Carl Stumpf and the Curious Incident of Music in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*

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Abstract: This essay explores Wittgenstein's encounter with Stumpf's work in Tone Psychology during a rarely studied period in Wittgenstein's early career when he worked as a researcher in Myers's laboratory for experimental psychology in Cambridge. I argue that Stumpf's emphasis on the notion of musicality as the ability to characterize what is 'musical' about music troubled Wittgenstein's initial formulation of his career-long adherence to the comparison between language and music. In the *Tractatus* the importance of internal projective relations far exceeds that of arbitrariness in language. This results in the curious elision of musicality in the *Tractatus*, as shown in his gramophone analogy. The acknowledgment of the enormous complexity pertaining to the facts of human life remained underdeveloped in Wittgenstein's philosophy until the anthropological turn in his middle-period. Only then do we see the blooming of the language-as-music simile and its eventual impact on Wittgenstein's later philosophy.

Keywords: Wittgenstein, Stumpf, musicality, language, aspects, *Tractatus*

1. Introduction

One of the least understood and often overlooked episodes in Wittgenstein's early thought is his 1912-13 stint as a researcher at Charles S. Myer's laboratory for experimental psychology in Cambridge. There Wittgenstein eagerly conducted experiments on rhythm designed "to investigate [the] nature of rhythm" (WLM, 9:40) and, more specifically, "to ascertain the extent and importance of rhythm in music" (Pinsent 1990, 3).[1] This was not just his first (and only) attempt to do

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[1] David Pinsent, a talented amateur pianist and fellow student at Cambridge, was Wittgenstein's close friend and one of his test subjects in these experiments. He reported in his diary many hours

experimental aesthetics, which informed his later views on the use and abuse of psychology for aesthetics (Schroeder 2017). It was also, and perhaps even more strikingly, his first hitherto unexplored encounter with Carl Stumpf's work in Tone Psychology, which, I argue in this essay, may have had an even deeper, long-lasting impact on the development of Wittgenstein's philosophical thinking than has been acknowledged.

Wittgenstein's experiments concerned a phenomenon then called "subjective rhythm." His experiments attempted to determine the conditions under which subjects heard or read into a sequence of beats a rhythm which, in a sense, was not there. The experiments followed almost to the letter Myers's protocol for laboratory exercise number 144 from the second volume of *Text-Book of Experimental Psychology, with Laboratory Exercises* (1911) (Myers 2013, 2:98-99).[2] Wittgenstein's subjects heard some stresses (often on the first pulse, rarely on two consecutive pulses), although the machine did not give them. More interestingly, the subjects experienced a tendency to collapse certain rhythms, which were not maintainable, into more stable ones, a sort of "constant stumbling," when he tweaked the pulse train (WLM, 9:42).

The striking thing about those experiments on rhythm is the fact that Wittgenstein produced in them the onset of what he would later call "noticing an aspect." This is by far the earliest evidence of Wittgenstein's career-long exploration of the philosophically pervasive implications of noticing an aspect. He returned to the discussion of aspects in the context of music in his middle-period lectures and writings, and even more so in his later work, most notably the *Philosophical Investigations*, and his later prolific writing on the philosophy of psychology.

of experimentation at the laboratory with Wittgenstein, which were "good fun." See the description of these experiments in McGuinness (1988, 125-129), Monk (1990, 49-50), Wittgenstein (2003, 359-360).

[2] Wittgenstein tweaked the original protocol by adding some elements taken from exercise no. 145 which concerns the perception of "objective rhythm." See my comparison between Myers's protocols and Wittgenstein's description of the experiments in Guter (2023).

Against this backdrop of Wittgenstein's interests and philosophical development, the distinct austerity and meagerness of Wittgenstein's treatment of music in the *Tractatus* draws one's attention. One may very well wonder what Wittgenstein's view of music could have been at the time of the *Tractatus*. If one simply extrapolates from the *Tractatus*, then it would seem that, since in the *Tractatus* meaning is restricted to propositions with sense (that is, ones that picture states of affairs), and since it is obvious that music does not consist of such propositions, music has no meaning at all. Yet it is hard to believe that Wittgenstein would have been satisfied with such a dismal conclusion about the form of art that meant the most to him and engaged his thinking so extensively before and after the *Tractatus*.

The basic intuition underlying this essay is a bit like Sherlock Holmes's intuition concerning "the curious incident of the dog in the night-time." My intuition concerns not the silence of a dog, but rather the elision of musicality in the *Tractatus*. In order to explain this curiosity, I will show why and how what Wittgenstein learned from Stumpf at Myers's laboratory was challenged by the *Tractatus* framework, only later to be rekindled after Wittgenstein's anthropological turn in his middle-period. Read against the backdrop of Stumpf's ideas concerning tone judgment and the bias of music consciousness, Wittgenstein's early remarks on music in the *Notebooks 1914-16*, the *Prototractatus* and the *Tractatus* offer insight not only into his philosophical attitude toward music at the time of the *Tractatus*, but also his subsequent intellectual development.

The essay is divided into three main parts. In sections two and three, I explicate Stumpf's influence on the research agenda in Myers's laboratory and how it relates to Wittgenstein's thinking on musicality and aspects while he was conducting laboratory experiences from 1912-13. In sections four to six, I contextualize the original 1915 version of Wittgenstein's simile of language as music, a simile stamped by Stumpf's influence, to show how it was then challenged by the *Tractatus* framework. I also trace the textual alterations that Wittgenstein carried out to pare down the simile to fit in the *Tractatus*. I then offer a reading of Wittgenstein's gramophone analogy, a centerpiece in the *Tractatus*, which shows the efficacy of Wittgenstein's elision of musicality in the *Tractatus*. In section

seven, I consider themes from Stumpf that carry over to Wittgenstein's later thinking in the aftermath of the *Tractatus*. I offer my conclusions in section eight.

2. Stumpf's Influence: Musicality and Characterization

The German phenomenologist and experimental psychologist Carl Stumpf (1848-1936), a student of Franz Brentano, has garnered a reputation for being a rigorous philosopher, but also for having initiated the field of music psychology, and for having laid the ground for the Berlin Gestalt School of Psychology. Stumpf's philosophical ideas had a substantial presence in Cambridge around the time Wittgenstein arrived there with a noticeable appetite for the Brentano School. G. E. Moore was reading Stumpf in 1912 and McTaggart is also known to have taken an extensive interest in Stumpf's work (Potter 2008,105-106). It is very likely that Wittgenstein knew about Stumpf and he may even have read some of his philosophical writings.

Wittgenstein's encounter with Stumpf's work on music can be linked directly to his close association with Charles Myers at the Cambridge laboratory from 1912-13 (Smith 1978; Potter 2008). Stumpf engaged in active dialogue with British theoreticians and psychologists, as he took special interest in the work of Darwin, Spencer and Gurney, among others, concerning music (Stumpf 1885; Sully 1886). His experimental research into the musical mind, including the relation between speech and music, and his deep interest in non-Western musical traditions, and pioneering work in the field of ethnomusicology had a substantial presence in Myers's laboratory. Myers's own research, carried out mostly between 1898-1922, concerned topics that overlapped with Stumpf's research program, including aspects of so-called primitive music and the putative origins of music, as well as an analysis of individual differences in listening to tones and music. Myers maintained direct professional contact with Stumpf in Berlin. In 1905, he sent a few phonograph cylinders of non-Western music from his expedition to Torres Straits to Stumpf's Berlin Phonogramm-Archiv for duplication. He also provided Stumpf with written descriptions and measurements of the recordings in a personal meeting that may have taken place in Berlin in the same year (Clayton 1996). Stumpf's celebrated book *The Origins of Music*, first published in 1911, contains

references to Myers's work and detailed discussion of the recordings and data he received from Myers.

