as straightforward as an expression of sadness.\(^{140}\) The following argument can be constructed from Davies’ writing:

(P1) Musicians express emotions by arranging emotional appearances.

(P2) If musicians express emotions by arranging emotional appearances, music is emotional.

(C) Music is emotional.

P1 can be challenged, for it reincarnates the problem of expressive incapability on the level of arrangement. We might question how certain arrangements are capable of turning musical appearances with emotion characteristics into emotional appearances. The idea of judicious

\(^{139}\) Davies, *Themes in the Philosophy of Music*, 141-5.

\(^{140}\) Davies, *Themes in the Philosophy of Music*, 144.
arrangement is no panacea for expression. Positioning the problem into the mind of composers does not solve the problem. Susanne Langer observes, “as long as a work of art is viewed primarily as an ‘arrangement’ of sensuous elements for the sake of some inexplicable aesthetic satisfaction, the problem of expressiveness is really an alien issue.”

P2 might sound plausible with simple musical structures. For example, Martin Peralta’s album “Aurora” contains many 30-second short soundtracks. Each piece may be conceived as having emotion characteristics. The piece “Eternity” might be heard as expressing relief from or triumph over the past. Its simple patterns are easily recognizable, which delivers the impression that the composer has carefully arranged the musical appearances to achieve that effect. Even the second movement in Joseph Haydn’s Symphony No. 94, “Surprise” might confirm P2, for it has a smooth and relaxing melody occasioned by sudden bursts of energy to shock the audience.

A problem with P2 is its implication of a calculated picture of musical expression. If the emotional nature of music is supported by careful arrangement of emotional appearances, one might wonder if the judicious calculatedness in arrangement installs an emotional illusion of its own kind. The more deliberate the arrangement is, the farther away the composers are situated from spontaneous and primordial emotions. If expressing an emotion is like playing with a marionette, all the care that goes into this play is not enough to make the marionette emotional. The marionette appears emotional at best. But the emotional appearance is not in the nature of the marionette. This problem with P2 can be seen clearly with music with complex structures where it is unreasonable to trace all emotional appearances to composers’ premeditated control. The feeling of dreamy calmness in Gymnopédies: No. 1 Lent et douloureux cannot be reduced to Erik Satie’s judicious arrangement. Although composers make use of musical appearances in artistic

---

production, to conceive emotional expression as a judicious arrangement of musical appearances presupposes an emotionality in the order of appearances.

Davies might reply that emotional spontaneity and primordiality can be accommodated into arrangement. For the arrangement to be judiciously ordered, not all aspects of the arrangement have to be completely controlled. The materials for arrangement can come from long forgotten melodies in composers’ memory. Events in a composer’s personal life can also pump physical energy that cries for outlet in a way that directs the arrangement. The composers, in searching for the expressive means within their minds, find it suitable to put this physical energy into certain musical forms. These musical forms might as well arrive as inspirations such that composers have little control over when and how they get these forms.

Even if the composition is not thoroughly controlled, composers cannot evade the search for the suitable expressive means. The problem with P2 is that it grounds the emotional nature of music in this search, while the nature of this search remains inexplicable. Suppose a composer aims to express an emotion like “the enlightened cheerfulness perceived as arrogance based on the possession of secret knowledge as a result of going through hell.” Although there are easy ways of conveying cheerfulness in musical forms, it is difficult to convey the kind of cheerfulness that comes from knowing something no one else knows. It is even more difficult to convey that this secret knowledge is learned by going through maximally terrible things. On top of everything, it is difficult for the arrangement of appearances to convey the sense that although this cheerfulness is perceived as arrogance, it is still cheerfulness. It would be almost impossible for composers to find the suitable expressive means by judiciously arranging emotional appearances.
Davies might reply that there must be a reason why composers use a low register to express a brooding grief and a high register to express a transcendent grief.\textsuperscript{142} A sense of order would be “arising naturally from” the arrangement of appearances. That natural order should make any expressive task intelligible. But this sense of naturalness is vague. Natural order would not be enough for emotional expression, if the “natural” sense of order refers to a collection of appearances without abrupt shifts. When a melody flows without sudden changes, the melody can feel natural to us. That cannot be enough to express the depth of emotions. Everyday musical experiences suggest that a musical movement holds emotional coherence, which cannot simply come from careful juxtaposition of emotional appearances, even if the appearances are close to each other. The dependence on naturalness would reduce emotional expression to auditory pastiche. To establish an adequate sense of naturalness, we still need to examine the expressive potentials of musical appearances themselves.

The argument from judicious arrangement does not refute the illusion view. It maintains a distance from the emotional appearances with the idea of arrangement. But judicious arrangement makes expression a form of emotional commentary, which organizes rather than illuminates the emotional appearances of music. To better understand what expression theory can do, let us take a step closer to the appearances.

\textsuperscript{142} Cooke, \textit{The Language of Music}, 111-2.
The Argument from Quality Recognition

In *Music Alone*, Kivy argues that musical experience involves a kind of cognition which includes the “appreciation, understanding, enjoyment” of music.\(^1\) This characterization may sound too intellectual. For many people, musical experience is all about enjoyment of a physical kind without any concern for cognitive understanding. People treat their favorite music as a powerful stimulation to incite senses and auditory systems in order to feel comfortable or healthy. Music can hype up moods to boost one’s immune system.\(^2\) Robinson claims that music is “very much like a drug” in that “it affects people directly in their physiology.”\(^3\)

Although there is nothing wrong in using music to feel good or healthy, Kivy dismisses physical enjoyment, even for the purpose of physical and mental health, as “utterly hopeless” for understanding musical expression.\(^4\) For Kivy, musical enjoyment can be based on and restrained by musical understanding. Pure music has an “aesthetically significant property … that must be cognized to be enjoyed.”\(^5\) As the physical pleasure obscures a cognitive pleasure one can get out of pure music, musical cognition that combines enjoyment, appreciation and understanding allows listeners to recognize expressive qualities in music. This recognition can happen from musical understanding without listeners being physically aroused.

---

\(^{1}\) Kivy, *Music Alone*, 27. Kivy restricts the discussion on musical expression of emotion to what he calls “music alone” or pure music. Pure music is not to be conceived simply as music without lyrics. This conception is not precise for Kivy, because musical pieces can be without words yet experienced for practical purposes. For example, an instrumental piece without words used for the celebration of a wedding and experienced as such will not count as pure music to enter the discussion. The practical function makes it unclear whether happiness is due to the music or the wedding, as the happiness of a wedding can infiltrate the experience of the music. The concept of “music alone” is not meant to pick out music without words, but to pick out a pure experience of music for the purpose of examining musical expression of emotion.


\(^{3}\) Robinson, *Deeper than Reason*, 397.


We must keep apart the claim that music is *expressive* (anger, fear, and the like) and the claim that music is *arousing* in the sense of *moving* … a piece of music might move us (in part) because it is expressive of sadness, but it does not move us by making us sad.\textsuperscript{148}

Kivy proposes that the expressive qualities of emotion in music can be recognized in the same way that expressive qualities of emotion in anything else can be recognized. This recognition happens naturally because whatever containing the expressive qualities appear to us in a certain way. For example, a Saint Bernard has a droopy face that resembles a sad look. Even if the Saint Bernard is not sad or expressing sadness, we see its droopy face with the expressive quality of sadness. Likewise, we can recognize expressive qualities of emotion in one’s voice, even if the person does not feel the emotion or try to express the emotion. The recognition of expressive qualities can still happen as a result of our understanding of how the voice appears. The following argument can be constructed from Kivy’s writing:

(P1) Expressive qualities of emotion can be recognized in music.

(P2) If expressive qualities of emotion can be recognized in music, music is emotional.

(C) Music is emotional.

One can object to P1 by noting a crucial difference between doggy sadness and musical sadness. With doggy sadness, the sadness is transparent in that there is no translation between the droopy face and the act of expression. When the dog shows its face in certain way, the face is immediately expressive of sadness. The expressiveness of music involves translation, however brief it is, because the expressive qualities are not experienced as transparent in music. Since translation involves much cognitive labor, it is a mystery why composers would want to use music instead of more straightforward means for the purpose of emotional expression, given that more straightforward ways of expression are available.

P2 is more problematic, because it evades the question of how expressive qualities get into music in the first place. To assume music has expressive qualities is question-begging. Kivy anticipates the challenge and sees it as calling for an explanation of “why music alone should possess expressive properties at all.” To address this issue, Kivy aims at an account of expressive qualities “in their general form.” This sets a reasonable expectation, for emotions in general forms are not limited to intentional objects. It is difficult enough for music to be expressive of joy even in a general form. If this cannot even be established, emotional expression in more specific forms would be out of the question. For example, if music cannot be expressive of joy generally, music cannot be expressive of my joy at seeing two squirrels in the early morning. Emotions like pride or respect involve intentional objects. It is not possible to have pride without being proud of something. Music can at best be expressive of what Kivy calls “garden-variety” emotions such as anger, fear, joy, and sadness. Although it is not normal for us to be sad without

feeling sad about anything, Kivy holds that it is possible for garden-variety emotions to emerge in the absence of intentional objects.\textsuperscript{151}

The scope of musical expression might be questioned at this point. Since there are no intentional objects to define the scope of garden-variety emotions, one might wonder how specific garden-variety emotions can be. It seems that without particular intentional objects, garden-variety emotions can still be specific enough to capture different shades of an emotion. For example, it might be possible for music to be expressive of not only sadness, but also quiet sadness rather than violent sadness. Since emotional categories can be further divided, it might be possible for music to be expressive of different kinds of quiet sadness.

Kivy resists this tendency to qualify emotions, as it can bring in extra-musical content for possible musical expression. To illustrate, Kivy considers whether music can be expressive of the “neurotically mournful.” “If music can be expressive of the neurotic, then, where it is also mournful, why not neurotically mournful?”\textsuperscript{152} The neurotically mournful is one step further than the mournful. For example, a piece of mournful music might exhibit sudden shifts or compression of short nervous phrases that sound neurotic. To address this question, Kivy makes a distinction between music being expressive of something and music being symptomatic of something. For example, the last movement of Mahler Symphony 6 is symptomatic rather than expressive of Mahler’s neurosis, given what is known about Mahler’s neurosis confirmed by extra-musical sources.\textsuperscript{153} On the level of emotional expression, there can only be mournfulness, as mournfulness is the only relevant expressive quality. For each emotion qualified by an adverb like “neurotically,” a story might be told to show that the specific qualification is a symptom. Kivy cautions against

\textsuperscript{151} Kivy, \textit{Music Alone}, 175.
\textsuperscript{152} Kivy, \textit{Music Alone}, 178.
\textsuperscript{153} Kivy, \textit{Music Alone}, 179.
infinitely particularizing garden-variety emotions, lest extra-musical content is introduced to the analysis of musical expression. The distinction between expression and symptom can reach beyond mere pathology to ideology. Kivy thinks that a musical piece like Edward Elgar’s Symphony No. 1 would be symptomatic of “pride of an imperial race at the apex of its power” as evidenced by sociological findings. Even if the distinction between being expressive and being symptomatic can be difficult to make in practice, Kivy insists that it should be maintained in theory.

To account for musical expressivity, Kivy proposes that garden-variety emotions without intentional objects have standard bodily manifestations. The standard bodily manifestations of garden-variety emotions are “identifiable behavioral and linguistic routines and gestures.” For example, people in happiness talk fast and loudly, keep eyes forward, and have big smiles. These are standard bodily manifestations of happiness. I might have idiosyncratic manifestations when I am happy. I might freeze when I am happy. But in that case, my personal tendency is not standard for others. The standard manifestations are supposed to be universal across different people.

Kivy suggests that standard bodily manifestations can take on sonic forms. Music can move slowly in a way that resembles the standard bodily manifestations of grief. My grief can be echoed by the slow movement of music in that the music shares the standard bodily manifestations with those of grief. In this case, music is expressive of grief for me as well as for all listeners, insofar as slow movement is taken to be a standard bodily manifestation of grief. Kivy holds that evolution has hardwired people to “read ambiguous patterns as animate whenever possible.” Just as we tend to see facial expressions in the clouds, we tend to hear patterns in music as if those patterns

---

are animate and contain standard bodily manifestations. For example, music can be expressive of pomposity by having “pomposity struts and postures.”\textsuperscript{159} By recognizing the standard bodily manifestations in music, we can understand what emotions music is expressive of.

This idea of standard bodily manifestation is empirically dubious. Bodily manifestations of the same emotion can take different directions and forms. In \textit{How Emotions are Made}, Lisa F. Barrett argues that emotions can be manifested in a plethora of ways depending on people’s predictions of what will happen in a given situation. Fear, for example, can manifest as keeping one’s head low, but it can also manifest as talking loudly, running fast, laughing uncontrollably, etc. No bodily manifestation is standard, because no prediction of a given situation is standard.\textsuperscript{160} To look utterly solemn can be a proper manifestation of happiness, if looking solemn wins out among competing predictions about what goes well in a situation. For example, in a trade talk, when one’s business rival makes a huge concession, one would want to laugh, but this manifestation will not be well received. All things considered, it may be best to express that happiness in a solemn look to save face for one’s business opponent.

The argument from quality recognition does not refute the illusion view. It is a mystery how expressive qualities get into music. Even if expressive qualities inhere in music, it is unclear how to standardize the recognition of them. It remains a question as to whether expressive means can “press out” expressive content.

\textsuperscript{159} Kivy, \textit{Music Alone}, 179.
\textsuperscript{160} Noël Carroll has raised a point in defense of Kivy’s account. It seems that there are standard bodily manifestations of emotions. For example, it is standard to smile at a wedding, regardless of whether we feel happy. In reply, this can be taken as a sociological observation, which does not undermine the metaphysical position of the illusion view. Nonetheless, the illusion view is compatible with the thought that music can resemble moods. Music can be fast, slow, gentle, raucous, invigorating, relaxing, soothing, healing, etc. On the illusion view, it is fine to describe music in terms of moods, as long as the terms do not imply a conceptual core that might turn a mood into an emotion. Still, when music is said to be cheerful or fearful, one risks putting emotions into music, even if one means to only suggest a resemblance between music and moods. Noël Carroll, personal communication, March 5, 2021.
The Argument from Dramatic Persona

In *Deeper than Reason*, Robinson offers a theory of musical expression that incorporates the idea of arousal.\(^\text{161}\) To start with arousal, Robinson observes that physiological changes caused by music can arise without cognitive evaluation of the music. Music makes listeners feel in a contagious way. Listeners can apparently catch the emotion in the music without wanting to be impacted. If I walk through a neighborhood where polka is played in the air, I can apparently catch the emotion in the music before I realize that I feel something and what I am feeling is bouncy cheerfulness. Robinson names the effect of catching an emotion without cognitive evaluation the “Jazzercise effect.”

There is lots of evidence that happy music does cheer people up and sad music saddens them, that restless music makes people restless and calm music calms them down *without* there being any prior ‘cognitive evaluation’ (or even any prior *affective* evaluation) of the music. I call this the ‘Jazzercise effect’. In the Jazzercise effect, a happy response to happy music is not based on an evaluation of the music or of anything else.\(^\text{162}\)

\(^{161}\) Different theoretical approaches are not mutually exclusive, even if each theory prioritizes an aspect of an allegedly emotional nature of music. This section examines a hybrid account. We will see how an account of emotional expression may be indispensable for an adequate account of arousal. We will also see how an account of arousal might inform an account of expression.

\(^{162}\) Robinson, *Deeper than Reason*, 392.
The Jazzercise effect has physiological support. Research has shown that exciting music increases the heart rate and lowers resistance in skin conductivity, whereas relaxing music decreases the heart rate and raises resistance in skin conductivity.\textsuperscript{163}

While “the Jazzercise effect operates below the level of conscious awareness and outside our control,”\textsuperscript{164} it carries evaluative implications that invite conscious monitoring. Music “induces bodily changes which … in turn lead to a disposition to evaluate the world positively or negatively.”\textsuperscript{165} When listeners are aroused into physiological states where they evaluate the world, they experience the states as emotional. Such emotional experiences may be inexplicable at first, yet they are open to interpretation and categorization, which reinforces the musical experiences.

Labelling the experience is part of \textit{cognitive monitoring}, and cognitive monitoring itself \textit{alters the nature of the experience}, feeding back upon bodily changes, action tendencies, and affective appraisals.\textsuperscript{166}

In the polka example, once I realize and label my feeling “bouncy cheerfulness,” I become conscious of my emotion as aroused by the music. My experience of the music is not passive without appraisal. I may walk faster to feel with the rhythm and think about everything in a more positive light.

It is unclear if listeners always prefer to have appraisal-laden bodily changes settled into labels and interpretations. Listeners might prefer to remain in the states of arousal where physiological changes remain inexplicable. The level of tolerance for emotional ambiguity in

\textsuperscript{163} Robinson, \textit{Deeper than Reason}, 395.  
\textsuperscript{164} Robinson, \textit{Deeper than Reason}, 402.  
\textsuperscript{165} Robinson, \textit{Deeper than Reason}, 400.  
\textsuperscript{166} Robinson, \textit{Deeper than Reason}, 402.
listeners may be higher than Robinson envisions. One may even listen to music for the sake of being baffled by something beyond one’s interpretive framework. The musical experience can be valuable because it offers a way to get out of our interpretive frameworks instead of reinforcing what we have already known to feel. Consequently, listeners can miss the musical experience, if their emotional responses are determined by interpretations. Labelling and interpreting bodily changes may ease the potential discomfort that arises in arousal. But the willingness to label and interpret bodily changes is not common to all listeners.

Robinson can reply that the emotional engagement with music happens with phases. At first, music induces bodily changes like a drug, then these changes dispose listeners to appraise the world in some way. This state in which listeners begin to appraise the world with bodily changes invites labelling in emotional terms because listeners want to make sense of it. The labelling is part of the cognitive monitoring which conceptualizes the appraisal-laden arousal. This cognitive monitoring, by its conceptualization of the musical experience, alters the experience into something intelligible and feeds back into bodily changes caused by the music. Strictly speaking, it is at the last stage that emotional content in concrete forms arises. But all the steps before the last stage play some role in bringing out the emotions. If we merely focus on the last stage, we will not be able to say that it is music that arouses the emotions. But if expand our horizon, we can see that music is responsible for our emotions, because it causes listeners to appraise the world in a certain way. This complete circle is like a “self-fulfilling prophecy”:

[W]hen we listen to music a state of arousal is induced and how we label that state of arousal affects how we feel to some degree … I also attribute *emotions* to myself even though my feeling state may not be the result of any affective appraisal.
Strictly speaking, I should not attribute any emotions to myself unless and until I start to make appropriate affective appraisals. But once I’ve interpreted my feelings as being of a particular emotional state, this tends to become a self-fulfilling prophecy: I start to view the world in the appropriate way and I begin to make the corresponding affective appraisals … We can describe this process as ‘confabulation’ but what starts out as a fable may end up coming true.\textsuperscript{167}

By calling the process of forming emotional responses to music “confabulation,” Robinson is by no means discrediting emotional responses. To say emotional responses are fables is not to say they are false. Rather, Robinson attempts to show the complex dynamics involved in emotional responses to music. From music to emotion, it is not a one-stop trip.

