

For example, why would making a mark or communicating something to others be important apart from their contribution to other worthwhile ends, such as happiness, justice, beauty, love, and similar positive values? Even on this approach, then, the concept of radically evil motives remains problematic and disputed (for example, see Gaita 2000, ch. 3: “Evil beyond Vice”).

SEE ALSO FREEDOM OF THE WILL; HUMAN ACT; MOTIVE, UNCONSCIOUS.

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**MUSIC, PHILOSOPHY OF**

Initially, the term *music* (Lat. *musica*, Gr. μουσική) was employed in a broad sense to signify any human art over which the nine Muses presided. It was then gradually restricted in meaning to signify the fine art of combining vocal and instrumental sounds into rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic structure. It is generally regarded as the most moving emotionally of all the arts. This article explores in a summary fashion the positions of a number of philosophers on the nature, character, and import of music.

**Greek Thought.** Among available documents, the fragments of the Pythagoreans are the oldest. Their principal interest in music was to discern the mysterious role of number in the physico-mathematical order. By means of this investigation, they discovered three important truths about music: (1) tonal intervals can be described by fixed numerical relations; (2) harmony is produced by contraries (namely, high and low sounds); and (3) an analogy exists between geometric and musical harmony inasmuch as (a) musical harmony has a continuity similar to the continuity of various geometric figures and solids, and (b) musical harmonies can involve inverted proportions.

The divine origin of harmony and rhythm was emphasized by PLATO (427/8–347/8 BC), who argued that God has produced in humans the natural inclination to produce harmony and rhythm, not at random, but ultimately in imitation of spiritual harmony (*Ion* 534D, E). Mathematics, according to Plato, is of

considerable help in making a clear delineation of rhythms and harmonies (*Rep.* 400). In the *Laws* (812C), he describes music as “the movement of melodies imitating the soul agitated by the passions.” However, Plato, if interpreted as a dualist, can also be read as exhibiting a deep ambivalence concerning music. On the one hand, he issues warnings against music, given its ability to incite one’s passions. On the other hand, he commends music, recognizing that its ability to influence the soul, if used rightly, can play a significant role in the education of virtuous citizens. When the dualistic interpretation of Plato is emphasized, the universal structural aspects of music are set over against its particular, material features.

In general, ARISTOTLE (384–322 BC) accepts what his predecessors have said about music (*Pol.* 1340a 14–19; 1340b 5–10; 1341b 8–15, 23–40). In his extended consideration of music in the *Politics* (1339a 11–1342b 33), he discusses the role of music in the education of youth and in this context manifests certain formalities about music not previously recognized or made explicit. Aristotle agrees with the common view that music imitates the movement of human emotions (*Poet.* 1447a 20–25; *Pol.* 1340a 19–1340b 10). But since human emotions are related to human action, music imitates artistically human action as well, and therefore should first be examined in a general consideration of all the arts (*Poet.* 1447a 14–17).

In the extant writings of Aristotle, there is not much treatment of music distinctively as an art form. In some agreement with Plato, Aristotle recognizes that the formal principles for disposing musical matter are derived from mathematics; arithmetic provides number, which ensures proportion within and among rhythms and harmonies, and geometry serves as the foundation for conceiving and achieving musical coherence (cf. *Phys.* 194a 8; *Meta.* 1004a 6–8). Because of this special relation between music and mathematics, music is a distinct science and art (*Anal. post.* 76a 9–15, 23–25). Yet music has something in common with the arts of epic, tragedy, comedy, dithyrambic poetry, dancing, and painting (*Poet.* 1447a 20–1447b 15; 1448a 1–18; 1449a 1–12). From the general science of poetics, music derives the distinction of meters and their capacity for mutual order with a view to signifying epic, tragic, or comic action (ibid.). In this way, music can be understood to signify the order of human emotions as related particularly to these three types of action.

Since man is naturally inclined to be iambic in speech, Aristotle maintains that the iamb is the natural meter (*Poet.* 1449a 24–27). The external use of the iamb, however, is traceable to the human inclination to resolve problems; the iamb contains the sign of indecisiveness (the *arsis* or light measure) as its first part, with the sign of decisiveness (the *thesis* or weighty measure) as its second part. Thus iambic music, or music wherein the

iamb is the architectonic and regulating meter, is especially apt to help man develop his natural propensity to speak and move decisively, and, indirectly, to judge decisively (*Pol.* 1340a 16–19; 1340a 40–1340b 14; 1341a 3–9).