Wittgenstein's initiation into Charles Myers's laboratory occurred in the aftermath of a fierce debate in the 1890s between experimental psychologists Carl Stumpf and Wilhelm Wundt. According to Hui (2013), the crux of the debate concerned the role of musical expertise in the laboratory study of tone differentiation. For Stumpf, sound sensation (pertaining to music) was bound up with musical expertise, which he considered a scientific skill that gave its possessor a superior ability to experience sound. Stumpf accordingly employed musical expertise as a criterion for credibility. By contrast, Wundt privileged large aggregates of data and statistical analysis over the subjective testimony of a few well-trained observers. Wundt found little need for his subjects to maintain a superior ability to recognize Western musical intervals. Since the testimony of musically untrained subjects was accepted as more legitimate and universal, musical expertise turned out to be irrelevant, and the concept of sound sensation, at least in a laboratory context, was increasingly defined in terms of what was experimentally testable by statistical methods. Ultimately, Wundt's conception would go on to dominate the field of experimental psychology, and the role of musical expertise in the laboratory study of sound sensation quietly diminished.

Yet the fact that Charles Myers's laboratory reverently sided with Stumpf's receding paradigm is most important for our present concern.[3] It is manifest in the aesthetic context of the proceedings of Wittgenstein's own experiments on rhythm, in particular in Wittgenstein's Siding with Stumpf means that the difference between musical and nonmusical individuals was taken to be important for grasping what is 'musical' about music. Stumpf was the first to undertake systematic research with nonmusical subjects (Kursell 2018; 2019). Significantly, he contrasted being 'nonmusical' with being expert in music. Expert individuals were musically schooled and musically versatile. He defined them somewhat

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[3] It is noteworthy that there is not even a single reference to Wundt's research in Myers's chapters on auditory phenomena in his magisterial *Text-Book* and *Introduction to Experimental Psychology*. The latter volume also includes a whole chapter on experimental aesthetics, a field which Myers championed in England.

loosely through their exposure to more than one musical activity or their outstanding ability to recognize musical features. As was the case with musically trained individuals at the time, they were almost exclusively exposed to the repertory and performance practice of central European tonal music from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Just as Myers's laboratory sided with Stumpf in privileging musical expertise, so, too, did Wittgenstein, as made evident by his recounting in his 1933 lectures on aesthetics the experimental difference between musical and non-musical subjects.[4]

In the experimental context, the term 'nonmusical' was not a derogatory term, but only a descriptive one denoting a control group. Stumpf was quite explicit about this in his preface to *Tonpsychologie*:

> The curious differences between musical and unmusical natures, [...] the diversity of tonal phenomena and the wealth of artistic secrets, […] the many historical changes of tonal systems and tonal feelings—all this lends the expert as many points of support for investigation as it presents obstacles for the non-expert. (WLM, 9:40-42)[5]

Being 'nonmusical' denotes the absence of the condition which experts exhibit. The latter group has access to the 'musical' features of music, which the control group does not, and observations that are considered relevant for that condition can

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[4] This reference is to the original pagination in G. E. Moore's notes. As Wittgenstein recounted in this lecture, what he was looking for was not just a matter of the scientific thrill of tinkering with perceptual oddities, but more importantly the way in which noticing an aspect feeds back into our use of language. The real issue was how to characterize the way in which significance is drawn into the experience of music—that is, the reciprocity between musical understanding and language. For him, to answer the question about significance required comparing and ordering in order to establish a field of possibilities and necessities, eventually offering the gift of a good simile. By Wittgenstein's own admission, he was looking for this in the experiments and he did not get what he wanted from his mostly nonmusical test subjects. That was the main reason for his frustration in the laboratory. See my discussion in Guter (2020).

[5] Stumpf 1883, vi. Translations from Stumpf's *Tonpsychologie* in this essay are mine.

be checked against the group without the condition. According to Kursell, Stumpf's control group showed that

> what nonmusical subjects lacked was not the ability to discriminate a physically measurable difference in frequency, but a mental scheme to which musically versatile listeners referred any such distances, thereby turning them into intervals and thus into musically relevant distances. The music experts were not actually characterized by a better sense for discerning frequencies, but by the fact that they always applied this reference scheme. […] A value on the parameter of pitch would not simply be considered a distance, but referred to points of orientation, i.e., to the closest interval. (Kursell 2019, 133)

Stumpf described this reference scheme metaphorically as having "clear, fixed signposts of acoustic geodesy within musical contexts" (Stumpf 1883, 149). For Stumpf, it was the relationship between intervals as such, and not the melody as defined by its absolute pitches, that signaled the richer human appreciation of sonic forms (Trippett 2012). Nonmusical subjects have no access to such musical cartography. They cannot characterize what they hear musically (Kursell 2019). They simply get lost in the territory.

This is where Stumpf's notion of 'tonal fusion' (*Tonverschmelzung*) comes into play, an idea that became prevalent in Myers's laboratory.[6] By 'tonal fusion' Stumpf means "the relation between two contents, more specifically between contents of sensation, whereby these do not constitute a mere sum but rather a whole [*ein Ganzes*]" (Stumpf 1890, 124). Fusion is not a property of musical notes or physical sounds, but a tendency of the subject's judgments to remain in a state

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[6] Myers often used Stumpf's notion of 'tonal fusion,' sometimes without explicit reference. The work of C. W. Valentine, Myers's collaborator at the laboratory at the time, is also replete with references to Stumpf's ideas and writings. It is quite likely that Wittgenstein, whose work at the laboratory was supervised by Myers himself, may have encountered Stumpf's notion of tonal fusion, if not directly by reading Stumpf's *Tonpsychologie*, then by consulting Myers's *Text-Book of Experimental Psychology, with Laboratory Exercises*, which was first published in 1909, and whose second edition had just come out in 1911, shortly before Wittgenstein started working at the laboratory in 1912. Wittgenstein's experiments were based on Myers's textbook.

of sensation (*Empfindung*) that precedes the subject's access to, and ability to implement, the musical reference scheme and thereby characterize what she hears musically (Kursell 2018). Importantly for Stumpf, that latter stage, pertaining uniquely to musical subjects, is 'analysis.' Stumpf suggested that the greater the tendency of sounds to fuse, the greater the consonance. Hence, while experiencing two tones as consonant is naturally given in sensation and so common to nonmusical and expert subjects alike, experiencing two tones as dissonant, that is, moving from sensation to analysis, is indicative of having exclusive access to the "musical cartography."

According to Fisette, Stumpf concluded that in a melody "moments of quality and of intensity form […] a unitary whole which is perceptible as a 'quality of form,' and it is precisely the unitary character of this perception, the fact that it is perceptible in one stroke and immediately as unitary form, that Stumpf tries to account for with the aid of the notion of relation of fusion" (Fisette 2019) Stumpf extended his theory to account also for the occurrence of tonal fusion with merely imagined tones, thus explaining processes such as musical imagery (and then, composition) or silent score reading, as usually performed by skilled musicians (Martinelli 2013).

According to Stumpf, musicality is aspectual in the sense that it is evinced by the ability of musical subjects to 'characterize' what they hear musically. According to Floyd, the attempt to characterize involves "the 'coming into view' of a scheme of possibilities available for characterization given a particular mode of characterization" (Floyd 2018, 368). For nonmusical people, the particular mode of characterization, which is the reference scheme of Western tonal music, is inaccessible or obfuscated. They lack, as Stumpf put it, "clear, fixed signposts of acoustic geodesy within musical contexts," and in that sense, for nonmusical people music does not 'come into view' for further characterization. When Wittgenstein later revisited this notion of a non-musical person, he wrote: "Aspect-blindness will be akin to the lack of a 'musical ear'" (PI, 225 §260).