Confabulation suffers from what might be called “interpretive narcissism” whereby one hears only the emotions one reads into the music. In psychology, narcissism refers to a personality disorder in which one has excessive admiration for one’s self-worth or physical appearance. Narcissists are unable to view the world from the perspective of others. Real or imagined insults to a narcissistic ego can threaten personal self-esteem, thereby inflicting narcissistic injury and triggering narcissistic rage.\textsuperscript{168} Psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut uses “narcissism” in a mundane, non-pathological sense. On Kohut’s usage, narcissism refers to not an extraordinary self-love or excessive feeling of self-worth, but rather a ubiquitous and ongoing need to cope with fragmentation anxiety deriving from deficit in self-love.\textsuperscript{169} For a child to develop a coherent rather

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{167} Robinson, \textit{Deeper than Reason}, 403.
\textsuperscript{168} Narcissists are characterized by their resistance to being subject to the claims of others, especially claims of fidelity and enduring commitment; the manipulation of the impressions they make on other persons; a shallow emotional life, or a protective incapacity to feel deeply; and a resistance to acknowledging their finitude. See Christopher Lasch, \textit{The Culture of Narcissism: American life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations} (New York: Norton, 1991), 31-50.
\textsuperscript{169} Heinz Kohut, \textit{The Analysis of the Self: A Systematic Approach to the Psychoanalytic Treatment of Narcissistic Personality Disorders} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 296.
\end{flushright}
than scattered ego, people around the child (especially parents) must be empathic to understand the child’s “anger at being thwarted.” Non-empathic parents cause a failure in the child to change from narcissism to object-love. Consequently, children create “self-objects” experienced as part of the self to cope with fragmentation anxiety.

The interpretation of musically induced bodily changes can be likened to an infantile “anger at being thwarted.” The arousal does not present itself as straightforwardly digestible. To deal with interpretive ambiguities, listeners need a way to absorb uninterpreted bodily changes, turning the musical experience into a “self-object.” The listening, feeling, labelling, and interpreting can happen within a listener’s own mental world. But listeners are able to interpret the bodily changes only to the extent that they can experience the bodily changes as part of themselves. This self-fulfilling prophecy places a significant limit on listeners’ openness towards the music.

To address this problem, there must be some way to acknowledge the sense of otherness in musical experiences. Some music is powerful because the bodily changes caused by them cannot be interpreted adequately. Such musical experiences cannot be fully absorbed as self-objects. To reply, Robinson draws on the model of maternal caregiving. “Maternal singing is an expression of love, and the infant’s emotional response is a reciprocal loving response.” Listeners might respond to music in the way infants respond to motherese singing. Robinson draws from Bunt and Pavlicevic’s research to illustrate the mother-infant mechanism:

---

[N]ewborn infants are neurologically predisposed to identifying, and responding to, contours and rhythms of movements, gestures, and vocalizations in their mothers’ gestures, vocal sounds, and facial expression. … In addition, they ‘tune in’ to subtle shifts in vocal timbre, and volume variations, and with their mothers negotiate and share a flexible musical pulse between them, constantly adapting their [sic] tempo, intensity, motion, shape, and contour of their sounds, movements and gestures in order to ‘fit’ and to communicate with one another. … Mother and infant develop and share a rich musical ‘code’ that has interactive significance.173

On the maternal caregiving model, musical listening involves a process of negotiating and sharing. Listeners align their aesthetic activities with what the composers may be communicating through the sounds. This attentive alignment requires attention and adaptation throughout the music. Listeners are able to interpret the bodily changes based on their engagement with the music. The caregiving model provides insight into the communicative aspect of musical listening and interpretation. As long as “the listener’s experience is not what determines what’s expressed by the music,”174 the narcissistic challenge seems to fade away.

The idea of expression becomes prominent in Robinson’s account, as Robinson applies the model of maternal caregiving to explain the otherness in emotional interpretation. According to Robinson, when we are moved by music, we are moved partly by what the music expresses. To interpret listeners’ bodily responses to music is largely to interpret what the music expresses.

174 Robinson, Deeper than Reason, 357.
Although Robinson’s account starts with the Jazzercise effects, it now depends on an expression theory to make sense of arousal.

When we are moved by particular harmonic modulation or change in rhythm, or the reiterated fragment of an earlier melody, we are in fact being moved partly by what the music *expresses*.\(^\text{175}\)

Robinson suggests that musicians express emotions by clarifying them in the creative process. The creative process and the expressive process are one, because “an artwork that expresses an emotion is a reflection upon the emotion process as a whole.”\(^\text{176}\) Emotional expression in art is an intentional articulation and elucidation of an emotional state.\(^\text{177}\) Expression is not “an all-or-nothing affair.”\(^\text{178}\) Emotions can be “more or less successfully ‘individuated’” according to the degree of vividness it is articulated. Since expression is a process through which musicians clarify the emotions, emotional expression would allow for uncertainty and possibly confusion.

It is normal for the emotions clarified through expression to be different from feelings composers undergo themselves. “Expression involves not the spontaneous betrayal of the artist’s very own emotion but reflection upon an emotion that may or may not have been personally experienced by the artist.”\(^\text{179}\) Composers achieve the clarification of emotion through “cognitive monitoring,”\(^\text{180}\) which is “a reflective way that is rare in ordinary life.”\(^\text{181}\) Although what music

\(^{175}\) Robinson, *Deeper than Reason*, 352.  
\(^{176}\) Robinson, *Deeper than Reason*, 269.  
\(^{177}\) Robinson, *Deeper than Reason*, 270-271.  
\(^{178}\) Robinson, *Deeper than Reason*, 277.  
\(^{179}\) Robinson, *Deeper than Reason*, 264.  
\(^{180}\) Robinson, *Deeper than Reason*, 264.  
\(^{181}\) Robinson, *Deeper than Reason*, 277.
expresses cannot be directly identified with the composers’ emotions, it can be traced to a “persona” imagined in the music, whereby the otherness to mitigate the problem of interpretive narcissism can apparently be found. Listeners can have two kinds of feelings about this imagined persona. They may feel for the persona or feel with the persona.

In listening to the Brahms Intermezzo Opus 117 No. 2, I may feel with the conflict between the two points of view I pointed out, identifying now with one and now with the other, but I may also feel heavy-hearted and compassionate as I contemplate the musical conflict in the persona: I may feel for him rather than with him. 182

For Robinson, feeling for the persona and feeling with the persona can come apart, “a piece of music may … express nostalgia although the emotion it evokes in me is melancholy; a piece may express fear while evoking in me only anxiety.” 183 The following argument can be constructed from Robinson’s writing:

(P1) Music expresses a persona’s emotional world.

(P2) If music expresses a persona’s emotional world, music is emotional.

(C) Music is emotional.

One might worry that P1 entails too limited a view of musical expression. Music may not be about any persona’s emotional world, but about the world in general. Yet this is not a serious

---

182 Robinson, Deeper than Reason, 358.
183 Robinson, Deeper than Reason, 358.
problem. Robinson holds that there are two interrelated ways of expression, which are “interactions or transactions between the person (persona) and his or her environment.”\textsuperscript{184} This highlights the impersonal and personal creative strategies with respect to the emotional world. Musicians can express an emotion either by “articulating the way the world appears to a person in that emotional state,” or by “articulating the thoughts, beliefs, points of view, desires, etc. of the person who seems to be expressing the emotion.”\textsuperscript{185} Musical works that are apparently about the world can be indirectly about a persona’s emotional world.

Nevertheless, one might charge P2 of a circularity that reads emotion into the persona. One may interpret the music as having an emotion, project that emotion to a persona, and then be aroused by what this persona is believed to express. This interpretive process would be circular in that it contradicts Robinson’s concept of the Jazzercise effect whereby listeners catch an emotion in a contagious way prior to cognitive evaluation. The interpretive circularity cannot accommodate the sense of otherness that is necessary to get listeners out of interpretive narcissism. This is not to say that interpretation should be forbidden in the imagination of a persona. Robinson maintains that interpretation is indispensable because it “will foreground aspects of the piece that may receive less emphasis in a purely formal analysis.”\textsuperscript{186} But the objection makes interpretation open to circularity by questioning how a persona is imagined and how an emotion is attributed to the persona. To see whether Robinson can meet this challenge, I will examine Robinson’s musical examples.

Robinson suggests that Shostakovich’s Tenth Symphony expresses a persona’s hope: “the incremental changes in the hopeful theme that finally produce the cheerful main theme of the final

\textsuperscript{184} Robinson, \textit{Deeper than Reason}, 274.
\textsuperscript{185} Robinson, \textit{Deeper than Reason}, 275.
\textsuperscript{186} Robinson, \textit{Deeper than Reason}, 334.
movement convey a sense of effort and purposefulness as the persona strives to realize the hopeful future he envisages.”\textsuperscript{187} Robinson holds that in this case, the persona is not just anyone in the composer’s imagination, but a persona of the composer himself. Such an attribution is justified by Shostakovich’s “signature motif,” which consists of notes D-E flat-C-B, corresponding to ‘D. Sch.’ in German transliteration for ‘Dmitri Schostakowitsch’.\textsuperscript{188} Yet one might contend that a signature motif can be merely one way for composers to identify their works. It would be too wild to believe that whenever I sign on something I write, I am leaving behind a persona of me. To corroborate the persona attribution, Robinson cites biographical anecdotes to argue that the composer acknowledges the Tenth Symphony to be “a musical portrait of Stalin” and that “it seems reasonable … to interpret the symphony as expressing Shostakovich’s reaction to the Stalin years and their aftermath.”\textsuperscript{189} Robinson suggests that without listening to the music thus interpreted, we will miss important aspects of “the work’s expressive structure.”\textsuperscript{190} Robinson maintains that it is not only reasonable but also necessary to listen with this interpretation to understand what the music expresses.

Nonetheless, the acknowledgment of the Tenth Symphony to be a “musical portrait” does not guarantee that the music expresses the composer’s “reaction to the Stalin years.” A musical portrait can be objective in the sense that it concerns only the object of the portrait, which in this case is allegedly Stalin. For the sake of argument, let us assume that the music as a portrait of Stalin makes it more probable to interpret the music along the lines of Shostakovich’s reactions to Stalin. Consequently, it is more reasonable to claim that the Tenth Symphony expresses a persona of Shostakovich. Still, this does not mean that there is a single interpretation most appropriate to a

\textsuperscript{187} Robinson, *Deeper than Reason*, 328.
\textsuperscript{188} Robinson, *Deeper than Reason*, 331.
\textsuperscript{189} Robinson, *Deeper than Reason*, 331.
\textsuperscript{190} Robinson, *Deeper than Reason*, 333.
musical work. Robinson acknowledges the possibility of multiple interpretations. “There can be multiple incompatible interpretations of the same work, which are all in some way appropriate to it.” Nonetheless, Robinson’s interpretation of Shostakovich’s Tenth symphony is skewed by the extra-musical knowledge about the composer. It is one thing to find that the music contains the composer’s reactions to Stalin years. It is another to interpret the music as expressing a persona’s hope. To bring biographical details into the interpretation may not be flawed by itself, but it introduces many ways to project the interpreter’s emotional understanding into the interpretation. One has to have an emotional understanding of what it is like to live in Stalin years, or even what it is like to live with hope in Stalin years, in order to formulate the proper emotional interpretation of the persona’s hope. But the emotional understanding of that sort would make the imagination of a persona redundant.

To save the argument, Robinson must show a persona’s emotional world can be interpreted without relying on unnecessary extra-musical knowledge. Robinson’s interpretation of Brahms’ Intermezzo in B flat minor, Opus 117 No. 2 might serve this purpose. “The major interpretative question … concerns the conclusion and the way in which the two themes and the modes of major and minor are ultimately reconciled.” Proposing “just one possible interpretation that is consistent with the expressive potential of the music,” Robinson notes that “the B theme grows out of the A theme, and the A theme is in B flat minor while the B theme is in the relative major of that key.” The “A-B-A’ structure” is better construed not as “a conflict between two different characters in the music,” but “as a single character, responding in two different ways to the same

---

191 Robinson, Deeper than Reason, 333.
192 Robinson, Deeper than Reason, 342-343.
193 Robinson, Deeper than Reason, 336.
194 Robinson, Deeper than Reason, 341.
material.” Robinson interprets the intermezzo as a “psychological drama.” In this drama, the interactions between musical movements allow listeners to experience the emotional significance of the entire work. The experience of that character is “bittersweet because the music goes back and forth between the two themes and between the major and minor modalities.” In particular, while it sounds like the B theme will “predominate with both its rhythm and its major tonality,” the dark minor tonality in the A theme takes on the calm rhythm of the B theme at bar 81, which suggests that the minor tonality will predominate in the end.

I will argue that Robinson’s interpretation of Brahms’ Intermezzo does not get out of the problem of circularity. Let us take a closer look at the structure of Robinson’s interpretation.

The emotional state of the protagonist unfolds as the music unfolds, and the music mirrors the psychological development of the protagonist ... music also mirrors the way the protagonist’s emotion processes develop and change over time. It expresses continuous yearning (the A theme) in conflict with calmer proclivities (in the B theme), but a calm that is itself undermined by a certain restlessness (since the B theme sounds calm but also has some restlessness in its inner voices), and that only partly succeeds in calming the striving and yearning (by bringing it into its own calmer rhythm) but that does not succeed turning the yearning into acceptance (since the tonic minor key wins out in the end).
The interpretation, based on a persona’s drama, is made specific by technical observations about how the two themes change and interact in time. The entire musical piece can then be interpreted on the model of this drama. “What is expressed in the *piu adagio* section is … a reluctant acceptance that the character’s yearning will never be satisfied.” Nonetheless, the interpretation begs the question of what emotions are involved in the drama. If we approach the music with conceptions of what emotions are involved, it is reasonable to doubt whether the persona’s drama is a product of our imagination that is not in the nature of music. This problem becomes conspicuous as Robinson remarks on the emotional clarification in music.

If we hear the Intermezzo as a psychological mini-drama, then we can detect qualities in the music that otherwise we might miss, such as the conflict between restless striving and calm acceptance in the coda, the ambiguity in the concluding arpeggio, and the intimate yet troubled relationship between the A and B themes throughout the piece and especially at the end.

Robinson’s musical analysis appears to derive from the interpretation of a persona’s psychological drama. But the problem is that Robinson’s description and analysis show exactly the opposite. There is a mismatch between the theoretical motivation and the interpretive practice. The argument originates from the thought that musical expression is a clarificatory process. On the listeners’ side, grasping the musical expression involves interpreting a persona’s drama. As we arrive at the mini-drama, we are told that technical knowledge is necessary to recognize the relevant emotions in the drama. We have to understand the music technically in order to get the drama right. Without

---

201 Robinson, *Deeper than Reason*, 346.
technical knowledge, it is questionable whether one can encounter the dramatic persona at all. One might as well wonder why we would not start with technical analysis in the first place. Since the psychological drama follows from technical knowledge, the dramatic persona does not have explanatory priority in making sense of musical expression. Our bodily responses interpreted in terms of a persona’s drama cannot establish an emotional nature of music.

Robinson might reply that the dramatic persona initiates and guides the musical analysis, even for those with the technical knowledge. Experts can analyze music along the lines of drama for inspirations to understand what the music expresses. The psychological dramas imagined of a persona may help listeners engage with the music psychologically. People who listen with psychological dramas in mind can appreciate the emotional potency in the music. It is easier to miss important expressive features without attending to music as a persona’s psychological drama. Expression does not come with mere expressive structures. “It is … the ‘metaphorical resonances’ of the music, in particular what it means psychologically,” that makes the music expressive. In order to catch the expressive magnitude, it is helpful to try listening to music as expressing a persona’s emotional world.

This reply seems innocuous, for it characterizes listening to music with imagined persona as an interpretive inspiration. But once we break down the process, it becomes clear that the function of persona in the interpretive practice is not so much inspirational as justificatory. Experts with formal knowledge might interpret the music technically, only to construct a drama later on to illustrate the technical analysis. Psychological dramas can be constructed to fit with the formal analysis. This renders the drama itself less indispensable than it appears. It is even questionable if listeners without formal training are in a cognitive position to imagine the right kind of persona.

---

The lack of technical knowledge may well restrict the listeners’ imagination in fundamental ways. A layperson might try to imagine a persona to better appreciate the emotional nature of a piano sonata by Mozart, but ultimately fail to do so adequately. For example, a persona might be imagined to be carefree at the start of a piece, but soon found to be lacking in different ways that render the imagined emotional world of a persona dispersed, disorienting, or distracting. The technical knowledge in formal training may be necessary to imagine a compelling persona.

The argument from dramatic persona does not refute the illusion view. It takes more than imagination and interpretation to postulate a dramatic persona. Technical analysis and knowledge seem indispensable for the persona to be convincing. The persona does not serve to match expressive means with emotional content.

Reflection

I have constructed three arguments from expression theories in contemporary Western musical aesthetics. The argument from judicious arrangement is too detached. Emotional expression from arrangement presupposes the expressive capability of the musical materials. The argument from quality recognition is too wishful. The presence of emotional qualities inherent in music presupposes an emotional nature of music. The argument from dramatic persona is too self-fulfilling. The psychological drama is a rational reconstruction of technical analysis and interpretation of music. While I have defended the illusion view against these specific arguments, I will consider broader challenges from the perspective of expression in a later chapter.
Chapter Six. Representation

In this chapter I will examine representation theories. Some historical background is helpful. The idea of representation in art goes back to Plato. The word for representation in Plato’s writings was “mimesis” which is alternatively translated as “imitation.” In Republic III 392d-399a, Plato distinguishes mimetic poets from narrative poets. The narrative poet “never hid himself”203 and “doesn’t attempt to get us to think that the speaker is someone other than himself.”204 Mimetic poets “make oneself like someone else in voice or appearance.”205 In other words, mimesis is different from narrative in that mimesis has a first-person vividness. When I narrate something for you, I am a reporter describing something from a third-person perspective. When I imitate something for you, I am presenting it as if I am that thing. Thus a mimesis can act like a substitute. Specifically, music is believed to imitate emotions in a direct and vivid way.206 In Republic X, Plato further claims that mimetic poetry “imitates human beings acting voluntarily or under compulsion, who believe that, as a result of these actions, they are doing either well or badly and who experience either pleasure or pain in all this.”207 Mimesis is able to represent not only people, but also events that happen to people and the emotions people go through. In mimetic poetry, the performer hides himself to emulate various characters. If the mimesis goes well, the audience would not see the performer’s own persona, but the characters which the performer imitates.208 In

203 Plato, Complete Works, Republic, 393d.
204 Plato, Complete Works, Republic, 393a.
205 Plato, Complete Works, Republic, 393c.
206 Plato, Complete Works, Republic, 393d. There is a distinction between positive mimesis and negative mimesis, the imitations of “courageous, self-controlled, pious and free” people are good, whereas the imitations of “either a young woman or an older one, or one abusing her husband, quarreling with the gods, or bragging because she thinks herself happy, or one suffering misfortune and possessed by sorrows and lamentations” are bad.
207 Plato, Complete Works, Republic, 603c.
this way, one might think of musical representation as hiding what music is. Music consists of a series of physical sounds. But as imitation, music gives an emotional appearance for the audience to appreciate. If the imitation goes well, listeners will not mind the reality of music as a series of sounds, but pay attention to the emotional appearance. Plato thinks that a mimetic painting “could make [things] appear, but … couldn’t make the things themselves as they truly are.” 209 Analogously, it might be thought that music can make emotions appear, but do not thereby constitute emotions. Mimetic poetry, which encompasses literature, music and dance, is a strongly emotional art form. Mimesis is moving as a “magnetic stone moves iron rings”210 such that the spectators are “possessed and held.”211

Various accounts have been given to explain how music represents emotion. The Host has raised the problem of representational inconstancy. One piece of music can represent different emotions. I will examine how representation theories account for constancy. If constancy does not derive from music, representation will not help to establish an emotional nature of music.

The Argument from Expressive Resemblance

In Critique of Pure Music, James O. Young offers a hybrid account of expression theory and representation theory. I will focus on the representational component, according to which music resembles human behaviors.212 The resemblance theory “will be confirmed to the extent that features of the human voice and human behaviors expressive of some emotion are found to

---

209 Plato, Complete Works, Republic, 596e.
210 Plato, Complete Works, Ion, 533d.
211 Plato, Complete Works, Ion, 536b.
resemble features of music expressive of the same emotion.”