Aristotle goes on to discuss the musical *modes*, which are established by the proportion of harmony to rhythm (*Pol.* 1341a 17–1342b 17). Thus the Doric mode is the best for the training of young persons because the Doric harmonies have the best proportion to iambic meter, whereas the proportion of the Lydian harmonies to the iamb is not very clear and is, therefore, more suitable for very young children and elderly persons (*Pol.* 1342a 1–1342b 30).

**Plotinus and the Prescholastic Tradition.** PLOTINUS (AD 205–270) starts his examination of music by observing that its ulterior purpose is to bear the listener beyond nature, to the highest beauty, whereby the soul, being beautified, becomes like God (*Enneads* 1.6.6). More generally, however (and here Plotinus makes explicit a truth generally presupposed in Aristotle’s discussions), music has the poetic purpose of making man attentive to some truth that should be examined (ibid. 4.4.40). This it accomplishes by binding his irrational appetites. As regards the signification of the meters, Plotinus notes that the art concerning sounds is analogous to “intelligible rhythm” (ibid. 5.9.11).

The contributions of St. AUGUSTINE (AD 354–430) to traditional doctrine on music are considerable. Observing the proportion between musical continuity and the muscular control exercised by the singer, he describes music as “the science of good modulation.” Since this proportion has a similar effect upon the listener, he goes on to say that music is the science moving man “by the preserved dimensions of tempi and intervals” (*Musica* 1.2–3). On the basis of the foregoing, music is a principle whereby man can know, analogously, the harmony of God’s government (*Epist.* 166.5.13); and, from the knowledge of the immutable numbers in music, one can analogize to immutable Truth (*Musica* 6; *Retract.* 1.11). Following in the tradition of Plato (read as a dualist) and Plotinus, Augustine struggled with the sensuality of music and cautioned against taking in too much of its pleasure—a sure sign that reason has been usurped and that the passions were reigning.

In addition to his extensive consideration of the relation between mathematics and music, BOETHIUS (c. 480–524) distinguishes three types of music: (1) mundane, found especially in the phenomena of the heavens; (2) human, which gives the incorporeal vivacity of reason to the body and reconciles the rational and irrational parts of the soul; and (3) that which enables instruments to serve melody (*De instit. mus.* 1. 2). Ac-

cording to his description of “human” music, then, one purpose of music is to counteract sluggishness in the body and its faculties (ibid. 5.2).

Whether Boethius arrived at this conclusion on his own or because of his close friendship with CASSIODORUS (c. 485–580) is hard to discern. One of the best-read and most extensive writers on music during the early Middle Ages, Cassiodorus was more interested in proportion and harmony as achieved in musical works than under their strictly mathematical aspects. He describes music as “the discipline which examines the differences and accords among mutually congruous things, that is, sounds” (*Comm. in Ps. 97*). The suggested analogous supposition of the term *sounds* is confirmed by his tenet that sonorous music is the symbol of all physical and moral harmony (*Epist. ad Boeth.*). This harmony is readily discerned in the first accomplished, although nonprimary, effect of music, namely, pleasure in the experience of bodily well-being and of the soul’s love for the body. Indeed, there is a mysterious bond between musical pleasure and supreme happiness, because aesthetic joy is a symbol of happiness in heaven; the satisfaction of the soul in music is especially analogous to the beatific vision because of the similarity in the respective effortless acts of the intellect (*De anima* 12).

Within its own scope, music frees man from the cares of life, distracts him from his occupations and preoccupations, and raises him to fully interesting activities (*Epist. ad Boeth.*). Cassiodorus held that, by promoting fortitude, the Dorian mode promotes also modesty and chastity. By the use of harmonies of a range lower than those employed by the Greeks, the Phrygian mode can animate the soul to fight against evil, while the Lydian mode comforts the person who feels defeated (ibid.). According to Cassiodorus there are three parts of music: harmony, rhythm, and meter. Vocal music should observe the notes, pauses, accents, pedal melody, and “composition” of the phrase (ibid.). Finally, he mentions the fact that natural overtones and natural undertones are contained in the human voice as focused on distinct midrange tones, and that this fact constitutes the basic meaning of *symphony* (or “sounding together”).

**High Scholasticism.** Most of St. ALBERT THE GREAT’s (c. 1200–1280) important observations on music are contained in his *Commentary on Aristotle’s Politics* (bk. 8). In addition to his many references to Aristotle’s doctrine on music, St. THOMAS AQUINAS (c. 1225–1274) made a theological application of the Aristotelian summation, with further analyses, in his *Commentary on Psalm 32*.