3. Musicality and the Acquiring of Music Consciousness

Rendering musicality in terms of 'characterizing' acknowledges the lived, embodied realities of musical intelligibility. According to Stumpf, the distinctions that seem natural to musical people are "acquired, dependent on education, and malleable" (Stumpf 1883, 48). This idea was advanced independently by music critic Eduard Hanslick, who maintained that the elements of musical language continuously change over the course of music history (see Hanslick 2018, 51).[7] It was also advanced by Herman von Helmholtz, one of the founding fathers of experimental psychology, who argued that "just as people with differently directed tastes can erect extremely different kinds of buildings with the same stones, so also the history of music shews us that the same properties of the human ear could serve as the foundation of very different musical systems" (Helmholtz 2012, 568). In Myers's laboratory, such insights were reinforced by studying the music of non-Western cultures. In fact, the cultural embeddedness of the Western tonal music reference scheme was precisely the contested bias at the heart of the debate between Stumpf and Wundt concerning the laboratory study of tone differentiation.

The habit of relating sensed tone distances to musical intervals was subject to what Stumpf termed "music consciousness" (*Musikbewusstsein*), but also, strikingly, "music-infected consciousness" (*musik-infinizierten Bewusstsein*) (Hui 2013). According to Stumpf, "the ear and the brain, in their present behavior, archive the practice of our forbearers and the music history of millennia made flesh and spirit" (Stumpf 1883, 341). The biases of music consciousness are a condition of the mind culturally shaped by musical environments, local traditions, and individual habits. It allows for better (namely, 'analytic') insight into sound sensation, yet once shaped, the musically schooled individual, afflicted by their condition, cannot help but receive sounds in a certain way. She can exercise very

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[7] It is quite extraordinary that the only remark by Wittgenstein which is actually traceable to Hanslick's *On the Musically Beautiful* (albeit indirectly) concerns this acknowledgement of the contingency of musical material. Musing about ideas that become worn out and may no longer be usable, Wittgenstein adds in parentheses: "I once heard Labor make a similar remark about musical ideas" (CV, 24). While this remark was penned in retrospect in 1931, we may assume that if Wittgenstein heard this remark from Josef Labor, who was a longtime protégé of the Wittgenstein family and the music teacher of Ludwig Wittgenstein's siblings, then he must have abided with such view already very early, possibly even before arriving in Cambridge in 1912.

little, if any, control over her subjective experience. (One is reminded of William Burroughs's famous quip, "Language is a virus from outer space.") According to Hui,

> by the end of the nineteenth century, if the Stumpf-Wundt debate is any indication, the value of musical skill had become contested. It could effect a vulnerability to observation bias and was therefore a potential menace. For Wundt, it did not reflect the listening practices of the masses. For Stumpf, who maintained a broader view of psychology than Wundt, this was precisely why it was valuable. His later work in ethnomusicology was a testament to the value of musical skill. (Hui 2013, 145-146),

Stumpf's foray into ethnomusicology – a foray predicated on the belief that the bias of music consciousness was the product of specific musical training – brought into question the innateness of the Western tonal system. The fundamental lesson to be gained from the encounter with non-Western music was that the researcher possesses particular mental presets for hearing music that are inscribed into a particular notational system.

Upon being first exposed to the singing of the "Bella Coola Indians" in 1885, Stumpf "was shocked not so much by their singing, which appeared as a mere howling to him, but by his own incompetence in following what they were doing" (Kursell 2018, 334). The difficulties of making sense of the sound sensations and transcribing what he gradually learned to hear by means of the inadequate European musical notation system made Stumpf aware of the bias of his own musical training. And as he went through this process of acquiring and accommodating new mental presets, he recaptured the experience of the nonmusical person.

This is vividly described in Charles Myers's conclusion to his own precis of the principles of the ethnological study of music:

> Thus it comes about that many examples of primitive music are incomprehensible to us, just because they are not so readily assimilated as those which are more nearly related to our previous experiences. Our attention is continuously distracted, now by the

strange features and changes of rhythm, now by the extraordinary colouring of strange instruments, now by the unwonted progression and character of intervals. Consequently *much familiarity is needed before we can regard such music from a standpoint that will allow of faithful description. We have first to disregard our well-trained feelings towards consonances and dissonances. We have next to banish to the margins of our field of consciousness certain aspects of music, which, were it our own music, would occupy the very focus of attention*. Thus incomprehensibility will gradually give place to meaning, and dislike to some interesting emotion. (Myers 1907, 249, emphasis added)[8]

Again, what needs to be suspended or undone in order to allow for a faithful description of the music, namely, the culturally saturated bias of musical consciousness, comes down primarily to the judgment of tones as exhibited by musically trained individuals. Stumpf explained this judgment in terms of 'analysis': characterizing musical sound by being proficient in curbing tonal fusion in sound sensation.

As a culturally contracted condition of the mind, the bias of music consciousness needs to be reckoned with as a way of hearing inscribed in a particular notation for a particular musical language. This way of hearing and its inscription are embedded in a common practice of music and the various aspects of a culture that sustains it. Stumpf was crystal clear about this when he wrote in *Origins of Music*: "Let us take as a basis for the hypothesis the oft-pronounced thought, which also presides over books, that all arts are born from the praxis of life. The formula in Goethe's *Faust* ought to be ours: 'In the beginning was the deed'" (Stumpf 2012, 68). The line from Goethe resounded with the later Wittgenstein (OC, §402; CV, 36), and the quote as a whole anticipates Wittgenstein's later thinking on grounding knowledge and language in illimitable

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[8] It is noteworthy that Myers uses here the term "standpoint" to describe the condition of musical comprehension for non-Western music that one strives to gain. This concept is taken directly from Stumpf's description (1883, 149) of what is unique about musically able listeners, namely, their ability to attribute any notes they hear to an implicit musical schema of tone relations.

ways of acting. That Stumpf's ideas about music consciousness find echoes in later Wittgenstein become less surprising when we remember that those ideas were part and parcel of Wittgenstein's initiation into Myers's laboratory.[9]

4. Language as Music: Wittgenstein's Simile in Context

Of all the early remarks on music contained in Wittgenstein's *Notebooks 1914-1916*, only one made the cut to the published version of the *Tractatus*, yet importantly, in a peculiarly truncated form and with significant modification of the terms.[10] In this original singular remark, Wittgenstein introduced for the first time the philosophically potent simile of language as music – a simile that proved significant for his philosophical development in the years to come.[11] In this early remark the simile takes the form of an analogy between "a word mixture" and "a tone mixture":

The sentence is not a word mixture (NB, 41 [5.4.15]).[12]

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[9] Myers (1907) clearly concurs with Stumpf's scientific agenda concerning the overlapping of the study of tone differentiation and the study of non-Western music. Importantly, he also explicitly shares Stumpf's conviction that the study of non-Western music requires the researcher to be a musician.

[10] The other remark on music in the *Tractatus* is the gramophone analogy (TLP, 4.014-4.0141), which I discuss in section six below. However, the gramophone analogy did not originate in the early *Notebooks* and it was added only very late to the 1922 bi-lingual edition upon the request of C. K. Ogden, the translator.

[11] I discuss this developmental aspect extensively in my new book. See Guter (forthcoming).

[12] I have modified the translation. Some unfortunate misconceptions ensue from unchecked translations of the musical terms in Wittgenstein's early texts. For the sake of clarity and consistency, I opt for the following standard translation of the musical terms: *Melodie* = melody; *musikalische Thema* = musical theme; *Ton* = tone; *Satz* = sentence. It should be noted that the German word "Satz" has both a logical sense and a musical sense, which are crucially different. See Nordmann (2005, 16) concerning the proper translation of the colloquial word *Satz* in Wittgenstein's early writings. It is important to acknowledge Arthur MacIver's firsthand impression from his interactions with Wittgenstein in Cambridge that "[Wittgenstein's] 'Satz' should really be translated 'sentence,' with the sense extended in the same way in which he extends the sense of

Nor is a melody a tone mixture, as all unmusical people think (NB, 41 [11.4.15]).[13]

A sentence in language is like a melody insofar as neither is a mixture. Thinking of a melody in terms of a "tone mixture" is typical, Wittgenstein adds, of unmusical (*unmusikalisch*) people. Two things about this remark immediately draw one's attention: we require a proper understanding of "tone mixture" (a rather strange coinage, both in the original German and also in English), as well as Wittgenstein's peculiar reference to "unmusical people."

