



2022

Philosophy and Music: A Search for Truth

Zhengzhou Li

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/honorstheses>



Part of the [Aesthetics Commons](#), and the [History of Philosophy Commons](#)

Colby College theses are protected by copyright. They may be viewed or downloaded from this site for the purposes of research and scholarship. Reproduction or distribution for commercial purposes is prohibited without written permission of the author.

Recommended Citation

Li, Zhengzhou, "Philosophy and Music: A Search for Truth" (2022). *Honors Theses*. Paper 1335.
<https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/honorstheses/1335>

This Honors Thesis (Open Access) is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Research at Digital Commons @ Colby. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Colby.

Philosophy and Music: A Search for Truth

Zhengzhou Li

Colby College

Department of Philosophy

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfilments of the requirements

for the degree of

Bachelor of Arts with Honors

in the subject of Philosophy

Thesis Advisor: Lydia Moland, Ph.D

Professor of Philosophy

Second Reader: Steve Saunders, Ph.D

Professor of Music

May 2022

Table of Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	v
<i>Prelude</i>	1
<i>I. Kantian Aesthetics, the Birth of Romanticism, and Beethoven's Music</i>	5
Kant's Aesthetic Judgement and its Implications on Music	8
The Birth of Romanticism	15
Beethoven's Music and the Romantic Revolution	22
<i>II. From Music to Truth: Hegel and Schopenhauer</i>	30
Hegel's System and Aesthetic Truth	31
Music in Hegel's System of Individual Arts	39
The Aesthetic Vision of a World as Will and Representation	47
Music and the Will.....	55
<i>III. The Philosophy of Gustav Mahler</i>	62
Mahler and Philosophy.....	62
A Symphonic World	65
What <i>Love</i> Tells me	72
<i>Coda</i>	78
<i>Illustrations</i>	81
<i>Bibliography</i>	82

Acknowledgements

This thesis is undoubtedly the most challenging project I have ever done in my life. I want to begin by expressing my most sincere gratitude to those who have helped me along the way.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my thesis advisor Professor Lydia Moland. I can never finish this thesis without you. During the pandemic, you have really helped me come through such a strange time of my life. I remember when I first embarked on my thesis, our zoom meetings connected us from literally the opposite sides of the world and got me started on this ambitious project. Your expertise on 19th century German philosophy, aesthetics, and philosophy of art has assisted with my research, reading, and writing in every way possible. I am sincerely grateful for your unwavering commitment, support, and guidance.

Next, I want to thank Professor Steve Saunders from the music department at Colby. Thank you for agreeing to be my second reader despite being on sabbatical. Your knowledge and passion for music were truly precious to my research and writing on music. I just loved talking about music with you!

I would also like to mention Professor Dan Cohen from the philosophy department. I remember my first semester at Colby, sitting in your office and listening to you talking all the interesting things in philosophy. I appreciate your passion and humor in teaching philosophy, which inspired me to have decided to major in philosophy – this is the best decision I have ever made. I want to thank the entire philosophy department for enriching my college education.

I also want to mention my piano instructor at Colby, Joann Westin. During my first semester at Colby, I decided to start playing the piano again after quite a few years since I last played when I was 12. The lessons I had with you truly made me passionate about music, and

they are part of the reasons why I wanted to pursue a thesis integrating my passions for philosophy and music.

In addition, I want to thank Professor Aaron Hanlon from the English department, Professor Daniel Harkett from the Art department, and Dr. Chaoran Wang, the multilingual writing specialist at Colby, for your contributions to my thesis.

Finally, to mom and dad: your unconditioned love and support made me where I am today. I am forever grateful for that.

Zhengzhou Li

April 2022

Waterville, ME

To those who have asked me what I study in philosophy or doubted if I am learning anything at all, this thesis is, before anything else, dedicated to you.

Prelude

With the rise of the analytic tradition, Ludwig Wittgenstein, in his groundbreaking *Tractatus*, believes that he has solved all the metaphysical problems. He concludes his book with the following line: “what we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence.”¹ The early analytic tradition culminates in the *Tractatus* in its discussion of meta-philosophy. In short, language, at least in Wittgenstein’s early thoughts, mirrors the world, and everything that is the case can be put in words. Propositions make up the totality of state of affairs. In this way, language underlies and constitutes the whole of natural sciences, to which philosophy does not belong. For Wittgenstein, “philosophy aims at the logical clarification of thoughts.”² Philosophy is not to discover truth but an activity to elucidate our use of language which helps science to arrive at truth about the world. Science, with the help of philosophical elucidation, can capture all the truths in the world. Wittgenstein indeed acknowledges that “there are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical”³ The mystical that Wittgenstein puts forward, then, must not be put into words. Wittgenstein’s solution to all metaphysical problems is to abandon any discussion about such mystical metaphysical truths because they are not part of the world, and we cannot speak of them. Hence comes the well-known Wittgensteinian quietism.

For Wittgenstein, and perhaps the entire analytic tradition, language plays a vital role in their philosophical undertaking. The scope of philosophy is almost synonymous with the limit of language. Wittgenstein thus insists that the metaphysical truth beyond language is also beyond

¹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans by D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness, (New York: Routledge Classics, 1977), 89.

² *Ibid*, 29.

³ *Ibid*, 89.

our grasp. It is exactly Wittgenstein's quietism that gives me inspiration for this thesis. In particular, I wonder what if we desire for such a metaphysical truth and mystical aspect of the world. How we can reach them, if not through language? Historically speaking, much philosophy has been done in the medium of language. In human's pursuit of truth, philosophers have written, published, read, and communicated their thoughts on truth through verbal and written language. This is perhaps why the analytic philosophers regards language as the primary focus of philosophy, given its significance in our philosophizing. However, the limit of language can suggest two conclusions: one is that it allows us to reasonably adopt the quietist doctrine for we do not have the language for those alleged metaphysical truth. The other is that perhaps we need other means in our philosophical pursuit of truth – in other words, one could argue language is not the only means to truth.

In the history of philosophy, some German philosophers around the 19th century were precisely against quietism in their philosophical agendas in regard to how we can arrive at the ontological truth in ways other than with language. Yet, one may ask, if not language, then what? For these German philosophers, aesthetics and art are vital tools in searching for truth. Sculptures, paintings, and music can, because they are not linguistic, help us gain access to truth and perceive the essence of the world. In response to the Wittgensteinian quietism and in search of other ways of philosophizing besides through the use of language, my thesis focuses specifically on the art of music and aims to explore how music can help us arrive at truth. My thesis adopts a somewhat historical approach because music had a close affinity to philosophy in 19th century German philosophy. By discussing the great philosophical thoughts of this period, I hope to demonstrate how people might philosophize, or gain access to truth, through music.

Before diving into my arguments, since I will be discussing the relationship between music and philosophy, I want to clarify what I mean by these terms. First, what philosophy is itself a philosophical question. In my thesis, therefore, I do not wish to cover all the philosophical discussions and argue that music is philosophical in a comprehensive sense. Historically speaking, however, philosophy has been a subject that searches for truth since the ancient Greeks who asked for the *arche*, or the origin of the world. Thus, I will assume that philosophy is a project that seeks for truth. In particular, I study how music helps philosophy achieve this goal.

Also, evidently, what 19th century philosophers had in mind was only the music of the Baroque, Classical, and Romantic periods. I should make it clear that I do not want to argue that all music is capable of philosophizing because it is arguable that 19th century philosophers ever foresaw and intended their theories to apply to the avant-garde music genres after their death. In this thesis, what I will be saying about music, therefore, does not pertain to the music after the 19th century, such as Schoenberg's second Viennese School, John Cage's 4 minutes and 33 seconds of silence, free jazz, or even contemporary pop music. However, there were indeed many captivating philosophical ideas pertinent to music and philosophy during the 19th century Germany, which will be the focus of this thesis.

The first chapter begins with Kantian aesthetics. Arguably, the history of aesthetics before Kant aimed at understanding beauty, but Kant's groundbreaking work was the first to shift focus to the issues about our aesthetic judgements. Since then, the audiences have been a vital part of understanding the beauty of art. Kant's aesthetics also has immense implications for music in distinguishing the judgement of the sublime from that of beauty. The Romantic philosophers build upon Kant's aesthetics and metaphysics to situate music as a central

epistemological tool for us to perceive the world. For them, our search for truth is incomplete without music. The Romantic agenda about music can be seen in the works of Beethoven, who is often regarded as the first Romantic composer in music history. His brilliant compositions truly realize the Romantic paradigm of music.

The second chapter is an expository survey of Hegel and Schopenhauer's philosophy, with a special emphasis on their philosophy of arts. Different forms of art play an important role in both of their overall philosophies. In different ways and degrees, arts can reveal to us metaphysical truths about the universe. Music, for Hegel, is one way for us to sensuously feel the truth through our inwardness and subjectivity, while Schopenhauer deems it a direct copy of the fundamental essence of the whole universe. Either way, music seems to be indispensable to our perceiving of truth, which strongly demonstrates its necessary affinity to philosophy.

The last chapter adopts another perspective to examine music and philosophy. As we will have discussed what philosophers say about music, this chapter studies the music of Gustav Mahler, whose third symphony contains immensely rich philosophical references and ideas. I argue that this symphony is more than a work of music; it is a work of philosophy. In his reference to Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, Mahler reveals to us our very existence, the essence of nature, and the meaning of life. His music serves as a perfect example of how music can help us get at higher truth and feel the transcendental world.

I. Kantian Aesthetics, the Birth of Romanticism, and Beethoven's Music

The connection between music and metaphysics was not unprecedented in our intellectual history. The ancient Greek Pythagorean school began their holistic philosophy with music. They believed that mathematical relations underlay the entire universe and humanity, ranging from religion, cosmology, soul, etc., because of their observations that the consonance of notes was due to their mathematical ratios with each other. For the Pythagoreans, the world was musical because the order of the universe was a harmony. The fact that both music and the universe involve some order gives us the intuition to see the connection between them, but this metaphysical view might be too straightforward and superficial.

The Enlightenment movement provided humanity with another approach to music. During this period, humanity oversaw a rapid growth in science and technology in the 17th century, during which philosophers and scientists, such as Descartes and Newton, gave humanity a greater understanding about us and the world using reason and science. Meanwhile, the Industrial Revolution bolstered human capability in its resistance against the power of nature. Music was no exception: in the attempt to objectify nature, scholars tried to understand music as a language in rhetorical tools, seizing control of the mystery of music. Bach's music, for example, was full of delicate counterpoints with an underlying mathematical structure.

During the second half of the 18th century, however, music underwent a major transformation in terms of its value, and this transformation was made possible by the changing music culture of that time. Before then, music had been works commissioned by churches for religious settings and performed on certain occasions with limited access to public audiences. Pure instrumental music did not enjoy a high status among the arts for its lack of reality, as opposed to, for example, church music. However, as public concerts became more accessible,

music began to be emancipated and become an independent aesthetic object. Although opera became publicly accessible and prevailing initially, instrumental music soon filled up the space on concert program brochures. The value of music thus changed in terms of its style, meaning, and philosophy. At the same time, Charles Rosen observes that “this development was accompanied by a change in aesthetics, the new conception of a work of art as an independent object with no function except that of inducing contemplations or delight.”¹

Around the same years, in 1790, Immanuel Kant published his *Critique of Judgement*, which presented a new listening paradigm for the audiences. Despite the fact that Kant's comments on music were infamously deficient, his thoughts on aesthetics nonetheless had immense implications for music. His aesthetics begin with his metaphysics which discusses how we fundamentally perceive and interact with the world. Music since then required the active participation of the listeners themselves, as Kant's theory about our interaction with the world was extended to the very act of listening itself. Mark Evan Bond writes, “even while downplaying the status of music without words, Kant had provided the philosophical basis for the creative role of the beholders of all art, including music.”² In his aesthetics, Kant distinguished two types of aesthetic judgement through which audiences could participate in the arts themselves: judgements of beauty and judgements of the sublime. This distinction initiated the debate regarding whether the aesthetic goal of music was beauty or the sublime, which was evident in the later romantic paradigm of music. It is worth pointing out the alleged Kantian formalism insists that aesthetic judgement is due to the form of music rather than its content.

¹ Rosen Charles, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 71.

² Mark Even Bonds, *Music as Thought: Listening to the Symphony in the Age of Beethoven* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 10.

The Romantics built upon Kant's aesthetics and metaphysics, viewing art as an essential epistemological tool and access to truth. Bowie, in his book *Music, Philosophy, and Modernity*, distinguishes two kinds of metaphysics: one to gain control of the world and one to find a meaningful place for humankind.³ The former metaphysics is exemplified by the Enlightenment; while the Romantics challenged the previous Enlightenment movement, instead emphasizing our feelings, contrary to language and reason, to approach the world. The Romantics expand not only on Kantian aesthetics but also on his metaphysics. Not only did they see the sublime as an embodiment of the infinity, but they also elaborated on Kant's distinction between the subject and object. For Kant, the subject "I" comes to see the objective world with an intuition of space and time. The notion of time is precisely what gives rise to rhythm that allows us to feel the world through time. Eventually, music becomes a philosophical language for the Romantics. Art becomes philosophical in its pursuit of truth.

As the romantic philosophers began to pay attention to music as a vehicle for truth before Beethoven's time, their ideas culminated in Romantic poet and writer Hoffman's review of Beethoven's astonishing 5th symphony. His comments on Beethoven's music incorporated the world of music into philosophy. Kantian aesthetics and the Romantic transformation in philosophy and music was evident in Beethoven's music. Historically, Kant's aesthetics prospered during Beethoven's heroic period, which, to music historians, often signifies the beginning of the Romantic Revolution. It is unclear to what extent Beethoven's music was influenced by philosophy, but the music from his heroic period fiercely challenged the pre-existing musical norms. Beethoven's music struck many of his contemporaries as

³ Andrew Bowie, *Music, Philosophy, and Modernity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 33.

incomprehensible and unprecedented, but it gave the Romantics the perfect example to make sense of their philosophy.

Kant's Aesthetic Judgement and its Implications on Music

Kant's aesthetics stems from his metaphysics that establishes a system for us to comprehend the world. We approach an object through our senses, after which our faculty of imagination turns our intuition (or broadly sense datum) into a concept via rules of our understanding. We eventually form a judgement about the object with reason and logic. In more detail, the subject comes to apprehend the object through the senses and space and time as *a priori* intuitions. Specifically, Kant thinks the subject has an *a priori* intuition of space and time that allows one to sense the objective world. Specifically, in the *Prolegomena*, he illustrates, “at the basis of empirical intuition lies a pure intuition of space and time [...] This is possible because the latter intuition is nothing but the mere form of sensibility, which precedes the actual appearance of the objects, since in fact it makes them possible.”⁴ In other words, we could not experience anything without the intuition of time because it is fundamentally how we perceive the world. It is only based on the intuition of space and time that we form judgement along with our understanding. The intuition of time, as will be discussed later in this chapter, is particularly vital to the Romantics because we only hear music through time.

As seen in Kantian aesthetics, Kant makes an important distinction between judgments of the good and judgments of the agreeable. On the one hand, judgements of the good require a concept of “good” beyond us and for which we seek agreement for its universality and necessity and hope for its existence. We desire certain (good) moral laws to be true of all of us. On the

⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*, trans. James Ellington (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1977), 25.

other hand, judgement of the agreeable is a report of our subjective internal feelings from which we may gain pleasure. Kant's aesthetic judgement sits between these two judgements, which combines judgement of the good and that of the agreeable in a seemingly contradictory way. Although we do hope for some agreement on our aesthetic judgement, the universality of beauty does not presuppose a concept with which our understanding must comply. However, we feel it is necessarily beautiful to all in a commonsensical way.