According to Young, the typical human behaviors expressive of emotion are speech acts. Expressive speech and music resemble each other in several ways: pitch contours (rising or falling), tempo (fast or slow), volume (loud or soft), dynamics (varying or constant), pauses, timbre, and attack.

It is worth noting that among the different dimensions of resemblance, one may prioritize certain dimensions as more important. Kris Goffin observes that the crescendo, tension, and release in music exhibit dynamism that can be found in moods. Both moods and music can be experienced as “surging, fading-away, fleeting, explosive, tentative, effortful, accelerating, decelerating, climaxing, bursting, and drawn out.” Young takes a more eclectic stance towards expressive resemblance without prioritizing any dimension as central. Slow tempi are expressive of sadness or tenderness, whereas quick tempi are expressive of anger or happiness. Similar features such as volume, timbre, pitch, variation in dynamic levels function similarly to be expressive of certain emotions. Young reasons that since these characteristics are expressive of emotions in speech, they would also be expressive of the same emotions in music. The following argument can be constructed from Young’s writing:

(P1) Music resembles expressive behaviors.

(P2) If music resembles expressive behaviors, music is emotional.

(C) Music is emotional.

---

213 Young, Critique of Pure Music, 15.
214 Young, Critique of Pure Music, 15.
217 Young, Critique of Pure Music, 16.
P1 might be supported by Young’s discussion of an experiment by Manfred Clynes and Nigel Nettheim. In the experiment, the researchers measured emotions subjects associated with patterns of finger pressures. The emotions include anger, hate, grief, love, sexual attraction, joy, and reverence. These emotions can be behaviorally expressed in various ways. The researchers transcribed these emotions physiologically into the amount and rhythm of pressure applied to the subjects’ fingers. This physiological transcription was based on the resemblance between the contours of finger pressure and the contours of musical recordings. “Anger, for example, was characterized by a strong, abrupt spike in pressure followed by an equally abrupt release of pressure.”\(^{218}\) For each of the emotions, there was a behavioral transcription in the form of finger pressure. Then researchers presented participants with musical recordings that shared the same formal patterns with the finger pressure. These recordings were “simple melodies with abrupt leaps, gradually falling pitch, and so on.”\(^{219}\) The researchers found that participants were able to discern the correct emotions these recordings expressed.\(^{220}\) Apparently, participants relied on their sense of shared contours between music and finger pressure to distinguish emotions as expressed by the musical recordings.

Nevertheless, P1 evidenced as such is symptomatic of reading emotion into the music. What the music recordings were taken to express was decided by the researchers. The participants were not required to identify emotions, but merely required to recognize emotions they had associated with patterns of finger pressure. The experiment establishes at most a reliable association between the emotions and the expressiveness of bodily motions. It has not been shown that this resemblance grounds the emotions in music.

\(^{218}\) Young, Critique of Pure Music, 21.
\(^{219}\) Young, Critique of Pure Music, 21.
\(^{220}\) Young, Critique of Pure Music, 20.
There is a more solid way to support P1. If participants made decisions based on their sense of shared contour, the order of the two events in the experiment should not matter. Suppose the researchers reverse the order of events in the experiment. The participants would first be asked to decide which emotions were expressed by which musical recordings, and would then be asked to indicate which emotions were associated with which patterns of finger pressure. The same discoveries should have been made. That finding, if made, would have been remarkable. It would have shown that without the priming of associations between emotions and finger pressures, participants would still be able to discern emotions out of the musical recordings. Nonetheless, even that more remarkable finding would just show that the participants’ decisions on which music expresses which emotions are coherent with their associations between music and finger pressure. That coherence could be accidental in that subjects could rely on mere guesswork or some extramusical associations to make decisions on which music expresses which emotion. It would be still hasty to derive representational constancy from the coherence.

One might contend that the researchers’ assignment of emotions to the musical recordings are not arbitrary. Rather, resemblance justifies the assignment of emotions. Here we get into the terrain of P2, where resemblance is meant to establish an emotional nature of music. To support P2, another experiment is needed to show that our recognition of resemblance is universal. One hypothesis is that people from different musical cultures should be able to tell the emotional expressiveness of music simply based on the psychophysical features of music. Young draws on Balkwill et al.’s study “Recognition of emotion in Japanese, Western, and Hindustani music by Japanese listeners.” In this study, classical Hindustani music excerpts were associated with different emotional states (rasa). It was found that participants from different musical cultures
could determine the emotional states expressed by the music. They did especially well on basic emotions such as joy, sadness, and anger. Let us look at this experiment in more detail.

Balkwill et al.’s study contains two consecutive experiments. In “Experiment 1: Judgment of emotion within and across cultures,” researchers asked musicians to create the musical excerpts to be used in the experiments. “Each musician was asked to play music they would normally play in order to evoke each of the three intended emotions.” These are joy, sadness, and anger. The researchers obtained the music excerpts by means of “intended emotion.” The intention is “musicians’ stated intention to evoke a specific emotion in their performance.” Yet the researchers also claim that “intended emotion is defined by the performer’s own indication of the emotion that was expressed.” This betrays a conflation between evoking and expressing an emotion. For the sake argument, let us assume that the difference does not matter for musicians to make the relevant recordings. The Japanese participants were asked to give ratings of joy, anger, and sadness for each music excerpt. The result shows that Japanese listeners could decode anger, joy, and sadness in Japanese, Western, and Hindustani music, even if they were unfamiliar with Hindustani music.

Nevertheless, there is a methodological worry. Since joy, anger, and sadness are three ready-made categories, the participants did not arrive at the emotional categories themselves. They were told that one of the excerpts had to express one of the three emotions. Moreover, the contrast within the three categories would introduce an additional clue for the listeners to use when determining what emotion a musical excerpt expresses. Although participants rated “anger” highest for music intended to express anger, this may show at most that they believe the “angry”

music expresses something different from sadness or joy, without necessarily taking anger as the precise emotion. Given the range of choices within three categories, that would leave anger as the only choice to be rated highest. In effect, the listeners may have followed a method of elimination and picked the least implausible category.

The same listeners participated in both Experiment I and Experiment II, though “no listener was presented the same music in the two experiments … avoiding carry-over effects.”

In “Experiment 2: Sensitivity to acoustic cues within and across cultures,” participants gave ratings of complexity, loudness, and tempo for musical excerpts. The researchers hypothesize that “ratings of complexity, loudness, and tempo should be significantly different for music intended to be angry, joyful, or sad.” They find that “across conditions, mean ratings of acoustic cues accounted for approximately three-quarters of the variance in mean emotion ratings.” Yet the researchers note a complication:

Acoustic cues did not always signify emotional meaning in the same way across the three music sets, suggesting a complex mapping between acoustic cues and emotional meaning. For example, whereas anger in Western music was associated with increases in tempo, anger in Japanese and Hindustani music was associated with decreases in tempo. More generally, acoustic cues often provided ambiguous information when considered on their own. For example, increases in perceived complexity were associated with increases in perceived anger as well as increases in perceived sadness.

---

This noted ambiguity of psychophysical properties of music puts into question Young’s aim to establish within-culture universality for the recognition of resemblance. The researchers particularly caution that musical interpretation should be “probabilistic” in that “each cue is associated with expression of different emotions to varying degrees.” Young’s interpretation of the experiment assumes the emotions expressed by the music excerpts. Although a resemblance between musical properties and emotions can be found, Young has not shown that the emotional detection is based on psychophysical properties of music.

One might try to defend P2 with Young’s discussion of Manfred Clynes and Nigel Nettheim’s study “The Living Quality of Music: Neurobiologic Patterns of Communicating Feeling.” This study contains a series of experiments aimed to test the “essentic form” of music derived from tactile, visual, and auditory channels. Clynes and Nettheim used “the dynamic form of the finger pressure expression previously identified as corresponding to anger, hate, grief, love, sex, joy, reverence.” Having conducted two experiments used to confirm their earlier work on how tactile forms could communicate intended emotional qualities, the researchers proposed to examine in the third experiment the crucial hypothesis that “expressive forms in touch and in sound share a common dynamic form.” Let us take a closer look at that experiment.

The researchers used computer technology to transform touch into sound, then used “frequency envelope scaling” -- initial frequency, polarity modulation, and depth scaling (modulation depth) -- to get stimuli into a clearer format. The technical decisions about the three

---

231 The definitions of the three terms go as follows. (1) The initial frequency - the frequency for zero pressure. (2) The polarity of modulation: does increasing pressure cause the frequency to go up or down? (3) The depth scaling - how
factors of frequency envelope scaling vary across emotions. For example, the choices on the starting frequency of anger are not crucial. Anger can be identified with whatever frequency to start with. Choices on polarity are highly sensitive. The sound for love, for example, must involve a decreasing frequency with increasing (downward) finger pressure. The choices on modulation depth are also sensitive in each case and have to be precise. For example, “for joy it was especially important to have an octave range, neither more nor less, for it to have a joyful character, even with the appropriate dynamic form.”232 Having transformed touch into expressive sounds, the researchers presented subjects with “ten expressions of each sound played through a single speaker” and instructed them to make “a forced choice of the seven emotions together with a confidence level for each choice.”233

Nevertheless, the methodological worry lingers. If participants were instructed to score themselves, they would have known the emotional categories -- “ten expressions of each of the seven emotions” -- before the experiment began.234 It is open to doubt whether the experiment measured participants’ learning or recognition. While Young interprets the experiment as testing the participants’ ability to recognize emotionally expressive sounds, the researchers measured at best the participants’ learning ability to recall which sounds were associated with which emotional category. Furthermore, the forced choices can limit the magnitude by which participants could have experienced and characterized the emotional appearances of the sounds. In short, it is unclear that emotional detection has happened at all based on psychophysical properties of the music.

The argument from expressive resemblance does not refute the illusion view. Music may resemble expressive behaviors in certain aspects. But what properties of music are salient for resemblance is relative to listeners. There is no universality in the recognition of resemblance. Resemblance is not enough to establish an emotional nature of music.

The Argument from Linguistic Metaphor

British musician Deryck Cooke, in *The Language of Music*, observes that a phrase of 1-3-5-6-5 in the major scale is thought to represent a “simple, innocent, blessed joy” as attested by “countless plainsong themes and Christmas carols.”²³⁵ No one ever set the Crucifixus to “quick, loud, major strains,”²³⁶ for there is a “musical vocabulary” being used by musicians.²³⁷ Cooke suggests that a rising pitch is used to represent an outgoing emotion.

We know that, purely technically speaking, the tonic is the point of repose, from which one sets out, and to which one returns; that the dominant is the note of intermediacy, towards which one sets out, and from which one returns; and we have established that the major third is the note which ‘looks on the bright side of things’, the note of pleasure, of joy.²³⁸

---
Let us grant that these basic musical terms have a fixed use in the practice of musical composition. When we combine all these elements together, we have a complex musical vocabulary whereby a melodic ascent 1-3-5 can represent an “outgoing, active, assertive emotion of joy.”\(^{239}\) This basic phrase allows for further variations like 1-2-3-5, 1-3-4-5, or 1-2-3-4-5. To show how this musical vocabulary is used to represent joy, Cooke draws from many examples, some of which have the basic patterns and some of which have the variant patterns.\(^{240}\)

Nonetheless, one might question if the connection between 1-3-5 in a musical work and joy derives from convention rather than the nature of that musical phrase. Cooke may object that it is not a mere coincidence that many composers find the 1-3-5 ascent adequate to represent joy. Yet once a convention takes root in musical practice and makes sense to our ears, it is no longer straightforward whether the association between emotions and musical vocabulary is based on the nature of music. It is not enough to show that music can have what Cooke calls “emotional connotations.”\(^{241}\) Representational constancy is stronger than conventional stability.

Philosophers have explored whether there is a metaphorical usage of everyday emotional terms to describe music. To say that music is sad is not literally saying that music is sad in the way people are sad. Roger Scruton, in *The Aesthetics of Music*, claims that “someone could be an expert at noticing the property we describe as musical sadness, even though he vehemently denies that music can be sad.”\(^{242}\) The metaphorical usage of emotional terms implies that music is not emotional in the way literally denoted by those terms. Rather, the word “sad” in the description “music is sad” is metaphorical in that it picks out some property of music.

---


Emotional terms may be given metaphorical usages to fulfill this linguistic function. If emotional terms are metaphorical, the attribution of them to music will not be meant to capture all dimensions of music. This does not mean that the metaphorical usage is ambiguous or impoverished. Rather, it suffices that everyday emotional terms are used to suggest the presence of something aesthetically significant in the music. Let us call whatever is aesthetically significant in the music an “aesthetic property.” The metaphorical usage of emotional terms seems indispensable for the appreciation of certain aesthetic properties that carry emotional content. Should it become obvious that the term “sadness” falls short of picking out a certain aesthetic property and a better word is found, people would opt for that better term and do away with the metaphorical use of the word “sadness.” The fact that an emotional term like “sadness” is still in use to describe music shows that this term is uniquely useful. In other words, the metaphorical usage of everyday emotional terms is resilient enough to anchor certain aesthetic properties. We do not feel compelled to do away with these emotional terms in search for more accurate descriptions. One might wonder if the aesthetic properties metaphorically described by everyday emotional terms may establish an emotional nature of music.

The structure of metaphor is crucial to understand how metaphor is supposed to work in music. In *The Metaphysics of Beauty*, Nick Zangwill claims that two concepts are involved in a metaphor: the concept of an aesthetic property and the concept of a non-aesthetic property. Both concepts are expressed by the same emotional term. For example, the same term “sadness” has two concepts in it, one used to describe an aesthetic property in music and the other used to describe an everyday emotion. Crucially, the metaphor is impossible to exhaust the meaning of the aesthetic property it describes. Since the meaning of an aesthetic property cannot be exhausted by anything in language, the aesthetic property cannot be known unless we approach it through the
relevant metaphor. We can know the aesthetic concept only through the metaphorical usage of an
everyday emotional term. Malcolm Budd, in “Aesthetic Realism and Emotional Qualities of
Music,” summarizes Zangwill’s view as follows:

[T]he view maintains that it is necessary to distinguish two concepts, one of the
aesthetic property, the other of the non-aesthetic property; it claims that the thought
expressed by the aesthetic metaphor employs the first concept, the thought
expressed by the non-metaphorical sentence employs the second; it asserts that the
acquisition of the aesthetic concept is causally dependent on the possession of the
non-aesthetic concept; and it maintains that the only way that the content of the
thought can be expressed in language is by the use of language metaphorically.²⁴³

The aesthetic property corresponds to the metaphorical usage, whereas the non-aesthetic property
corresponds to the non-metaphorical usage. Budd calls attention to the “exceptional strength of the
modal claim” in this view.²⁴⁴ It is not just that we cannot express concepts of aesthetic properties
because we lack the practical means to do so. The claim is that “aesthetic concepts (or properties)
are such that it is impossible that they should be expressed (or described) non-metaphorically.”²⁴⁵

Nevertheless, Budd contends that the distinction between a non-metaphorical usage and a
metaphorical usage eludes the necessity of metaphor. According to Budd, for a metaphor to pick
out an aesthetic property, the non-metaphorical usage must inform the metaphorical usage.

²⁴⁴ Budd, “Aesthetic Realism,” 115.
An understanding of the metaphorical use must be guided by an understanding of the literal use of the sentence: the meaning of ‘sad’ used literally informs the correct interpretation of its aesthetic metaphorical use, for the point of using the term ‘sad’ is precisely to indicate or express a connection between the music and sadness.\(^\text{246}\)

Since the non-aesthetic non-metaphorical usage should inform and guide our understanding of the aesthetic metaphorical usage, we cannot leave out the non-aesthetic usage from the aesthetic experiences. According to Budd, the non-aesthetic non-metaphorical usage of emotional terms should be incorporated into aesthetic experiences. If there is nothing like everyday sadness in “sad” music, the metaphorical usage of “sadness” would not be adequate to pick out the relevant aesthetic property in the music. One might as well use an altogether different metaphor.

With this observation in mind, Budd argues that without the guidance of non-aesthetic non-metaphorical usage of emotional terms, it is impossible to have certain aesthetic experiences, which are the “canonical basis” for the aesthetic metaphorical usage of emotional terms.\(^\text{247}\) Budd proposes that the way to incorporate the non-aesthetic non-metaphorical usage of emotional terms into aesthetic experiences is to embed it in an “unasserted” thought in aesthetic experiences:

> The concept expressed by the non-aesthetic use of the emotion term is a constituent of the intentional content of the experience of perceiving an item as possessing the aesthetic emotional property -- a constituent that figures in an “unasserted” thought ... It is for this reason that only the non-aesthetic concept can serve as the

---

\(^{246}\) Budd, “Aesthetic Realism,” 117.

\(^{247}\) Budd, “Aesthetic Realism,” 111.
right metaphor to characterize the item and why metaphor, that particular metaphor, is indispensable.\textsuperscript{248}

An unasserted thought might be taken as a supposition. For example, I can suppose that extraterrestrial intelligence exists, that is, I can entertain the propositional content of “extraterrestrial intelligence exists” without believing it to be true of reality.\textsuperscript{249} Although Budd does not specify exactly what it is for a thought to be “unasserted,” the theoretical work Budd wants an “unasserted” thought to do seems clear: an unasserted thought ensures the absence of a mental representation of the world.

The concept expressed by the non-aesthetic use of the term occurs in the content of a thought that is unasserted: the world is not represented as containing an item that falls under the concept—that is not how, in his or her experience, the world actually seems to the subject to be.\textsuperscript{250}

According to Budd, the thought must remain unasserted to avoid exhausting the metaphor. Insofar as the thought embedding the non-metaphorical concept is “unasserted,” the music would not be represented as fulfilling a definite concept. Take Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky’s The Seasons, Op. 37a: VI. June – Barcarolle. The aesthetic experience of this music involves intentional content that is hard to put into words. Suppose that there is an aesthetic property in the music and one may sense its presence in an emotional way. One experiences this aesthetic property emotionally without

\textsuperscript{248} Budd, “Aesthetic Realism,” 120-1.  
\textsuperscript{250} Budd, “Aesthetic Realism,” 120-1.
being able to conceptualize fully what the experience is like. It would be helpful to describe the music as “sad.” This term informs the aesthetic experience of this music by pointing towards some aesthetic property. Nevertheless, the non-aesthetic non-metaphorical usage of “sadness” does not exhaust the experience of the relevant aesthetic property. This seems to be Budd’s proposal.

Budd’s proposal does not hold a metaphor to be “through and through representational.”\(^{251}\) The non-aesthetic non-metaphorical usage must not reduce the aesthetic property into something mundane represented by everyday emotional terms. Otherwise, the aesthetic experience would collapse into a conceptual experience of “sadness” in its everyday meaning. Whatever aesthetic property the music has, it cannot be reduced to everyday sadness, but the term “sadness” is a helpful metaphor for listeners to recognize the aesthetic property, whatever that is. The following argument can be constructed from Budd’s writing:

(P1) Aesthetic properties in music can be described by emotional metaphors.

(P2) If aesthetic properties in music can be described by emotional metaphors, music is emotional.

(C) Music is emotional.