Read out of context, one might be tempted to brush aside the underlying distinction here between musical people and unmusical people as a condescending, perhaps typically Viennese *façon de parler* on the part of the young Wittgenstein. For surely even unmusical people can recognize a melodic contour, as this is necessary also for grasping intonation in speech, for example. Being unmusical is not being tone- or tune-deaf, as is apparent in people with congenital amusia (Peretz 2013).[14] A melodic contour is related first and foremost to singableness. As Schoenberg pointed out, "a melody could hardly include unmelodious elements; the concept of the melodious is intimately related to the concept of singableness. The nature and technique of the primordial musical instrument, the voice, determines what is singable" (Schoenberg 1999, 98). In Western music, an entire organon for composing melodies follows from the intrinsic relation between melody and the human voice: the use of long notes, smooth linkage of registers, avoiding leaps, employment of natural intervals of a key while avoiding augmented

'language'" (McGuinness 2016, 221). I also opt for the translation of the German word *Gemisch* as mixture (as suggested by Ogden with Wittgenstein's approval) rather than blend.

[13] I have modified the translation. Anscombe mistranslated *Tongemisch* as "a blend of notes." Not only does her translation fail to capture the idiosyncrasy of the original German, but it also falls prey to the manner in which colloquial English tends to obfuscate the difference in music between a tone and its graphic designation in the score.

[14] The congenital condition of *amusia* is a particular type of auditory agnosia in which only the perception of music is impaired. A person afflicted with this condition is usually unable to discriminate the pitch of two successive tones, and he also may fail to recognize familiar melodies, carry a tune, or keep musical time. Such a disabled person usually exhibits an overall indifference towards music and an inability across the board to take part in any aspect of music-making.

and diminished intervals, gradual modulation and so forth. Additional restrictions derive from the registers of the voice and from peculiarities of intonation. Johannes Brahms put it very simply in a phrase Wittgenstein might have heard and undoubtedly would have appreciated: "The melody of a song should be such that one could whistle it" (Schoenberg 1999, 99).

Yet the point is that unmusical people may not whistle a melody very well, but this in and of itself has absolutely nothing to do with the notion of a judgment of tones, as implied in Wittgenstein's suggestion that unmusical people think of a melody in terms of a 'tone mixture.' Given Wittgenstein's exposure to the study of music at Myers's laboratory, the original remark in the *Notebooks*, penned not more than two years after his two-year stint as researcher in the laboratory, is anomalous insofar as the analogy between language and music appears much more robust than what is usually granted. This anomaly calls for scholarly attention.

Stumpf afforded Wittgenstein with a clear understanding of the connection between being non-musical and failing in tone judgement. Reacting directly to the degree of tonal fusion, nonmusical people practically get lost in the territory of music. According to Stumpf, they have no clear, fixed signposts of acoustic geodesy within musical contexts. Hence, their judgment of tones is flawed, and so they are unable to participate competently in musical practices. It stands to reason that Wittgenstein conceived of the odd term 'tone mixture' (*Tongemisch*) in relation to Stumpf's notion of 'tonal fusion' (*Tonverschmelzung*). It is in this sense that a melody can be coherently said to be a *Tongemisch* for nonmusical people; for, as pointed out above, even nonmusical people can still recognize the contour of a melody as such and may even attempt to whistle it (albeit not quite successfully). As a false judgment of tones, however, the tone mixture is due to tonal fusion unchecked by the 'musical' features of music. As a consequence, the judgment fails to characterize tone distance as intervals, i.e., as musically relevant distances.

This lends an ineliminable emphasis—which lay at the core of Stumpf's theorizing—on the culturally embedded activity of characterizing or phrasing the pitch values in a certain way given a particular mode of characterization, namely, the culturally-contracted reference scheme of Western tonal music. Understanding

a given melody as such, i.e., not as a "tone mixture," amounts to being acquainted with a possibility as something real. Necessity (as in Stumpf's idea of the "music-infected consciousness") is bestowed by means of a proper characterization, and characterization is something that we do. It includes concocting appropriate forms of charactery, such as systems of musical notation. This is the inevitable lesson from Stumpf's (and Myers's) ethnological study of music: we can rephrase and requalify anything we hear. This means that truth or falsity in the judgment of tones hinges upon the individuation of one among many possible ways of hearing. Such individuation turns out to be an ineliminable exercise we require of one another when we learn to play and hear.[15]

The anomaly in Wittgenstein's original simile of language as music emerges when we consider what would be the analog in the realm of language for being unmusical in that sense. Wittgenstein does not say in the original *Notebooks* remarks, nor in his recasting of these remarks in the *Tractatus*. While both a melody and a sentence in language are clearly said not to be a mixture of their respective elements, the direction of the simile is also clear: that a sentence in language is not a word mixture just as a melody is not a tone mixture, as nonmusical people think. Yet if Wittgenstein took his initial lead from Stumpf concerning unmusical people, then it is also clear that sentences and melodies are not mixtures of their respective elements in quite the same sense, *pace* the author of the *Tractatus*.

The absence of an analog in the realm of language for being unmusical stands out. As I pointed out at the end of section two, nonmusical people (in Stumpf's sense) are aspect-blind (in Wittgenstein's sense). They have no access to the musical cartography, which is the acquired, culturally embedded presets of what Stumpf called "music consciousness." They consequently cannot characterize what they hear musically, in a living way. Yet in the realm of language, the analog of meaning-blindness far exceeds the framework of the *Tractatus*. According to Day, being meaning-blind is as though one comes to adopt a rather static view of the connection between words and their systematic implications, and begins to

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[15] This is also where Stumpf's onetime medicalized metaphor of 'music-infected consciousness' falls short: becoming afflicted is anything but passive.

imagine that the field of our words has long been surveyed, at least in a given instance. One succumbs to "a kind of fixed literal-mindedness in taking in the world" (Day 2010, 218-219).

Perplexingly, in the *Tractatus* the idea of a sentence not being a mixture of words cannot be fully analogous to what is musical about its musical counterpart. Indeed, saying that a sentence is not a word mixture amounts to saying that "the sentence is articulate" (TLP, 3.141).[16] The idea that a sentence is articulate means that it has structure: a sentence is a determinate combination of elements.[17] Of course, the melody is articulate in quite the same sense. If a melody did not inhere in a structure from the start, that is, if its constituent parts were supposed to be tones *qua* mere pitch values, then understanding a melody would have amounted to being able to discriminate a physically measurable difference in frequency.[18] It is as if one would reduce all language to some physical set of noises—the kind of reduction that Wittgenstein clearly set himself to reject when thinking in terms of articulate pictures.[19]

Yet the idea of a melody as a structure remains very thin (that is, aptly logical) in the sense that it does not (and is not supposed to) tell us anything about any particular capacities of any particular musical language. Importantly, the philosophical lesson from Stumpf and Myers was that the answer to the question what the musical features of music are requires an emphasis on the ineliminable importance of the culturally situated capacity for a myriad of enormously complex techniques of characterizing needed to communicate musically. Within the

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[16] While the reference is to C. K. Ogden's translation, I regularly consult also the translation by Pears and McGuinness, and I modify the translation where I deem necessary.