Kant discusses two kinds of aesthetic judgements: judgement of beauty and judgement of the sublime. For the former, the beauty of the object demonstrates purposiveness, but it does not have a purpose or role for which it aims to satisfy. Also, one is disinterested in the object of beauty; that is, we only appreciate its beauty without any desires that we develop from it but enjoy the object for the sake of aesthetic judgement. Thus, it is clear to see that the sentence "I like the sunset" is a judgement of the agreeable because it is merely a personal report, but the sentence "the sunset is beautiful" is an aesthetic judgement. Although the latter utterance seems to be objective because it calls for necessity, it is subjective in a meaningful way. The puzzle, Peter Kivy observes, is "how there can be judgement that are both aesthetic and universal."⁵ Kant's answer would be that the way we produce such judgements is a play of our faculty of imagination and understanding, instead of our understanding that governs the imagination with a rule. The play embodies a "free lawfulness" or "lawfulness without a law." Although this play is of one person's faculties, we expect everyone whose faculties play the same way would eventually reach the same judgement. The play between faculties is about subjective feeling, despite having universal implications. The "I" is important in this process because it requires us to engage with the object in an aesthetic way for our faculties to play. To reiterate, this differs

⁵ Peter Kivy, *Introduction to a Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 54.

from a normal judgement since our understanding does not impose a rule by which the imagination must comply but gives a certain freedom for us to feel the beauty. As Bonds summarizes, “beauty would be defined no longer as a quality within a given object, but rather as a function of subjective, aesthetic perception.”⁶ In this way, aesthetic appreciation asks the audience to actively engage in the very act of judgement to enjoy the aesthetic objects. When the imagination and understanding of the “I” are playing, as has been noted, it appears to be bounded by a “law,” despite Kant insisting that there is no such imposed restriction. Objects of art cannot be subsumed under any determinate concept as other objects. Incidentally, beauty may be jeopardized if the art is created based on a pre-determined concept that inhibits the free play of imagination and understanding.

Kant thus distinguishes two kinds of art: free art and adherent art. For the former, Kant writes, “we presuppose no concept of any purpose for which the manifold is to serve the given object, and hence no concept as to what the object is meant to represent.”⁷ On the other hand, adherent beauty “presupposes the concept of the purpose that determines what the thing is meant to be.”⁸ If aesthetic judgement relies on an intrinsic purpose of an object, incidentally the determinate concept, then it depends on, and is thereby restricted by, its purpose. Thus, the aesthetic judgement is impure. Examples of free art, Kant suggests, include designs *a la grecque*, the foliage on borders or on wallpaper, and fantasias in music, i.e., music without words. As such, Kant would prefer instrumental music precisely because its absence of verbal cues which are exemplified in opera or art songs which contain a verbal context that narrates what is going on musically. Also, Kant seems to favor instrumental, non-representational music, over program

⁶ Mark Even Bonds, *Music as Thought: Listening to the Symphony in the Age of Beethoven*, 17.

⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. Werner Pluhar (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), 77.

⁸ Ibid.

music, which is depictive and often comes with a descriptive title. This preference is because the free play of our faculties is not limited to a particular setting and our imaginative freedom allows bigger room for play.

This scheme is akin to Kant's (supposed) formalism.⁹ The sensations of tones would be a formal determination. Moreover, judgement of beauty is pure insofar as it is uninterrupted by content as we see in the comparison between instrumental music and opera. Kant argues, "it pertains only to form, because there we can abstract from the quality of the kind of sensation..."¹⁰ Indeed, music takes the form of vibration through air in its physical nature. Kivy restricts the form of beauty to the vibration of sounds, not formal properties such as harmony or melody that subsequent theorists are concerned about.¹¹ I argue that this view is too limited. Although the form is perceived through our sensation of vibrating sounds, it lays out on both vertical and horizontal aspects of music.¹² Given a listener's participation in music, for example, we envision that experienced audiences can distinguish the difference between a consonant chord and a dissonant chord and hear the timbre it adds to the music, and that this awareness is beyond simple vibrations of sound. Also, we sense the melody through time in which music unfolds itself within a musical structure, which is also a form that music takes horizontally. Such structures of music are meaningless in terms of content but concerns the musical form. This fact is consistent with Kant's claim that free art is an appreciation of the form. We should engage in the form that music takes, whether it is harmony or melody, for our faculties to play freely.

⁹ Kant did not identify himself as a formalist, but later commentators have apparently put him in that category. What gives rise to the idea of formalism is section 14 in the *Critique of Judgement*.

¹⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 71.

¹¹ Peter Kivy, *Introduction to a Philosophy of Music*, 59.

¹² To explain my terminology, the verticals of music refer to what we can hear at a moment of the music, which often means a note or a chord played at one time; on the contrary, the horizontal aspect of music describes how music elapses through time, and this often means how music develops in its melodies.

Moreover, Kant suggests another kind of aesthetic judgement, namely the judgement of the sublime, where the form is completely shattered or beyond our comprehension. Instead of a free play between imagination and understanding, judgement of the sublime is an activity of imagination and reason. When we encounter a boundless object, our imagination fails to comprehend it and we have to appeal to reason. The fact that reason is more powerful than sensation is the source of our pleasure. Specifically, Kant distinguishes the mathematical sublime from the dynamic sublime. The former refers to an aesthetic object whose size is greater than all comparisons. The infinite magnitude overwhelms our imagination, and our reason perceives it in an aesthetic sense. The example Kant gives is the starry sky at night. Although our imagination strives to capture its infinite size, it inevitably fails. The notion of infinity is an aesthetic one that our reason demands to feel the sublime. On the contrary, dynamic sublime refers to the power of the object in the sense that we fear that this object could destroy us. Kant suggests, “though the irresistibility of nature’s might make us [...] recognize our physical impotence, it [...] reveals in us a superiority over nature that is the basis of a self-preservation ...”¹³ The dynamic sublime shows how we succumb to nature while we feel a sense of freedom that we are able to escape from its power.

The aesthetic magnitude and power, as in the beautiful, is manifested by the form of the object. But Kant points out that “the sublime can also be found in a formless object, insofar as we present unboundedness, either as in the object of because the object prompts us to present it.”¹⁴ A formless object induces a feeling of sublime precisely because it does not have a perceivable form such that we are confused by its impenetrable presentation, or that the form is

¹³ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 121.

¹⁴ Ibid, 98.

utterly obscure to our imagination. Then, art can also be sublime if it appears unintelligible. As Bart Vandenabeele argues,

[Such artworks] elicit a complex and heightened cognitive activity that grapples with the immense richness, the abundance of forms and ideas, the numerous allusions, and the expressive and semantic complexity of the work, but fails to ‘comprehend’ all of the allusions, intimations, and distortions in a single image, let alone a single determinate concept.¹⁵

Since we cannot grasp the formless art objects with the senses, we cannot possibly understand it. Thus, this is the source of the sublime feeling.

Kant’s theory of the sublime has immense implications in subsequent development in both music and philosophy. As I will elaborate later, the sublime is one of the themes in romantic philosophy that makes us feel the uncanny as a way to connect with the world. Moreover, Beethoven gives up the pursuit of beauty and instead shifts his focus to the sublime, with his music serving as a perfect example for the Romantics to philosophize about the metaphysical and epistemological implications of art and music. In short, sublime music arguably becomes the ideal paradigm among romantic music.

It is worth pointing out that Kant himself does not praise music highly among the fine arts. His treatment of music, Herman Parret argues, is “mutable, fragmented, and contradictory [...] he praises music as an art of form, and he condemns it as a mere play of sensation. He values it highly from the standpoint of ‘charm’ and ‘mental agitation’ but rejects it from the point of view of culture of reason.”¹⁶ For Kant, art is created by geniuses with a luminous and

¹⁵ Bart Vandenabeele, “The Sublime in Art: Kant, the Mannerist, and the Matterist Sublime,” *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 49, no.3 (Fall 2015), 40.

¹⁶ Herman Parret, “Kant on Music and the Hierarchy of the Arts,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56, no.3 (Summer 1998), 255.

unspeakable rule given by nature, but this rule is not a concept or even unintelligible to the genius himself. Instead, the work of a genius demonstrates an aesthetic idea, which Kant calls “a presentation of imagination which prompts much thought, but to which no determinate concept whatsoever, i.e., no determinate concept, can be adequate, so that no language can express it completely and allow us to grasp it.”¹⁷ This lack of determinacy seems to suggest the limitation of language for its inability to express certain ideas of beauty. However, despite its reliance on words, Kant holds the art of poetry on top of his hierarchy. In short, Kant favors poetry because poetry can transcend specific ideas and emotions and could trace its origin all the way to genius without being shaped by rules or concept.¹⁸ Music, on the other hand, only speaks through sensation without concept. Unlike poetry, music gives us nothing to meditate about. Andrew Bowie further writes, “[music] therefore lacks the connection to the moral and intelligible realms which literature possesses by virtue of its use of words to enliven the conceptual capacity.”¹⁹

Moreover, some worry this might relegate instrumental music into the agreeable arts. Kant ascribes music to the beautiful play of sensations, but he notes that the auditory senses are capable of a special sensation since we can hardly tell whether this perception is based on sense or reflection. The difference is that the former is merely an agreeable sensation and only the latter is a beautiful play of sensations for which we judge its form aesthetically. If all we perceive is the vibration of tones in air, then we only sense the agreeableness with tones. To have an aesthetic judgement of music, one must have a mathematical sense to these vibrations and be able to distinguish tone to “perceive a qualitative change in the varying intensities along the scale of [...] tones.”²⁰ Only in this way can music be represented as a beautiful art, yet this imposes a

¹⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 182.

¹⁸ Mark Even Bonds, *Music as Thought: Listening to the Symphony in the Age of Beethoven*, 39.

¹⁹ Andrew Bowie, *Music, Philosophy, and Modernity*, 85.

²⁰ Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 194.

strict requirement on the listeners for the music is not an object of art when they can hear the tone in an articulate sense. If, however, someone is musically trained or seasoned, what they hear would be a pleasurable melody. Music, as a fine art, would be meaningless without the background knowledge and musical experience of the listeners such that the act of listening is again emphasized in Kantian aesthetics. This suggests that listeners are an indispensable part to music because in a sense they are what endows meaning and liveliness to music.

Despite Kant's infamous comments on music, the Romantics took his aesthetic and metaphysics to develop a new system of philosophy where music paves the way to new sets of tools to perceive the world through the sublime of music. Later, we will see how this is evident in Beethoven's music, combining the sublime and the romantic metaphysics.

The Birth of Romanticism

In short, the Romantics see art as an access to truth. The sensuous feature of art is a higher form of consciousness than rational reasoning and provides us with better ways to see the world. Art and beauty are indispensable to truth. Philosophy only communicates thoughts through language, and thus the highest knowledge, which the Romantics call the Infinite or the Absolute, can never be fully represented in philosophical language. Beyond reason, we approach the Absolute by our imaginative power that enables us to feel the world. The goal of art is to invoke the notion of the Absolute. However, the Absolute can never be clearly articulated because the Romantics believe we would destroy the Absolute if we could speak of it. Instrumental music becomes the suitable means for such philosophical inquiry because it does not rely on any concrete concepts or linguistic expression, such as in visual art or poetry. Once regarded as a weakness, the lack of power in its imitation to reality precisely becomes the

strength of music since music can create an independent world that is itself rich and meaningful.²¹ Music conveys thought in an abstract and obscure way in that we cannot understand it *prima facie* but through feeling.

Rosen makes an acute observation that in the eighteenth century, the German word for “theme” is *Gedank*, meaning idea or thought, and Schlegel takes this music term literally, as if it is the vehicle of thoughts.²² In *Athenaeum*, Fredrich Schlegel writes in one of his fragments,

Many people find it strange and ridiculous when musicians talk about the ideas in their compositions: and it often happens that one perceives they have more ideas in their music than they do about it [...] he will consider a certain tendency of pure instrumental music toward philosophy as something not impossible in itself. Doesn't pure instrumental music have to create its own text? And aren't the themes in it developed, reaffirmed, varied, and contrasted in the same way as the subject of meditation in a philosophical succession of ideas?²³

Music conveys thoughts and ideas precisely through its indeterminacy which we can only feel, but this reveals to us parts of the world that were previously unintelligible. As finite beings, we are brought to the Infinite only through music (and art) in its sensuous form, because no finite reason can capture it. For Schelling, art would not be art if it does not invoke the Infinite, and works of art empower us to feel the endlessly deductive, unfruitful reasoning as well as experience the Infinite directly by our contemplation.²⁴

²¹ Rosen Charles, *The Romantic Generation*, 72.

²² *Ibid*, 73.

²³ Fredrich Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Peter Firchow (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 92.

²⁴ Mark Even Bonds, *Music as Thought: Listening to the Symphony in the Age of Beethoven*, 41.

Romantic philosophy provides us with a fundamentally new way to approach metaphysics and human epistemology. Bowie, in his accomplished book *Music, Philosophy, and Modernity*, carefully distinguishes two kinds of metaphysics that inject new meanings into music as a metaphysical undertaking. For one story, metaphysics has its roots in the ancient Greek that “attempts to map out the place of humankind in the universe by giving an account of the true nature of being.”²⁵ As finite beings, we do not possess a complete understanding of the world in many aspects and feel threatened by our lack of knowledge. The motivation of metaphysics is to try closing this epistemic abyss that has been constantly unsettling humanity. Bowie further comments, “scientific truth is generated by the need to control the natural world, rather than by the desire for objectivity.”²⁶

Thus, it is no surprise that philosophers want to reduce music to the objective language. The reason for doing so is because music has been relying on words and vocals which are themselves extramusical. Bonds points out, “the Enlightenment’s conception of music as a language reflects the broader practice of hearing music within the framework of rhetoric.”²⁷ Also, music as a language is different than music using language, such as opera or art songs. What this contrast entails is that instrumental music is analogous to verbal expressions, and this puts a special emphasis on the composers because it is within their responsibility to make their music articulate and intelligible. It seems that every musical connotation has its own linguistic meaning, so composers must aim for comprehensibility in their use of musical forms.²⁸ Such theorists, however, confuse the syntactical structure of language with its semantic meaning. Music, as Kivy understands, is a language minus its meaning, and what is left is its syntax: its

²⁵ Andrew Bowie, *Music Philosophy, and Modernity*, 33.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Mark Even Bonds, *Music as Thought: Listening to the Symphony in the Age of Beethoven*, 30.

²⁸ Ibid, 32.

grammatical component.²⁹ As I have argued before, the listening paradigm during the pre-Romantic era has shifted its emphasis to the listeners because they are the ones that enrich the semantic content of instrumental music. Our feelings and emotions from the music that we listen to fill the emptiness of the purely syntactical sounds. However, the subjective feelings, or emotions, that music elicits are not our act of will, although we still hope for some rationality to be evoked via music. The connection of emotion and metaphysics as such shows the discrepancy of the world and our will, and we mistakenly deceive ourselves in that we are able to reconcile this epistemic gap because it is not based on our will but “our encounters of aspect of the world which we do not control.”³⁰ In other words, this implies truth is not a human product and we cannot necessarily capture it. The truth in music is such a nebulous fissure that separates us from the world, and thus the story of metaphysics as gaining control of the world is destined to fail.

The other story about metaphysics, Bowie claims, is that it is meant “to establish a meaningful place for humankind,” and this stands in opposition to the former view since “[science] has progressively undermined the special position of humankind, reducing the earth to the status of a minor cosmic contingency and humankind to being a result of evolutionary mechanisms.”³¹ Scientism’s attempt to objectify human beings urges us to attach meaning to who we are, beyond biological machines and sequences of genes. For the Romantics, art is one way to resist complete scientism. The fact that art cannot be reduced to scientific explanation does not mean it emerges from a threat discussed in the scientific view of metaphysics. Rather, art gives us access to the things that are unknown to us. Bowie also says, “the very fact that music can have to do with ‘things outside ourselves that we do not control,’ thus with

²⁹ Peter Kivy, *Introduction to a Philosophy of Music*, 59.

³⁰ Andrew Bowie, *Music, Philosophy, and Modernity*, 35.

³¹ *Ibid*, 36.

experiences of transience, loss, and longing, connects us with the world in ways which knowledge may not.”³² In a sense, music and art in general pave the way to a completely new world beyond our knowledge and control that we cannot attain through rational reasoning and thoughts. Feelings seem to be a new epistemological tool.

Bowie quotes Novalis saying that “[philosophy] is really homesickness, the drive to be at home everywhere,” which Novalis does not think can be satisfied, but music “allows the mind to be for short moments in its earthly home.”³³ Meanwhile, another important theme circulating during Romanticism is the uncanny, or “*unheimlich*” in German which describes a feeling of unease and homelessness. In other words, the uncanny makes us separated from home, but Novalis claims that music can help us feel at home. The sense of being at home indicates a sense of unity among human beings that is similar to Spinoza’s monism. Since we are all substances of God, we are one being united by love. Homesickness encourages us to pursue this intersubjective unity and sense of belonging that we could indeed come back home everywhere.

But how can music accomplish this task? Kant’s sublime gives a good explanation: to repeat, the music that we encounter is so powerful that our imagination is incapable of coping with it and thus leaves us with fear. This feeling separates us from the places that we are acquainted with and takes us to an uncanny sphere. But our reason shows that we can resist such dynamic forces. As soon as we feel safe, we return to our earthly home.