One way to challenge P1 is to observe that it seems to postulate a deep layer in music beneath the surface. The deep layer contains aesthetic properties that are not directly accessible. We can only approach them through linguistic approximations of emotional metaphors. The deep layer is not universally accessible, but only open to listeners who know the relevant metaphors and have the aesthetic sensibility to uncover the aesthetic properties through the metaphors. It has been

\(^{251}\) Budd, “Aesthetic Realism,” 112.
pointed out that a deep layer of aesthetic properties in music is “metaphysically bizarre.” According to Kivy, this idea has no empirical purchase on musical experiences. “If there is such an entity, we are in no position to tell, in the ordinary way, whether or not music accurately represents it, or represents it at all, since it is not, as Kant would say, an object of possible experience for us.” The aesthetic properties are not transparent to listeners. “Representation unperceived gives no satisfaction at all.” For Kivy, the philosophical challenge is to explain the musical phenomenon that “the listener has been getting deep satisfaction, no less than the connoisseur’s pleasure in van Gogh, prior to having the representationality of the music ‘revealed’.” Kivy argues that the only way out is for the representational theorist to “appeal to an ‘unconscious’ appreciation of musical representation.” But Kivy cautions that “we have no idea … why it is or even if it is pleasurable to unconsciously perceive representations.”

Budd might reply that P1 makes the deep layer less mysterious. The structure of metaphor in music contains an unasserted thought. This unasserted thought might seem “unconscious” from Kivy’s perspective, but it needs not be. The non-metaphorical usage of emotional terms can guide us to find the relevant aesthetic properties. There is nothing mysterious about the non-metaphorical usages. The fact that emotional terms have two usages, one metaphorical and the other non-metaphorical, makes the mystery of deep layer evaporate. The emotional descriptions serve as helpful pointers to inform our aesthetic experiences. This guidance demystifies emotional attributions to music. Our guided experience of the aesthetic properties can certainly be pleasurable.

---

The success of the argument then hinges upon P2. According to P2, emotional metaphors are sufficient to establish an emotional nature of music. But this depends on how well the emotional terms can capture aesthetic properties in music. If an everyday emotional term such as “sadness” misses a significant part of the relevant aesthetic property in music, it is questionable whether the emotional meaning in the non-metaphorical usage carries over into the relevant aesthetic property. The emotional terms attributed to the tip of an iceberg may not apply to the iceberg itself. The guidance that emotional terms, as metaphors, may offer for our experiences of some aesthetic properties in music would be irrelevant for determining the nature of those aesthetic properties in music. For example, when Bob Dylan metaphorically claims chaos as his friend, he directs our attention to certain unpredictable features of his friendship, but that does not yet establish a chaotic nature of his friendship, which may contain order as well. If these metaphors are ultimately a “window” through which we can glimpse into music, it would be too hasty to claim that the landscape we see shares the properties of the window.

The argument from linguistic metaphor does not refute the illusion view. Emotional metaphors are insufficient to deliver representational constancy. Even if emotional terms may metaphorically describe aesthetic properties in music, the meaning of emotional metaphors does not establish an emotional nature of music.

The Argument from Temporal Semblance

In *Feeling and Form*, Susanne Langer argues that music symbolizes emotion. Langer’s account starts with an observation that most appearances in the world have practical functions. A bottle of hot chocolate may have a decorative shape, but the primary function of that shape is to
hold the hot chocolate. The appearances in art are different. To illustrate, Langer borrows the concept of semblance from psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung. Semblance refers to the appearance of things that affords a consideration of the appearance as appearance. Suppose I see a painting and it appears that someone is crying in the painting. If I consider the painting as an object to which I relate practically, I may think that there is no crying person in the painting, because what I see as a crying person is made of pigments. I may further think about practical matters such as where the pigments come from, how much the painting can cost at an auction, whether it will be a good decoration for a lounge. In thinking practically about the painting, I have not treated the appearance of the painting as meaningful in itself. The way I engage with the painting is not different from the way I engage with everyday objects. According to Langer, if I were to engage with the painting as art, I need to focus on the appearance of the painting as such without thinking about its place in the practical world and how it relates to other objects. I may know that the crying person is made up by materials in the world. But I would have to immerse myself in the appearance if I were to appreciate the painting as art. In this sense, semblance gives art “some aura of illusion.” Even if there is something beneath the appearance, an aesthetic interest in the appearances makes those aspects fade from our consciousness. Langer also characterizes the illusory quality of semblance as “strangeness,” “transparency,” “otherness,” “autonomy,” or “self-sufficiency.” Semblance refers to the self-sufficient illusory appearance.

Semblance is significant for art. The status of semblance makes the appearance “more freely and wholly apparent than they could be if they were exemplified in a context of real circumstance and anxious interest.” In the practical world, objects are held and conceived within

258 Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 46.
259 Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 50.
a causal nexus. The appearance of an object in the practical world can hardly be separated from the practical function of the object. Semblance abstracts away from the practical world and offers a “detachment from actuality.” The semblance of a thing, thus thrown into relief, is its direct aesthetic quality. The semblance “liberates perception” out of practical meanings. While people tend to engage with art in a make-believe mentality, Langer characterizes art as offering “disengagement from belief.”

This disengagement from practical belief is not an end in itself. The semblance, through an abstraction from the actual world, can take on the status of a symbol for subjective experiences. An artistic symbol “conveys the idea of vital reality and the emotive import belongs to the form itself.” For Langer, the task of artists is partly “to produce and sustain the essential illusion, set it off clearly from the surrounding world of actuality” and to make it “perceptible in formal creation.”

Langer holds that abstract forms in semblance are similar to the forms of emotions. This similarity gives emotional import to artistic symbols. Langer illustrates this point with various art forms. I will focus on how Langer applies the idea of emotional import to music:

The tonal structures we call “music” bear a close logical similarity to the forms of human feeling—forms of growth and of attenuation, flowing and stowing, conflict and resolution, speed, arrest, terrific excitement, calm, or subtle activation and

---

260 Langer, Feeling and Form, 46.
261 Langer, Feeling and Form, 50.
262 Langer, Feeling and Form, 49.
263 Langer, Feeling and Form, 49.
264 Langer, Feeling and Form, 50.
265 Langer, Feeling and Form, 82.
266 Langer, Feeling and Form, 68.
267 Langer, Feeling and Form, 91.
dreamy lapses—not joy and sorrow perhaps, but the poignancy of either and both—the greatness and brevity and eternal passing of everything vitally felt. Such is the pattern, or logical form, of sentience; and the pattern of music is that same form worked out in pure, measured sound and silence. Music is a tonal analogue of emotive life.²⁶⁸

Langer suggests that music “conforms” with human feelings. By “logical similarity” Langer does not mean that music and emotion follow the same principles of reasoning. Abstract forms in music can be symbolic of emotions, because the abstract forms of emotions are “the same” as abstract forms in music. The symbolic relation between music and emotion is more intimate than the sense of symbol used in everyday life. It is commonly thought that a dove is symbolic of peace. But such symbols are more conventional than natural. There is not much similarity between the abstract form of a dove and the abstract form of peace. Langer holds that music and emotion have a more intimate symbolic relationship. Music symbolizes emotion because the two share abstract forms. This makes artistic symbols “charged with reality.”²⁶⁹ If there is an emotional nature of music, it might be seen as a symbol of emotion within the musical appearance. Let us take a closer look at the abstract forms of music.

The abstract forms of music unfold in time. The next note cannot begin if the previous note does not end. Abstract forms in music are presented as a succession of changes. This sets music apart from many art forms. The abstract forms of paintings and sculptures are predominantly spatial. The abstract forms of Claude Monet’s water lilies can be spatially located within the visual illusion of the paintings. But the abstract forms of Antonio Vivaldi’s Four Seasons are not spatially

²⁶⁸ Langer, Feeling and Form, 27.
²⁶⁹ Langer, Feeling and Form, 52.
locatable. They must be perceived and presented in time. Even if the way musical notes move may suggest a virtual space, that follows upon the abstract forms unfolding in time. Hence the space in music is what Langer calls a “secondary illusion.”

The temporal unfolding of music is not a duration devoid of structure. For Langer, the musical structure is characterized by permanence and change. Permanence and change are fundamental to life. For a biological organism, to live is to strive for retaining some level of permanence of its form amid changes. Complete destruction of the formal permanence would mean the end of life. Permanence is realized precisely through progressive changes. The abstract forms “disintegrate” once the music “stands still.” In analogy, Langer observes that “living organisms maintain themselves, resist change, strive to restore their structure when it has been forcibly interfered with.” Constant changes are the way to ensure the continuity of the “life” in music. Music directly presents the movement whose forms contain a sense of permanence and change. The temporal dynamics between permanence and change bring “life” to music.

Permanence of form, then, is the constant aim of living matter; not the final goal (for it is what finally fails), but the thing that is perpetually being achieved, and that is always, at every moment, an achievement, because it depends entirely on the activity of “living.” But “living” itself is a process, a continuous change; if it stands still the form disintegrates - for the permanence is a pattern of changes.

---

270 Langer, Feeling and Form, 117.
271 Langer, Feeling and Form, 66.
272 Langer, Feeling and Form, 88.
273 Langer, Feeling and Form, 66.
If this account could put life into music, we would not be far from finding emotions in music. Emotion is part of the living process for human beings. According to Langer, the sense of permanence and change is the most fundamental aspect of emotion. If music delivers the sense of permanence and change, music seems to have everything needed to present emotions, even more acutely than real-life scenarios. The following argument can be constructed from Langer’s writing:

(P1) Music symbolizes emotion.

(P2) If music symbolizes emotion, music is emotional.

(C) Music is emotional.

Since an artistic symbol of emotion carries emotional import, P2 follows from Langer’s definition of symbol. The weight with this argument lies in P1. Here is one way to challenge P1. Although the abstract forms of music contain a sense of permanence and change, this sense of permanence and change is not enough to deliver emotional import. The dynamics of permanence and change does not seem sufficient to pinpoint an emotion. Happiness and sadness can both be experienced as either ephemeral or everlasting. Although the sense of permanence and change might be fundamental to emotions, the dynamics needs to be expanded to generate emotions in abstract forms. It is impossible to distinguish emotions based on such a restricted pair of concepts as permanence and change.

One might defend P1 by drawing more dimensions into the sense of permanence and change specific to music. According to Langer, music is suitable to symbolize the multidimensional passage of time. Change in music is not a mechanical succession of events as measured by the clock. The passage of time has what Langer calls “volume.” “Subjectively, a unit
of time may be great or small as well as long or short; the slang phrase ‘a big time’ is psychologically more accurate than a ‘busy,’ ‘pleasant,’ or ‘exciting’ time.” The dimension of volume can be added to the temporality of music to expand the symbolic base. According to Langer, the volume of music is filled with “tensions” that are “physical, emotional, or intellectual.” The musical experience of these tensions unfolding in time can “fall apart into incommensurate elements.”

When one is taken as parameter, others become “irrational,” out of logical focus, ineffable. Some tensions, therefore, always sink into the background; some drive and some drag, but for perception they give quality rather than form to the passage of time.

These incommensurate elements enter into relations with each other. The intricate interactions may serve as the expanded base to generate emotions.

One might wonder if this makes the representation theory collapse into an arousal theory that revolves around physiological tensions. We have seen how mere bodily changes are not enough to generate emotions. But let us stick with the representational aspiration in Langer’s account. The odd thing with this reply is that the new symbolic power from “volume” is gained at the expense of abstract form. Although time can be experienced differently, it is almost a category mistake to think of abstract forms as having volumes. The volume erodes the abstract forms. With the enriched experience of multidimensional time, it becomes increasingly difficult to conceive

---

274 Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 112.
275 Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 112.
277 Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 113.
musical time as anything other than a “formless flow” imbued with tensions “whereby we let ourselves be cradled.”\textsuperscript{278} The experience might be pleasurable, exciting, and full of life. But this move towards enrichment puts abstract forms at stake. It is problematic as Langer claims in the above passage that voluminous tensions provide “quality rather than form to the passage of time.” The abstract forms are what give musical symbols its emotional import. If music derives its emotional import from elsewhere, music would no longer be a symbol of emotion in a representation theory. In other words, once we extend the sense of permanence and change to something as resourceful as a concept of time passing with voluminous tensions, we are no longer in a position to characterize the emotional import of music as coming from a symbol. Rather, we would concede that abstract forms are not enough to deliver emotional import.

The problem with P1, in short, is that music cannot symbolize emotion. This can be put into a dilemma. If mere permanence and change are attributed to the temporality of music, we do not get a solid enough symbol for emotion. If something beyond permanence and change is attributed to the temporality of music, we may get emotion by drawing on “life” borrowed from experience, but not by drawing on abstract forms of music.

The argument from temporal semblance does not refute the illusion view. The temporal features of music are not enough to symbolize emotions. We may read emotion into music by experiencing the temporal features emotionally. But that would be an act of emotional projection. Music might serve as a symbol for temporal movement or even temporally sensitive life. But that does not give music an emotional nature.

\textsuperscript{278} Langer, \textit{Feeling and Form}, 116.
Reflection

I have constructed three arguments from representation theories in contemporary Western musical aesthetics. The argument from expressive resemblance is too weak. The similarities salient for resemblance are decided by researchers rather than discovered by participants. The argument from linguistic metaphor is too hasty. Metaphorical usages of emotional terms may not capture aesthetic properties in music. The argument from temporal semblance is too deficient. The features of permanence and change are insufficient to import emotions into music. While I have defended the illusion view against these specific arguments, I will consider broader challenges from the perspective of representation in a later chapter.
Chapter Seven. Illusion

In this chapter I will consider potential objections to the illusion view more broadly. I will revisit certain points in the discussion and explore them further to see if the illusion view can withstand potential challenges from the perspectives of evocation, expression, and representation. Objections can be motivated by the enjoyment from listening to music emotionally, the communication that happens through music, and the language that is used to describe music in commercial or educational contexts.

The Objection from Emotional Pleasure

I will consider a series of challenges from the perspective of evocation. In particular, these challenges revolve around the emotional enjoyment in music. To start, one might worry if it could be difficult to enjoy music without treating emotional appearances of music as real. It seems that the illusion view makes enjoying music harder.

The distinction between emotions and sensations can be used to address this worry. The restful or restless sensations without emotional input can be rooted in music. But emotional appearances are illusory. Whenever emotional appearances are treated as real, there is a conflation between sensations and emotions. This conflation is understandable, because the emotional appearances can be compelling. Commercial music is often made to encourage a kind of enjoyment with emotional projection. To emotionalize music this way is to use music as an emotional drug. The illusion view resists the tendency to emotionalize music for the sake of enjoyment. As a result, the illusion view paves the way for a more authentic encounter with music.
The awareness of illusion makes a difference in musical enjoyment. One can distinguish the post-awareness enjoyment from the pre-awareness enjoyment. In analogy, to enter the post-awareness enjoyment is like taking off glasses to see ocean waves. The vision is clearer with the glasses on, as the waves are segmented into different parts by the sunlight. Even if the movement of the waves makes it impractical to track the ever-changing parts, there is an impression that the waves are orderly arranged. But taking off glasses would allow the eyes to perceive the waves without much reflection of the sunlight. A visceral encounter with the “life” of the waves in their rise and fall as a whole is only possible when we let go of external factors (light and glasses) that may control the impression and make it intelligible to us. But the illuminated segments are not in the waves, but in our visual perception. Listening to music through the lens of emotions is like putting on glasses to see ocean waves under the sunlight. The more manageable the visual impression is, the less we experience the inner force of the waves.

The illusion view does not offer specific guidance for getting rid of the illusion. Presumably one has to get immersed in the emotional illusion for a long time before an escape is possible. It is hard to pretend that the emotional appearance is absent.\footnote{In the Müller-Lyer illusion, it appears that the lines with arrows pointing to different directions at the end are of different length. This appearance lingers even after the realization that the lines are equal in length. Likewise, the emotional appearances of music may not go away even after one endorses the illusion view.} Still, the illusion view might seem too demanding, if it takes emotionalizing music for enjoyment to be wrong. But the illusion view simply stands against enjoyment without awareness of the emotional illusion. In analogy, the awareness that dream is illusory does not make it less enjoyable to dream. The awareness of the illusion can liberate perception from tendencies of emotionalizing music rigidly. To illustrate, consider the Disney experience. Disneyland is an artificial space where fantastical characters do magical things in dreamlike buildings. The magic that happens in Disneyland is illusory compared
to everyday life. To enjoy the illusion, one must not mistake the illusion for reality. According to an online community board, when the performer of Piglet offered a lady a kiss on the hand at the Crystal Palace, the lady’s boyfriend became jealous and punched Piglet. The kiss offer was part of Piglet’s program. Piglet might have offered a kiss with the intention of presenting an appearance of affection. The boyfriend fails to play along because he takes Piglet’s emotional appearance too seriously. The boyfriend mistakenly treats the Disney context as equal to an everyday situation without the awareness that the emotional appearances of events inside the Disneyland are illusory. His perception, as a result, becomes distorted. The awareness of the illusion is a precondition for enjoyment such that the awareness protects the fun from degenerating into another everyday event where unexpected initiations from fantastical characters may reasonably cause anxiety.

Something similar happens in musical enjoyment. Our perception of music can be loaded with emotions we project into music in a way that diminishes musical experiences. Musical works with compositional complexity can appear unnecessarily baffling, if musical appearances are taken to instantiate the order expected from emotional events. Each shift in emotional tone will likely clog the musical experience. This is not to say that emotional appearances of music lack coherence. But hearing musical appearances as emotional propels listeners to seek a projected coherence, which often turns out to be a wild-goose chase. Listeners with this mentality would probably be anxious about losing track of the emotional trajectory. If a piece of music is apparently tragic, by taking the tragic appearance as real I might get distracted with following it through and observing its possible reappearance. The musical experience would become exhausting. A piece of music might sound tragic for a while and shift to a different emotional appearance. If I am stuck with the tragic emotion, I would struggle with searching emotional labels for the shifts and enjoying them.

\footnote{Jesse Prinz, personal communication, July 9, 2020.}
I might be chasing an emotionalized theme with a motivation to keep my experience connected by devising a mini-drama.

Now we arrive at the deeper significance of the illusion view. There is a sense of liberation that comes from claiming complete ownership of the emotion in musical experiences. By insisting on the reality of emotional nature in music, listeners miss the chance to claim that full ownership of their emotions in musical experiences. By realizing emotional appearances as illusory, listeners can claim full ownership of their emotions in musical experiences. It allows listeners to acknowledge emotions as their own. Prior to this acknowledgment, apparently it is music that makes listeners feel certain emotions. Given the full ownership, I would enjoy more freedom in terms of choosing the music that will facilitate my projection the best. I stop being a passive listener waiting to be stimulated in various ways. I would realize that I have emotional dispositions to be awakened by music. In other words, the music makes me more me, instead of making me long for something out there. With the aid of the music, I realize more clearly than before who I am and what emotional states I appreciate. Thus music becomes a way of self-discovery. It truly reveals something about us. It is only through realizing the illusion that this self-discovery is possible. So, one can claim that the illusion makes the experience fuller in that music makes the listeners more aware of their own emotions.

To illustrate, Beethoven’s Quartet in A minor for Strings, Op. 132 may be open for full emotional exploration. Listeners can expect to find some echo of their emotions in it. Melvin Berger eulogizes this piece:

Beethoven leaves the realm of personal self-expression and enters the domain of the universal -- plumbing the full depths of the human soul and psyche ... It is music
that transcends music, that even transcends human feelings and thoughts, to achieve
a spiritual level above all worldly concerns.\textsuperscript{281}

Great musical works hold up a structure for our emotions to find a place in it. But they do not
contain the emotions in it, nor does it command a certain emotional response from us. Different
listeners are allowed to project different emotions into this piece and enjoy it in individual ways.

The Objection from Emotional Communication

I will consider a series of challenges from the perspective of expression. In particular, these
challenges revolve around the emotional communication through music. To start, it is undeniable
that people form emotional connections through music. Performing a piece of music together gets
musicians emotionally connected. Listeners also experience a sense of togetherness in a concert.
But emotional connections through music do not refute the illusion view, as the fact that people
form emotional connections by watching sports or the sunset does not mean that sports or the
sunset are emotional. What may be problematic is the emotional communication that can happen
through music. Composers can make music with the goal of communicating emotions in mind and
listeners are able to grasp those emotions.