[17] Wittgenstein later underscored the notion of structure here in a comment to his translator C. K. Ogden: "Propositions do not consist of words in that sense in which a colour which a painter uses consists of different tints. I.e. that the prop[osition] isn't a mixture of words in the sense in which a colour may be a mixture of other colours" (LO, 24).

[18] "A tone must have *some* pitch" (PT, 2.0142; TLP, 2.0131).

[19] This is also incongruent with Stumpf's findings (which have been assimilated into Myers's work) that the fundamental difference between nonmusical and expert subjects was not the latter's ability to discern frequencies, but rather their consistent reference to a given pitch value as a point of orientation to the closest interval.

Tractatus framework, a melody can be said to a structure only if one takes for granted that all those arbitrary correlations between signs and objects have already been taken care of and have been fixed. This is where we can observe the almost inevitable elision in the *Tractatus* of musicality understood (via Stumpf and Myers) as inhering precisely in the arbitrariness of such correlations.

In the *Tractatus*, the importance of internal projective relations far exceeds that of arbitrariness in language. According to Floyd (2018, 373-374), "the *Tractatus* aimed to assure, with one grand gesture, that the possibility of all possibilities, of all possible parametrizations, *must* work out, inscribed in the schematic structure of the general form of proposition. […] The *Tractatus* idea is that what belongs to logic as such shows forth anyway, regardless of what we do in concocting particular forms of charactery and characterization." The elision of musicality in the *Tractatus* can be seen as in accordance with the incentive to belittle the specific techniques of characterization involved in symbolizations and representations of all kinds.

Importantly, Wittgenstein does allow for a glimpse of an open-ended notion of the human organism and the facts most directly relevant to human life.

> Colloquial language is a part of the human organism and is no less complicated than it. […] The silent adjustments to understand colloquial language are enormously complicated. (TLP, 4.002)

As Tejedor noted, this is a precursor to Wittgenstein's later notion of a form of life (Tejedor 2015; cf. PI, 15 §23). The facts relevant to human life include the facts concerning our physical environment, biology and psychology – facts which play out differently in our differently enculturated forms of life. The acknowledgment of the enormous complexity pertaining to the facts of human life is there in the *Tractatus* for Wittgenstein to lean on, but the matter itself remains underdeveloped until the anthropological turn in Wittgenstein's middle-period, which enabled him to bring in a more articulate sense of the arbitrary. The language-as-music simile certainly inspired Wittgenstein's idea of articulateness, yet my point is that within the framework of the *Tractatus*, musicality, at least in the sense that he learned at Myers's laboratory, ended up being bracketed as belonging to those enormously complicated "silent adjustments to understand colloquial language."

5. Toward the *Tractatus*: Paring Down the Simile

The original language-as-music simile suggested in the *Notebooks* was bound to be challenged within the emerging *Tractatus* framework, which required the suppression of the philosophically potent underlying Stumpfian distinction between musical and unmusical people. Wittgenstein's grappling with the original simile is evident in his textual alterations and editing decisions in the course of the complex transition from the early remarks in the *Notebooks* to the *Prototractatus*, and then to the ultimate bilingual publication of the *Tractatus* in 1922. In this section I offer a close reading of the process by which he pared down the original simile.

It is noteworthy that in the *Notebooks* the two sides of the simile are actually disjointed. There is the thought about a sentence in language, and then there is the juxtaposed thought about a melody – a significant qualifying afterthought, which in fact was entered only a week later. The belated addition betokens a disjunctive mood, rendering the latter entry, the *secundum comparatum*, much more suggestive and philosophically potent, as argued in the previous sections.

The corresponding remarks in the *Prototractatus* attest to an effort to deal with the inherent tension that Stumpf's notion of musicality introduced. This tension is now brought into sharper focus as a result of some modifications and additions in the text:

> The sentence is not a word mixture. [–] (Just as the melody [just like
> the musical theme] is not a mixture of tones.)
> The musical theme is a sentence.
> The sentence is articulate. (PT, 3.1602-3)[20]

The language-as-music simile is retained, now welded together with an insert of the word *wie* (just like), yet the *secundum comparatum* (music) is placed in parentheses in order to reduce tension. Moreover, Wittgenstein deliberately distanced himself from Stumpf's theory by both dropping the philosophically

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[20] I have modified the translation.

potent reference to "unmusical people" and replacing the odd, seemingly technical term *Tongemisch* with the more colloquial phrase *Gemisch von Tönen*. But now Wittgenstein is found oscillating between referring to a melody, as in the original remark in the *Notebooks*, and to a musical theme. Again, this seems reasonable if he wanted to distance himself even further from Stumpf's theory, which was primarily focused on tone judgment and paid little attention to the structure of musical works.

Wittgenstein also inserted a modified fragment from an earlier remark in the *Notebooks*, saying that the musical theme is a sentence (PT, 3.16021).[21] This modified fragment is in fact one of thirty-one remarks of the *Prototractatus* that were not incorporated into the *Tractatus*. And then there is the appearance of the desideratum for the comparison with music, the idea that a sentence is articulate. This idea is culled from an earlier remark in the *Notebooks* saying that "language is articulated" (NB, 40 [29.1.15]). That remark immediately precedes (was entered a week before) the original remark that "musical themes are in a certain sense sentences."

The first thing to observe in the transition of ideas from the *Notebooks* to the *Prototractatus* is this: what is designated in the *Prototractatus* sequence as a desideratum was in fact the originating thought for the original sequence in the *Notebooks*. Hence, only by a fallacy of equivocation can one reach the idea of logical articulation from a comparison between a sentence in language and a melody. However, Wittgenstein's consideration of the term 'musical theme' instead of 'melody' generates additional tension. There is a conceptual difference between a melody and a musical theme, which is perhaps emulated by the idiosyncratic distinction that Wittgenstein suggested in the *Notebooks*.[22] In a strictly musical sense, a melody is independent and self-determined—it requires no addition, continuation or elaboration. It would therefore be reasonable to say, as Wittgenstein did, that "it is complete in itself; it satisfies itself" (NB, 40

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[21] This is a resolute version of the rather tentative and ambiguous earlier remark that "musical themes are *in a certain sense* sentences [*Sätze*]" (NB, 40 [7.2.15], emphasis added).

[22] As I pointed out earlier, Wittgenstein (NB, 40) differentiated between a musical theme ("musical themes are *in a certain* sense sentences," emphasis added) and a melody ("a melody *is a kind* of tautology," emphasis added). Both remarks did not make the cut to the *Tractatus*.

[4.3.15]). However, a theme is strictly bound to consequences that have to be drawn and without which it may appear insignificant. A theme, even when it is a melody in itself, is conceptually bound to a unified whole which is the entire piece. Every succession of tones produces some sort of unrest, conflict, puzzle or problem. Whereas a melody seeks to reestablish repose through balance, no such repose will be reached or even attempted in a theme: the latter will sharpen the problem, bring it to a point, or deepen it, as we may find, for example, in the music of Beethoven. In the succinct words of Schoenberg, "a melody can be compared to an 'aperçu', an 'aphorism', in its rapid advance from problem to solution. But a theme resembles rather a scientific hypothesis which does not convince without a number of tests, without presentation of proof" (Schoenberg 1999, 102).

The notion of musical theme befits Wittgenstein's post-Tractarian notion of logical depth. In the *Big Typescript* he wrote: "When I understand it, a proposition acquires depth for me" (BT, 7). He explicates this notion of depth by considering the manner in which our understanding of a sentence relates to the unfolding of a story in which the sentence appears: "I would know, for instance, how one could use this sentence, I could come up with a context of my own for it [...] And yet I don't understand it in the way I would understand it if I had read the story up to that point" (BT, 7). According to Floyd, the point here is that "the very same form of words, absent stage-setting and a context in which we see their point, can individuate no specific truth-value, can characterize no definite action, situation or intention" (Floyd 2018, 377). The same, I suggest, can equally be said of the musical theme, as described above. Without having played this particular piece, without having entered into that musical game itself, the theme (and the possibilities it may be used to reveal) can acquire no "depth" for me.