More importantly, the Kantian influence on the Romantics is not merely his aesthetics, but the Romantic perception of the world is embedded in Kantian metaphysics as a completely new way to perceive the world. Roger Scruton summarizes, “every philosophical inquiry, Kant

³² Ibid, 39.

³³ Ibid.

argued, begins and ends in the point of view of the subject.”³⁴ In my brief sketch of Kantian metaphysics earlier, I mentioned that the subject comes to apprehend the object through the senses and space and time as a priori intuitions. What matters here is the pre-conceived intuition of time that opens new forms of articulation championed by the Romantics, who thereafter took rhythm to be the fundamental way to perceive the world. Moreover, rhythm, in a broad sense, underlies the music. Bowie further points out, “rhythm is not a natural phenomenon that we apprehend empirically, because even the linking of moments of a rhythmic pattern in nature depends upon the a priori capacity for synthesis.”³⁵ Since it is the subject that brings together the objective sound which lapses through time, we thus see a growing mutual reliance of the subject and object. In the Enlightenment agenda, the attempt to objectify nature results in a growing fissure between the subject and object, and the Romantics’ job is to try to save us from falling into it by remedying the subject-object relation. Rhythm is a perfect example of the unity of subject and object.

The rise of rhythm challenges a pre-existing musical norm: melody vs. harmony. Music develops in both vertical and horizontal aspect. Melody progresses through time and is what propels the music to move forward, while harmony gives founding support to a moving melody. This pair of antitheses is purely musical. However, rhythm replaces melody for its philosophical significance. Rhythm manifests itself through the return to self and a progression of patterns through time – this includes melody in a musical sense. Thus, Schlegel chooses rhythm over melody because it is more complicated and dominates the whole.³⁶

³⁴ Roger Scruton, “German Idealism and the Philosophy of Music,” In the *Disputatio: Philosophical Research Bulletin*, Vol. 7, no. 8 (2018), 4.

³⁵ Andrew Bowie, *Music, Philosophy, and Modernity*, 89.

³⁶ Carl Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, trans. Roger Lustig (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 53.

Again, longing is an essential theme to the Romantics because it helps us attain something unavailable to us. According to Bowie, Schlegel once notes “music is most of all longing.”³⁷ Rhythm gives rise to the longing and helps us overcome this terror of the Infinite because we, as subjects in the Kantian sense, find regularity in the objective, chaotic, and undifferentiated sounds. For Schlegel, rhythm is a fundamental way to show our existence in the world, and more abstract ways to see the reality stem from it. To quote Bowie again,

Rhythm involves both the ‘incomprehensible infinity’ which can merely result in an endless chaos of feelings and that which is able to fix a world which has stable elements.

It is the combination of expansive energy and forms of limitation which makes rhythm essential to what becomes philosophy.³⁸

For Schlegel, music produces the philosophical edifice because philosophy, to some extent, is musical. To repeat, the Truth is an infinite longing process to which music brings us closer by the unity of the subject and object. Since we cannot, and in fact should not, render the Infinite completely comprehensible, the metaphysical inquiry can only be done through feelings, and thus music is a prime example to do so. Human inquiry eventually merges into a single enterprise, and the act of aesthetic perception is philosophical precisely because the Romantics consider it to be the central question of epistemology.³⁹ Therefore, music is philosophical for its special importance in metaphysics and epistemology.

³⁷ Andrew Bowie, *Music, Philosophy, and Modernity*, 92.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 96.

³⁹ Mark Even Bonds, *Music as Thought: Listening to the Symphony in the Age of Beethoven*, 40.

Beethoven's Music and the Romantic Revolution

As aforementioned, the Romantic philosophical ideas begin to circulate around the 1790s, before both the publication for Kant's Critique of Judgement and Beethoven's heroic period in which he surpasses the classical norms and begins the romantic revolution. Although the Romantics praise instrumental music as a higher (or even highest) art genre, it is troubling that there is a discrepancy between the early Romantics' claims about instrumental music and the repertoire that serves as examples to their philosophy.⁴⁰ The failure to address any actual music in their example leads to an anticipation for music that is yet to be composed.⁴¹ The Romantics were in need of some "innovative" music to reflect their philosophical agenda. E.T.A Hoffman, a romantic poet and music critic, was the one that connected music and romantic philosophy. In his review of Beethoven's 5th symphony, he writes very poetically:

Glowing beams shoot through this kingdom's deep night, and we become aware of gigantic shadows that surge up and down, enclosing us more and more narrowly and annihilating everything within us, leaving only the pain of that interminable longing, in which every pleasure that had quickly arisen with sounds of rejoicing sinks away and founders, and we live on, rapturously beholding the spirits themselves, only in this pain, which, consuming love, hope, and joy within itself, seeks to burst our breast asunder with a full-voiced consonance of all the passions.⁴²

Evidently, echoing with the romantic notion of the uncanny, his writing reflects the sublime feelings that the symphony elicits through pain, fear, annihilation, etc. The pursuit of music, for

⁴⁰ Mark Evan Bonds, *Music as Thought: Listening to the Symphony in the Age of Beethoven*, 11.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² E.T.A. Hoffman, "Review," *The Critical Reception of Beethoven's Compositions by his German Contemporaries, Volume 2*, trans Robin Wallace, edited by Wayne Senner, Robin Wallace, and William Meredith (London: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 106.

Beethoven, shifts from beauty to the sublime. The sublimity, for Hoffman, suggests that the music “moves the lever controlling horror, fear, dread, pain and awakens that interminable longing...”⁴³ The longing enables the music to create another realm beyond itself – it opens us to a whole new world. Beethoven is a pure romantic because his music opens to us a new, vast, and immeasurable realm. As Beethoven’s music becomes a prime example in demonstrating the power of music, instrumental music provides us with the access to truth in the eyes of many Romantic philosophers such as Schlegel and Novalis. Romantic art strives for infinity, dissolves from language and even expressions, and is regarded as a hallmark of the “sublime” for its indeterminate content.

Beethoven’s composition differs drastically from its predecessors in its forms. To a large extent, Beethoven’s audacious music revolutionized the history of music in different ways, setting new composing and listening paradigms. However, to see this shift of musical paradigm, it is essential to understand the music of Beethoven. Music historians regard Beethoven’s music as a pivotal point in the history of music where the musical canon shifts from classicism to romanticism. The music of nineteenth century underwent a wild transformation, inspired by the myth about Beethoven. Dahlhaus writes, “as a period of music history, it was dominated by a myth which only began to pale in decades that thought of themselves as ‘modernist.’ This was the overpowering myth of Beethoven, which not only forms part of music history but itself took part in making that history.”⁴⁴ The fact of how and why Beethoven shifted away from the Classical canons still remains a question. Similar to the “modernism” we think of today, it was equally hard to make sense of Beethoven’s music and his aesthetic idea, which nonetheless

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth Century Music*, trans. Bradford Robinson (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), 75.

propels a development of a new trend of thoughts in music and philosophy of art.⁴⁵ In the dawn of the nineteenth century, Beethoven's romantic revolution has similarly astonishing effect on the musical norms of its time, and certainly, it is not surprising that Dahlhaus refers to Beethoven as a "modernist," because it was equally challenging for his contemporaries to understand his music in the view of their days.

Unlike the music of Mozart or Haydn, Beethoven's music differs from them in its length, use of dissonance, unconventional forms, extreme speed, and its sheer size. Conceivably, the audience of his time will ask why – this is a philosophical question that perhaps Beethoven imposes through his music.

Beethoven's music is much longer in length than his predecessors. Although his first two symphonies resemble their classical counterparts in their length, Beethoven's third symphony, the *Eroica*, takes the audiences into an hour-long heroic journey. Most of Beethoven's chamber music and solo instrumental music also exceed those of Mozart in length. Accompanying this lengthy music is the grand size of Beethoven's use of orchestration and his manipulation of conventional musical forms. Traditionally, for example, a classical piano concerto begins with a long orchestra tutti and then the soloist joins the music repeating the themes introduced by the orchestra. By contrast, Beethoven's 4th and 5th piano concertos all begin with a piano solo as the introduction, surprising the audience. Moreover, he uses short motives instead of lines of melody. The iconic opening of the fifth symphony shocks the audience with only four bars, and yet this brief motive gets developed throughout the movement in different keys and rhythm. This is also evident Beethoven's third symphony, which marks the beginning of his heroic period

⁴⁵ In contemporary terms, when we think of "modernism," we tend to be overwhelmed by the Second Viennese School. In particular, Arnold Schonberg and his serialism's manipulation of chromaticism created a new set of rules unparalleled in music history.

(1802 – 1813). The first theme is simply a fragment consisting of E-flat major arpeggios in several instruments, and yet this short motive appears quite a few times throughout the movement in an unexpected manner:

Beethoven's approach to dramatizing the opening theme is unique: the theme [...] is subjected to increasingly complex adversity [...] A 'new' theme in the development, a leaping, syncopated figure, challenges the original theme, as do a fugato and extreme harmonic rhythmic dissonance. The theme ultimately emerges triumphant for the recapitulation, though not without its surprises: the horns' entrance sound early, a carefully planned effect contemporary audiences thought a mistake.⁴⁶

The puzzlement that Beethoven presents to the audience is unparalleled by the classical era where people have been used to the melodic lines common in Mozart or Haydn's symphonies. As Beethoven's music often contradicts our expectation, it induces a sense of bewilderment in understanding the music in its form but provides us with joy and sublime feelings. The structure of his music is also unconventional on larger scales. To match the length of his grand music, in the first movement *Eroica* Symphony, Beethoven follows and breaks the traditional structure of music, to which later music theorists refer as the sonata form. Although we can agree on the first theme, it seems the music just runs on and on. It does not indicate a clear demarcation on the transition and second theme, which, for example, Mozart does distinctively, using a modulation from one key to another in specific ways. His creative composition is more common later in his life. Dahlhaus comments on Beethoven's late period (1814 – 1825):

[Beethoven's] late works derived from an effort to reduce traditional forms to their first

⁴⁶ Program Notes, "Journey to Beethoven.," Program Notes to Beethoven Symphony No. 3 in E-flat Major, Op. 55, Jinwook Park. Colby Symphony Orchestra, Colby College, Waterville, ME: Lorimer Chapel, October 23rd, 2021.

principles, from them to draw conclusions that cause general and particular to merge. The forms that Beethoven chose as his starting point – sonata, variation, fugue, and character piece – are by no means left unchanged. They are subjected to striking transformations, striking not just because of their radicality but because the meaning of one form seems to emerge precisely from its transformation into another.⁴⁷

What Beethoven does in his music is to express poetic ideas, which gives meaning to the music and underwrites the content of music in Kantian sense. He does so by manifesting form as content and content as form.⁴⁸ The *Eroica* Symphony, for example, portrays the journey with the massive form that exhibits struggles and leads up to the exhilarating triumph at the end. In this sense, Beethoven disregards Kant's criticism on program music for he takes form and content to be mutually determining in the music itself. The musical form of the *Eroica* symphony also entails the story behind the music.

Beethoven's music is also famous for his use of dissonance. Tonal music usually begins and ends with a consonant tonic chord that signifies a sense of home. Consonance creates a sense of stability, and dissonance conveys a feeling of insecurity that tends to lead us home as it always wants to be resolved to a consonant chord. Again, the development in the *Eroica* Symphony reaches a chordal section with the wind and brass instrument. It begins with a series of big chords and arrives at the climax with increasing dissonance to which we hardly call a chord at the end with an E and an F in the flute (see Figure 1.1), yet the unharmonious sound is so powerful. Tonality simply collapses at this point, but it lets us feel a sense of heroic power and, as I will argue later, a feeling of the sublime.

⁴⁷ Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth Century Music*, 86.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 85.



Figure 1.1 Ludwig van Beethoven, *Symphony No. 3 in E-flat, Op.55, Eroica*, mm 276-284⁴⁹

Another example comes from Beethoven's famous 5th symphony. Rather than a break between the third and fourth movement, Beethoven connects them as if they were one movement, using the dominant G major chord at the end of the third movement leading up to the enthralling beginning of the fourth movement in C major. The music is raised to a point of anxiety. The melody of the first violins presses a feeling of restless longing in the dominant key of G major accompanied by the tremolos of the strings as the timpani keeps striking the dissonant C throughout. As the dynamic experiences a sudden crescendo with the flutes, horns, and trumpets joining in, the music bursts out of the darkness and into a glorious triumph in tutti. The heavy, dissonant strokes of the timpani, Hoffman thinks, sounds like a strange and frightening voice that excites the fear of spirits.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Ludwig van Beethoven, *Symphony No. 3 in E-flat, Op.55, Eroica*, ed. Wilhelm Rush (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1862): 17.

⁵⁰ E.T.A. Hoffman, "Review," 97.

Beethoven's music thus gives us the feeling of the sublime. As I've discussed, the "modernist" character of Beethoven's music is precisely ascribed to his manipulation of musical forms. In the view of classicism, his music is completely obscure. His challenge to previous musical norms and his unparalleled composition breaks apart our imagination for it goes beyond the audiences' experience. In a way, Beethoven expands the horizon of music, as his unprecedented music demonstrates the seemingly immense complexities of musical form. His music no longer seeks for the beautiful, because it exhausts the ways for which imagination is to play with understanding. When the formal harmony of classicism collapses, the grand scale of Beethoven's music incidentally allows us to feel pleasure due to its artistic sublime.

Meanwhile, Beethoven's music also conveys the sublime through its dissonance. Hoffman's description of fear and frightening voice signifies an overwhelming power. The cacophonous dissonance and use of lingering dominant chords that take forever to return to the tonic key strikes us as fearful and establishes disturbance within us. We feel an infinite longing for resolution and thus are constantly seeking stability. Beethoven's music depicts such escape from the terrifying dissonance also with his heroic music. When the dissonance finally resolves, as for example, when we hear at the beginning of the fourth movement of Beethoven's 5th symphony, we realize that the fearful power does not dominate us whatsoever, but that we can eventually prevail over it. The heroic and often triumphant ending of Beethoven's symphonies suggests to us an overcoming of struggle.

Music historians typically consider Beethoven as the first romantic composer, but in the history of philosophy, the romantic agenda began to circulate long before his music. Again, it is unclear the extent of philosophical influence Beethoven had from the likes of Novalis or Schlegel if there is any at all. His music nonetheless musically realizes the themes and ideas of

Romantic philosophy. Hoffman's critique ties music and our pursuit of truth in a virtually unprecedented way. Music, usually thought to be decorative art and communication of ideas, acquires a special philosophical importance for its connection with truth and the ontology of the world.

II. From Music to Truth: Hegel and Schopenhauer

Contrary to the notion of the infinite conceived by the Romantics, Hegel proposes the Idea that fundamentally encompasses his entire philosophy. Art is the sensuous expression of the Idea. Hegel constructs his hierarchy of the arts based on how individual pieces of art can achieve this purpose. Music ranks only second to the top. Hegel's account of music is controversial. In his chapter on music, he explicitly discusses Mozart, Haydn, and Rossini, but fails to mention Beethoven. Hegel's aesthetic thoughts formulated around the 1820s, soon after Beethoven's heroic period where his unprecedented music eventually initiated the Romantic Revolutions. It remains unclear whether Hegel had the chance to appreciate any of Beethoven's romantic compositions, nor do we know if his philosophy of music takes Beethoven's music into account.

On the other hand, Schopenhauer's treatment of music is arguably more popular among musicians for the special place it has in all arts. Schopenhauer was himself a musician, and music is an integral part of his life.¹ In this sense, he had more connection to music than Hegel. He approaches art from a different direction by discarding the idealism and realism distinction and instead seeing the world as will and representation. He then constructs his hierarchy of arts accordingly, with music as the highest form of art.

In this chapter, I will outline Hegel and Schopenhauer's philosophy of art and the role that music plays in their overall philosophies. Although Hegel and Schopenhauer adopt different approaches to art, their thoughts converge in the sense that art underlies the way we approach the world. In discussing their philosophy of music, I hope to show that music and philosophy, in some sense, share the same goal in their pursuit of truth: music can be a metaphysical inquiry, revealing to us the truth of the world.

¹ Dunton Green, "Schopenhauer and Music," *Music Quarterly*, Vol. 16, no. 2 (1930), 200.