A proponent of the illusion view may conceive emotional communication as a trade of
emotional meanings attributed to music. Emotional meanings can be exchanged like currency to
facilitate communication. Still, the trade does not make emotional meanings part of the nature of
music, just like the properties of goods in trade are not part of the nature of currency. To illustrate,

the exchange of emotional meanings through emotional communication can be modeled on accounts of meaning in philosophy of language. Paul Grice proposed a theory of meaning, according to which a speaker means \( p \) by uttering something when three conditions are met:

(i1) that the audience should believe that \( p \).

(i2) that the audience should recognize the speaker’s intention (i1).

(i3) that it be by means of the recognition of (i1) that the audience comes to believe that \( p \).\(^{282}\)

It is possible to construct a similar set of conditions for the communication of emotional meanings between composers and listeners. A musician means an emotional meaning \( p \) by making musical phrases when three conditions are met:

(i1) that the audience should believe that the music is emotional in \( p \) way.

(i2) that the audience should recognize the musician’s intention to bring about (i1).

(i3) that it be by means of the recognition of (i1) that the audience comes to believe that the music is emotional in \( p \) way.

(i1) requires that the musician succeeds in generating a belief about the emotional content of music. This is necessary for communication to work. For example, imagine a composer makes a piece of instrumental music with the purpose of communicating a jubilant emotion for a festival. If the audience does not believe so, the composition would fail to achieve its communicative

purpose for the festival. Notice that (i₁) does not require the audience to respond to music in exactly the way as \( p \). To believe that the music is emotional in \( p \) way is to think of \( p \) as the emotional content of music. The audience may believe that music has an emotional content of \( p \) without responding to the music in the same way. It is possible to believe that a piece of music is happy and respond to it with serenity, or to believe that a piece of music is sad and respond to it with admiration. The emotional response does not necessarily align with the emotional content. Still, emotional responses may be helpful in terms of alerting to us that something emotionally communicative could happen. The attentiveness fostered by emotional responses can lead us to form beliefs about emotional content by paying attention to emotional meanings in the music.

For communication to happen, it is important for (i₂) to hold. If the audience cannot recognize the musician’s intention to bring about (i₁), the mere belief that a piece of music is emotional in \( p \) way may originate from the audience’s own interpretation. Only when the musician’s intention to convey an emotional meaning gets recognized can the audience’s belief count as a result of emotional communication.

It is worth clarifying how (i₃) is needed for communication to happen. Sometimes it suffices that the audience believes that a piece of music is emotional in \( p \) way and recognizes the musician’s intention to bring about this belief, yet the belief may come from sources other than the recognition of this intention. The musical experience itself may serve as sufficient evidence that the music is emotional in \( p \) way. The composer’s intention might serve as a confirmation of the audience’s belief. Consider Beethoven’s String Quartet No. 7 in F major, Op. 59, No. 1, “Razumovsky.” A sense of happiness brightens as the music proceeds. Yet the mood recognizably shifts to pensiveness or sadness in the third movement, Adagio molto e mesto (mesto -- “sadly”). One can believe then that grief takes over the melody. This presence of grief is huge such that in
the end it sounds like whimpering. American musicologist and critic Joseph Kerman describes the third movement as “profoundly tragic in intensity, an essay in misery scarcely relieved by any response of sobriety or solace.”

The belief is not reached by means of recognizing Beethoven’s intention, although the recognition of Beethoven’s intention is necessary for the belief to count as an element of emotional communication, if any, between Beethoven and the audience. In this case, Beethoven’s cryptic inscription was found above the manuscript: “A Weeping Willow or Acacia Tree over my Brother’s Grave.” It looks like the composer has the intention to express grief in this part. This intention confirms the earlier belief to make communication possible. Even if the audience might have projected grief into the music merely based on the music alone, emotional communication is fulfilled once Beethoven’s intention is recognized.

Nevertheless, in certain difficult cases, there is no other way to believe that a piece of music is emotional in a way without relying on the recognition of the musician’s intention. This is more obvious in minimalist works where the musical materials by themselves do not provide enough credence for a belief. For example, Anton Webern was a radical minimalist in musical composition. Some of his works -- such as the Bagatelles and the Four Pieces for Violin and Piano -- last only seconds, but critics find these brief moments packed with meanings and ideas well compressed and self-contained. As Schoenberg put it, “each glance can be extended into a poem, each sigh into a novel.” French composer Pierre Boulez comments on the Six Pieces,

Webern had never been so seductive before and perhaps never would again ... The individual lines are excessively supple; their curve, their unexpectedness, their

---

grace, and their complete lack of heaviness are captivating. The use of instrumental color is of so direct a beauty that the listener has no difficulty enjoying it, although at first it may be so strange to him as to seem a rarefaction of the musical atmosphere.  

The brevity of Webern’s *Six Pieces for Orchestra* is thought to be poetical. The music is not entirely moderate. At certain points it sounds like jarring or shrieking. Generally, it is easy to get a sense of pensiveness. But it is almost impossible for listeners to believe that the music contains tenderness or anguish until they recognize that Webern intentionally associated these pieces with the death of his mother in 1906. “No motif is developed; at most, a brief progression is immediately repeated. Once stated, the theme expresses all it has to say; it must be followed by something fresh.” The lack of development in this music may become more intelligible with the recognition of that death-related intention, for Webern may conceive of life and death as a succession of underdeveloped themes.

The Gricean model has received criticisms from philosophers of language. I am not suggesting that it is the best model of meaning, but only pointing out that it can be used to account for emotional communication through music. Stephen Davies, in *Themes in the Philosophy of Music*, draws on Grice’s distinction between natural meaning (meaning$_N$) and non-natural meaning (meaning$_{NN}$), and argues that the emotional meaning of music is natural meaning. Davies’ argument not only challenges the applicability of the Gricean model to emotional communication

---


285 Sullivan, “Close to Poetry.”
through music, but also threatens the illusion view. Let us examine Davies’ argument in more detail.

Grice distinguishes natural meaning from non-natural meaning. Grice’s example for natural meaning is the sentence “Those spots mean measles.” Grice’s example for non-natural meaning is the sentence “Those three rings on the bell (of the bus) mean that ‘the bus is full’.”286 Specifically, there are five criteria that sets the two kinds of meanings apart. Davies goes through the five conditions and argues that a sentence like “this music means sadness” has a natural meaning. Let us take a look at the five conditions one by one.

Grice’s first condition is about factual entailment. For natural meanings, “x means p” entails that p. I cannot have the spots without having measles. But the bus may not be full even if the bell rings three times. Davies asserts that a sentence like “this music means sadness” is more like the measles case than the bell case. But Davies has not explained why the emotional meaning of music entails a fact about the music. I have the opposite intuition because of the illusion view. It seems to me that “this music means sadness” is more like the bell case than the measles case.

Grice’s second and third conditions are both about intentional use. For natural meanings, we are not entitled to argue from “x means p” to any statement about “somebody meant so-and-so by p.” We are not entitled to say, according to Grice, that “He meant by those spots that he had measles.” In contrast, for non-natural meanings, we are entitled to argue from “x means p” to some statement about “somebody meant so-and-so by p.” We are entitled to argue from the statement about rings on the bell to some statement about what is meant by rings on the bell such as “the bus conductor meant that the bus is full by the rings on the bell.” Nonetheless, Grice cautions that these

---

two conditions involve complications, for utterances and gestures with natural meanings can sometimes be given an intentional use.

Consider Grice’s example of a frown. A spontaneous, unintended frown has a natural meaning of displeasure. But someone can frown intentionally to indicate displeasure. If we recognize the person’s frown as intentional, we would normally regard its meaning as non-natural. Davies notes that the fact the composers intentionally present emotional appearances might give the impression that emotional appearances are non-naturally meaningful. Yet Davies resists this impression by observing a difference in the practical interests we have for a frown and for the emotional appearances of music. Davies says, “the expressiveness of music does not interest us as indicating how any person feels; our concern is with the appearance of emotion rather than with a particular feeling as indicated in such an appearance.” 287 As Davies argues, the composers’ intentions are irrelevant to the meaning of emotional appearances in music, for the emotional appearances have natural meanings.

I disagree with Davies’ observation that the emotional appearances of music do not “interest us as indicating how any person feels.” Rather, the emotional appearances of music interest us as indicating how we feel. Our discussion from the previous section on claiming full emotional ownership can help illustrate this interest. When I listen to music, I am primarily interested in observing how I emotionally react to music and form beliefs about the emotional appearances. The person whose feeling in which I am interested is closest to me, for it is me. Yet my interest in self-discovery may lead me to care about a composer’s intention to communicate emotional meanings. I may not start off by caring for what the composer intends. But that does not

---

deprive me of the interest in the composer’s potentially recognizable intention to make me form beliefs about the music in certain ways.

Grice’s fourth and fifth conditions are both about restatement. For natural meanings, a sentence like “Those spots mean measles” cannot be restated as “Those spots mean ‘measles’” or “Those spots mean ‘he has measles’.” But “Those spots mean measles” can be restated as “The fact that he has those spots means that he has measles.” In contrast, for non-natural meanings, whether putting the part after the verb “mean” in inverted commas does not change the meaning of the sentence. It means the same to say “Those three rings on the bell (of the bus) mean that ‘the bus is full’” and to say “Those three rings on the bell (of the bus) mean that the bus is full.” But the sentence cannot be restated with the phrase “The fact that…” at the beginning as “The fact that the bell rings three times means that the bus is full.” Grice notes that although the two sentences may be true, they are not equivalent in meanings. Davies claims that a sentence like “this music means sadness” is more like the measles case than the bell case. But as we have seen with the first condition, I have the opposite intuition because of the illusion view. It seems to me that “this music means sadness” is more like the bell case than the measles case.

If Davies showed that emotional appearances of music have natural meanings, the Gricean model would not work to account for the communication of emotional meanings. As Davies points out, if emotional appearances are naturally meaningful, “the composer’s intentions as regards the expressiveness of his work drop out at the second level of Grice’s account of utterer’s occasion meaning.”288 In other words, the composer’s intention becomes irrelevant for the audience’s belief. Moreover, if Davies showed that emotional appearances are naturally meaningful, the illusion

288 Davies, Themes in the Philosophy of Music, 129.
view would be in trouble. Expressing emotions through music, on that view, would be as natural as getting spots from measles. That would directly establish an emotional nature of music.

As we have seen, Davies has not shown that emotional appearances are naturally meaningful. It would be question-begging to use Davies’ intuitions to establish similarities between sentences describing emotional appearances and naturally meaningful sentences in the first, fourth, and fifth condition. The assumption, which Davies uses to establish similarities in the second and third condition, that emotional appearances of music do not interest us as indicating how anyone feels is in conflict with the intuition suggested by our first-person emotional ownership. The illusion view allows me to care about how I feel in response to the emotional appearances. Emotional communication can happen when that first-person interest leads me to recognize musicians’ intentions and form beliefs about the emotional appearances accordingly.

Davies might contend that there is nothing in the music itself that allows for the recognition of a composer’s intention. 289 An emotion seems expressible “independently of its being intended.” 290 It seems to Davies that intentions that are not realized in the music are not part of the music’s meaning. 291 Hence, the claim about intention sounds gratuitous. But Davies does not seem to distinguish the communication of emotional meanings from the appreciation of emotional appearances. Admittedly, the appreciation of emotional appearances does not require the recognition of a composer’s intention. Even if the appreciation is about meanings, the audience can provide their own interpretations to form meanings that make sense to them. Even if the audience projects emotional meanings, it is not entirely impossible that they hit upon the intended meanings, in which case the audience would have emotional consonance with the musicians. Note

289 Davies, Themes in the Philosophy of Music, 129.
290 Davies, Themes in the Philosophy of Music, 128.
that this kind of emotional consonance in musical appreciation does not show that communication has happened. It is a little like telepathy. There are a million ways to go wrong in the projection of emotional meanings without relying on any extra-musical information. But at least it is conceivable that listeners are able to do this by chance and echo the same intended meanings from the composers.

But I maintain that there is a difference between appreciation and communication. The recognition of intention is essential for emotional communication of meanings. The recognition does not have to come from the music alone. Indeed, listeners might seek emotional communication actively. Consider Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Op. 36. Tchaikovsky’s involvement with his patron Nadezhda von Meck and composition of his Fourth Symphony began at the same time. In letters to von Meck, Tchaikovsky referred to this work as “our symphony.” By May 1877 he had completed most of this piece and wrote to her: “I should like to dedicate it to you, because I believe you would find in it an echo of your most intimate thoughts and emotions.” The weight of this symphony falls on the first movement, with the other three movements working as pleasant adornments. Yet Nadezhda von Meck seemed unsure whether her intimate thoughts and emotions were echoed, so she asked Tchaikovsky to explain the music.

293 James M. Keller, “Notes on the Program,” program notes for Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Op. 36. New York Philharmonic, Tugan Sokhiev (conductor). New York: David Geffen Hall at Lincoln Center, October 27, 2018. Upon her request, Tchaikovsky revealed his secret program through a description of the opening movement: “The introduction is the seed of the whole symphony, undoubtedly the central theme. This is Fate, i.e., that fateful force which prevents the impulse toward happiness from entirely achieving its goal, forever on jealous guard lest peace and well-being should ever be attained in complete and unclouded form, hanging above us like the Sword of Damocles, constantly and unrelentingly poisoning the soul. Its force is invisible, and can never be overcome. Our only choice is to surrender to it, and to languish fruitlessly. … When all seems lost, there appears a sweet and gentle daydream. Some blissful, radiant human image hurries by and beckons us away. … how good this feels! How distant now seems the obsessive first theme.”
One might object that the Gricean model, as applied to music, threatens the illusion view. It seems that the emotional meaning of something can be conceived as part of the representational content of that thing. The fact that we find emotional meanings in music suggests that music may have emotional meanings as its representational content. If this representational content can come into existence through intention, it seems that music can represent emotions after all. If the illusion view suggests that the emotional appearance is illusory despite the existence of emotional meanings, the illusion view seems to suggest, a bit too strongly, that emotional meanings in everyday language, or rather all meanings in language, are illusory.\textsuperscript{294} It is widely believed that language can latch onto reality.\textsuperscript{295} When I say “I am happy,’’ there seems to be a fact of the matter about my emotional state. The linguistic expression can be true by reporting that fact. This is not to say that the sentence “I am happy” is the substance of my emotional state, for the sentence is not my emotional reality. Still, to think of the sentence as illusory would miss the representational capability of language. If emotional meanings in language are not illusory, it seems odd to think of emotional meanings in music as illusory.

In reply, it is worth clarifying what the illusion is. The illusion is not the emotional meanings in music, which can be intended to represent emotional states. This representation makes emotional communication possible through the use and recognition of intention. But it does not follow that the emotional states belong to the nature of music. Rather, the emotional states belong

\textsuperscript{294} Jesse Prinz, personal communication, August 2, 2020.
\textsuperscript{295} There are skeptical arguments about whether there is a fact of the matter regarding my mental or behavioral state, when I say “I am happy,’’ that can justify my belief that I mean “I am happy” rather than “I am schappy”. To illustrate, according to the skeptics, it is possible that I have always meant “I am schappy” in the past when I say “I am happy,’’ where “schappy” might be defined as a term for the emotional state “heavenly in musical contexts and happy in all other contexts.” Further, skeptics argue that there is no fact of the matter in my mind or in the world that can refute this possibility on the metalinguistic level. Skeptical challenges thus motivated by philosophy of language on truth and meaning are potentially important when applied to music, but are too tangential to be discussed in the present project. Saul A. Kripke, \textit{Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 19.
to intenders. The same goes for linguistic expressions. When I utter the sentence “I am happy,”
the sentence can be intended to represent my emotional state, but my emotional state is not in the
sentence, but in me. The illusion, in the linguistic counterpart, is to think of the sentence “I am
happy” as having something in its nature that grounds the representation. In fact, it is the utterer’s
intention and the linguistic convention that give the sentence its representational capacity. We do
not thereby treat linguistic expressions as emotional in nature. But once the emotional meanings
are recognized in music, there is a theoretical tendency to become oblivious of their intentional
sources and to justify the meanings as natural. Hence the illusion is not the idea that emotional
meanings intended in music can reflect emotional states, but the idea that emotional meanings in
music derive from the nature of music.\footnote{Jesse Prinz has wondered about the necessity of drawing a line between the intended emotional meanings in music and the nature of music apart from metaphysical concerns. Drawing the line can apparently preserve the possibility of musical expression unscaffolded by intention and language. Future research might develop a positive account of what emotional illusions can do in aesthetic experiences. Jesse Prinz, personal communication, March 5, 2021.} Since the emotional meanings are not based on the nature
of music, emotional communication on the Gricean model will not threaten the illusion view.

In short, without the recognition of intention, there is no communication between the
musicians and the audience. Intention matters for emotional communication through music. The
Gricean model of meaning makes intelligible emotional communication between musicians and
listeners through music. The illusion view is compatible with emotional communication through
music.
The Objection from Emotional Language

I will consider a series of challenges from the perspective of representation. In particular, these challenges revolve around the use of emotional language. To start, the emotional appearance of music is so intertwined into our social fabric that it is practically devastating to claim the appearance as nothing but an illusion. For example, it is a common practice for concert programs to include emotional terms to guide the audience. The guidance often asks the audience to remain alert to recognizably emotional parts of the music. If the illusion view is right, all this emotional language would be a strategy to keep the audience from wandering absent-mindedly.

In reply, the illusion view is against instrumentalizing music for political or economic purposes. There are economic incentives to marketize the emotional appearances of music in the music industry. The illusion view guards against that tendency to treat emotional appearances as real for the purpose of music consumption. The widespread usage of emotional language in the music industry suggests that the audience has been kept in the dark. An emotionalized music is more relatable and marketable. A concert without an emotional ride can make consumers doubt the value of the experience. Listeners are generally skeptical about the value of immersing just in the music. The music industry encourages listeners to consume the emotions already projected into music. According to the illusion view, listeners can be encouraged to have a more authentic experience if they let go of guidance in the form of emotional language. The illusion view suggests that the less market-driven part of the music industry should probably minimize emotional language in marketing. The music can then become an occasion to facilitate self-discovery. If the concert goes well, the audience can discover something emotional about themselves. Otherwise, at least the audience is saved the anxiety of looking out for emotions and the humiliation of not
understanding music in emotional terms. Marketizing the emotional appearances can pressure the audience to blame themselves for not appreciating something that is not there in the first place.

Whether emotional language is attributed to a piece of music may have nothing to do with music itself. Consider Schubert’s Symphony No. 4 in C minor, D 417, which had a tough time establishing its “tragic” credentials. Composed in 1816, it was not premiered until November 19, 1849, in Leipzig -- more than 20 years after Schubert’s death. Critics found it hard to believe that 19-year-old could publish a genuinely tragic work. Sir George Grove could find no justification for the description, guessing that perhaps Schubert’s poverty was the inspiration; others guessed it was pent-up anger and frustration at being turned down for a teaching position and having to write for a small amateur orchestra (an outgrowth of the Schubert family string quartet). Still others denounced the “tragic” label as inaccurate and even pompous. True, the critics admitted, the symphony opened with an Adagio introduction and ensuing Allegro that breathe a spirit of resignation and sadness, but the rest of the symphony comprises a delicate Andante, a Beethoveneque scherzo, and a sonata finale that ends with a long C-major coda. These early commentators questioned where exactly the tragedy was. The emotional label for Schubert’s symphony is based not on the nature of music, but on a form of social recognition within the musical institution.