Wittgenstein's tentative opting for the term 'musical theme' (instead of 'melody') draws attention to the acts of phrasing and characterizing by which an entire musical piece is made surveyable.[23] If so, then the musical sense of the term 'musical theme' is again too robust for the *Tractatus* framework and needs to be curbed. Consider the ambiguity that Wittgenstein's singular addition in the *Prototractatus* generates: "The musical theme is a sentence" (PT, 3.16021). In a

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[23] Cf. "In Mathematics, Ethics, Aesthetics, Philosophy, answer to a puzzle is to make a synopsis possible" (WLM, 9:39).

strictly musical sense, this claim is correct. A musical sentence not only makes a statement of an idea, but at once starts a kind of development. Hence a musical theme is typically a musical sentence, whereas a melody is not. However, if we opt for thinking of the term *Satz* in the logical mode, then we find that it is too restrictive musically. A musical theme—as thought out by composers and made heard in the playing—has valences, strengths, roles, specific qualities. Again, it is bound to consequences which have to be drawn, and without which it may appear insignificant. This clearly exceeds the idea of logical articulation asserted next in paragraph 3.1603. A retrograde reading of the remark in paragraph 3.16021, that is, rendering the notion of a musical sentence from within the general outlook that "language is articulated," forcing the *logical* mode upon the idea of a *musical* sentence, stultifies musicality.[24]

The transition from the *Prototractatus* to the *Tractatus* reveals Wittgenstein's final attempt to tame down the language-as-music simile:

> The sentence is not a word mixture.—(Just as the musical theme is not a mixture of tones.)
>
> The sentence is articulate. (TLP, 3.141, trans. modified)

The belabored comparison between a sentence in language and a musical theme is retained, but the problematic claim that the musical theme is a sentence (in the logical mode) is dropped altogether in order to reduce tension. Keeping the *secundum comparatum* (music) in parentheses further curtails the simile. Thus, the allusion to music in paragraph 3.141 rhetorically becomes nothing more than a pointer for the idea of logical articulation. The highly potent language-as-music simile has thereby been pared down to accommodate the idea of logical structure.

6. The Gramophone Analogy: The Elision of Musicality

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[24] In the corresponding tentative remark in the *Notebooks*, forcing the logical mode upon the idea of a musical sentence led to the striking consequence that "knowledge of the nature of logic will *for this reason* lead to knowledge of the nature of music" (NB, 40 [7.2.15], emphasis added). Wittgenstein eventually jettisoned the claim that the musical theme is a sentence (in the logical mode), suppressing ipso facto this onetime suggestion concerning our knowledge of the nature of music as well. Never again did Wittgenstein opt for such, or as a matter of fact, any generalized definition of the nature of music.

At the heart of the *Tractatus* we find music again, this time in the form of the gramophone analogy (TLP, 4.014-4.0141). It is easy to see how the notion of structure plays out in Wittgenstein's gramophone analogy, which is designed to exemplify his picture theory. The gramophone analogy consists of a comparison between four things: the musical score, the musical thought, the music (problematically referred to alternately as sound-waves and as a symphony), and the gramophone record. "To all the logical structure is common. […] They are all in a sense one" (TLP, 4.014).[25] The analogy is supposed to elucidate Wittgenstein's idea that language stands in an internal relation of depicting to the world. He maintains that we can recognize that there is an essential link between these otherwise very different things: given any one of them, we can derive the others from it by means of a law of projection. Wittgenstein suggests that we might think of this general rule as equivalent to a rule for translating from one language to another. In this sense, Wittgenstein sees the musical score, the musical thought, the music, and the gramophone record as mutually translatable languages.

The gramophone analogy is a late addition to the train of thought that began in the original language-as-music simile in the *Notebooks* and that thereafter was gradually pared down by means of textual alterations and editing. In fact, the bulk of the analogy (TLP, 4.0141), originally glossed as "Supplement no. 72," was one of about a hundred scraps that Wittgenstein was unsure whether to incorporate into his work or not. He removed most of them before handing the typescript to the original Austrian publisher. "Supplement no. 72" was redacted from the 1921 Ostwald Print, only to be reinserted quite reluctantly into the final form of the *Tractatus* upon the request of C. K. Ogden during the proofing stage in 1922. This

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[25] Musical thought inexplicably drops out of consideration in the supplemented second part of the analogy, which I discuss below. It is noteworthy that the original German says "Ihnen allen ist der logische Bau gemeinsam." The word *Bau* means construction, not structure. McGuinness translates this as "they are all constructed according to a common logical pattern." While there is oblique reference to their having the same structure, the phrase is indeed inflected in such a way as to put an emphasis on the actual process of construction, which above all befits the idea of musical thought. Dropping musical thought in the editing process of the final version of the gramophone analogy is yet another piece of textual evidence for the elision of musicality.

was done without too much hope on the part of Wittgenstein that it could elucidate anything in the manuscript.[26]

The shorter, first part of the gramophone analogy (TLP, 4.014) appeared already in the *Prototractatus* (PT, 4.01141-4.011411). It is noteworthy that in the *Prototractatus* the gramophone analogy is preceded by the claim that "[t]he possibility of all similes, of all the imagery of our language, rests on the logic of representation" (PT, 4.0101; cf. TLP, 4.015). According to Floyd (2018), this claim harbors the idea that what belongs to logic as such shows forth anyway, regardless of what we do in concocting particular forms of charactery and characterization. Yet in the *Tractatus* the order is reversed, and the gramophone analogy comes first. In effect, whatever Wittgenstein was trying to spell out by means of this analogy has already been predisposed by this view of logic. Indeed, as Sterrett (2005) suggests, the primacy of logical form and internal similarity in the *Tractatus* framework could also explain why Wittgenstein chose as an example the (then) relatively new technology of the gramophone over other well-known technologies at the time whose similarity was visual or geometrical.

Wittgenstein's opting for the gramophone as a technology for mechanical reproduction seems apt for its designated purpose. Yet, as Kramer (2012, 131-132) points out, the gramophone effaces itself in the idealizing of the music, and this depends on foreclosing uncertainty. That is, with the notion of musicality comes also all that could go wrong in performance, but that risk cannot be archived by the technology. Thus, the striking thing about the gramophone analogy—surely, to any practicing musician—is that it comes across as conspicuously unmusical.[27] This is due first and foremost to Wittgenstein's explicit appeal (in the supplemented second part of the analogy) to the existence of rules by which one representation can be obtained from another. According to Sterrett (2005), the key notion here is translation: the mapping from a meaningful entity in one language to a meaningful entity in another language. However, the idea of isomorphism glosses over

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[26] See WS, LPA Ostwald Print 1921 (ÖNB, Cod.Ser.n.39.597), 213av; LO, 26, 39-40, 46.

[27] Sterrett (2005). I maintain that all of Wittgenstein's subsequent allusions to the gramophone hinge upon the blatant unmusicality of the mechanism. See Guter (forthcoming).

profound asymmetries between the various tasks involved in each intermediary step of the inter-translation as posited in the gramophone analogy.

Consider performing a symphony from a score versus deriving a score from a performance of a symphony. From a musical standpoint, there is no simple, mechanical reversibility here as in the intermediary steps of recording and playback. Both intermediate steps depend on human agency, but the required musical tasks, skills and sensitivities are profoundly different. Performing a symphony from a score calls for interpretation, phrasing, and characterizing of a situated performance of the symphony, expressing specific choices in real time by the performers in the given acoustic space. Identical renditions are impossible (or at least, unimportant). Only new realizations matter. This is a practice familiar to many, performers and audience alike.