Hegel's System and Aesthetic Truth

Similar to romantic philosophers who regard music as a philosophical tool to approach the infinite or the Ideal, art holds a very special place in Hegel's pursuit of truth. Unlike the fragmented philosophy of the Romantics, Hegel has an immensely organized system that captures his masterful thoughts. Hegelian idealism asserts *the true that is the whole* to describe the world. This self-determining whole is also known as the Idea, which, as Moland quotes Hegel, is "the interpenetrating, mutually determining unity of thought and object: it is 'the Subject-Object as the unity of the ideal and the real, of the finite and the infinite, of the soul and the body, as the possibility that has actually in itself, as that whose nature can be comprehended only as existing [...] and so forth.'"² Hegel's holism fully demonstrates his dialectical approach. In forming the self-determining and thus mutually determining whole, everything begins as divided beings in the sense that every object is inherently different from each other, but everything again ends up in unity. Thus, we, as human beings, recognize the Idea as the unity of unity and division because the Idea is the ever-processing whole that integrates indeterminate beings into a whole. Nothing exists without such conceptualization. This process is purely spontaneous, meaning there are no "givens" that manipulate the formation of this idealist totality. This observation implies that human beings, in this self-forming totality, are free in the spiritual realm without any religious messages and divine oracles which claim to have mysteriously created humanity and the world.

As humanity does not belong to any pre-given world, we must acknowledge that we live in the process of metaphysical creation of the world embodied by the Idea. But how can we

² Lydia Moland, *Hegel's Aesthetics: The Art of Idealism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 24.

access *the true that is the whole*? Hegel's dialectical approach synthesizes logic and nature, which demonstrates that humans are not only are physical beings but also possess certain rational thoughts. The synthesis of logic and nature makes us conscious beings. Hegel describes spirit (*Geist*) as the realm of self-consciousness, in which humans come to understand themselves as embodied and free beings, or as understood as both thought and nature.³ In the subjective spirit, we begin as an indeterminate subjective certainty. Further, underlying our multi-faceted identities is a unity of self-consciousness with itself. This unity is opaque to us because it is determined by the intersubjective relations between ourselves and others as well as the contingencies around us, instead of by reason. On the contrary, the objective spirit demands that only after a dialectical process does our identity become explicit. This process includes mutual recognition within our living social, cultural, and political institutions in which we seek our own identities. In short, Eldridge concludes,

The ideal but actualizable and even self-actualizing end of this process of growing up, according to Hegel, is free human life, construed as the reasonable expression of both one's particular talents and one's shared human, rational-reflective nature, within a cultural setting of mutual recognition and endorsement.⁴

The crucial part of this dialectical process is the realization that human beings are free and self-determining because we spontaneously and freely search for our own identity while simultaneously creating the organic whole embodied by the Idea. For humans to understand their participation in the world and reflect upon it, Hegel argues that we must do so through the Absolute Spirit.

³ Ibid, 25.

⁴ Richard Eldridge, 'Hegel in Music,' In *Hegel and the Arts*, ed. Stephon Houlgate (Northwestern University Press, 2007), 128.

We can access the Absolute Spirit in three ways: philosophy, religion, and art. Philosophy, through Hegel's well-known dialectical approach, strives to achieve the Idea through conceptual understanding. By contrast, religion is the representation of Truth through a holy narrative that mimics the Truth. Lastly, art is the sensuous expression of Truth – it allows us to *feel* the Idea. Although Hegel deems philosophy to be the highest understanding of the Absolute Spirit, that does not, incidentally, make religion and art inferior in their relation to the Truth. They simply enable us to see, or to feel, insofar as what Hegel says of art, the Truth through different lens. Philosophy, religion, and art all provide humans with a unique perspective on the Idea. When we know the Idea through its sensuous form, we understand the Truth in the name of beauty. Hegel connotes beauty, or the aesthetic Truth, using the word “ideal” to distinguish its significance from that in philosophy and religion. This “ideal” stands for the sensuous experience of the “vast, self-determining whole that expresses the unity of thought and being and underlies the wide-ranging components of Hegel's idealism.”⁵

Scholars often credit Hegel with being the father of art history because of his analysis of symbolic, classical, and romantic art. To understand this attribution, I shall reiterate that the Idea is a self-determining whole, and it comes to be self-conscious purely through human thought and without any divine intervention. Contrary to Kant's alleged formalism, content plays a greater role in Hegel's aesthetic conception. The content of beautiful art must not be divine in the religious sense, but divine within humanity itself as an embodiment of our freedom that eventually constitutes the Idea. The history of art resembles a trajectory of getting closer to such Ideal beauty and reflects the actualization of the Idea in particular forms of art. Bowie sees this process as “a changing relationship between form and content, subjective and objective.”⁶ In a

⁵ Lydia Moland, *Hegel's Aesthetics: The Art of Idealism*, 28.

⁶ Andrew Bowie, *Music, Philosophy, and Modernity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 85.

brief sketch, the symbolic art externalizes the divine, making the Idea abstract, indeterminate, and incomplete. The subjective and objective are not fully unified and thus not a perfect unity of form and content, because the art is merely symbolic – its meaning can only be grasped arbitrarily, and instead of a complete unification, the content and form remains an abstract harmony.⁷ The progress of symbolic art is what Bowie calls a “striving” that unites form and content.⁸ As the art achieves a total harmony of form and content, it becomes classical art. Bowie writes, “classical art [...] realizes the union of internal and external by presenting the human form as an object.”⁹ It is the interpenetration of spirit and nature and the perfect expression of the Idea in sensuous manner. Classical art is thus the highest art aesthetically, but the natural form that it adopts is inadequate because human spirituality cannot be expressed in complete physical forms. To some extent, classical art fails to synthesize with the inwardness of human spirituality that constitutes the true that is the whole. Therefore, classical art progresses towards the more philosophically adaptative romantic art, as Hegel explains, “when the Idea of the beautiful is comprehended as absolute spirit, and therefore as the spirit which is free in its own eyes, it is no longer completely realized in the external world, since its true determinate being it has only in itself as spirit.”¹⁰ Once again, the form and content are disrupted by the inwardness of the spirit that shows the freedom of human beings. Thus, romantic art cannot be considered the best art aesthetically. However, romantic art grants us better access to the Idea and thus is the highest art philosophically, fulfilling its role in the sensuous expression of Truth.

The divine, which is a crucial theme throughout Hegel’s account of history of art, becomes increasingly humanized and secularized in the sense that we *are* the divine. The divine

⁷ G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Arts*, trans. T.M. Knox (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 300.

⁸ Andrew, Bowie, *Music, Philosophy, and Modernity*, 128.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Arts*, 301.

is no longer an external being. Similar to Spinoza's monism, God is us and we are God. Since Hegel's system is a self-determining whole, as aforementioned, it must not extoll any creator of the world. Thus, humans are the divine, and art is supposed to reflect such constitutions of the Idea. Historically, there have been many holy influences on art, but Hegel's holism demands that modern art be free from the divine. As such, art risks not being art at all: as art is humanized, it also becomes prosaic. Hegel uses the word "prosaic" to describe the commonality of life, or in Moland's words, to "designate the everyday world as it appears given to us."¹¹ Thus, ironically, besides his title of father of art history, Hegel is also often known as the prophet who foresees the end of art. However, the end of romantic art does not mean that the future of art is doomed. Artists' jobs are to make the prosaic world poetic, as Moland indicates: "the artist unifies, purifies, and enhances the familiar world around us into an artificially simple whole that gives us a sensuous experience of the many-faceted true that is the whole and of our creative role within it."¹² Humanity comes to a stage of modernity precisely when we are the ones who create our own world – humans are the divine.

To better illustrate my point, I shall use two examples in paintings. Michelangelo's painting, *Creation of Adam*, portrays the scene where God created Adam and Eve, who were the first two human beings (see Figure 2.1). They are vital to the idea of God's creation of humanity. But contrary to Hegel's spontaneous, self-determining system, what this painting reflects presupposes a divine being as the creator of the organic whole. Michelangelo's painting is a fusion of a classical and Christian world that is elevated to the horizon from a divine perspective, which is only approachable by the artist who is divinely inspired. Religious paintings, in general, presuppose the existence of an external being outside the spiritual realm of humanity, but the

¹¹ Lydia Moland, *Hegel's Aesthetics: The Art of Idealism*, 37.

¹² Ibid.

artistic expression of such a figure is insufficient to depict the self-determining process of the Idea. By contrast, Hegel was fond of Dutch genre painting.¹³ Dutch genre painting is neither historical nor religious but portrays a mundane scene of our everyday life. It is also not a commissioned work made for a special occasion, but rather an everyday creation for secular purposes. Moreover, such paintings often appeared on the market and were sold to wealthy merchants that hung them at home. For example, Nicolaes Maes's *the Lacemaker* shows a domestic scene of a mother and her child (see Figure 2.2). Maes is able to endow his artistic vision to elevate a mundane scene to one of philosophical importance by simply showing the ordinary life that we live in.

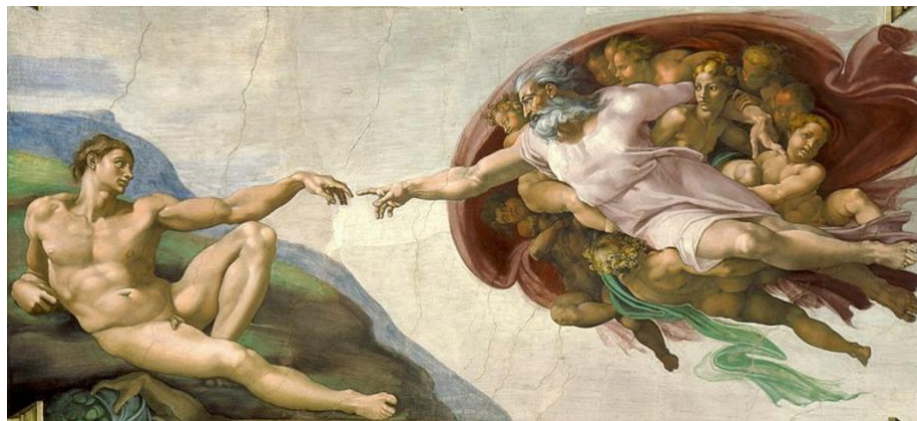


Figure 2.1 Michelangelo, "The Creation of Adam", 1512¹⁴

¹³ Ibid, 137.

¹⁴ Michelangelo, *The Creation of Adam*, Fresco, 1512, Sistine Chapel, Italy.



Figure 2.2 Nicolaes Maes, *The Lacemaker*, 1656 ¹⁵

Hegel understands this genre of paintings as finding the spiritual meaning among prosaic life. Such paintings no longer hinge on religious narratives that endow meaning because, once again, humanity is the source of divinity. As such, everyday life can fully support the spiritual content of the artistic creation by giving us access to a “greater contemplation of spiritual meaning”, which “[shows] our mutual formation with it, all in ways that allow us to experience the Idea.”¹⁶ Art must truthfully represent this paradigm shift from an external divinity to the modernity of human life in its content.

Music underwent a similar transformation from its religious purpose to Beethoven’s romantic revolution in the 19th century. In short, since music is ultimately about us, as compared to superior beings beyond humanity, romantic music more often conveys subjective emotions and feeling. This individuality precisely accounts for the unity of unity and division that

¹⁵ Nicolaes Maes, *The Lacemaker*, Oil on Canvas, 1656, The Met Museum, New York.

¹⁶ Lydia Moland, *Hegel’s Aesthetics: The Art of Idealism*, 138.

underlies Hegel's holism because every one of us has the opportunity to partake in the *true that is the whole*. The feelings we obtain from music, despite being arguably individualized and divided, constitute a whole that enables us to understand, access, and finally narrate the spiritual realm of humanity. As Bowie further comments, "music is therefore connected to the development of specific forms of thinking which arise from the individualization of the subject in modernity, and to the loss of a community founded on shared religious beliefs."¹⁷ This explains the historical change in which music ceases to be religious since music is essentially about us, rather than some external being beyond humanity. Beethoven's music, for instance, often portrays a heroic figure that faces struggles but ultimately embraces a glorious victory. His music is about the struggle and triumph of humanity. Beethoven's 5th symphony is a perfect example of such a journey, and his 9th symphony is an ode to humanity at its core. Music, as Bowie describes Beethoven to believe, is free from extraneous social demands in the sense that it is on the one hand autonomous, but on the other hand echoes more fully with social and historical changes.¹⁸ This is a salient feature of modernity. Music reveals our journey, values, society, history, and, most importantly, our freedom with which we can narrate the story of humanity in its entirety – we are part of the self-determining whole. Admittedly, this feature is not solely true of music, but also applies to many other genres of art in general. Music, however, still has its own special meaning in Hegel's philosophy. Thus, one may ask: how does music enable us to feel the Idea?

¹⁷ Andrew Bowie, *Music, Philosophy, and Modernity*, 129.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 124.

Music in Hegel's System of Individual Arts

In the system of individual arts, Hegel explores how each specific art genre can allow us to feel the Idea in a sensuous manner. Since, as previously mentioned, the true that is the whole does not presuppose any givens, Hegel's hierarchy of art ascends toward the philosophically highest art in a way that embodies an increasing degree of subjectivity. This trajectory explicitly represents greater involvement of human beings and surveys the externality of architecture, the individuality of sculpture, and the inwardness of painting, music, and poetry.

Hegel begins his section on music with a brief survey of other arts' inferiority to music from a philosophical standpoint. Architecture, he argues, "was the most incomplete art because we found it incapable [...] of portraying the spirit in a presence adequate to it."¹⁹ Thus, architecture does not reflect our inwardness at all and can only exist as an external being. Sculpture is spiritual only insofar as it is "required for the individual vivification of a content inherently substantial."²⁰ Sculpture still relies heavily on the bodily forms that are not evident in the inner life, as shown in the classical art. It is in painting that this inner life is finally revealed. However, the color of painting remains in spatial forms which only exist as a three-dimensional object when internalized within us. To this end, Hegel calls colors "a pure appearance of *separated* things" because they fail to incorporate the subjective soul into the art on its own. Following this train of thought, the next art would be an embodiment of a complete inwardness, free of any physical or spatial beings, which only exists in virtue of the subject; this is the birth of music. Music, in essence, is a product of a double negation as a process of resounding. We hear music by negating the external world (i.e., the physical vibrations of sounds), and turning it into the inner vibration of the soul. Next, another cancellation cancels this negation, and the

¹⁹ G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Arts*, 888.

²⁰ Ibid.

music reunites as, what Hegel calls, “the first and more ideal breath of the soul.”²¹ Or as Moland puts it,

The subject must negate the external world, cancelling all three dimensions, turning inward and making itself its own object. It then recognizes that this other is itself and so cancels the negation, asserting unity with itself [...] As long as the subject has no content but itself, it remains an abstract series of double negation.²²

The double negation dissects the continuity of time into a series of “nows” which “supersedes itself by passing into another ‘now’ and therefore reveals its negative activity,” and which “still remains always the same in its alteration; for each point of time is a ‘now’ just little distinguished from the other [...] as the abstract self is from the object in which it cancels itself [and] closes itself.”²³ That is, the subject is crucial in this process. Like Kant, without the subject, the physical world becomes incomprehensible. For Hegel, the subject gets to feel itself through time by synthesizing the points of time: “the self is in time, and time is the being of the subject himself.”²⁴ Unity of unity and division becomes evident in this picture: as the music is presented as a melodic whole, we have to cancel its objectiveness by dividing it into the “nows”, after which the subject will sensuously feel the sound of the soul as unity. Though the material sound is purely transient, the work of music “comes home to us,” because, Hegel explains, “music takes as its subject-matter the subjective inner life, with the aim of presenting itself, not as an external shape or as an objectively existing work, but as that inner life...”²⁵ The content of music is thus the music of the inner soul.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Lydia Moland, *Hegel's Aesthetics: The Art of Idealism*, 225.

²³ G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Arts*, 907.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid, 909.