Nevertheless, emotional language abounds not only in music consumption but also in music education. The education of young musicians seems to rely on the use of emotional language.


One of the earliest defenders of the symphony in America was H. L. Mencken, whose 1928 article in The American Mercury illustrated the work’s “tragic” qualities: “Of Schubert’s symphonies, the orchestras play the ‘Unfinished’ incessantly – but never too often! – and the huge C Major now and then, but the ‘Tragic’ remains one of Schubert’s masterworks, and in its slow movement, at least, it rides to the full height of the ‘Unfinished.’ There are not six such slow movements in the whole range of music. It has an eloquence that has never been surpassed, not even by Beethoven, but there is no rhetoric in it, no heroics, no exhibitionism. It begins quietly and simply, and it passes out in a whisper, but its beauty remains overwhelming.”
It seems absurd to abandon emotional language in music education, as the illusion view apparently suggests. The emotional terms are useful to get music students to perceive the beauty of music and inspire them to play music beautifully. If emotional terms are useful for music education and production, it seems that the emotional appearances to which emotional terms refer cannot be entirely illusory.

In reply, it is important to recognize the limited value emotional language has for music education. When emotional language is effective, it functions as an aid of technical illustration rather than an independent pedagogical device. Likewise, music teachers sometimes ask students to form mental images associated with music. This would not show that music is visual. Rather, the visual images serve as aids to illustrate certain technical nuances about performance or composition. Any excessive use of emotional language that does not yields a technical point would not help with music education. Indeed, excessive use of emotional language might misfire by overshooting a point. If I am instructed to play a cadenza with joy, the instruction would be vague insofar as I am not equipped with knowledge about the technical execution to back up the emotional language. I might, as a result, focus on joy but ruin the performance. The value of emotional language for music education is grounded in knowledge about musical beauty instead of emotion. To miss this point and uphold the emotional language absolutely would confuse students. In analogy, if I am instructed to make ice-cream taste sweet with a little melancholy, I would not understand what this means unless I am shown how this feeling can be created. Otherwise, left on my own to interpret such an emotional appearance, I would end up adding a lot of sugar and a cup of vinegar, making the ice-cream taste bad but perhaps conform to my conception of melancholic sweetness.
Reflection

I have shown that the illusion view can withstand broader objections from the perspectives of evocation, expression, and representation. The illusion view liberates musical perception and lets listeners claim full ownership of their emotions in response to music. The illusion view is compatible with emotional communication through music conceived as an intentional exchange of emotional meanings. The illusion view cautions against the overuse of emotional language in commercial or educational contexts.
Chapter Eight. Integration

In this chapter I will consider a possible objection to the illusion view. An opponent of the illusion view might argue that the illusion view does not accord with musical experiences where the music plays a uniquely causal role in generating the affective components of an emotion. By being the only cause of certain affective components of an emotion, the music would be partially responsible for the formation of that emotion. Even if the emotion in such a musical experience is ultimately in the listener, this causal role of music apparently suffices to establish a partially emotional nature in the music. I will call this “the objection from sole cause as partial nature.” The illusion view can be charged of being experientially hollow, if it cannot accommodate musical experiences that motivate this objection.

To account for the musical experiences in question, it would be illuminating to examine texts that are not restricted to academic philosophy yet hold philosophical implications. Literature, in this regard, is a good source to locate vivid accounts of musical experiences. Some philosophically illuminating descriptions of musical experiences can be found in Marcel Proust’s novel *In Search of Lost Time*. In particular, Charles Swann’s musical experience is significant, because it can be formulated in a way to motivate the objection. I will argue that Swann’s musical experience can be integrated into the illusion view, and as a result, that the illusion view is experientially richer than it might appear at first.

---

299 It is no news that Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time* is a singular milestone in 20th century literature. It is a classic that not only inspires modern literature, but also embodies the practice of philosophical thinking through literature. That ability to philosophize through literary writing is a rare treasure for philosophers.

300 I do not claim to have found the most philosophical interpretation of Proust’s writing. The way I read Swann’s musical experience is largely informed by my interest in the illusion view. This chapter is meant to open up new directions of research.
Marcel, the narrator of Proust’s novel, describes Swann’s musical experience at multiple places. The experience itself is so complex that it needs to be presented in steps. The number of steps depends on one’s interpretation. I will present Swann’s musical experience in 12 steps. This presentation has two aims. First, I aim to give a detailed account of the musical experience, letting the musical experience guide our philosophical thinking. Second, I aim to foreground the emotional agency in each step: whether something related to the formation of emotion is in Swann or in the music. As I present Swann’s musical experience, I will explain what emotional agency is and examine its philosophical implications for the illusion view.

Swann’s Musical Experience in Twelve Steps

Let me tell the story in a synopsis. Swann has an emotion that he does not know. The emotion is love for Odette. The reason Swann does not know it is that it is not formed yet. This emotion has not emerged even once in Swann’s consciousness. Swann may never realize this emotion that he has. The emotion can only be awakened under a special condition. That condition is a particular affective state. Swann must be affected in a very particular way in order to realize this emotion. We can think of the conceptual element (love for Odette) as ready to be combined

---

301 I will not debate the sincerity of the narrator, or doubt the genuine authenticity of the experience. I will take Marcel’s word for it, not treating it as a rhetorical device to achieve expressive purposes. This accords with Proust’s philosophy of composition, whereby an author should aim at a natural description of how things are. Still, I will differentiate Marcel the narrator from Proust the author.

302 Swann’s musical experience will not cleanly fit into any of the three theoretical models. My priority is to reflect upon the experience as accurately as possible, without worrying about how to categorize the experience with existing terms. Elements in the three approaches seem mingled together in the story. To uphold the priority of musical experience, let us allow ourselves to move away from existing paradigms a bit. The real life of musical experience may not be that clean-cut, and the three approaches may cooperate in complicated ways that defy easy delineation.

303 For the purpose of this discussion, I will neither attempt to do a formal analysis of Proust’s style, nor attempt to trace Marcel’s ideas to philosophical undercurrents at the time.

304 A twelve-step program is a project used to help people recover from addiction. The pun is intended, for Swann realizes in the end that his emotion for Odette is illusory.
with certain affective states. Now, that condition can only be generated by a musical phrase. That musical phrase is the only thing in the world that can put Swann into that affective state, which may awaken the awareness of an otherwise unformed and unknown emotion.

Step 1: impression

The initial set-up Marcel has for Swann’s musical experience is crucial and contains the seed for later developments. Let us start with the place in the story where Swann discerns the existence of the musical phrase that will later cast a spell on him.

This time he had distinguished quite clearly a phrase which emerged for a few moments above the waves of sound. It had at once suggested to him a world of inexpressible delights, of whose existence, before hearing it, he had never dreamed, into which he felt that nothing else could initiate him; and he had been filled with love for it, as with a new and strange desire.305

The musical phrase “emerged” out of a sonic background. It has the power to immediately suggest “inexpressible delights.” Swann is drawn to the music, which alone has that almost otherworldly power: “nothing else could initiate him” into that world. Swann’s impression of this musical phrase is so strong that it feels out of control.

With a slow and rhythmical movement it led him first this way, then that, towards a state of happiness that was noble, unintelligible, and yet precise. And then

suddenly, having reached a certain point from which he was preparing to follow it, after a momentary pause, abruptly it changed direction, and in a fresh movement, more rapid, fragile, melancholy, incessant, sweet, it bore him off with it towards new vistas.306

It is unclear whether “a state of happiness” is a full-fledged emotion. It is better to not read too much into that phrase for now, lest we attribute too much conceptual content into the state. The music “bore him off,” which can be read as implying that Swann could not help but feel with the music.307 In that sense, to be “led … towards a state of happiness” is not Swann’s choice. It seems that the music contains more agency in deciding whether Swann finds himself in that state of happiness. Swann started to feel a yearning for this musical phrase.

But when he returned home he felt the need of it: he was like a man into whose life a woman he has seen for a moment passing by has brought the image of a new beauty which deepens his own sensibility, although he does not even know her name or whether he will ever see her again.308

Swann’s need of the music consists partly in the fear that something potent might have been lost. From Swann’s perspective, the music is uniquely powerful and potentially uniquely meaningful. Swann does not believe that he could muster his own mental strength to put himself in the state which that musical phrase “of a new beauty” can put him in. Swann’s need of the music suggests

306 Proust, In Search of Lost Time, 253.
307 One episode from Tom and Jerry illustrates in a funny way how Jerry could not help but feel with Tom’s music, “You’re Still My Baby,” accessed March 1, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PZcHR_zMRgU.
308 Proust, In Search of Lost Time, 253.
that some emotional agency does not lie in him, but in the music. Otherwise, Swann would not have worried about not hearing the music again.

To characterize the power of this musical phrase, Marcel calls attention to a “re-creative influence” it has on Swann. The musical phrase is missed because it suggests a different life for Swann.

[H]e begins to envisage the possibility, hitherto beyond all hope, of starting to lead belatedly a wholly different life, Swann found in himself, in the memory of the phrase that he had heard, in certain other sonatas which he had made people play to him to see whether he might not perhaps discover his phrase therein, the presence of one of those invisible realities in which he had ceased to believe and to which, as though the music had had upon the moral barrenness from which he was suffering a sort of re-creative influence, he was conscious once again of the desire and almost the strength to consecrate his life.309

The musical phrase suggests to Swann the possibility of living “a wholly different life.” Swann is unclear on what it is about the music that suggests that possibility. The music is unintelligible yet powerful. Swann’s lack of agency is prominent in the first step.

Step 2: recognition

Swann anticipates the reappearance of the musical phrase, as it shows up on another occasion.

309 Proust, In Search of Lost Time, 254.
But that night, at Mme Verdurin’s, scarcely had the young pianist begun to play than suddenly, after a high note sustained through two whole bars, Swann sensed its approach, stealing forth from beneath that long-drawn sonority, stretched like a curtain of sound to veil the mystery of its incubation, and recognized, secret, murmuring, detached, the airy and perfumed phrase that he had loved. And it was so peculiarly itself, it had so individual, so irreplaceable a charm, that Swann felt as though he had met, in a friend’s drawing-room, a woman whom he had seen and admired in the street and had despaired of ever seeing again.

This musical phrase has taken on a singular importance for Swann. Swann “despaired” of hearing it again. It is unnecessary to despair over things within one’s control. Swann’s emotion, regardless of its content, is not within Swann’s control, even if it resides in Swann. The music holds a singular charm for Swann. Now that the charm is recognized, Swann wants to know more about it.

Finally the phrase receded, diligently guiding its successors through the ramifications of its fragrance, leaving on Swann’s features the reflection of its smile. But now, at last, he could ask the name of his fair unknown (and was told that it was the andante of Vinteuil’s sonata for piano and violin); he held it safe, could have it again to himself, at home, as often as he wished, could study its language and acquire its secret.310

---

310 Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, 255.
Knowledge offers a sense of security. Swann “held it safe” so that there is no more of the despair that he may not hear it again. By knowing more about the music, Swann attempts to arrest the charm.

Then he asked for information about this Vinteuil: what else he had done, at what period in his life he had composed the sonata, and what meaning the little phrase could have had for him—that was what Swann wanted most to know.\footnote{Proust, \textit{In Search of Lost Time}, 256.}

The quest for knowledge is a natural reaction to the presence of charm. Swann is interested in the “meaning the little phrase could have had for him.” Swann is seeking self-understanding by trying to know what it is that charms him. Swann begins to display some emotional agency, but insofar as the music remains powerfully enigmatic, it holds an irreplaceable charm.

Step 3: association

As Swann listens more, he affirms the power of the musical phrase deeper and begins to hear it in conceptual ways. The conceptual associations are manifest in Marcel’s descriptions.

[T]he little phrase appeared, dancing, pastoral, interpolated, episodic, belonging to another world. It rippled past, simple and immortal, scattering on every side the bounties of its grace, with the same ineffable smile; but Swann thought that he could now discern in it some disenchantment. It seemed to be aware how vain, how hollow was the happiness to which it showed the way. In its airy grace there was
the sense of something over and done with, like the mood of philosophic detachment which follows an outburst of vain regret.\textsuperscript{312}

The state of happiness is complicated by the observation that a “mood of philosophic detachment” is in the feel of happiness. What the music must sound like to merit such a description is unclear yet not important for our discussion. Swann does not try to interpret the music in a certain direction by projecting a persona or constructing a psychological mini-drama. Apparently, the conceptual associations are unforced in response to the musical charm. Nonetheless, Swann associates the charm in the music with the idea of happiness, even if that is somewhat “hollow.” The conceptual association manifests Swann’s emotional agency.

Step 4: objectification

As Swann listens more, he pays attention to what the musical phrase means for himself rather than in itself. Swann associates the music with Odette, whom he loves. Swann knows that his love for Odette lies outside the intention of the composer. Still, Swann hears the music as perfectly capturing how that love feels to him.

\[H\]e contemplated the little phrase less in its own light—in what it might express to a musician who knew nothing of the existence of him and Odette when he had composed it, and to all those who would hear it in centuries to come—than as a pledge, a token of his love, which made even the Verdurins and their young pianist think of Odette at the same time as himself—which bound her to him by a lasting

\textsuperscript{312} Proust, \textit{In Search of Lost Time}, 262.
tie; so much so that (whimsically entreated by Odette) he had abandoned the idea of getting some professional to play over to him the whole sonata, of which he still knew no more than this one passage.

The objectified association gives Swann an emotional focus. This focus, once it becomes obvious, does not have to remain private to Swann, but can be shared between Swann and Odette.\(^{313}\) Swann’s emotional object structures his attention in such a way that Swann values most the part that is associated with his love for Odette.

“Why do you want the rest?” she had asked him. “Our little bit; that’s all we need.” Indeed, agonized by the reflection, as it floated by, so near and yet so infinitely remote, that while it was addressed to them it did not know them, he almost regretted that it had a meaning of its own, an intrinsic and unalterable beauty, extraneous to themselves, just as in the jewels given to us, or even in the letters written to us by a woman we love, we find fault with the water of the stone, or with the words of the message, because they are not fashioned exclusively from the essence of a transient liaison and a particular person.\(^{314}\)

The transience of the liaison does not seem problematic for the lovers. I will go deeper into the philosophical implications of this later. For now, Swann’s association of the musical phrase with

\(^{313}\) It is arguable whether for Odette, the music is associated with Swann’s love for her or her love for Swann at the moment. It might as well be such a general notion as “our love.” But even as “our love” it contains Swann’s love for Odette, of which Odette is aware at this point. At any rate, there is an agreement between the lovers on the presence of Swann’s love for Odette. Nevertheless, this agreement is not indispensable in our discussion.

\(^{314}\) Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, 262-3.
his love for Odette seems to be an effort to seal his love into the music. Arguably, Swann is putting his emotion into the music. Despite the sense of “disenchantment” in the previous step, Swann is driven by his love to focalize his musical experience in objectified association. This looks like a willful interpretive move that exhibits Swann’s emotional agency.

He would find, lying open on the piano, some of her favorite music … but he would ask her, instead, to give him the little phrase from Vinteuil’s sonata. It was true that Odette played vilely, but often the most memorable impression of a piece of music is one that has arisen out of a jumble of wrong notes struck by unskilful fingers upon a tuneless piano. The little phrase continued to be associated in Swann’s mind with his love for Odette. He was well aware that his love was something that did not correspond to anything outside itself, verifiable by others besides him; he realized that Odette’s qualities were not such as to justify his setting so high a value on the hours he spent in her company.\(^{315}\)

Swann decides to hear the music in the associated way, although this decision does not accord with other pieces of knowledge he has. Swann knows that the association is wishfully forced in his mind, for he knows that “his love was something that did not correspond to anything outside itself.” At this point we can identify Swann’s love for Odette as the emotion in question. Swann’s decision to associate the musical phrase with his love for Odette might be his way of making the emotion memorable. The emotional agency lies with Swann at this stage.

\(^{315}\) Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, 282.
Step 5: liberation

The continued association of the music with an emotion alters Swann’s being in the presence of this musical phrase. He feels liberated beyond being charmed.

But the little phrase, as soon as it struck his ear, had the power to liberate in him the space that was needed to contain it; the proportions of Swann’s soul were altered; a margin was left for an enjoyment that corresponded no more than his love for Odette to any external object and yet was not, like his enjoyment of that love, purely individual, but assumed for him a sort of reality superior to that of concrete things. This thirst for an unknown delight was awakened in him by the little phrase, but without bringing him any precise gratification to assuage it.\textsuperscript{316}

The musical phrase liberates Swann into an alternative reality from an everyday world. It is better not to read Marcel as advancing a metaphysical theory. The musical phrase reveals an alternative reality that is “superior” to “concrete things.” The liberating power consists in making an inner “space” available for Swann. The inner space is necessary to “contain” the musical phrase. There is a magnitude of the musical phrase that requires an emptiness of mind for its appreciation. The appreciation would not be possible when the listener is preoccupied with everyday concerns. This enjoyment appears to be solitary. In that solitary space, “a margin was left” just for Swann’s love. This musical experience allows Swann to be alone with the music while contemplating his love for Odette. The music does not directly arouse the emotion of love, but makes possible a mental space where that emotion is awakened.

\textsuperscript{316}Proust, In Search of Lost Time, 282-3.
With the result that those parts of Swann’s soul in which the little phrase had obliterated all concern for material interests, those human considerations which affect all men alike, were left vacant by it, blank pages on which he was at liberty to inscribe the name of Odette.\textsuperscript{317}

The mental vacancy liberated by the musical phrase is essential for Swann to “inscribe the name of Odette.” Even if the musical phrase does not arouse Swann’s love directly, it clears Swann’s mind such that his love can arise. Insofar as Swann evacuates everyday concerns from his musical experience, he displays emotional agency in a negative way by remaining inactive for the liberation to work. Some emotional agency can be attributed to both Swann and the music.

Step 6: transformation

The liberation brings about a transformation in Swann’s character. To be transformed thus is like being taken to an alternative reality within by the power of perfume. The experience of that alternative reality is pleasant.

And the pleasure which the music gave him, which was shortly to create in him a real need, was in fact akin at such moments to the pleasure which he would have derived from experimenting with perfumes, from entering into contact with a world for which we men were not made, which appears to us formless because our eyes cannot perceive it, meaningless because it eludes our understanding, to which we

\textsuperscript{317} Proust, \textit{In Search of Lost Time}, 282.
may attain by way of one sense only. There was a deep repose, a mysterious refreshment for Swann—whose eyes, although delicate interpreters of painting, whose mind, although an acute observer of manners, must bear forever the indelible imprint of the barrenness of his life—in feeling himself transformed into a creature estranged from humanity, blinded, deprived of his logical faculty, almost fantastic unicorn, a chimaera-like creature conscious of the world through his hearing alone. And since he sought in the little phrase for a meaning to which his intelligence could not descend, with what a strange frenzy of intoxication did he strip bare his innermost soul of the whole armor of reason and make it pass unattended through the dark filter of sound.318

Swann feels transformed into another being.319 As a transformed being, Swann gets to experience a “pleasure” that is perceptible through “one sense only.” In this pleasure there is a “deep repose.” Swann appears to be “deprived of his logical faculty.” The transformed listener is marked by a diminished ability to reason about things. The transformation gives Swann some existential distance, if not alienation, from his normal self. This state of “being a chimaera-like creature” feels like “intoxication.”

The state of transformation includes a complicating factor. As a transformed being, Swann becomes more sensitive and notices things in the music that are disorienting. “He began to realize how much that was painful, perhaps even how much secret and unappeased sorrow underlay the sweetness of the phrase; and yet to him it brought no suffering.”320 Despite the objectified

318 Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, 283.
association, Swann is not deaf to other impressions from the music. Some impressions may not cohere well with his association. The music is not merely pleasant and sweet. There is a painful feeling beneath the sweetness. Nevertheless, Swann ignores these impressions.