However, deriving the musical score from a given performance of a symphony is a highly specific and rare feat. It calls for outstanding dictation skills, which are not so common even among professional musicians. The process is prone to many inaccuracies and unforeseeable anomalies due to built-in limitations of the notational system, different possible ways of notating certain musical elements (even concerning the same pitch, as in the case of enharmonic spelling), specific difficulties concerning choral dictations, and diversities due to agogic stress and phrasing in the actual performance. Most importantly, deriving a score from performance is a highly specialized task which normally serves a particularly professional purpose: practicing, sketching, capturing an aspect of the music for future reference, and so forth.

Thus, viewed from the standpoint of music, the purported isomorphism is inevitably cluttered and unevenly parsed by the enormously complicated conventions and activities on which musical understanding depends. The gramophone analogy is sustained by glossing over the human agency involved in music-making. That is, the analogy suppresses the fact, known to Wittgenstein all too well, that music is commonly bestowed upon us by virtue of the mutual tuning-in relationships between musically trained individuals in performance. In this

sense, the 'musician' alluded to in the gramophone analogy is a precursor to Wittgenstein's later discussion of the possibility of a "human reading machine."[28]

From the standpoint of logical structure, Sterrett (2005) points out, the features of the symphony must be only those features of the symphony that are used in applying the rule by which the score is obtained from the symphony. The isomorphism is based upon just those features of the symphony that can be projected onto the score. Hence only what is relevant to the mode of depiction belongs to the logical structure shared by the depiction and the depicted. This would mean that the peculiarities of an individual performance, unless they are captured in both the musical score and the gramophone lines, are not considered part of the logical structure of the symphony performance. Since any individual performance is patently underdetermined by the score—in common-practice era music to various degrees, and even more so in ancient and contemporary notation (e.g., graphic notation)—this comes down to a meagre image of music in terms of pure inter-translatability.

Furthermore, on this account, whichever musical notation is used dictates what is and is not included in the logical structure of the symphony. As Sterrett (2005) notes, this has an interesting consequence: the logical structure of the symphony is not something independent of language and absolute, but relative to the musical notation used to depict it. Yet, as I argued in the previous sections, a crucial lesson from Stumpf's and Myers's comparative study of non-Western music was that the built-in limitations of the musical notation that we use embody our open-ended culturally contracted mental presets that allow for music to be appreciated musically. Wittgenstein remained silent on this matter due to the need in the *Tractatus* framework to reflect on the idea of a common logical form. The bracketing of musicality (and the distinction between musical and unmusical people) among all other deep seated complex human competencies, which extend to the very capability of language itself (see TLP, 4.002), allows for a neat

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[28] See PI §156 and my discussion (Guter, forthcoming) of the affinity between the allusion to the gramophone in the *Tractatus* and the allusion to the pianola in Wittgenstein's later writings.

presentation of the picture theory by drawing out the specter of technology within music.

7. The Later Wittgenstein: Persisting Themes from Stumpf

Most striking about the cluster of early remarks discussed in this essay is the fact that it not only sets the language-as-music simile for the first time in Wittgenstein's oeuvre, but also discloses his early awareness of its philosophically significant direction: language is to be compared to music. The simile was to become a staple of his later philosophy, culminating in his assertion that "understanding a sentence is much more akin to understanding a theme in music than one may think" (PI, 151 §527; cf. BB, 167ff). As Cavell pointed out, in the context of Wittgenstein's later philosophy, the very invocation of the understanding of a musical theme as a guide to philosophical understanding invokes the promise of an understanding without meanings, "a utopian glimpse of a new, or undiscovered, relation to language, to its sources in the world, to its means of expression" (Cavell 2022, 261).

In Wittgenstein's later writings, thinking about language as music became part and parcel not only of his multifarious considerations of meaning, understanding and aspects, but also, and importantly so, of his treatment of the experience of meaning. That which pertains to music is fundamentally aspectual, a matter of characterization, the coming into view of a scheme of possibilities for characterization. Hence, in its full bloom, the simile allows Wittgenstein to bring to the fore all that is fluid, non-mechanical, embedded in ways of life, incalculable and indeterminate in language, first and foremost gesture and expression.

I argued elsewhere (Guter 2020) that the language-as-music simile virtually covers the physiognomic master simile of "aspect in logic as a face"—which, according to Floyd (2018), has been suppressed in the *Tractatus* only to emerge and prosper in Wittgenstein's later thinking. Floyd argues that as part of Wittgenstein's attempt to refashion Russell's notion of acquaintance, Wittgenstein developed early on a simile likening the notion of an 'aspect' in logic to the 'look' or 'character' of a face. A face is a dense field of significance, but to be acquainted with it, some mode of characterization—verbal or gestural or otherwise—must

occur. There must emerge a field of valence and possibility and contrast. This master simile, which returned Russellian acquaintance to its everyday home – namely, the sense in which we may be acquainted with a person – has propelled and shaped the evolution of Wittgenstein's philosophy ever since.[29]

The blooming of these two 'sister similes' attends the anthropological turn in Wittgenstein's philosophy. That turn takes place in the aftermath of the *Tractatus*, beginning in the early 1930s and becoming much clearer after 1933. Wittgenstein's transition toward the anthropological view, which characterizes his philosophy from the *Philosophical Investigations* onwards, involved his moving away from logical atomism (the doctrine that all meaningful discourse can be analyzed into logically independent elementary propositions) to logical holism (the thesis that analysis leads to systems of logically related propositions and that language is a formal system of rules), and then from logical holism to practical holism (the view that our coping with things and people in and through language can only be meaningful in specific contexts and against the background of shared practices).[30]

With the anthropological turn, Wittgenstein brought in the notion of a form of life – a notion only incipient in the *Tractatus*. In so doing, Wittgenstein returned to the fundamental lesson from Stumpf about musicality which had been elided in the *Tractatus*. That lesson concerned the significance of the ability to characterize,

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[29] On the reading I follow here, aspects in Wittgenstein's sense are not aestheticized. This makes the notion of aspect fundamental to all of Wittgenstein's later thoughts about language rather than something pertaining merely to aesthetics or the philosophy of mind, as it is usually read. Aspects are to be seen in the sense that "aspect-phrasing serve us essentially in our ability to draw meaningful distinctions between characterizations and properties, discoveries and inventions, appearances and realities, possibilities and necessities" (Floyd 2021, 5). The constant connection of music with aspects in Wittgenstein's thinking suggests a connection in his later work between the articulation of genuinely musical characteristics and the articulation meaningful characteristics of thought in language. The connection also suggests that aspects should not be restricted to aesthetic elements of the philosophy of mind – a misunderstanding arising from a focus on the second part of the *Philosophical Investigations*. The present essay is not primarily taking a stand on the difference between the first and the second parts of the *Philosophical Investigations*, which is a topic for another paper.