Hegel goes on further to explore some notable elements in music – time, harmony, and melody – and how each of them helps us to attain the Idea by sensuously expressing our inner subjectivity. To repeat, music allows our inner soul to feel the Idea through time. As such, time becomes the fundamental notion that underlies essentially all musical work, simply because music persists through time. Since we feel music through the process of double negation, music must be able to demonstrate, or mimic, this metaphysical process. In a sense, music therefore must interrupt the flow of time because time, by itself, is indeterminate, or, in Hegel’s own words, “a uniform stream and also an inherently undifferentiated duration.”²⁶ To interrupt the continuity of time, Hegel introduces the idea of the bar, and he continues,

The simple purpose of the bar is to establish a specific temporal unit as the measure and rule both for the marked interruption of the previously undifferentiated temporal succession [...] and to bring about the continual renewal of this time-measure in an abstractly uniform way.²⁷

The bar is a regulative tool that groups time in a uniform way. With time and bars in hand, we are ready to bring in rhythm. Here, if the music strictly follows the rhythm of the beats, the music becomes “humdrum, bare, and lacking in invention.”²⁸ Music achieves a sense of liberation working with and against the beats, echoing the emancipation of human beings from divinity, which informs us of our freedom. The rhythm must show some variation and contrast to avoid falling into the tedious sound, and this results in syncopation in its sharpest form.

Next on Hegel’s agenda is harmony. Notes, as building blocks of harmony, stand in numerical relations to each other, just as the Pythagorean school observes. Mathematical

²⁶ Ibid, 913.

²⁷ Ibid, 915.

²⁸ Ibid, 918.

relation, according to Hegel, is not random, but rather contains an “inner necessity both for their particular characters and for their ensemble.”²⁹ As a result, chords are organized into a necessary system. Hegel makes a comparison between consonance and dissonance. As the former suggests an undisturbed unity, the latter destroys this unity by adding a note that drives the harmony into opposition. However, this opposition is essential to the identity of identity of division. Hegel’s system thus echoes with the tension and resolution of dissonant and consonant chords. Hegel concludes, “if music is to express artistically both the inner meaning and the subjective feeling of the deepest things [...] it must possess in the sphere of its notes that means capable of representing the battle of opposites.”³⁰ Musical tension is extremely common in the world of music. For instance, music often ends with the consonant chord, often preceded by a dominant 7th chord as a sign of resolving tension and forming stability. This may be why Bowie points out the similarity between Beethoven’s music and Hegel’s philosophy because they both “rely on contradictions and tensions which are integrated into a dynamic whole that gives the parts their meaning.”³¹ As has been articulated in the last chapter, Beethoven was admittedly a master in manipulating tensions through his use of short thematic phrases which create tension and only gain meaning in the grand scheme of his symphony. For Hegel, the resolution is a sign of arriving at the unity of the consonance and dissonance, hence unity and division. Resolution is imperative because harmony is to present us with a contradiction that must eventually be resolved “if satisfaction is to be given to the ear and the heart.”³²

²⁹ Ibid, 925.

³⁰ Ibid, 928.

³¹ Bowie, *Music, Philosophy, and Modernity*, 125.

³² G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Arts*, 928.

Now, we finally unit the dimension of time and harmony to acquire “a genuine existence only through and within the melody as the essential features and aspects of the melody itself.”³³ In melody, the subject finds the freedom of his or her inner self, because what music does is to enable us to feel the freedom of the soul. The progression of melody is both free and restricted, which Hegel calls a “battle of freedom and necessity.”³⁴ As in the dimension of harmony, Hegel favors a combination of consonant and dissonant chords – melody is supported by such chord progressions. The “battle of opposites” must be a feature throughout the melody of music and thus demonstrates our freedom. Therefore, as melody shows an infinite determinability and possibility, it must be “so regulated that what we comprehend is always an inherently total and perfect whole.”³⁵ A good metaphor here is the Heraclitan river: it seems always stable and determined, but underneath it is a raging torrent. Through music, we become liberated spiritual beings that form a mutually determining whole; we are free but to some extent also determined by our freedom. Thus, music can “lift the soul to the apprehension of a higher sphere.”³⁶ This means that melody is the final building block that enables us to sensuously feel the Idea in our spiritual life.

Hegel also warns us about ways in which music becomes prosaic, from which we cease to feel ourselves. Hegel points out two ways that music can fail in fulfilling its purpose:

The one immerses itself entirely in the given work of art and does not wish to render anything beyond that the work in hand already contains; whereas the other does not merely

³³ Ibid, 931.

³⁴ Ibid, 932.

³⁵ Ibid, 933.

³⁶ Ibid.

reproduce but draws expression, interpretation, the real animation in short, principally from its own resources and not only from the composition as it exists.³⁷

On the one hand, music cannot be a mere imitation. In Hegel's language, if music has a "objective solidity," this necessitates that the artist is obedient to the music and gives herself entirely in the character of the work.³⁸ Such work is then purely objective and thus, in Hegel's sense, prosaic, because art must transcend the commonality of the world. Since Hegel rejects a premade given world, an imitation presupposes an object that belongs to such world. Music, for Hegel, should reflect this philosophical perception. However, program music was quite common during Hegel's era. For example, German romantic music used a three-degree downward motion to mimic the chirping sounds of the birds. This technique is used in Beethoven's piano sonata No. 25, sometimes known as the "Cuckoo" (see Figure 2.3).



Figure 2.3 Beethoven Piano Sonata No. 25 in G ³⁹

Beethoven's music is not incompatible with Hegel's description of music, because it is a poetic replication of the prosaic nature around us. To better clarify Hegel's distinction between the poetic and the prosaic, it is necessary to distinguish the mere imitation of natural sound from a poetic imitation. For example, in contemporary music, people are creative enough to mimic the sounds of nature on instruments, such as the sound of lightening, horse, etc. If one were to

³⁷ Ibid, 955.

³⁸ Ibid, 956.

³⁹ Ludwig van Beethoven, Piano Sonata No. 25 in G, Op.79 (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel).

imitate the sound of nature in a literal sense, Hegel would then argue that this music fails as a prosaic ending. By contrast, Beethoven elevates the prosaic elements in nature to a poetic expression. More broadly, although Hegel would prefer absolute music, this does not mean that program music is invaluable for being potentially prosaic.

On the other hand, a work of music cannot purely be virtuosic for it must not only “evince an astounding mastery over external material.”⁴⁰ Virtuosity, thus, risks “[displaying] its unbounded freedom by surpassing itself.”⁴¹ This is why, I gather, Hegel pays special attention to the opera for its cadenza. In music, cadenza refers to a virtuosic passage improvised by the soloist. Not only do the performers play what is given, but they also “[introduce their own] interpretation, fills in gaps, deepens what is superficial, ensouls what is soulless...”⁴² In such passages, the performers improvise with the music, but cannot only pursue unbounded freedom. As such, the cadenza is hence a “free melodic stream of the soul which rejoices to resound on its own account and lift itself on its own wings.”⁴³ Cadenzas are common to many other instruments, such as the piano, violin, etc. When the artist performs on these instruments, she cannot merely show off her virtuosity, which would cultivate the audiences’ admiration on her skills, instead of the music. Thus, music might cease to embody the Idea. Arguably, for example, much music of Franz Liszt and Niccolò Paganini, who are Hegel’s romantic contemporaries, would not be philosophically enriching for Hegel because their music only challenges the skills of talented musicians, rather than expressing the soul.

In concluding the discussion on Hegel’s thoughts on music, it should be emphasized that music is not the highest art for him. In other words, music cannot best express the Idea, as Hegel

⁴⁰ G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Arts*, 957.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid, 956.

⁴³ Ibid, 957.

puts poetry on top of his hierarchy of art. Music, to repeat, reflects our complete inwardness, but this also results in its inability to fully embody the Idea in sensible forms. As Moland puts it, “although music can powerfully evoke the aspect of the Idea that is humans’ inner life, this interiority must ultimately be balanced by an evocation of the external world.”⁴⁴ While music collapses into the inner subjectivity of human beings, it also loses the external reality of which our spiritual life consists. Hegel’s idealism in this sense is different from Berkeley, who famously claims that *esse est percipi*. Hegel does not forgo the sphere of actuality, and the world is not purely mental.⁴⁵ In forming the true that is the whole, the interpenetrating subject-object relation is what underlies the unity of unity and division. Just as being is meaningless without nothing, the subject would not exist without the objective world.

Hegel argues, “[music] does not get beyond the more abstract and general character of what it takes as its subject or beyond vaguer deep feelings of the heart.”⁴⁶ The total inwardness is exactly the weakness of music. The need to restore the objective world gives rise to poetry – Hegel says, “the sphere of ideas, which transcends the rather abstract inner life of feeling as such and give to their world the shape of concrete actuality, cuts itself free from music and gives itself an artistically adequate existence in the art of poetry.”⁴⁷ Poetry thus attaches the spiritual inner soul onto the actual world. Linguistic descriptions are more concrete than music because they refer to things of actuality. Moreover, Hegel sees drama as the best poetry because we are embodied in the world through the performance of drama. In this sense, we have finally felt the Idea in its full sensible form, as poetry reflects our “co-authorship with the world.”⁴⁸ It is also

⁴⁴ Lydia Moland, *Hegel’s Aesthetics: The Art of Idealism*, 251.

⁴⁵ Hegel’s idealism often gets criticism for identifying that the world is all mental. The analytic tradition, such as British philosopher G.E. Moore, starts out to attack on this view, but I believe this is a misunderstanding of Hegel.

⁴⁶ G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Arts*, 962.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 960.

⁴⁸ Lydia Moland, *Hegel’s Aesthetics: The Art of Idealism*, 253.

worth pointing out that although poetry is highest art, it does not follow that the other arts are worthless. Hegel's conceptual argument does not aim to discard individual arts and be left with the best one. Each art form provides us with a unique way of experiencing the Idea; architecture, sculpture, paintings, music, and poetry all take a special place in the overall picture. Only poetry stands out due to its closeness to the Idea. Next, we shall see that Schopenhauer's hierarchy puts music at top precisely for its inwardness that brings about our free imagination.

The Aesthetic Vision of a World as Will and Representation

The philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer differs drastically from that of Hegel. While Hegel asserts the true as the whole as the guiding principle of the world, Schopenhauer distinguishes two aspects of the world: will and representation. Needless to say, aesthetics has different meanings in their systems of thoughts. For Schopenhauer, aesthetics is a central idea of his philosophy because it fundamentally connects to the essence of the world, but Hegel sees it as only one of the three ways to access Truth.

Schopenhauer begins his book *the World as Will and Representation* with an astoundingly bold statement: "the world is my representation."⁴⁹ But he is not asserting any kind of solipsism such that the world is entirely one's imagination or conceptualization. He further explains, "everything that exists for knowledge, and hence the whole of this world, is only object in relation to the subject, perception of the perceiver, in a word, representation."⁵⁰ In other words, every act of "knowing" presupposes a person who knows. Without the subject, the world would, in a sense, cease to exist. As the idealist tradition identifies the subject as the root of

⁴⁹Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E.F.J Payne (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1969), 3.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

epistemology, Schopenhauer acknowledges the contribution of Berkeley, but it seems he disagrees with the doctrine that to be is to be perceived. The reality is itself a coherent whole under the principle of sufficient reason, which demands that everything that is the case must have a cause or reason. In other words, the world is fully determined under the law of causality. While Schopenhauer does not deny the existence of an external world, this world constitutes a transcendental ideality that can only be accessed by the subject's own experience and thus is one's representation. Following Kantian tradition, the objective world is governed by space and time, but the subject is free from such constraints because it is "whole and undivided in every represented being."⁵¹

Schopenhauer refutes both materialism and idealism. Materialists fail to recognize the fact that "with the simple object, it had at once posited the subject as well," while the idealists overlooked the principle of sufficient reason that underwrites all objects independent of the subject.⁵² Both schools attempt to start from either subject and object and derive the other aspect of the world accordingly. Schopenhauer avoids this polemical antimony and begins his metaphysics with representation. But this is merely one side of the world. On the other side, the world possesses an entirely distinct realm, which "is its innermost being, its kernel, the thing-in-itself."⁵³ This entity is what Schopenhauer calls the "will." As Wicks puts it, the will "transcends the division between subject and object, along with the ceaseless transformation – like travelling along the surface of a Mobius strip, between subject and object standpoints inherent in the [conflict between materialism and idealism]."⁵⁴

⁵¹ Ibid, 5.

⁵² Ibid, 34.

⁵³ Ibid, 31.

⁵⁴ Robert Wicks, *Schopenhauer's The World as Will and Representation: Reader's Guide* (New York: Continuum Books, 2007), 37.

To discover the will, Schopenhauer starts from our own bodies, of which he claims that we have an immediate access to the innermost being, i.e., the will. He says, “the inner nature of his own phenomenon, which manifests itself to him as representation both through his actions and through the permanent substratum of these his body, is his will.”⁵⁵ That is, the external physical being is the representation of the will. Further, Schopenhauer continues,

Not only the actions of the body, but the whole body itself, as was shown above, is phenomenon of the will, objected will, concrete will. All that occurs in it must therefore occur through will, though here this will is not guided by knowledge, not determined according to motives, but acts blindly according to causes, called in this cases *stimuli*.⁵⁶

In other words, the will has a causal effect on the world of representation. Also, this implies that the world is guided by the law of causality, and by the will that underlies the phenomenal world. Moreover, the will does not subsist in space and time and cannot be subsumed under the principle of sufficient reason. It is thus unreachable by any knowledge because knowledge, for Schopenhauer, refers to the knowable world which consists of space and time. Will, however, lies outside this realm; we only have an intuitive apprehension of it.

We have mentioned that Schopenhauer avoids solipsism, or what he calls “theoretical egoism.”⁵⁷ His agenda is to make the generalization that will does not only exist within me, but every matter in my representation of the world. As in his example of one’s body, we know it as will and representation in their respective sense. Similarly, he then claims,

“We shall therefore assume that as, on the one hand, they are representation, just like the body [...] so on the other hand, if we set aside their existence as the subject’s

⁵⁵ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 109.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 115.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 104.

representation, what still remains over must be, according to its inner nature, the same as what in ourselves we call *will*.”⁵⁸

His argument seems to be an inductive argument from analogy, which may be a fallacious over-generalization. It is indeed a gross simplification to use only his own body as the example to show that every matter in the world is metaphysically identical to it. Wicks offers another interpretation: since we have direct access to the inner nature of one of the representations, i.e., my self-consciousness and my body, and there is nothing special about me. Thus, it would be safe to assume the same is true for anything else. Otherwise, the world would be less philosophically coherent because of potential solipsism.⁵⁹ Thus, the world consists of nothing but will and representation.

Further, Schopenhauer argues that the will is *one*, which entails that the world is a unified whole manifested through a single inner reality. As was mentioned, will is not bounded by space and time and is thus free of the principle of sufficient reason. Therefore, it eliminates the possibility of plurality. As there is no being or matter that provides a sufficient cause or ground for the will, it remains indivisible as a self-sufficient being. That is, the sphere of the will does not presuppose or necessitate the existence of anything else, so the will must be the *one*, and is present in everything in nature and living being. Schopenhauer further says, “if, per possible, a single being, even the most insignificant, were entirely annihilated, the whole world would inevitably be destroyed with it.”⁶⁰

Now, we have seen that the principle of sufficient reason plays a vital role in Schopenhauer’s arguments, especially his treatment in differentiating the will and the

⁵⁸ Ibid, 105.

⁵⁹ Robert Wicks, *Schopenhauer’s The World as Will and Representation: Reader’s Guide*, 50.

⁶⁰ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 129.

representation. However, after Schopenhauer establishes that the world is will and representation, he considers, as the title of book III suggests, “the representations independent of the principle of sufficient reason.”⁶¹ Schopenhauer begins this discussion with Platonic Ideas. According to Plato, all things in the world have a form within them that always is and never becomes anything else nor fades away. For instance, a thing is red because it possesses the form of “redness.” Forms, or Platonic Ideas as Schopenhauer calls them, are timeless, spaceless, and contains no plurality. In a sense, the Platonic Ideas are virtually identical to the will, but forms are objects that, as Plato teaches us in his *Republic*, philosophers attempt to grasp in their pursuit of knowledge. It is also worth clarifying that the forms, as the Platonic realism puts forward, are real objects in the world, instead of some idealist construction or imagination. In this case, the Ideas are the most immediate objectification of the will. In understanding the Idea, one ought to only think about “what” rather than “where,” “when,” or “how,” because the “what” is free of the principle of sufficient reason. Consequently, Schopenhauer forgoes all sciences in discovering the Ideas because they are necessarily contingent on the laws of a spatial-temporal world. Thus, he asks,

What kind of knowledge is it that considers what continues to exist outside and independently of all relations, but which alone is really essential to the world, the true content of its phenomenon, that which is subject to no change, and is therefore known with equal truth for all time, in a word, the *Ideas* that are the immediate and adequate objectivity of the thing-in-itself, of the will?⁶²

⁶¹ Ibid, 167.

⁶² Ibid, 184.