What matter though the phrase repeated that love is frail and fleeting, when his love was so strong! He played with the melancholy which the music diffused, he felt it stealing over him, but like a caress which only deepened and sweetened his sense of his own happiness.321

The strength of Swann’s love makes his willful indifference to painful impressions possible. Swann closed his mind somewhat to preserve his happiness. There is something closed off in the musical experience at this point. Despite the primordial richness of the musical experience, Swann chooses to enjoy the music in the way he finds comfortable. Swann might be afraid of losing Odette. By willfully clinging to the Odette-associated emotion, Swann might be trying to safeguard their relationship.322 The music transforms Swann, yet Swann insists on hearing the music in a definite way. Emotional agency can be attributed to both sides.

Step 7: protection

322 It is interesting to compare this with some sayings collected by Roland Barthes. Roland Barthes: “It was as if I were trying to embrace one last time, hysterically, someone about to die – someone for whom I am about to die: I was performing a denial of separation.” Freud: “This rebellion is sometimes so intense that the subject may reach the point of rejecting reality and clinging to the lost object by means of a hallucinatory psychosis of desire.” Winnicott: “Just before this loss is experienced, we may discern in the child, in the excessive utilization of the transitional object, the denial of the fear that this object may lose its signification” (*Playing and Reality*). Roland Barthes, *A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 109.
In the state of transformation, Swann enters into imaginary contact with Odette, the object of his love. As his love is fading, Swann has buried his emotion somewhat and tries to avoid impressions that might remind him of Odette. Swann’s escape from the music attests the emotional appeal the music still holds over him.

But suddenly it was as though she had entered, and this apparition was so agonizingly painful that his hand clutched at his heart. The violin had risen to a series of high notes on which it rested as though awaiting something, holding on to them in a prolonged expectancy, in the exaltation of already seeing the object of its expectation approaching, and with a desperate effort to last out until its arrival, to welcome it before itself expiring, to keep the way open for a moment longer, with all its remaining strength, so that the stranger might pass, as one holds a door open that would otherwise automatically close. And before Swann had had time to understand what was happening and to say to himself: “It’s the little phrase from Vinteuil’s sonata—I mustn’t listen!”, all his memories of the days when Odette had been in love with him, which he had succeeded until that moment in keeping invisible in the depths of his being, deceived by this sudden reflection of a season of love whose sun, they supposed, had dawned again, had awakened from their slumber, had taken wing and risen to sing maddeningly in his ears, without pity for his present desolation, the forgotten strains of happiness.\(^\text{\ref{323}}\)

\(^{323}\) Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, 400.
Swann is caught off guard when he encounters the musical phrase, which reawakens his love and brings back specific memories with Odette. There is an intimacy between Swann and the music. The intimacy manifests itself as a kind of power that can wound Swann. Nonetheless, this intimacy is also experienced as “protective.”

As though the musicians were not nearly so much playing the little phrase as performing the rites on which it insisted before it would consent to appear, and proceeding to utter the incantations necessary to procure, and to prolong for a few moments, the miracle of its apparition, Swann, who was no more able to see it than if it had belonged to a world of ultra-violet light, and who experienced something like the refreshing sense of a metamorphosis in the momentary blindness with which he was struck as he approached it, Swann felt its presence like that of a protective goddess, a confidante of his love, who, in order to be able to come to him through the crowd and to draw him aside to speak to him, had disguised herself in this sweeping cloak of sound.324

The “momentary” state protected by the musical phrase feels like a “refreshing” metamorphosis. The music is protective of the transformed Swann who experiences his love. The music alone can offer that protection, since in no other place might such an emotion be allowed to come into awareness. This protection makes Swann feel at home in the state of transformation. “He felt that he was no longer in exile and alone since she, who addressed herself to him, was whispering to him of Odette.”325 Swann cannot lose his fading emotion for Odette insofar as he is experiencing

---

324 Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, 403.
325 Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, 403.
the music. There is a decrease of emotional agency on Swann’s part. Swann has to rely on the
music to rekindle the emotion.

Step 8: representation

Then comes a mental effort to solidify the significance of the music. Swann moves beyond
mere association into something more definite, which is to intentionally take the music to represent
the charm of an emotion. In this regard, Swann’s mental act cannot be reduced to one of the three
theoretical approaches.

It was the charms of an intimate sadness that it sought to imitate, to re-create, and
their very essence, for all that it consists in being incommunicable and in appearing
trivial to everyone except him who experiences them, had been captured and made
visible by the little phrase.326

The music is not taken to represent an emotion directly. Rather, the music is taken to imitate
charms of an emotion. There is a sense of arousal built into the representation. This conception
seems to lower the stake of representation by making it more subjective. The music does not have
to imitate a definite emotion in order to count as a successful representation. Insofar as the charms
of an emotion are imitated, the representation can be taken to be successful. But the evaluation of
the representation of charms can vary with how Swann is charmed by the music. Given Swann’s
intention for the music to represent the “charms of an intimate sadness” at this point, it is possible
that Swann is more susceptible to the charms the music has for him. Swann’s emotional readiness

326 Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, 404.
can then make him project his arousal back to the music in a way that clouds whatever charms the music itself is capable of representing.

We might hope to get a more precise conception of the representation. But for Marcel, the representation of charms does not seem amenable to precise definition. Swann tries to put the representation of the charm into words to no avail. “Doubtless the form in which it had codified those charms could not be resolved into rational discourse.”327 This may sound radical if it is read as proposing that the representation of charms is beyond rational discourse. But Marcel might just mean that rational discourse cannot “resolve” the representational form, which would be in line with the illusion view.

The representation still happens within the transformed state. For Swann, the representation of emotional charms derives its meaning from the transformation. “Swann had regarded musical motifs as actual ideas, of another world, of another order, ideas veiled in shadow, unknown, impenetrable to the human mind.”328 Musical motifs are “actual ideas of another world,” because Swann himself is transformed into another world. Still, the representation is Swann’s mental act informed by his arousal, hence the emotional agency in this step lies with Swann.

Step 9: location

Only much later was Swann able to “face the music.” Since the music is taken to represent emotional charms, Swann wonders about what part of the music generates the charms. Swann seems to make a discovery at first.

327 Proust, In Search of Lost Time, 404.
328 Proust, In Search of Lost Time, 404.
When, after that first evening at the Verdurins’, he had had the little phrase played over to him again, and had sought to disentangle from his confused impressions how it was that, like a perfume or a caress, it swept over and enveloped him, he had observed that it was to the closeness of the intervals between the five notes which composed it and to the constant repetition of two of them that was due that impression of a frigid and withdrawn sweetness.\textsuperscript{329}

Swann locates the power of the musical phrase in “the intervals between the five notes” and “the constant repetition of two of them.” These specific features might not work without a general structure, but Swann holds these features to be specifically responsible for the impression of that “withdrawn sweetness.”

Nonetheless, Swann does not believe that the emotional charms are locatable in this way.

[But in reality he knew that he was basing this conclusion not upon the phrase itself, but merely upon certain equivalents, substituted (for his mind’s convenience) for the mysterious entity of which he had become aware, before ever he knew the Verdurins, at that earlier party when for the first time he had heard the sonata played.\textsuperscript{330}]

Emotional charms do not come from the features located in the music. The cause of emotional charms is not the musical phrase itself, but “certain equivalents” that are mentally “substituted”

\textsuperscript{329} Proust, \textit{In Search of Lost Time}, 404.
\textsuperscript{330} Proust, \textit{In Search of Lost Time}, 404-5.
for a “mysterious entity.” The five notes do not deliver the answer, but at most serve as pointers to a mysterious source that generates the emotional charms. The emotional agency lies with Swann.

Step 10: distinction

Even if specific features in the music cannot be located, the musical phrase serves to distinguish a specific love Swann has for Odette. The emotional distinction is made possible by musical distinction. The difference between this musical piece and any other musical piece is sufficient for Swann to distinguish his love for Odette, informed by this musical phrase, from other emotions he has.

He knew that the very memory of the piano falsified still further the perspective in which he saw the elements of music, that the field open to the musician is not a miserable stave of seven notes, but an immeasurable keyboard (still almost entirely unknown) on which, here and there only, separated by the thick darkness of its unexplored tracts, some few among the millions of keys of tenderness, of passion, of courage, of serenity, which compose it, each one differing from all the rest as one universe differs from another, have been discovered by a few great artists who do us the service, when they awaken in us the emotion corresponding to the theme they have discovered, of showing us what richness, what variety lies hidden, unknown to us, in that vast, unfathomed and forbidding night of our soul which we take to be an impenetrable void.331

331 Proust, In Search of Lost Time, 405.
Each musical piece can awaken a specific emotion in our soul which appears to be an unfathomable “void.” Swann affirms the original power of the particular phrase that represents the charms of his love for Odette.

In his little phrase, although it might present a clouded surface to the eye of reason, one sensed a content so solid, so consistent, so explicit, to which it gave so new, so original a force, that those who had once heard it preserved the memory of it on an equal footing with the ideas of the intellect. Swann referred back to it as to a conception of love and happiness whose distinctive character he recognized at once as he would that of the Princesse de Clèves, or of René, should either of those titles occur to him.

Swann hears an original force in the music and treats the musical phrase on a par with intellectual ideas. The musical phrase functions in Swann’s mind as a solid reference for his love.

Even when he was not thinking of the little phrase, it existed latent in his mind on the same footing as certain other notions without material equivalent, such as our notions of light, of sound, of perspective, of physical pleasure, the rich possessions wherewith our inner temple is diversified and adorned. Perhaps we shall lose them, perhaps they will be obliterated, if we return to nothingness. But so long as we are alive, we can no more bring ourselves to a state in which we shall not have known them than we can with regard to any material object, than we can, for example, doubt the luminosity of a lamp that has just been lit, in view of the changed aspect.
of everything in the room, from which even the memory of the darkness has vanished.

The musical phrase is fundamental to Swann’s perception of life. It apparently cannot be unlearned, once it is known. There is no “material equivalent” to this musical phrase, although it can be performed on a piano. The emotional agency comes partly from the uniqueness of the music and partly from Swann.

Step 11: accretion

Swann’s love for Odette is an emotional process. The way an emotional process feels can be experienced as the charms of the emotion.

In that way Vinteuil’s phrase, like some theme, say, in Tristan, which represents to us also a certain emotional accretion, had espoused our mortal state, had endued a vesture of humanity that was peculiarly affecting.\(^{332}\)

The musical phrase represents an “emotional accretion” for Swann. One might think of the emotional accretion as a process that builds up towards a tangible target. But according to Marcel, that emotional accretion moves towards something akin to nothingness.

Its destiny was linked to the future, to the reality of the human soul, of which it was one of the most special and distinctive ornaments. Perhaps it is not-being that is the

\(^{332}\) Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, 405-6.
true state, and all our dream of life is inexistent; but, if so, we feel that these phrases of music, these conceptions which exist in relation to our dream, must be nothing either. We shall perish, but we have as hostages these divine captives who will follow and share our fate. And death in their company is somehow less bitter, less inglorious, perhaps even less probable.\textsuperscript{333}

The emotional destination signaled by music is one of dreamy nonexistence. But this form of nonexistence has a superior reality.

So Swann was not mistaken in believing that the phrase of the sonata really did exist. Human as it was from this point of view, it yet belonged to an order of supernatural beings whom we have never seen, but whom, in spite of that, we recognize and acclaim with rapture when some explorer of the unseen contrives to coax one forth, to bring it down, from that divine world to which he has access, to shine for a brief moment in the firmament of ours.\textsuperscript{334}

Our enjoyment of the musical phrase is to “bring it down” from the other world. The delicate beauty of the musical phrase shows the otherworldly reality of nothingness.

Swann felt that the composer had been content (with the musical instruments at his disposal) to unveil it, to make it visible, following and respecting its outlines with a hand so loving, so prudent, so delicate and so sure that the sound altered at every

\textsuperscript{333} Proust, \textit{In Search of Lost Time}, 406.
\textsuperscript{334} Proust, \textit{In Search of Lost Time}, 406.
moment, softening and blurring to indicate a shadow, springing back into life when it must follow the curve of some bolder projection. And one proof that Swann was not mistaken when he believed in the real existence of this phrase, was that anyone with the least discernment would at once have detected the imposture had Vinteuil, endowed with less power to see and to render its forms, sought to dissemble, by adding a counterfeit touch here and there, the flaws in his vision or the deficiencies of his hand.\footnote{Proust, \textit{In Search of Lost Time}, 406.}

The musical phrase is taken to represent an emotional accretion towards nothingness, which is experienced as emotional charms. This intention for representation lies with Swann, while the beauty that proves the otherworldly reality of the nothingness belongs to the music. The emotional agency is shared between Swann and the music.

Step 12: appreciation

At last Swann disentangles his love from the music.

True that, as often, it had warned him of their frailty. And indeed, whereas in that earlier time he had divined an element of suffering in its smile, in its limpid, disenchanted tones, tonight he found there rather the grace of a resignation that was almost gay.\footnote{Proust, \textit{In Search of Lost Time}, 403.}
The musical phrase gives rise to new emotional interpretations with new conceptual content. Different emotional interpretations are rendered possible by the same tones.

When it was the little phrase that spoke to him of the vanity of his sufferings, Swann found a solace in that very wisdom which, but a little while back, had seemed to him intolerable when he fancied he could read it on the faces of indifferent strangers who regarded his love as an insignificant aberration.337

The shift in emotional interpretation leads Swann to reexamine his earlier emotion. The musical phrase now enables Swann to face the “vanity of his sufferings,” which has received unfavorable judgments from people in everyday life. But the musical phrase facilitates a generous kind of reflection that does not involve self-accusation.

For the little phrase, unlike them, whatever opinion it might hold on the transience of these states of the soul, saw in them something not, as all these people did, less serious than the events of everyday life, but, on the contrary, so far superior to it as to be alone worth while expressing.338

The musical phrase bestows value upon Swann’s emotion rather than mocks it. Hence, the realization of “the vanity of his suffering” as heard in the music does not feel judgmental. This may be partly due to the beauty of the musical phrase, which apparently enhances the perceived

337 Proust, In Search of Lost Time, 404.
338 Proust, In Search of Lost Time, 404.
acceptability of the realization.\textsuperscript{339} This in turn makes Swann more open-minded and willing to engage with all impressions from the music.

There were in this passage some admirable ideas which Swann had not distinguished on first hearing the sonata and which he now perceived, as if, in the cloakroom of his memory, they had divested themselves of the uniform disguise of their novelty. Swann listened to all the scattered themes which would enter into the composition of the phrase, as its premises enter into the inevitable conclusion of a syllogism; he was assisting at the mystery of its birth.\textsuperscript{340}

To assist at the mystery of its birth suggests Swann’s emotional agency. Now Swann is able to appreciate the beauty of music without hearing it as a token of love for Odette.

How beautiful the dialogue which Swann now heard between piano and violin, at the beginning of the last passage! The suppression of human speech, so far from letting fancy reign there uncontrolled (as one might have thought), had eliminated it altogether; never was spoken language so inexorably determined, never had it known questions so pertinent, such irrefutable replies. At first the piano complained alone, like a bird deserted by its mate; the violin heard and answered it, as from a

\textsuperscript{339} Bruce Wilshire writes, “Music is the celebration, corroboration, enhancement, and support of the whole business of being human. It authorizes us to live fully. Even more deadening than obvious despair or panic—if this is possible—is the numbing effect of mindless habit. This can be so subtly boring that it is not even recognized as boredom. For some of us, existence becomes so routinized that we no longer notice how precious are the daily essentials of life: everyday food, shelter, the air we breathe, and the water we drink and use to be cleansed. When this anesthetized state occurs, music can help us break the shell of encrusted habit and trance and refresh our hold on reality. For, in echoing us, it gives us a subtle distance from ourselves: We are no longer engulfed in ourselves numbly.” Wilshire, Bruce. The Much-at-Onece: Music, Science, Ecstasy, the Body (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 18.

\textsuperscript{340} Proust, In Search of Lost Time, 407.
neighboring tree. It was as at the beginning of the world, as if there were as yet only the two of them on the earth, or rather in this world closed to all the rest, so fashioned by the logic of its creator that in it there should never be any but themselves: the world of this sonata. Was it a bird, was it the soul, as yet not fully formed, of the little phrase, was it a fairy—that being invisibly lamenting, whose plaint the piano heard and tenderly repeated? Its cries were so sudden that the violinist must snatch up his bow and race to catch them as they came. Marvelous bird!  

The beauty forms a world of its own. It is unclear who the subject is or how many subjects there are in this beautiful reality. It can be a bird, a soul, or a fairy. Various parts of music can be experienced as a communication between subjects.

The violinist seemed to wish to charm, to tame, to capture it. Already it had passed into his soul, already the little phrase which it evoked shook like a medium’s the body of the violinist, “possessed” indeed. Swann knew that the phrase was going to speak to him once again. And his personality was now so divided that the strain of waiting for the imminent moment when he would find himself face to face with it again shook him with one of those sobs which a beautiful line of poetry or a sad piece of news will wring from us, not when we are alone, but when we impart them to friends in whom we see ourselves reflected like a third person whose probable emotion affects them too.  

---

341 Proust, In Search of Lost Time, 407.
The musical beauty can shatter the subjectivity of Swann into several perspectives. It is as if Swann does not have the strength to meet the beauty directly. To savor this beauty, Swann needs to remain in a state of immobility.

Swann dared not move, and would have liked to compel all the other people in the room to remain still also, as if the slightest movement might imperil the magic presence, supernatural, delicious, frail, that was so soon to vanish.\(^{343}\)

The appreciation of musical beauty brings Swann to reflect upon his love. Instead of adding passion into that love, the music allows Swann to see that “his hopes of happiness would not be realized now.”\(^{344}\) The emotional agency resides more in Swann and less in the music in the end.

### The Objection from Sole Cause as Partial Nature

Let us define emotional agency as the source of power that is causally responsible for the formation of an emotion. Below is a table for how emotional agency is distributed in Swann’s 12-step musical experience. There might be no consensus regarding how to distribute the emotional agency. I try to err on the side of caution by factoring in the contribution from the music as far as possible. The table reflects what I take to be the least favorable, yet fair, way of distributing emotional agency for the illusion view.

---

\(^{343}\) Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, 408.

\(^{344}\) Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, 408.
If a big letter “X” shows up, emotional agency wholly resides in one side. Here is a brief explanation of the assignment. For Step 1, music is powerful to create a recreative influence over Swann. The music initiates Swann’s emotional journey. For step 3 and 4, Swann associates the music with such a concept as love and such an object as Odette. For Step 8 and 9, Swann intentionally takes the music to represent emotional charms and attempts in vain to locate that representation in specific features of the music.