[30] See Stern (1991).

and of the specific ways we characterize, including the choices and the risks that we take in characterizing. It was a lesson that enabled him to develop fully the analogy between the articulation of genuinely musical characteristics and meaningful characteristics of thought in language, as seen in the comparison in the *Philosophical Investigations* between understanding a musical theme and understanding a sentence in language.[31]

Wittgenstein also returns to the notion of nonmusical people in his later philosophy. The conspicuously absent analog to the nonmusical person in the realm of language was to be addressed explicitly in Wittgenstein's later writings as aspect-blindness. Aspect-blindness included the lack of ability to experience the meaning of words, which Wittgenstein literally compared to lacking a musical ear.[32] This was complemented by Wittgenstein's continued interest, originating from Stumpf's comparative study of the music of non-Western peoples, in the difficulty involved in acquiring and accommodating 'alternative presets' for understanding church (or ancient) modes that had existed before the common-practice era in Western music.[33] The manner and function of this later view draws upon a persisting theme from Stumpf, who, we may recall, not only pitched the study of nonmusical people as a foil to understanding musicality, but also described the nonmusical person as wandering aimlessly within musical contexts, having no "clear, fixed signposts of acoustic geodesy." Given the far-reaching implications of Wittgenstein's notion of aspect-blindness concerning language and the mind, it

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[31] It is noteworthy that introducing musicality into the discussion of language is not a slippery slope to relativism. Aspects open up space for the discoveries that are possible to make in philosophy and logic, not just in the arts. Aspects also open up space for the kinds of things that people may miss. The whole trajectory from the *Tractatus* to Wittgenstein's later philosophy hinges upon opening up the realm of possibilities that allows for more to be seen. The *Tractatus* remains rigid about this. Wittgenstein remains in some way an absolutist about the totality of possibilities, whereas in the later philosophy it is more open-ended. But that does not mean relativism.

[32] See RPPI, 100 §§ 782-784; PI, 225 §260.

[33] Wittgenstein first mentioned the problem of understanding a church mode in 1930 in the context of discussing the issue of noticing an aspect, then again in 1933 in the context of discussing his experiments at Myers's laboratory. The issue was evoked later in *Philosophical Investigations* (in the context of the language-as-music simile), as well as in other subsequent writings. See PR, 281 §224; WLM, 9:41; PI, 152 §535; RPPI, 118 §639.

becomes even more important to realize that Stumpf's notion of musicality is at play here. It may also undercut the tendency to reify aspect-blindness as some sort of clinically diagnosable syndrome.[34] Instead, it supports the opposite view, which sees aspect-blindness as something quite familiar to us and people we have met (Schulte 1990, 68-70).

Indeed, the persisting idea, which can be most recognizably traced back to Stumpf, is Wittgenstein's radical move to assert the interaction of language (speech) and music (CV, 58-60). The first occurrence of this move took place already in the aftermath of the *Tractatus* in 1929, while he was in conversation with members of the Vienna Circle:

> In musical thinking there actually survives an element of sentence-intonation, of the rhythm of accented and unaccented syllables, of pausing for breath, even of question and exclamation – hence too the inclination to search for words to go with music. Music has developed from singing, it is a kind of prolongation of language, and that is important because *it shows how language trails off into what no longer would be called language*. (VW, 395, emphasis added)

Wittgenstein evokes here Stumpf's view, handed down to him by Myers, that music developed from primitive song, preserving elements such as the rise and fall of pitch that have a clear analogy to the movements of emotional speech.[35] Throughout his career, Wittgenstein retained a distinctly ethnomusicological fascination with the speech-like character of music, which he found, for example, in: Bach's music and in the double bass recitative in the fourth movement of Beethoven's ninth symphony (CV, 40); or in the unusual importance that people seem to have attached to the way in which Josef Labor's organ playing was reminiscent of speaking (CV, 71). Wittgenstein realized that understanding music means that "the [musical] theme is a new part of our language, it becomes incorporated in it; we learn a new gesture" (CV, 59). Yet this introduces the

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[34] See Baz's (2020, 29 n. 38, 44) emphasis on the case of Schneider, the patient of Goldstein and Gelb whose case is central to Merleau-Ponty's exposition of the phenomenological perspective.
[35] See Sully (1886, 585) and Myers (2013, 1:53).

ineliminable interrelatedness of language games and the ultimate embeddedness of gesture in "the whole field of our language games" (CV, 59).[36]

Thus, the most enduring, and by far the deepest theme carried over from Stumpf, is encapsulated in the quote from Goethe's *Faust*, which dawned upon both thinkers: "In the beginning was the deed." That theme propelled Wittgenstein in his later philosophy away from the initial orbit of the *Tractatus*.

8. Conclusion

In Arthur Conan Doyle's famous short story, "The Adventure of Silver Blaze," Sherlock Holmes solves the curious incident of the dog that did not bark in the nighttime by figuring out that the thief was no stranger to the dog. Similarly, in this essay I show that Wittgenstein's familiarity with the notion of musicality from his two-year stint as researcher at Myers's laboratory explains its eventual elision in the *Tractatus*.

What makes music in the *Tractatus* a curious incident indeed is the fact that Wittgenstein seems to have utilized music for the sole purpose of fleshing out the idea of logical form central to that text. This prompted a construal of Wittgenstein's view of music at the time of the *Tractatus* as musical formalism, understood along lines attributed to the work of Hanslick as the inseparability of form and content in music.[37] Hanslick famously contended that the content of music consists entirely

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[36] See my full discussion of interrelated language games in Guter (2017) and Guter (forthcoming).

[37] See Ahonen (2005), Appelqvist (2023) and Szabados (2014). It is noteworthy that there are no convincing historical grounds for associating Wittgenstein's view of music in the *Tractatus* with Hanslick's musical formalism and (through Hanslick) with Kant's aesthetics. There is an argument that Wittgenstein's early childhood exposure to "Brahmsian musical circles" at the Wittgenstein Palais in Vienna must have been the efficient cause for his purported adherence to Hanslick's musical formalism at the time of the *Tractatus*. But such an argument risks begging the question. Furthermore, recent studies related to the new scientifically edited translation of Hanslick's *On the Musically Beautiful* have determined that the common assumption about the existence of a historical Kant-Hanslick connection is false and misleading. See the introductory essays in Hanslick (2018) and Wilfing (2018). It is noteworthy that Appelqvist (2023) dropped the historical claim,

of "sonically moved forms" (*tönend bewegte Formen*) (Hanslick 2018, 40-41). Wittgenstein's ultimately pared down version of the language-as-music simile seems to corroborate this (TLP, 3.141). However, the interpretation I have presented has the advantage of showing that, given the progression of Wittgenstein's thinking at the time, musical forms can only be said to be "sonically moved" if we grant that all the arbitrary correlations at the bottom of our culturally-contracted reference scheme of Western tonal music have already been fixed, as if what Stumpf called "signposts of acoustic geodesy within musical contexts" consist in absolute simplicity, foreclosing indeterminacy and arbitrariness. I agree with Floyd (2018) that, from the point of view of the later Wittgenstein, such belittling of the specific techniques of characterization involved in symbolizations and representations of all kinds can be seen as a deep lacuna at the heart of the *Tractatus*. Thus, in a sense, the specter of absolute music appearing in the *Tractatus* is merely the corona that encircles the eclipse of the philosophical significance of musicality at that stage in the evolution of Wittgenstein's thinking.

In my reading, the elision of musicality in the *Tractatus* mirrors something that Wittgenstein later came see as a general difficulty with the *Tractatus* that was not so clear to him at the time when he wrote it: the idea that "colloquial language is a part of the human organism and is no less complicated than it" (TLP, 4.002). This idea remained an underdeveloped aspect of Wittgenstein's early philosophy. He had not yet seen in general, nor in the specific case of language, how to bring in a more articulate sense of the arbitrary.

If Wittgenstein struggled with these ideas and so kept them out of the *Tractatus* before later returning to them, then this, I maintain, was because in the *Tractatus*, having suppressed the importance of the specific ways we characterize, Wittgenstein was left without any way to develop the analogy between a musical theme and a sentence in language. He was able to do that later, in his middle period, when he brought back the idea of the anthropological form of life. Once the anthropological turn was made, it stands to reason that thinking about music and musicality became available to Wittgenstein as an excellent point of entry for that

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opting now for a broader philosophical outlook on the shared Kantian commitments of both Hanslick and Wittgenstein.

more dynamic field of concepts. Only then did Stumpf's ideas about musicality and characterization become central to his thinking about both logic and music. He was then able to utilize that sense of characterization to great philosophical effect in his later work.[38]

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