His answer is *art* – the work of genius. Art “plucks the object of its contemplation from the stream of the world’s course and holds it isolated before it.”⁶³ The method of genius is precisely to discard a world underwritten by the principle of sufficient reason as embodied in science and to look away to another world via aesthetic contemplation. In other words, the genius possesses full knowledge of the Ideas due to their ability to achieve such contemplation. Schopenhauer further continues, “that the Idea comes to us more easily from the work of art than directly from nature and from reality, arises solely from the fact that the artist, who knew only the Idea and not reality, separated it out from reality...”⁶⁴ For Plato, such Ideas are the highest form of knowledge, and Schopenhauer accordingly considers art to be epistemically superior because “the objects it reveals are those that serve as the fixed archetypes of our fluctuating world.”⁶⁵ Schopenhauer urges us to approach the world through the aesthetic lens, as art is fundamentally grounded in his metaphysics and epistemology because art serves as a epistemic tool that communicates the knowledge of the Ideas. If the knowledge of the Ideas is ever to circulate among human beings, we must assume that everyone must be inherently sensible to the Ideas through an artistic vision. However, this ability to access the Ideas comes in different degrees among people, and some may be less sensitive to the Ideas as the most immediate objectification of the will. Thus, it is the genius’s job to convey the Ideas through her aesthetic creation.

Wicks provides us with a powerful analogy with reference to Plato’s allegory of the cave.⁶⁶ In the *Republic*, Plato imagines a scene where a crowd of prisoners is chained in a cave. In this place, a group of people is manipulating everyday objects behind the prisoners and projecting them onto the wall in front of a bonfire – all the prisoners can see is the shadows on

⁶³ Ibid 185.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 195.

⁶⁵ Robert Wicks, *Schopenhauer’s The World as Will and Representation: Reader’s Guide*, 68.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

the wall, and they believe these shadows are the real world. However, one person manages to free himself from the chains and escapes from the cave. He finally witnesses the real world under the sun and recognizes the illusions he sees in the cave. The sun, according to Plato, is the form of the good, which allows this person to apprehend a higher reality. Having acquired this knowledge, this person becomes a philosopher who returns to the cave and desires to share his knowledge. However, this person, in the view of Schopenhauer, is the artistic genius, who will “[let] us peer into the world through his eyes.”⁶⁷

The aesthetic method of Schopenhauer suggests that knowledge of the Ideas comes from the arts. This further sheds lights on the way we perceive arts. Schopenhauer identifies two inseparable parts of the aesthetic knowledge: “the Platonic Ideas,” and the “pure, will-less subject knowledge.”⁶⁸ The aesthetic pleasure must arise from these two aspects of the art. While I have articulated the significance of the Platonic Ideas, it remains to clarify what it means to be a will-less subject of knowledge. This is one of the reasons why scholars and philosophers regard Schopenhauer’s philosophy as dark and pessimistic. Famously Schopenhauer says, “all willing springs from lack, from deficiency, and thus from suffering.”⁶⁹ Although one manages to fulfill a desire, more wishes arise that are yet to be satisfied. We must constantly go through this painful process, and thus humanity dwells in a world full of pain and suffering. Aesthetic pleasure allows us to escape the will and find consolation as the pure subject of knowing. By merely knowing, we only attend to the “what” of the object instead of its relation that the artistic object may have, however remotely, to the willing soul. Thus, the Platonic Ideas are only perceptible when one stops to operate in the service of the will.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 195.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 196.

⁷⁰ Sandra Shapshay, “Schopenhauer’s Aesthetic and Philosophy of Art, “In the *Philosophy Compass*, Vol. 7 no. 1

When we become such pure knowing subjects, we are then able to possess the experience of beauty, namely the Platonic Ideas. In this case, through pure contemplation, we transcend “ourselves, our willing, and in fact all willing,” and gain pure knowledge without a struggle, since the beauty of the object, or in other words its qualities that facilitate knowledge of its Idea, has removed the will and knowledge of relations that slavishly serve the will from consciousness.⁷¹ This is to say, if we can access the Ideas, we have gained the experience of beauty. Incidentally, the beauty allows us to approach the will through its instantaneous objectification. Along the line of post-Kantian aesthetics that differentiates the beauty and the sublime, Schopenhauer also gives his own account of the experience of the sublime, but he does not treat it as another kind of judgement from beauty, as evident in Kant or Schiller. For him, the sublime is only one of the varieties of beauty. On the one hand, as our perception of the will can be akin to the will in many ways, the experience of beauty requires us to abandon such relations to the will so as to elevate ourselves above the will and become pure knowing subjects. On the other hand, these relations to the will can be hostile in the object by threatening us in its “might that eliminates all resistance.”⁷² As one perceives this mighty power, one “may consciously turn away from it, forcibly tear himself from his will and its relation and [give] himself up entirely to knowledge.”⁷³ This idea of “tearing away” suggests a sense of overcoming similar to Kant and Schiller’s account of the sublime, but this does not effectively make the sublime another category of aesthetic experience. Schopenhauer further explains, “the feeling of sublime is distinguished from that of the beautiful only by the addition, namely the exaltation beyond the

(2012): 14.

⁷¹ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 203.

⁷² Ibid, 201.

⁷³ Ibid.

known hostile relation of the contemplated object to the will in general.”⁷⁴ Thus, the sublime and beauty both indicate our perception of the Platonic Ideas without willing or suffering, but as pure subjects of knowledge.

Music and the Will

In Schopenhauer’s account, the knowledge of Platonic Ideas is equivalent to the experience of beauty (or the sublime). From this observation of the role that aesthetics play in his philosophy, Schopenhauer proposes his hierarchy of art based on the grades of objectification of the will. His hierarchy sets a trajectory along which the arts embody the Platonic Ideas, i.e., the immediate objectification of the will. Like Hegel’s system of individual arts, Schopenhauer also begins with architecture for its inorganic nature such as extension, shape, rigidity, etc. Moving up the ladder, he discusses sculpture, paintings, and lastly poetry. Poetry is the highest form of art that reveals to us the Platonic forms because it most explicitly provides a verbal narrative of the truth. It effectively exhibits concrete perceptions of the world from multiple perspectives via its vivid use of poetic language. Consistent with his pessimistic philosophy, Schopenhauer regards tragedy as the best poetry for its power to depict the inherently suffering human lives.

At this point, Schopenhauer puts an end to his hierarchy of art in relation to the Platonic forms, but music does not fall under anywhere on this trajectory thus far even though we have exhausted all possible art forms that reveal the Platonic Ideas. Music is thus not an objectification of the will, but rather a direct copy of the will itself, while all other arts are merely imitations of the Ideas. Music does not necessitate any objectification in the world of representation but “could still exist even if there were no world at all...”⁷⁵ For Schopenhauer,

⁷⁴ Ibid, 202.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 257.

music persisting through time does not demand any material representation and is the sound of the will. Thus, music is as removed from pain as possible because it has no phenomenon reality. Music offers us a redemption from our perpetual suffering.⁷⁶ Moreover, since the will is universally prevailing among us, it transcends the individuality of human beings and allows us to explore the infinite world. For Schopenhauer, real freedom lies in the escape from transient individuality.⁷⁷ Though the will is universally groundless, the will of beings like us is grounded in the appearance of the will. But the individual will, to repeat, is the source of our suffering, which sheds light on the pessimistic life of human beings. In this sense, music, as the copy of the Will, shows our freedom in delving into a world of infinite imagination and empowers us to escape the painful longing. Music helps us overcome the melancholy of life. Here, this similarity of music and the will suggests their close relation to each other.

To demonstrate the interconnection between music and the will, Schopenhauer again makes use of an analogy. The bass of a harmony is “the lowest grade of the will’s objectification” because the fact that these notes offer a solid support to the high notes mimics the fact that all bodies and organizations of nature come into existence “through gradual development out of the mass of planet.”⁷⁸ In addition, human ears can only register a certain range of pitches, outside which the sound becomes physically inaudible, because it lacks the form and quality for us to perceive. For Schopenhauer, it follows that nothing exists without the will. Thus, the inorganic nature must reflect some objectification of the will, despite in the lowest grades. As harmony is the vertical aspect of music, the notes between the bass and the singing

⁷⁶ Lydia Goehr, “Schopenhauer and the Musicians: An Inquiry into the Sounds of Silence and the Limits of Philosophizing about Music.” In the *Schopenhauer, Philosophy and Arts*, edited by Dale Jacquette (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 208.

⁷⁷ Andrew Bowie, *Music, Philosophy, and Modernity*, 201.

⁷⁸ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 258.

melody surveys through the “whole gradation of the Ideas in which the will objectifies itself.”⁷⁹

Moving up the harmony is analogous to seeing the different grades of the Platonic forms.

However, when we reach the highest notes, the principal melody, we hear the highest objectification of the will in “progressing with unrestrained freedom, in the uninterrupted significant connection of one thought from beginning to end, and expressing a whole.”⁸⁰ The infinite possibilities of melody define not only the freedom of our enlightened will, but the immensely diversified intellectual world of the entire humanity. Although the will is the *one*, it is inherently rooted in everything in nature and every modality because the will determines our perceptible pasts and perceivable futures of all possibilities. Melody still says more: it portrays every agitation, every effort, every movement of the will, every feeling and passion.⁸¹ Moreover, music resembles the constant striving of the will that is satisfied but again strives for more. Analogously, the melody is a “constant digression and deviation” from the tonic key in a thousand ways both in harmonious and dissonant intervals, but it always returns to home, signifying the will’s effort and its ultimate satisfaction.⁸²

Furthermore, Schopenhauer identifies different types of music, tonality, and expression markings as conveying emotions and feelings. For instance, *adagio* in minor key expresses the keenest pain and becomes the most convulsive lament.⁸³ In other words, the satisfaction of the will takes longer, during which time we are suffering in this painful yearning. Such dynamic and expressive markings pervasively appear in 19th century music. Composers use them to suggest how performers should play their music. Historically speaking, these markings, at first, arguably

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 259.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid, 261.

only entail the speed of the music, such as *allegro*, *andante*, *vivace*, etc. However, the romantic composers become more creative and suggestive using these markings to convey their musical thoughts. They start to use adjectives, such as, *maestoso*, *con fuoco*, *cantabile*, to communicate feelings through music. But Schopenhauer sees them not as particular feelings, but as emotions itself. They only express “the inner nature, the in-itself, of every phenomenon, the will itself,” and the very nature of joy, sorrow, horror, and so on.⁸⁴ This is precisely why our emotions can easily drift away with music.

Schopenhauer’s comments, I believe, can also be extended to program music. As program music often portrays a scene, some descriptive titles replace the expression markings on the sheet of music. For example, Beethoven, in the first movement of his Pastoral symphony writes “awakening of cheerful feelings on arrival in the countryside.”

⁸⁴ Ibid.

SECHSTE SYMPHONIE
(Pastorale)
Beethovens Werke. von Serie 1. N^o 6.
L. VAN BEETHOVEN.
Dem Fürsten von Lobkowitz und dem Grafen Rasoumofsky gewidmet.
Op. 68.

Erwachen heiterer Empfindungen bei der Ankunft auf dem Lande.
Allegro ma non troppo. *♩ = 66.*

Original-Verleger: Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig. H. G. Stich und Druck von Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig.

Figure 2.4 The Beginning of Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony First Movement ⁸⁵

The imagery does not just depict a scene in the world of representation, but instead depicts the world as the will would have revealed. Music appeals more than just our feelings as the essence of emotions. Program music is not inferior to absolute music for its descriptive power. Music is universal because it can describe everything as the will could. Schopenhauer prefers instrumental music for this reason, while music with words does not “speak a language not its own” because music as such succumbs to the words.⁸⁶ Thus, the universality of instrumental music grants that

⁸⁵ Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 6 in F, Op. 68, Pastoral, ed. Wilhelm Rush (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1863).

⁸⁶ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 262.

“infinite number of possible melodies” contains “all possible efforts, stirrings, and manifestations of the will.”⁸⁷ Therefore, Schopenhauer concludes,

When music suitable to any scene, action, even, or environment is played, it seems to disclose to us its most secret meaning and appears to be the most accurate and distinct commentary on it. Moreover, to the man who gives himself up entirely to the impressions of a symphony, it is as if he saw all the possible events of life and of the world passing by within himself.⁸⁸

In this sense, as music is the direct copy of the will, it enables us to feel the distant world of the will although we cannot have any immediate knowledge of it.

In discussing his thoughts on music, Schopenhauer relies heavily on drawing analogies. Goehr notices that this might indicate the inability of philosophy to describe music.⁸⁹ Evidently, Schopenhauer’s arguments entail that we lack the conceptual tools or languages to fully make sense of the nature of music, just as we cannot know inner reality of the world, i.e., the will. If our metaphysical inquiry is to investigate the fundamentality of the world, Schopenhauer has then pointed to us a way to access it. Music, in this sense, becomes a metaphysical inquiry. On the one hand, scientific progress under the principle of sufficient reason only tells us about one side of the world; on the other hand, music can reveal to us the other side of it. By showing the infinite possibilities of music, the feeling of listening to music conveys all the truth there ever is. Like the Romantics, Schopenhauer argues that music is a rudimentary epistemological tool to perceive the world in its entirety. In comparison, Hegel explicitly distinguishes music and philosophy as two ways to approach the Truth; for Schopenhauer, if philosophy is the task to

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Lydia Goehr. “Schopenhauer and the Musicians: An Inquiry into the Sounds of Silence and the Limits of Philosophizing about Music,” 202.

understand the entirety of the world, then music would be embedded in the grand scheme of philosophy. Aesthetics allows us to approach the ontological truth, and music gives us the most direct access. Allow me to conclude this chapter in Schopenhauer's own words: for Leibniz, music is the unconscious practice of arithmetic, but, as Schopenhauer understands it, "*musica est exercitium metaphysices occultum nescientis se philosophari animi.*"⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 264.

Latin for "music is an unconscious exercise of metaphysics in which the mind does not know it is philosophizing."

III. The Philosophy of Gustav Mahler

Thus far, I have examined several philosophical accounts of music about what philosophy says about music. However, given that my goal is to explore the close relationship between music and philosophy, I propose we should also approach this topic from another perspective – that is, what music says about philosophy. In this chapter, I focus on the music of Austrian conductor and composer Gustav Mahler, whose music is a milestone in late Romanticism and leaves a tremendous legacy to the history of music. In particular, what philosophical messages do his symphonies convey? I focus on his 3rd symphony, which echoes the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Nietzsche. This gigantic 90-minute-long symphony is itself practicing philosophy in reflecting a hierarchy of existence and shows a sign of transcendence of humanity that culminates in its famous *Adagio* movement which is unconventional in the evolution of symphonic forms.

Mahler and Philosophy

Born in 1860, Gustav Mahler lived in a time of great upheaval in intellectual history. Toward the end of 19th century, the dawn of Darwin's evolutionary theory, Nietzsche's claim of God's death, Freudian psychoanalysis, Frege's initiation of the linguistic turn, and Schlick's logical positivism all contributed to the intellectual richness of this history period. In addition, rapid technology and scientific development further empowered human beings to understand the world in its entirety. The German-speaking world had by this point long been influenced by Idealist traditions such as Kant, the Romantics, and Hegel. As people acquired more understanding and control of the material world, Mahler was nonetheless attracted to the world

where the immaterial mattered.¹ The scientific development during his time gave people the confidence to finally resolve the philosophical debate as a realist attempt to reject idealism. Mahler, however, disfavored an entirely scientific world, contrary to the mainstream ideas of his contemporaries. The Romantic conception of art was replaced by an avant-garde artistic norm that better reflected the currents of Mahler's time. Morten observes, however,

The social criticism, criticism, sexuality, sensual perception, and other earthly topics that often served as the mainstay of artistic production fell beneath Mahler's standards of what was considered worthy of such treatment. Such pursuits amounted to an absorption in the petty cares of daily existence that lacked seriousness, suitability of content, and often even the requisite craftsmanship...²

In the sense, Mahler's musical and artistic vision aligns with idealist tradition. To understand his connection with philosophy, it is imperative to look at some of his biography.

Mahler himself developed an infatuation with reading both literature and philosophy. Reportedly, he has read Aristotle, Shakespeare, Spinoza, Kant, Schiller, Novalis, Schopenhauer, and more.³ Mahler's exposure to philosophy made him a fan of the philosophy of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer. Mahler was mentored by his life-long friend, the young poet Siegfried Lipiner, who "praised the decline of dogma and the renewal of truth, leading to a new, trans-individual pantheism."⁴ Lipiner was a key member to the Pernerstorfer Circle, and he formed a group of artists and intellectuals that opposed bourgeois liberals, which we today call conservatives, and advocated for German-blend of artistic idealism and folk culture society.⁵ Later, some group

¹ Morten Solvik, "German Idealism," In *Mahler in Context*, ed. by Charles Youmans (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 185.