According to scholars such as Edgar de Bruyne (1898–1959), Robert GROSSETESTE (c. 1168–1253) introduced a subtle confusion not present in the ancient-

medieval tradition that served to obscure this previous tradition for at least six centuries. As summarized by de Bruyne in *Études d’esthétique médiévale* (Studies on Medieval Aesthetics), Grosseteste teaches that there are five fundamental proportionalities, identically repeated in a whole, from which is derived “all beauty, that is, all ‘concord,’ whatever the magnitudes may be” (de Bruyne 1946, 3:139–148). This fundamental, universal, metaphysical principle is as true of plastic beauty as it is of sonic beauty (*De luce* 59). The five proportionalities are at the basis of harmony in the musical arts: music, dancing, and poetry (ibid.). Both sonic and visible forms can be represented by simple figures (*De gen. sonorum* 8). All these forms are reduced to movements, which can be measured and ordered according to the principles of spatial proportionality, as well as by time measures (*De artibus liberalibus* 2). One and the same discipline concerns the proportions in singing and in the movements of the body (ibid. 3). All artistic compositions, however, are regulated by the number ten and the simple relations that it contains, and the ethical effects of music are based upon the concordance between the proportionality in the soul and the proportionality of sensible nature (ibid.).

Although John DUNS SCOTUS (c. 1266–1308) did not write a treatise on music per se, he frequently employs musical analogies and related terminology in his reflections on ethics and the moral goodness of an act (*Lectura* I.17, p. 1, un., n. 95; *Ord.* I.17, p. 1, q. 1, n. 152). Moreover, Scotus’s discussions and applications of musical metaphors show that he is working within the classical aesthetic tradition, emphasizing beauty and harmony as proper relational proportions.

THOMAS OF YORK (d. c. 1260) and ROGER BACON (d. 1292) extend Grosseteste’s position. Bacon holds that music is the fundamental art, since, without it, grammar and the other arts of the trivium cannot possibly be learned with any thoroughness (*Opus majus* 4).

Here one has an attempted philosophical justification of formalistic music, that is, music without pulsation (or genuine modulation). The truths partially contained in Grosseteste’s position are that the proportions established by number do regulate artistic production; that geometry is a discipline that enables the artist to establish coherence (taken in its full analogous meaning) in the work he produces; and that what is directly imitated is natural movement (especially human motion). But by reducing all these truths to mathematical proportions, Grosseteste obfuscates, and some would even claim that he destroys, the hierarchy of artistic signification.

**Renaissance and Modern Developments through the Nineteenth Century.** A reaction against this position was manifested early in the Renaissance by Marsilio

FIGINO (1433–1499), who held that “love is the master of all the arts,” including music. Later, Giambattista VICO (1668–1744) taught that, like poetry, music has divine and heroic characteristics; it is the expression of “the most violent passions of the nascent human race,” and that, therefore, music is the first expression of man, coming before words and the reflections of the “pure mind” (*Scienza nuova* 1725, rev. 3rd ed. 1744). Apparently, then, Vico was restoring the analogous signification of music; yet his dialectical language prevents one from establishing this point with certainty. He arrived at Roger Bacon’s cited position, yet based upon a different principle.

According to Immanuel KANT (1724–1804), music is “a charming game concerned with the sensations of hearing” (*The Critique of Judgment* 1790, 1). He doubts whether it is truly an art, since it is “the pleasure which culture incites [the game of thoughts being the effect of a quasi-mechanical association] and, judged by reason, it has less value than any of the other *beaux-arts*” (ibid.). Kant’s emphasis on disinterestedness and the formal features of music and his downgrading of the sensuous aspects of music suggest that the struggle between these two poles, as evidenced in the ancient and medieval periods, continued well into modernity. His account of the interplay between imagination, which draws out the coherent patterns of sensory (sound) data, and understanding, which recognizes and appreciates the intelligible ordering of these relations, is Kant’s attempt to provide a solution to various tensions he identified in relation to musical judgments.