If a small letter “x” shows up, emotional agency partially resides in either Swann or the music. I do not aim to measure precisely how emotional agency is shared between Swann and the music.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotional Agency</th>
<th>In Swann</th>
<th>In the Music</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1: impression</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2: recognition</td>
<td>x-</td>
<td>x+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3: association</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 4: objectification</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 5: liberation</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 6: transformation</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 7: protection</td>
<td>x-</td>
<td>x+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 8: representation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 9: location</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 10: distinction</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 11: accretion</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 12: appreciation</td>
<td>x+</td>
<td>x-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
music. Nevertheless, I occasionally use “x+” and “x-” in those steps where emotional agency seems to reside more in one side. Whenever the small letter “x” shows up on the side of music, the illusion view receives a potential challenge. Let me briefly explain the assignment of each small letter “x”. For Step 5 and 6, the music is powerful. But music alone would not achieve the liberation or the transformation. Swann’s willful attention also plays a role. Hence the agency is distributed between the two. For Step 2 and 7, Swann is doing some emotional work by recognizing the charm and seeking protective intimacy, but the music is the predominant factor to make things happen. For Step 10, music provides a basis for emotional distinction, yet emotional distinction would not happen if there is no intention to distinguish emotions on Swann’s part. For Step 11, musical beauty is the reality of nothingness towards which Swann’s emotional accretion builds up. Both the beauty of music and Swann’s emotional progress contribute to the emotional formation. For Step 12, the music merely provides a space for Swann to actively reflect upon his emotional journey and appreciates different interpretations he can give to the music. For all steps involving the small letter “x”, it is still uncontroversial that the emotion belongs to Swann. Yet Swann’s emotional agency alone is inadequate to make the emotion come into being. The challenge to the illusion view comes collectively from the emotional agency in the music.

Swann’s musical experience is messier than what might be imagined from the illusion view. I did not expect to see emotional agency reside in the music at all, let alone many times with varying strength. At this point, one may wonder how much emotional agency is needed on the musical side to undermine the illusion view.

One cannot resolve this matter merely by counting the number of x. Although the majority might give a reason to consider that side more, it is not on the basis of a majority that we should reach a conclusion about the emotional nature of music. Here are two simple suggestions that do
not work. One may suggest that one “X” is sufficient to establish an emotional nature of music. But since the only “X” on the musical side is in Step 1 where it is uncertain whether an emotion will emerge, it is too early for that “X” to establish an emotional nature of music. Alternatively, one may suggest that only one “x” on the musical side is sufficient to establish an emotional nature of music. But since there is also emotional agency on Swann’s side, it is not clear that music has an emotional nature.

A more stringent suggestion is that all the emotional agency is needed on the musical side to establish an emotional nature of music. If some agency falls on the side of Swann, it is not the case that music has wholly an emotional nature. But this will settle the issue too quickly and appear too demanding for the opponents of the illusion view. Moreover, to settle the debate this way would mask the plasticity of the illusion view. Let us consider the thought that even if music is not wholly possessive of an emotional nature, it may have one partially. The emotional nature of music, on this view, may need extra-musical sources like Swann’s mental activities to fully generate an emotion.

The worries raised by emotional agency in the music can be grouped into three kinds according to their functions at different stages of Swann’s musical experience. Here is a brief summary.

Initiation (Step 1-2): The music is able to initiate Swann’s emotion. Although stimulations surround Swann every day, not every stimulation is able to have that recreative and charming effect that makes him want to live differently. The music alone is able to arrest Swann’s attention. To the extent that the arresting power can contribute to the formation of an emotion, the music might be seen as having an emotional nature. At the first hearing of the music, Swann might have already
been unconsciously in love with Odette. But the music is apparently the only initiator of that emotion.

_Transformation_ (Step 5-7): The music is powerful enough to liberate Swann from worldly concerns and awaken an emotion in Swann as a transformed being. To the extent that the transformative power can put Swann into an alternative state of existence where Swann is hypersensitive to certain emotions, the music might be seen as having an emotional nature.

_Distinction_ (Step 10-12): The music is able, through its beauty, to provide a mental space for Swann to distinguish an emotion and reflect upon it. To the extent that the distinguishing power is significant for Swann’s emotional journey, the music might be seen as having an emotional nature.

The initiative, transformative, and distinctive power of music all converge on the idea of causation, which is the philosophical core underlying the three groups of worries. The difference between these groups of worries lies only in the stages of the emotional trajectory. Instead of dealing with each group separately, I will try to meet the challenge at that philosophical core, according to which the music can be conceived as the sole cause of Swann’s emotion. Even if the musical phrase does not directly arouse Swann’s emotion, it arouses the affective components of the emotion. The conceptual components are unconsciously ready on Swann’s part. Since the affective components can be generated only by the musical phrase, the music is indispensable. Once the affective components are put in place by the music, an emotion is on its track to emerge.

Since the music is the sole cause of an emotion, it seems to have an emotional nature albeit partially so. Music is not asked to take full responsibility for the formation of the emotion. The potential opponent recognizes that the emotion belongs to Swann and comes partially from Swann. But the opponent protests that Swann is not able to have this emotion without the music. Being the
sole cause means that there is a causal role uniquely played by the music in the formation of the emotion. The partial responsibility taken by music in this way seems to establish an emotional nature of music.

Replies from Transience, Catalyst, Musicality

I will consider three possible replies to the objection from sole cause as partial nature. The first reply does not work, the second brings the debate to a stalemate, and the third will refute the objection.

The Reply from Transience

One might argue that the objection proves too much. To illustrate, when I walk along the seashore, the ocean sound makes me feel a certain way. The affective components, combined with my concept about life, form an emotion akin to wonder. The way the ocean waves touch the shore generates a specific volume and pattern of sound, which alone can cause the affective components on my part. Imagine that the physical environment of this ocean is unique such that ocean sounds from elsewhere cannot have this effect on me. I might be willing to think that the ocean sound has an emotional nature. But in fact I would be projecting my emotional state into a natural phenomenon.

The opponent may argue that what distinguishes music from natural phenomena such as ocean sounds is the fact that musical materials are intentionally arranged. But intentional

---

345 A panpsychist may see everything as conscious in the universe. The ocean sound might be heard as emotional in that it can be heard as a message from a conscious Nature. But the objection should not require panpsychism in order to hold its ground.
arrangement does not put emotion into the object. The candles in *Friends’* proposal scene between Chandler and Monica are carefully arranged to create an amorous atmosphere.\(^{346}\) The love may have existed for some time without certain affective components which could only be aroused by the candles. But that does not mean that love is in the nature of the candles. Nonetheless, the opponent can maintain that if Chandler had made those candles himself, we would find it reasonable to think of the candles as having a nature of love. The significance of intention might lie not in the arrangement of the candles, but in the tailor-making of the candles for a proposal. In that case, the candles are almost equivalent to intellectual ideas in the same way the musical phrase is equivalent to intellectual ideas for Swann, even if Chandler is the maker in our thought experiment and Swann is not the composer in the novel. In other words, the physical properties of the candles do not prevent them from being an icon to represent something else such as the charms of love. The objection does not prove too much.

One may also wonder if the objection proves too little. In particular, there seems to be a problem with the fleetingness of what is caused. The emotion is fleeting even within Swann. Different amorous stages saw Swann experiencing subtly different emotions. Swann felt a refreshing happiness, a frailty in that happiness, a detached resignation, etc. These emotions are not the same, even if they might feel similar on some level. If the emotion cannot be identified, apparently it makes little sense to attribute emotional agency to the music.

Nonetheless, the opponent can reply that the different emotions are different manifestations of love (or lovesickness).\(^{347}\) As long as all the emotions are love, they do not differ in kind. Hypothetically, we can even imagine a consistent Swann who sticks with one token manifestation

\(^{346}\) Chandler and Monica, “the Proposal,” accessed March 1, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7z3ylDKFeY.

\(^{347}\) I do not distinguish love from lovesickness here. They are just two perspectives of viewing the same emotion for the purpose of this discussion. For more discussion on the sick side of love, see Berit Brogaard, *On Romantic Love: Simple Truths about a Complex Emotion*, Oxford University Press, 2015.
of love. Indeed, the objection does not require a consistent Swann on the token level. The multiple manifestations of an emotion may strengthen the objection. Vagueness can be seen as versatility in the emotional agency. A musical phrase may provide affective states which are versatile to mingle with different conceptual components to form different emotions.

Therefore, the reply from transience does not refute the objection. If so, the strategy of underdetermination may not work, for the idea of underdetermination and the idea of transience point to the same thing. The force of the objection lies in that it determines the emotion at least for one individual at a time. An adequate reply must not sidestep the causal uniqueness of this musical phrase for Swann. Even if it is a private emotion, there is something so strong about the music for Swann that seems absent in the theoretical horizon of the illusion view.

The Reply from Catalyst

Let us approach the heart of the objection through three analogies. I will argue that it is unjustified to establish an emotional nature of the thing in each analogy.

*Improvisation.* There is no time for the performer to deliberate about what to perform. I find in a musical improvisation something uniquely powerful, which generates an emotion for me in the way the little phrase does for Swann. Just because some sounds can initiate an emotion in me, it does not follow that I get to attribute my emotion back to the nature of that sound. The nature of improvisation implies that the music has its effects on me by chance. I may have missed the improvisation. Had the improvisation been slightly different, it would not create the same effects in me. It is odd to think of one improvisation as having an emotional nature, while other possible variations of the performance do not have one.
Literature. I have an emotion that is impossible to emerge unless I take 3 hours to read Plato’s *Symposium* from beginning to end intensely. Each time I read the text, I can count on experiencing that emotion. It is an emotion of love. This does not mean that Plato’s *Symposium* has an emotional nature. Although Plato wrote the text intentionally,\(^\text{348}\) it is absurd to think of Plato as writing the dialogue to generate an emotion in me. I should refrain from attributing an emotional nature to Plato’s text based on my emotional response. Plato’s text can be emotionally powerful in a general way without suiting my circumstance. Some readers may experience a strong hatred from it. The problem of underdetermination lingers with us.

Speech. A professor is giving a speech in front of the class. I am in the audience. To the extent that the professor intentionally addresses the audience, I am an intended receiver of the speech. I am touched by the speech. There is nothing else in the world that can awaken an emotion that I have. I am the only member in the audience who feels this way. The emotional effect can be so strong that I think there could be no mistake that the professor intends the message to be experienced just in the way I experience it. The professor may agree with my emotional response to the speech in that the conceptual components I use to form my emotion are the relevant ones in the eyes of the professor. Still, by insisting on an emotional nature of the speech, I would bring the speech down to my level and not give it a chance to appear in its own light. A more proper attitude is gratitude. I am grateful to experience a great speech. But the speech does not thereby have that emotional nature as perceived in my experience.

These analogies show that projecting an emotion into the nature of something fixes my experience of it. Once my experience becomes formulaic, it gives an illusory sense of the nature of the thing that awakens my emotion. But the opponent may insist that the power of music is

\(^{348}\) Plato may have composed this dialogue with some musical structure in mind. See J. B. Kennedy, *The Musical Structure of Plato’s Dialogues*, Routledge, 2014.
shown in formulaic experiences. Swann is transformed into a different being, which seems more significant than the fact that his experience is formulaic. On the illusion view, however, the music serves as a mere catalyst without an emotional nature of its own. There is no emotional agency in the music. At least there is no way to decide whether the musical phrase is an emotional agent or an emotional catalyst in Swann’s experience. We are at a stalemate.

The Reply from Musicality

Let us focus on the causal uniqueness of music. Causal uniqueness can be construed as causal otherworldliness. To say that a musical phrase alone can cause certain affective components is to affirm an otherworldly power in the music. The causal otherworldliness of music does not imply that the emotion caused by the music is otherworldly. Swann might conceive his love for Odette sacred, but that emotion can be seen as a sign of vanity in the eyes of others. Rather, the causal otherworldliness of music implies that the affective components caused by the music are otherworldly themselves. The affective components are not achievable anywhere other than in the experience of the music. Swann has his conceptual components ready, but his emotion needs some otherworldly affective components to come into being. The musical phrase is otherworldly powerful in that it alone can cause the otherworldly affective states.

One might reply that otherworldliness suggests the strength of the power, but it does not give the power an emotional nature. We are especially prone to projecting emotions into otherworldliness. But this reply is deflationary. It is only as a transformed being that Swann can project an emotion into that otherworldliness. Since a transformed being perceives a different world, the transformed Swann is otherworldly himself. Only an otherworldly Swann is capable of projecting his love for Odette into the music. One might worry if the objection implies too big a
sacrifice in the subjectivity of Swann to make sense. But Swann is willing to sacrifice this agency in exchange for an experience. Even if Swann allows himself to be transformed, the affective work is accomplished by the music. Swann’s emotional projection depends on the causal otherworldliness of the music.

Nevertheless, the idea of otherworldliness may prove too much. In analogy, think of a near-death moment when worldly concerns are obliterated from consciousness. Suppose I feel an emotion of regret that I have not lived bravely enough. A near-death moment, being rare, initiates a mental space for my realization, but the emotion I have on a rare occasion does not put my emotion into the nature of the moment. Suppose I live a form of life where near-death moments abound, though all but one of them will come true. Even if the otherworldly occasions happen more often, it would be mistaken to think of each occasion as having an emotional nature that happens to align with my regret. Substituting musical phrases for near-death moments should not change the answer. We can feel something particular on otherworldly occasions. But the occasions themselves do not take on the emotions we feel.

The opponent may reply that the analogy does not hold between the near-death moment and the musical phrase. The music not only provides an occasion, but contains something that is able to set into motion the emergence of an emotion. There is something in and about the musical phrase that is uniquely powerful in awakening an emotion. Think of a perfume that is potent to make Swann feel a desire towards someone. The mental association belongs to Swann, but the affective arousal is caused by the perfume which is designed to generate such desires in people.

Nonetheless, it would be wrong to attribute Swann’s emotion to the nature of the perfume. Swann’s emotion is not part of the perfume, though the perfume may be conceived as part of Swann’s emotion. Likewise, the musical phrase can be conceived as part of Swann’s emotion,
since the musical phrase participates in the formation of the emotion. The causal uniqueness of the music makes it constitutive of Swann’s emotion. This is a way not of putting emotion into music, but of putting music into emotion. The musicality of emotion means that emotion can take music as its part. It follows that emotion can be musical in its nature, not that music can be emotional in its nature. The objection from sole cause as partial nature conflates the idea that Swann’s emotion for Odette is musical with the idea that the musical phrase, which is part of Swann’s love, is emotional. Swann’s love has a musical nature. The illusion view can accommodate the causal uniqueness of music, once we acknowledge the musicality of emotion. It would be interesting to elaborate on the musicality of emotion, but that would be a project for another occasion.

Reflection

In this chapter I have considered a possible objection to the illusion view. Our potential opponent can draw on the causal uniqueness of music to formulate the objection from sole cause as partial nature. If a piece of music alone is able to generate affective components that are necessary to form an emotion, it seems that the music has some emotional agency, which may serve as the basis to establish an emotional nature of music. I have explored three possible replies to this objection. The reply from transience does not solve the problem, because emotional transience does not take the unique causal power away from music. The reply from catalyst mitigates the objection, but does not resolve the question of whether music has an emotional nature. The reply from musicality solves the problem by distinguishing the emotionality of music from

---

349 One may protest that it is really the reaction to the music that is the starting point in the emotion. But let us grant this point and include the external stimulus, the music, into the emotional identity.
the musicality of emotion. A musical experience like Swann’s, where a musical phrase alone is able to cause the affective components of an emotion, can be integrated into the illusion view.
Chapter Nine. Conclusion

Various accounts have been advanced to establish an emotional nature of music. Upon closer inspection, the emotions attributed to music in those accounts are read into music through projective acts of interpretation and imagination. Music does not have an emotional nature. The emotional appearance of music is illusory.

I have adopted a comparative and interdisciplinary approach to investigate the emotional appearance of music. Comparative philosophy is helpful because it provides a starting point that voices the illusion view directly. Since the illusion view is out of tune with prevailing theories on the emotional appearance of music, it would be an almost insurmountable burden for me to carve out a conceptual space for the illusion view from scratch. Rather than articulating the illusion view myself, I uncover a compelling articulation of the illusion view from an ancient Chinese text written by a philosopher and musician. This has taken on more than historical significance, because I have reconstructed the critical arguments in the text.

There are interpretive challenges inherent in approaching an ancient Chinese text. Most obviously, there is a question about the applicability of the terms. As a fundamental worry, people might think that the way an ancient Chinese philosopher understands “music” and “emotion” would be so different from the way contemporary philosophers understand such terms that a meaningful dialogue is impossible. I have addressed such worries by doing most of the translation of the text and highlighting interpretive issues to draw out philosophical problems. I believe that Ji Kang’s text can be used as a starting point in our discussion. To best incorporate Ji Kang’s thinking into our project, I have not followed exactly the same structure of Ji Kang’s text. I have reconstructed the thoughts in the text into three arguments for the illusion view. I unpack the main
ideas and present the dialectics for two sides. The challenges raised by Ji Kang center on the representational inconstancy, expressive incapability, and evocative underdetermination of music.

One might wonder if these challenges could be met in Chinese philosophy such that a contemporary rendering of these ideas is unnecessary. To address this worry, I have explored possible objections to the illusion view that can be raised from the Confucian tradition. They are objections from representational reliability, expressive sincerity, and evocative appropriateness. These objections mitigate, yet ultimately fail to refute the illusion view. Representational reliability is not as robust as representational constancy. Expressive sincerity presupposes expressive capability. Evocative appropriateness does not seem to hold over time.

There are numerous accounts in contemporary Western musical aesthetics that implicitly stand against the illusion view. Most prominent are such theoretical approaches as representation, expression, and evocation. These accounts have not been used to deal with such a foundational challenge as the illusion view. Normally, the debates among different theorists revolve around whether a theoretical approach should take explanatory priority. To challenge the illusion view, I have constructed arguments out of writings in contemporary approaches. These arguments should be thought of as expounding neither the contemporary theories nor mine, but rather contemporary theories as they might strike Ji Kang, as they present a problem for the illusion view. It turns out that none of the arguments can refute the illusion view.

I have defended the illusion view against broader objections that can be raised from contemporary approaches. For evocation, the illusion view allows listeners to claim full ownership of emotion in musical enjoyment. For expression, a Gricean model of meaning can be used to explain emotional communication through music. For representation, emotional language in commercial or educational contexts can be useful yet should be limited.
I have formulated a possible objection based on Swann’s musical experience in Proust’s novel. I have examined the emotional agency in Swann’s musical experience and formulated the objection from sole cause as partial nature. As I have shown, although music might be a unique causal power in the formation of an emotion, music does not even partially have an emotional nature. Nonetheless, I have suggested that an emotion can be musical. The illusion view turns out to be experientially richer than it might appear at first.

I do not claim to have exhausted all the theoretical attempts at establishing an emotional nature of music. Still, I take the nine arguments constructed from three philosophical approaches to be representative of the main conceptual paths. It is possible that some unexplored arguments in contemporary Western aesthetics might be mobilized to establish an emotional nature of music. Likewise, in the Confucian tradition, it is possible that some texts might be mobilized to formulate counter-arguments to the illusion view. Yet further explorations might also confirm the illusion view. To explore alternative arguments would enrich the discussion in the future.

The value of the illusion view as a philosophical position lies in its revelation of the conceptual space opposite where theorizing normally happens today. The problems of representational inconstancy, expressive incapability, and evocative underdetermination have been buried in the philosophical pursuit of putting emotion into music. This philosophical pursuit has informed musical experiences in a way that misaligns with the nature of music. To think of music of having an emotional nature implies beliefs about representational constancy, expressive capability, and evocative determinacy. These beliefs have further consequences. Together they form a web of ideas that limit one’s musical world.

The illusion view can reorient musical experiences informed by contemporary philosophical discussions. This reorientation allows us to consider whether differences in musical
aesthetics might originate from differences in how we understand the nature of music. Musical aesthetics built upon the emotional illusion of music might rest on a philosophical error. Only when we see through the emotional illusion of music can our disagreements on emotional appearances of music be substantive. The world of musical experiences, reoriented without the emotional baggage, becomes free.
Bibliography


Comfort, Kelly. “Art(ist) for Art’s Sake or Art(ist) for Capital’s Sake: Aesthetic Production and Consumption in Turn-of-the-Century Literature.” PhD Diss., University of California, Davis, 2005.


Van Dyke, John C. *Art for Art’s Sake: Seven University Lectures on the Technical Beauties of Painting*. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1907.