² Morten Solvik, "Literary and Philosophical Worlds of Gustav Mahler," In *Cambridge Companion to Mahler*, ed. Jeremy Barham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 27.

³ Ibid, 25.

⁴ Peter Franklin, *Mahler: Symphony No. 3* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 10.

⁵ See Peter Franklin, *Mahler Symphony No.3*, 8; Morten Solvik, *Literary and Philosophical Worlds of Gustav*

members, including Lipiner, formed the *Leseverein der deutschen Studenten Wiens* (Reading Society of Viennese German Students), who turned to Schopenhauer, Wagner, and Nietzsche for philosophical guidance.⁶ Since Mahler joined the in Pernerstorfer Circle, it is no surprise that his life was full of the influence of such philosophical trends during his time at University of Vienna. To some extent, the philosophy of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche directed Mahler's music in considering the fundamental questions about human spirituality and our very existence.

Mahler's music is a quest that looks beyond the realm of humanity and investigates the truth about the world – a task not much different from the works of philosophers. Among his symphonies, he “searched for reassurance in the notion of a meaningful existence, that life had a distinct and higher purpose and that death represented nothing more than a transition.”⁷ Life and death are arguably the most central themes to our existence. On the latter, Mahler writes of his second symphony,

What did you live for? Why did you suffer? Is it all only a vast, terrifying joke? – We have to answer these questions somehow if we are to go on living – indeed, even if we are only to go on dying! The person in whose life this call has resounded, even if it was only once, must give an answer. And it is this answer I give in the last movement.⁸

The answer that Mahler gives to these philosophical questions, as the second symphony suggests, is *Auferstehung*.⁹ Mahler's quote asks us to make sense of the suffering and pain in life to continue our lives. Death, in a way, lets us escape the melancholy and suffering of life. But we

Mahler, 23; Lesley Chamberlain, “Nietzsche,” In *Mahler in Context*, ed. by Charles Youmans (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 189.

⁶ Peter Franklin, Mahler: *Symphony No. 3*, 9.

⁷ Motern Solivk, “Literary and Philosophical Worlds of Gustav Mahler,” 22.

⁸ Gustav Mahler to Max Maxschalk, 26 March, 1896, in *Selected Letters of Gustav Mahler*, ed. Knud Martner (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux), 180.

⁹ German For “Resurrection.” The second symphony is nicknamed the “Resurrection Symphony” because part of the vocal texts Mahler uses in the last movement comes from German Poet Fredrich Klopstock's poem *Die Auferstehung*.

do not have to fear death because we will eventually be resurrected. Life is promising because we will overcome the pain and enter a higher, transcendental world. By contrast, his third symphony portrays the different levels of our existence in the world, culminating in the worldly human love that transcends everything. I will now explore this world that Mahler composes in his third symphony.

A Symphonic World

Finished in 1896, Mahler 3rd symphony is a massive six-movement work that lasts for almost two hours. It surveys a natural world and a transcendental realm, in which Mahler explores a hierarchy of existence. In his letter to Marschalk in 1896, Mahler titles each movement:

A Summer's Midday Dream.

Part One

Introduction: Pan Awakes

I. Summer marches in (bacchic procession).

Part Two

II. What the *flowers* in the meadow tell me.

III. What the *animals* in the forest tell me.

IV. What *man* tells me.

V. What the *angels* tell me.

VI. What *love* tells me.¹⁰

In another letter he wrote in 1895 during which he was in the middle of composing the symphony, Mahler explains, “the emphasis on my personal emotional life (that is, what things tell me) corresponds to the peculiar ideas embodied in the whole work. II-VI are to express the

¹⁰ Gustav Mahler to Marschalk, 6 August 1896, *Selected Letters of Gustav Mahler*, 193. For reference to English translations, see Jens Fischer, *Gustav Mahler*, trans. Steward Spencer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 276.

hierarchy of organism...”¹¹ Although this symphony is entirely programmatic, Mahler would not see that as a disadvantage. Mahler himself wants his music to be apprehensible to everyone in a specific way by dictating listeners’ imagination in his own explanatory program.¹² One could argue that such music suppresses our imaginative freedom, but music, for Mahler, is about sending a message – perhaps a philosophical one. Mahler’s third symphony does not resemble other program music that portrays any mundane scenes. Rather, its understanding of the hierarchy of existence most lucidly reflects the essence of existence, transcendental to any pictures in nature or among humans, which, as I argued in the last chapter, reflects the kind of program music, embodying the essence of the world, or the will, in the Schopenhauerian sense. I quoted Schopenhauer saying that “to the man who gives himself up entirely to the impressions of a symphony, it is as if he saw all the possible events of life and of the world passing by within himself.” Mahler’s music follows closely to this Schopenhauerian agenda. Of his third symphony he famously says, “my calling is a ‘symphony’ is really inaccurate, for it does not keep to the traditional form in anyway. But to me ‘symphony’ means constructing a world with all the technical means at one’s disposal...”¹³ As we will see, this Mahlerian world fulfills Schopenhauer’s ideal to directly provide us with a picture of the will to life.

The first movement shows Mahler’s ambition to embrace everything in the world with the power of music. In his letter to Löhr, Mahler writes,

[The first movement] is intended to hint at humorously subjective content. Summer is conceived in the role of victor – amidst all that grows and flowers, creeps and flies, thinks

¹¹ Gustav Mahler to Friedrich Löhr, 29 August 1895, *Selected Letters of Gustav Mahler*, 164.

¹² Peter Franklin, *Mahler: Symphony No. 3*, 18.

¹³ Natalie Bauer-Lechner, *Recollection of Gustav Mahler*, trans. Dika Newlin, ed. Peter Franklin (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 40, quoted in Peter Franklin, *Mahler Symphony No. 3* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 37.

and yearns, and finally all that of which we have only an intuitive inkling (angels – bells – transcendentals).¹⁴

As Mahler divides the six movements into two parts with the first movement along as the first part, the picture of summer provides us with a synopsis of his massive project that depicts the real world and the spiritual one. Mahler also calls the first movement the “bacchic procession.” This name reveals to us an immediate philosophical connection to Nietzsche: Bacchus is also known as Dionysus in Greek culture, who is the God of wine, symboling dance, irrationality, insanity, etc. This Dionysian force is precisely what defines ideal music for Nietzsche. Besides Dionysus, in *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche also discusses Apollo, the God of rationality and reason. One way to differentiate the Apollonian and the Dionysian is their connection to nature: the rationality embodied in the Apollonian artists deviates from nature for its artificial rules created by reason, while the Dionysian artists have an unmediated tie to both nature and human nature.¹⁵ Furthermore, as Franklin understands Nietzsche,

Apollo’s taming and ordered poetic expression filtered violent Dionysus’s vision of Nature’s underlying chaos. The Apollonian artist was therefore the medium between things as they are and a dream-picture conducive to a state of mind in which we might go on living.¹⁶

In Nietzsche’s vision, what Franklin calls “things as they are” resonates with the Schopenhauerian will, which remains inaccessible to the Apollonian artists. The will to life constantly brings up pain and suffering for we can never truly see nature as it is with an Apollonian vision. Nature, however, is a purposeless chaos, but through the Dionysian force,

¹⁴ Gustav Mahler to Friedrich Löhr, 29 August 1895, *Selected Letters of Gustav Mahler*, 164.

¹⁵ Carl Niekerk, “Mahler Contra Wagner: The Philosophical Legacy of Romanticism in Gustav Mahler’s Third and Fourth Symphonies,” *The German Quarterly*, Vol. 77, no. 2 (Spring, 2004): 193.

¹⁶ Peter Franklin, *Mahler: Symphony No.3*, 16.

humanity finally situates itself in an ideal world and finds a meaningful mode of existence. If the Apollonian is the medium, then it implies humanity is incomplete by merely practicing reason. Human beings fully realize themselves by partaking in dancing to music and drinking wine. In the Bacchic procession, as Franklin sees, “its merrily intoxicated participants were to stride in to battle under the banner of Pan...”¹⁷ As the title of the Introduction suggests, Pan awakes and hence begins the march of the Dionysian cavalcade. The word “pan” is Greek for everything. In Mahler’s search of a title to express his sentiment toward his music, he chooses Pan which symbolizes the “essential nature of All Things.”¹⁸ In the first movement, Mahler seems to introduce a group of drunken people of Dionysian spirit under the lead of Pan to travel through the symphonic world Mahler. As summer marches, our protagonists embark on a quest to discover the different realm of human existence.

As the first movement gives the audience a taste of a world yet to be composed, the second movement begins with the flowers in the meadows. Nature, to Mahler, really means everything in the world, but might indicate other feelings to the general audiences. This discrepancy presents to Mahler a programmatic problem, on which Mahler reflects “I always feel strange that when most people speak of ‘Nature’ what they mean is flowers, little birds, the scent of pinewoods, etc. No one knows the god Dionysus, or Great Pan.”¹⁹ The flowers in the meadows appear as well presented to human beings, but Mahler’s journey of nature only begins with the flower, representing the primitive form of the world. The third movement is a scherzo full of musical metaphors with references to animals, but Mahler takes this movement as animals

¹⁷ Ibid, 80.

¹⁸ Gustav Mahler to Mildenburg, 9 July 1896, *Selected Letters of Gustav Mahler*, 190.

¹⁹ Mahler to Richard Batka, 18 November 1896, *Selected Letters of Gustav Mahler*, 197.

falling into the lifeless nature of inorganic matter and connects it to the consciousness in the highest earthly creature – humans.²⁰

As our protagonist marches in the realm of human, Mahler gives his most direct reference to Nietzsche. The fourth movement features a contralto vocalist, singing the “midnight song,” a poem from Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Mahler’s use of human language draws a clear demarcation between animals and man. If music can mimic the sound of nature as seen in the flowers and as the animals hear it, language belongs to humanity alone. In Nietzsche’s view, Higgons points out, “language developed along with consciousness to facilitate the survival of the proto-human herd animals from whom we descend.”²¹ The existence of humanity is higher than animals and flowers precisely due to the power of our linguistic creation which serves our needs. Language is first and foremost a human instinct imperative to our survival, despite its poetic features or creative meanings. The philosophical significance of language, however, lies beyond the human realm as we have only reached the fourth movement. As survival is merely the basic human needs and our primitive instinct, the symphony, as a whole, suggests that there is more to being human – we are different from animals in our pursuit of the spiritual life.

The midnight song appears twice in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Respectively, Zarathustra wanders between two states of consciousness – between being asleep and awake, “he is able to grasp a deeper truth and bring to the surface an insight that goes beyond what we think possible in broad daylight.”²² Mahler arguably adopts the same plot in his music. McGrath also comments,

The subject of the [fourth] movement is a dialogue between the life-will motif, the rising

²⁰ Peter Franklin, *Mahler: Symphony No. 3*, 65.

²¹ Kathleen Higgons, “Nietzsche on Music,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 47, no. 4 (Oct. – Dec. 1984): 663.

²² Carl Niekerk, *Reading Mahler: German Culture and Jewish Identity in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (New York: Camden House, 2010), 108.

and falling theme representing the realm of feeling, and the human voice, the representative of intellect, a dialogue through which the will first becomes aware of its own nature, and then, as the dialogue becomes a duet, realizes the possibility of transcending that nature.²³

On the one hand, this movement serves as a transition into the human realm in its use of language; on the other hand, it foreshadows the forthcoming transcendental realm. The mystery of humanity cannot be grasped by reason, and the will follows its desire for a deep eternity of willing.²⁴ The Midnight song portrays a man waking up in midnight, from his secret dream of a deep world that is deeper than the day can know.²⁵ Evidently, what the day knows is the superficial Schopenhauerian world of representation, because the illuminous daylight is arguably analogous to the clarity of reason and rationality that underwrites the world of representation. On the contrary, the essence of nature is buried in the midnight dream, which symbolizes its inaccessibility by reason. But as the last two lines read, “all desire wants eternity – wants deep, deep eternity.”²⁶ It seems that nature is, after all, understood in a dream from which we never want to wake up. The eternal joy is not a result of the consciousness of being awake. Schopenhauerian pessimism, to repeat, is a result of constant willing and desire. As long as we keep looking for answers of ontological problems, we would be in miserable pain for we can never achieve those answers in reason and rationality. The metaphor of midnight dreams is to forcibly make people stop pondering such metaphysical questions, and thus stop willing. Dreams allow us to avoid the Schopenhauerian pessimism and gain pleasure. If we recall the Dionysian

²³ Williams McGrath, *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria* (London: Yale University Press, 1974), 142.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 143.

²⁵ For English translations, compare Williams McGrath, *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria*, 143; Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 244; and Peter Franklin, *Mahler: Symphony No. 3*, 67.

²⁶ See Williams McGrath, *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria*, 143.

force, our life is about partaking in dancing and wine drinking. The rationality brought about by being sober is less powerful than the intoxication and seeing the true, ideal world. Chamberlain explains, “the Dionysian was the intense experience of disorientation and spiritual pain, not a delight in the beautifully formed image, but an ecstatic terpsichorean moment of abandon.”²⁷ The parties and dances are human escape from our daily lives. The intoxication emancipates us from the ordinary world, or the world of representation in Schopenhauer’s words, from which we ultimately move to a transcendental, spiritual world as the will.

The fifth movement begins the process of transcendence, which serves as a brief transition, aiming for the eternal love embodied in the last movement. The fifth movement thus signifies the beginning of a journey. As Mahler’s use of language and poetry is crucial in the overall significance of the symphony, the fifth movement is no exception: Mahler uses an entire children chorus only to sing “bimm–bamm” rather than any concrete poetic lines throughout this short movement. Since the midnight dreams are a key step to the essence of the world, the innocent sounds of children make us feel like waking up to the naïve songs of morning bells in a dream – fleeing from the mundane world, we have entered in the dream world. The Dionysian drunkenness, to some extent, is akin to the delusional dream as a meaningful contrast to reason and the clarity of thoughts. The children’s chorus simply reminds us of our dreaming of the world, rather than perceiving it in an intelligible way. Mahler’s use of onomatopoeia again reiterates the limitation of language in capturing the sound of nature.

Besides the heavenly ambiance created by the children’s chorus, the fifth movement is a conversation between the soloist from the fourth movement and a women’s chorus. If the fourth movement is about the perpetual longing and thus the painful suffering of the soloist, the fifth

²⁷ Lesley Chamberlain, “Nietzsche,” 193.

movement is where the soloist seeks guidance from God. Mahler, in this movement, makes use of a *Wunderhorn* – German folk poem – to portray a scene where a woman confesses to God for breaking the Ten Commandments. The redemption is to love God and one will eventually gain heavenly joy. The poem indicates that the heavenly joy is a “blessed city” that is eternal and open to all human beings and that joy is granted to all humans for eternal bliss through Jesus.²⁸ It is ambiguous whether Mahler intends for a transcendence from reality or a holy redemption from our suffering of everyday life under the guidance of God. Since it is known that Mahler has read much Nietzsche’s philosophical work, it should be clear to him that Nietzsche does not like the Christian God. The divine reference, however, only appears in the fifth movement, instead of the last, which means that the realm of heaven is still not yet the highest form of the world. To some extent, redemption is only the first step to achieving transcendence, which finally takes place in the last movement.

What *Love* Tells me

As Mahler’s third symphony is already an unconventional work consisting of six movements, the last movement only further emphasizes the unorthodox musical form by ending in an *Adagio*. The slow movement suggests to us the highest form of beings in Mahler’s metaphysical conception. In a letter he writes, “what love tells me, is a synopsis of my feelings toward all beings, in which deeply painful spiritual paths are not avoided, but gradually lead through to a blessed faith”²⁹ Instead of individual forms of beings, as suggested in the previous

²⁸ For a complete version of the poem, see Peter Franklin, *Mahler: Symphony No.3*, 69.

²⁹ Gustav Mahler to Friedrich Löhr, 29 August 1895, *Selected letters of Gustav Mahler*, 164.

movement, love is what binds us all together as a whole. It is therefore necessary to understand what Mahler means by love. In another letter, Mahler says of the last movement,

It is an attempt to show the summit, the highest level from which the world can be surveyed. I could equally well call the movement something life: “what God tells me!”