G. W. F. HEGEL (1770–1831) views music as one of humankind’s most valuable attainments. For Hegel, although the formal aspects of music are crucial, music is not reducible to mere form; rather, music exceeds form because of its intimate connection to human feeling, spirituality, and self-realization. Owing to its expressive capacities, musical content allows us to penetrate more deeply spiritual or ideational reality. In Volume 2 of his *Lectures on Fine Art* (1835), Hegel emphasizes music’s inner life as its proper life; however, this indeterminate inner feeling can only manifest itself through an external means by disappearing and, as it were, annulling itself when expressed. Music’s temporal, unfolding nature and its minimal reliance on materiality (in contrast with, for example, visual arts), elevates it among the arts. How so? It directs humans to an inward spiritual ideality and thus helps to facilitate a greater awareness of the self’s own dialectical movement between tension and resolution—a pattern that music itself imitates in its structures. This dialectical process is part and parcel of the self’s and humankind’s quest for freedom in its ascent toward absolute idea. Ultimately, however, in our march toward absolute idea, we must

move beyond the sensuous constraints of art (and hence music) to philosophy, where form and content coalesce perfectly.

Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829) seems to revive Vico’s position by holding that, since music expresses the most profound sentiments, it is analogous to philosophy. Arthur SCHOPENHAUER (1788–1860) expands this doctrine by teaching that music has an absolute primacy over the other arts because of its metaphysical character. Unlike the other arts, music is a copy of the will itself (*World as Will* 1844, Vol. 1, bk. 3, sec. 52). It is an immediate objectivization. Richard WAGNER (1813–1883) rejects Schopenhauer’s conclusions, but agrees with him in his general position that music manifests the profound essence of things, especially the tragic aspect of human existence. While Friedrich NIETZSCHE (1844–1900) went from ardent fan to stringent critic of Wagner, he, nonetheless, took as his point of departure the common nineteenth-century belief that music and inwardness are profoundly related. Like Scotus, Nietzsche employs musical metaphors throughout his writings. Terms such as *dissonance*, *harmonic movement*, and *competing contrapuntal voices* are metaphors not only helpful for elucidating philosophical concepts but also descriptive of life itself. Although Nietzsche’s view of music at times oscillates between passionate love and disenchanting frustration, music and musical discourse remained his preferred symbol to counter life-negating discourses, whether Platonic dualistic or modern scientific, and to encourage us to affirm and embrace our post-God groundless existence.

#### **Twentieth- and Twenty-First-Century Phenomenological, Political, and Pluralist Perspectives.**

As Wayne D. Bowman (1998) observes, in the twentieth century, theorists Thomas Clifton, David L. Burrows, and others influenced by phenomenologists such as Maurice MERLEAU-PONTY present us with rich descriptions of music as heard and performed. Consonant with the project of PHENOMENOLOGY generally speaking, the phenomenology of music seeks to peel away imposed layers of metaphysical theory and to return us to the corporeal, embodied aspects of music as experienced.

Other twentieth-century thinkers, such as Theodor W. ADORNO and Jacques Attali, foreground the sociopolitical dimensions of music. Theorists in this vein raise questions concerning the essence and value of music as limited to the realm of musical art. That is, if the nature of music involves something beyond the sphere of musical art itself—and is by nature implicated in sociopolitical activities and in shaping the cultural consciousness—then by what criteria do we establish the strictly musical versus the strictly social aspects? What counts as purely musical and what counts as political? Does music’s value somehow become obscured or

diminished by emphasizing social and political dimensions as essential features of music?

For Adorno, music possesses a unique ability to awaken our soporific social consciousness. Music must resist commodification in order to be a powerful force for sociopolitical change; thus, Adorno lays stress upon unconstrained, unique, uncontaminated musical structures—structures that do not participate in the mindless repetition characterizing popular music. Thus, in order for music to function in an authentic sociocritical mode, it must evidence originality and highlight individuality, which is the exact opposite of mass-produced commodified music. Likewise, Adorno's position recognizes that musical compositions, unlike traditional philosophical texts, can influence and can occasion social change by performative and other means wholly unavailable to philosophy construed as a "purely" rational enterprise. For instance, atonal music calls into question the naturalness of music and thus argues that music's form, content, harmonic structures, scales, and so forth are conventional; they are nonabsolute human practices that change over time and differ within a society, as well as across social, cultural, and historical boundaries. Similar to the way that innovative musical structures and contents can create extreme dissonance and unsettle a listener bodily, music's sociocritical function can likewise unsettle our cultural complacencies and dulled moral sensitivities. Adorno's strong stance on the objectivity of musical value, which has been highly criticized, does not sit well with his insistence on music's conventional and progressive nature.

In the opening pages of Attali's *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* (1977), the relation between music and power is brought front and center. Music is a site of struggle in which voices are always fighting to be heard, resisting at all costs a sociopolitical silencing mimicking the final silence associated with death. Like Adorno, Attali agrees that the mass production of music—its commodification—slowly eradicates music's "human face." Paradoxically, the excess of musical products and the resultant repetition and "sameness" of commodified music both silences music and deafens society. Consequently, Attali calls for a return to the humanity of music, to its communal, personal, and difference-affirming origins. Yet, unlike Adorno, Attali does not limit music's sociocritical efficaciousness to highly technical, avant-garde expressions of music. In short, Attali stresses our need to recover the activity of attentive listening, of hearing the complex timbres and tones of the world and the other. Our lifeworld is not best understood as a thing upon which we must fix an objectifying "gaze"; rather, it is a realm wholly permeated with sound, with a multiplicity of voices ready to be heard. If we would but listen, music has much to say about how to establish harmonious, difference-affirming

relations between individuals and collectives, and about how to strike the delicate balance between freedom and constraint—themes central to social and political theory and practice.

Lastly, feminist perspectives on music are also attuned to music's social and political dimensions. In particular, feminist musicologists such as Susan McClary and Ruth A. Solie, seek to unearth the various ways that patriarchal narratives and practices have shaped our views of music. Keeping with certain shared feminist philosophical and political concerns, feminist theorists promote a diverse, multiple, inclusive view of music and are suspicious of theories limiting what counts as "genuine" music. Highlighting that such narrowly defined accounts have tended to portray Western, male-dominated, European music as the norm or the ideal form of music, feminist theorists show how female composers and performers have been systematically excluded from making significant contributions in the history of music. Rather than stress static, homogeneous, ideal musical forms, feminist musicologists emphasize diverse musical styles and dynamic musical practices—practices arising from particular historical periods and addressing specific sociopolitical concerns. Like other cultural practices, music informs our views of GENDER. As a social force, music can help both to solidify and to subvert "gender" stereotypes.

Although unified with respect to their common goal of liberating women from all forms of patriarchal oppression, feminist music theorists employ diverse and, at times, conflicting philosophies and strategies. For example, some feminists appeal to an alleged "feminine essence" rooted in biological differences between the sexes. Consequently, those working in this vein of feminist thought argue for a distinctly female or matriarchal art, characterized by "natural" feminine traits—traits or characteristics often set in opposition to "natural" male traits. Perceiving dangers in the gender essentialism underlying the concept of matriarchal art, other feminist theorists articulate a social constructivist account of "gender" by applying constructivist theoretical principles to their analysis of music. That is, just as "gender" is constructed via sociopolitical practices, institutions, and cultural narratives, our views of "gender" influence our understanding of what music is, who counts as a "master," and what counts as an ideal musical work or performance. In sum, feminist theorists argue that music, like "gender," is performative and political, taking shape through embodied practices and emancipatory struggles.

**The Nature of Music.** As is evident from the foregoing, the philosophy of music, like philosophy itself, is polysemous. The defining characteristics of music, as well as its purpose, are understood differently over time.

In the ancient and medieval periods, music was generally understood as the art that, through the use of modulation and the mathematical delineation of rhythms and harmonies, imitates human emotions as engaged in epic or dramatic action, with the direct aim of recreational contemplation, which indirectly promotes human beings in their pursuit of the moral good. In the modern and postmodern periods, many of the above characteristics of music have been affirmed; however, earlier claims regarding music's purpose—whether it is merely instrumental to some higher end or whether it ought to be viewed as an end in itself—continue to be debated. Likewise, the sociopolitical and cultural milieu out of which music is created, its social significance, and phenomenological analyses of music, laying stress on music as experienced, both broaden and challenge our understanding of music. Music, it seems, must “speak,” or sound, polyphonically.

Lastly, mention should be made of scholars and composers who have developed the science of music under its mathematical and acoustical aspects. In fact, a knowledge of this development, together with a thorough acquaintance with the works representing the whole history of music—not classical only, but jazz, Indian, African, and other non-Western forms of music—are all needed for a full appreciation of the philosophical tradition concerned with this subject.

**SEE ALSO** AESTHETICS; AESTHETICS, HISTORY OF; ART, CLASSICAL APPROACHES TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF; ART, CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF; BEAUTY IN AESTHETICS; LITURGICAL MUSIC, THEOLOGY AND PRACTICE OF; MUSIC AND CATHOLICISM.

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