And this in the sense that God can, after all, only be comprehended as love.³⁰

God and love are almost synonymous in this regard. One explanation is Spinoza’s monism: we are all one substance also known as God, and we are one being in our love of God. The notion of God, for Spinoza, is an infinite, existing, and unique substance of the world. In the late 19th century, the historically evolving conception of God, however, ceased to be a transcendental figure.

Nietzsche, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, claims that God is dead. *Zarathustra* aims to create a new type of community by enlightening his fellow citizens about his meta-philosophical agenda and unifying them with his philosophy of life.³¹ Scientific development also attests to the death of God from another perspective. Darwin’s evolutionary theory appears decades before Nietzsche’s philosophical works and Mahler’s symphonies. Darwinism precisely argues against a divine figure as the creator of the world, but we all come from some biological roots. For so long, it has been artists’ job to recreate the seemingly mystical divine figure, as opposed to Darwin’s theory of evolution. However, the inspiration that artists acquire from Darwinism is that meaning is created by humans, instead of God. Although Hegel’s philosophy dates prior to Darwin’s evolutionary biology, he, to recall from the previous chapter, deems that art reaches modernity exactly when we are liberated from the transcendental divinity. This is only more true

³⁰ Gustav Mahler to Anna Mildenburg, 1 July 1896, *Selected Letters of Gustav Mahler*, 188.

³¹ Carl Niekerk, “Mahler Contra Wagner: The Philosophical Legacy of Romanticism in Gustav Mahler’s Third and Fourth Symphonies,” 196.

in the dawn of Darwinism. The emancipation from God supports abundant artistic and philosophical ideas. Since then, Chamberlain observes, “a great banality and a deflating literalness had entered the culture with, concomitant with Darwinism, the collapse of the Christian myth [...] Nietzsche qua philosopher was part of the problem as well as offering a potential solution.”³² Nietzsche’s answer, famously enough in this anthropological evolution, is embodied in his idea of the *Übermensch*. In short, the death of God implies that there is no external being that grants us meaning of life and our very existence; humans shall be overcome to become a higher mode of self-awareness. Art is one way to accomplish this task. As Franklin sees it, the Dionysian artists alone could be seen as the prototypical *Übermensch*.³³ Since their artistic creation portrays a world that ties humans and nature, this tie is not a result of the divine. In other words, the Dionysian art helps us establish such a connection, which is what the *Übermensch* desires. At the same time, he argues, “Nietzsche was to move toward a conception of human consciousness and metaphysical truth that held artistic man to be the creator, or ‘dreamer’ of the world.” As such, art is the salvation from the pre-modern human life as well as the emancipation from divinity. The fantasy of art is our dream of the transcendence. Mahler himself also attests to the idea of a dream in his letters; to Max Kalbeck he writes, “shift the problem to any plane to choose – in the end you will always reach the point where ‘your philosophy’ begins to ‘dream.’”³⁴ Musical composition, to Mahler, is itself a mystical act that probes into the realm privy to truths beyond everyday perceptions.³⁵ Dream is the metaphorical concept contrary to the rational and logical thinking of philosophy. Since reason cannot demonstrate to us all the truth there is, dream represents another approach to these hidden truths.

³² Lesley Chamberlain, “Nietzsche,” 196.

³³ Peter Franklin, *Mahler: Symphony No. 3*, 17.

³⁴ Gustav Mahler to Max Kalbeck, 22 June 1901, *Selected Letters of Gustav Mahler*, 252.

³⁵ Morten Solvik, “German Idealism,” 187.

The Dionysian dancing and intoxication indicates, to some extent, the dream in which human beings fully realize themselves and see the true, ideal world. In this dream, the Dionysian oneness asserts the experience of self-abandonment of individuality manifested in the Apollonian vision and highlights our sense of belonging to each other. Higgons illustrates this point through Nietzschean image of orgy – the sexual licentiousness is how we recognize our mutual recognition with each other and where “we share the ground of experience with each other.”³⁶ This collectivism surpasses every individual, and humans survive after death because we belong to the bigger whole. Although Nietzsche’s sexual allusions might be somewhat discomforting, the Dionysian oneness is what allows humanity to discover their essence. Music can provide us with such Dionysian force. Echoing Spinoza’s monism that says we are all bonded by love, Mahler also refers to love as the medium that constitutes the Dionysian oneness. The last movement is a tribute to collectivism over individuality, and thus the human suffering in the fourth movement is finally relieved. Higgons further summarizes, “music alone can invest myths with the power to convey the Dionysian wisdom that, despite suffering, individual existence is joyous and powerful because it is grounded in basic unity of all that lives.”³⁷ For Mahler, we can grasp a transcendental world because of the secular love we have towards each other. In Mahler’s eyes, the transcendental world is a place without suffering, pain, war, sorrow, mourning, wounds, etc., but peace, serenity, harmony, and love.

The sixth movement begins with an expressive singing melody by the strings, on which Mahler marks *Adagio, Ruhevoll, Empfundener*. The deep emotions immediately describe our desperate feeling of love. To love is to desire something of which we lack, which is synonymous with our willing toward it. But such will, according to Schopenhauer, is the source of human

³⁶ Katheleen Higgons, “Nietzsche on Music,” 666.

³⁷ Ibid, 669.

suffering. In the end, this movement is then a peaceful soothing to our souls. In the fourth movement, Nietzsche's poem made us aware of our eternal desire, and the last movement responds to that desire with solace in music. In the last movement, by contrast, Mahler discards human voices and again makes use of instrumental music to express his thoughts. In doing so, Mahler reaffirms the idea that language cannot give much comfort to our suffering, but only absolute music can offer us a calming place and moments of salvation. In a Nietzschean sense, absolute music speaks the Dionysian truth of the world more directly because it underlies human existence. In Schopenhauerian sense, absolute music is the direct copy of the will and allows us to feel the world as will. Once we have felt the will through music, we would stop all the willing and, more importantly, escape from the suffering associated with it. In this way, Mahler's third symphony truly realizes Schopenhauer's convoluted philosophical ideas. As McGrath points out, "of all his intellectual forebears, there was none whom Mahler resembled more in temperament and world view than Schopenhauer, and in his Third, Mahler felt he had captured the will-less serenity that his predecessor had so ardently sought and so rarely found."³⁸

Throughout his massive work, Mahler manages to present the complexities of life and existence. In his constant references to Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, he integrates their thoughts into his music that eventually culminates in the humane love – a journey led by a protagonist of Dionysian spirit who travels through all the realms in the universe. His third symphony has justified the meaning of life in that life is worth living because of our love that emancipates us from the eternal willing and hence from pain. In a sense, Mahler's music has achieved something of which other philosophers are not capable due to the limitation of conceptual language. The

³⁸ Williams McGrath, *Dionysian Art and Populists Politics in Austria*, 156.

third symphony is a musical analogy to Nietzsche and Schopenhauer's philosophical thoughts. In this sense, Mahler's third symphony is, in its essence, a philosophical work.

Coda

I began my thesis asking how we can philosophize in ways not confined to the conceptual linguistic tools that the Wittgensteinian quietism necessitates. Bowie says, “for many conceptions of philosophical argument, the failure of language to convey the basis of an answer to a philosophical problem has to be a reason for rejecting the answer.”¹ In the very beginning of my thesis, I pointed out two solutions implied from the limitation of language: one is quietism, while the other is to embrace other means to practice philosophy. In the end, I hope to have shown that music is such a practice and plays an important role in epistemological life. For one, it sheds light on the truth in a way that we come to feel, rather than verbalize. The Romantics, Hegel, and Schopenhauer all have similar thoughts on the function of music in their respective philosophical edifices. Mahler, in his music, provides us with a convincing example of how music can reveal to us our existence, which has been for so long a metaphysical task. It is perhaps a mistake to regard our conceptual limitations as the end of the metaphysical undertaking. Music proves to be a fruitful example that enables us to feel the unspeakable world.

It is, without a doubt, wrong to conclude that music gives definitive answers to the big philosophical questions, or conversely, that philosophy is done through music. However, the metaphysical truth is within the grasp of music. For the metaphysical truth that some philosophers argue are inaccessible, others, such as the Romantics, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and even Mahler, believe that such truth manifests in music. The fact that music cannot, and indeed should not, be captured by a logical form of articulation resembles the incomprehensibility of the world. Human beings have always wanted to understand the incomprehensible world. To quote a

¹ Andrew Bowie, *Music, Philosophy, and Modernity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 413.

wise man, Aristotle, in the beginning of his *Metaphysics*, says that human beings by nature desire to know.² Although music does not necessarily pertain to cognitive knowing or propositional knowledge, music, as I argued, allows us to experience truth as a critical part of this Aristotelian epistemological undertaking.

Bowie concludes his book *Music, Philosophy, Modernity*, saying that “at present, the dominant forces in philosophy are still mainly focused on ‘the said,’ to the point where even countenancing what may be missed by this focus is often regarded as philosophically disreputable. The history of music’s entanglement with philosophy suggests that this attitude may be seriously mistaken.”³ Music, as I understand in my thesis, constitutes a sharp contrast to the “said,” and we should incidentally call it the “felt.” Music suggests to us new perspectives to think about philosophical pursuit of truth. In listening to music, we become connected to the truth, as music establishes the bridge between humanity and metaphysical truth.

Since Kant’s great thoughts on aesthetics, the focus of music is shifted to the subject “I” who feels the aesthetic pleasure. In a way, since beauty is not an objective concept anymore, it is a metaphysical claim. As the Romantics broaden the scope of aesthetics to metaphysics, music pulls us closer to the metaphysical truth that is banned from pure conceptual thinking in language. Hegel does not argue for the limited power of our conceptual thinking, but music is nonetheless a vital tool for us to feel the true that is the whole because music allows us to take part in the whole. For Schopenhauer, music is almost therapeutic because it emancipates us from our willing for the inaccessible metaphysical truth that we have been trying to capture using reason, science, language, and arts other than music. The Mahlarian love, as discussed in the last

² This quote is arguably one of the most famous lines in the history of philosophy. For reference, see Aristotle, “Metaphysics,” In *Philosophy of Aristotle*, trans. J.L. Creed and A.E. Wardman (Signet Classics, 2011), 15.

³ Ibid, 417.

chapter, is philosophical in a similar way because it demonstrates to us our affection to each other and to the ultimate essence of nature. As the love is the sentiment to all beings, the essence of universe is captured in such a secular human feeling.

Music can reveal to us the metaphysical truth of the world in a presumably unparalleled way. Insofar as we are seeking for truth, it is appropriate, despite of potentially being an overstatement, to conclude this thesis with one of Nietzsche's aphorisms: without music life would be a mistake.⁴

⁴ Kathleen Higgons, "Nietzsche on Music," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 47, no. 4 (Oct. – Dec. 1984): 669.

Illustrations

Beethoven, Ludwig Van. Symphony No. 3 in E-flat, Op.55, Eroica. Edited by Wilhelm Rush. Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1862.

---. Symphony No. 6 in F, Op.68, Pastoral. Edited by Wilhelm Rush. Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1863.

---. Piano Sonata No. 25 in G, Op.79. Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel.

Maes, Nicolaes. *The Lacemaker*, Oil on Canvas, 1656, The Met Museum, New York.

Michelangelo, *The Creation of Adam*, Fresco, 1512, Sistine Chapel, Italy.

Bibliography

- Alpers, Philip. "Schopenhauer and Musical Revelation." In *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 40 (Winter 1981): 155-166.
- Aristotle. "Metaphysics." *The Philosophy of Aristotle*. Translated by J.L. Creed and A.E. Wardman. Signet Classics: 2011.
- Bowie, Andrew. *Music, Philosophy, and Modernity*. New York: Cambridge University Press: 2007.
- Chamberlain, Lesley. "Nietzsche." *Mahler in Context*. Edited by Charles Youmans, 189-197. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021.
- Cook, Nicholas. *Music: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press: 2000.
- Danto, Arthur C. "Philosophy As/and/of Literature." In the *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*. Vol. 58, no. 1 (1984): 5-20.
- Dahlhaus, Carl. *The Idea of Absolute Music*. Translated by Roger Lustig. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.
- . *Nineteenth-Century Music*. Translated by Bradford Robinson. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989.
- Eldridge, Richard. "Hegel on Music." In *Hegel and the Arts*. Edited by Stephon Houlgate, 119-145. Northwestern University Press, 2007.
- Evan Bonds, Mark. *Music as Thought: Listening to the Symphony in the Age of Beethoven*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.
- Francisco, Megan. "Mahler's Third Symphony and the Languages of Transcendence." Master's Thesis, University of Washington, 2016.
<https://digital.lib.washington.edu/researchworks/handle/1773/36782>.
- Franklin, Peter. *Mahler: Symphony 3*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Fischer, Jens. *Gustav Mahler*. Translated by Steward Spencer. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011.

- Goher, Lydia. "Schopenhauer and the Musicians: An Inquiry into the Sounds of Silence and the Limits of Philosophizing about Music." In *Schopenhauer, Philosophy and Arts*, edited by Dale Jacquette, 200-228. Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Green, Dunton. "Schopenhauer and Music." In the *Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 16 no. 2 (1930): 199-206.
- Hegel, G.W.F. *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Arts*. Translated by T.M. Knox. New York: Oxford University Press, 1975.
- Hoffman, ETA. "Review." *The Critical Reception of Beethoven's Compositions by his German Contemporaries, Volume 2*, 95-112. Translated by Robin Wallace, Edited by Wayne Senner, Robin Wallace, and William Meredith. London: University of Nebraska Press, 2001.
- Higgins, Kathleen. "Nietzsche on Music." *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 47, no. 4 (1986): 663-672.
- Jacquette, Dale. "Schopenhauer's Metaphysics of Appearance and Will in the Philosophy of Art." In *Schopenhauer, Philosophy and Arts*, edited by Dale Jacquette, 1-36. Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgement*. Translated by Werner S. Pluhar. Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company: 1987.
- . *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*. Translated by James Ellington. Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company: 1977.
- Kivy, Peter. *Introduction to a Philosophy of Music*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Parret, Herman. "Kant on Music and the Hierarchy of the Arts." In the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 56, No. 3 (Summer 1998): 251-264.
- Program Notes. "Journey to Beethoven." Program Notes to *Beethoven Symphony No. 3 in E-flat Major, Op. 55*. Jinwook Park. Colby Symphony Orchestra. Colby College, Waterville, ME: Lorimer Chapel, October 23rd, 2021.
- McCoy, Marilyn. "Mahler and Modernism." In *Mahler in Context*. Edited by Charles Youmans, 147-153. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021.

McGrath, Williams. *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria*. London: Yale University Press, 1974.

Moland, Lydia. *Hegel's Aesthetics: The Art of Idealism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Niekerk, Carl. "Mahler Contra Wagner: The Philosophical Legacy of Romanticism in Gustav Mahler's Third and Fourth Symphonies." In the *German Quarterly*, Vol. 77, No. 2 (Spring 2004): 188-209.

---. *Reading Mahler: German Culture and Jewish Identity in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*. Rochester: Camden House, 2010.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy*. Translated by Shaun Whiteside. Penguin Books, 2003.

---. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Translated by R.J. Hollingdale. Penguin Books, 2003.

Rosen, Charles. *The Romantic Generation*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.

Rothstein, Edward. *Emblems of Mind: The Inner Life of Music and Mathematics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Schlegel, Friedrich. *Philosophical Fragments*. Translated by Peter Firchow. London: University of Minnesota Press: 1991.

Schopenhauer, Arthur. *The World as Will and Representation*. Translated by E.F.J Payne. New York: Dover Publications Inc.: 1969.

Scruton, Roger. "German Idealism and the Philosophy of Music." In the *Disputatio: Philosophical Research Bulletin*. Vol. 7, no. 8 (2018): 1-13.

Selected Letters of Gustav Mahler. Edited by Martner Knud. Translated by Eithne Wilkins, Ernst Kaiser, and Bill Hopkins. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1979.

Shapshay, Sandra. "Schopenhauer's Aesthetic and Philosophy of Art." *Philosophy Compass*, Vol. 7 no. 1 (2012): 11-22.

- . "Schopenhauer's Aesthetics." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2021 Edition), Edited by Edward N. Zalta,
<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2021/entries/schopenhauer-aesthetics/>.
- Solvik, Morton. "The Literary and Philosophical Worlds of Gustav Mahler." In *The Cambridge Companion to Mahler*, edited by Jeremy Barham, 21-34. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- . "German Idealism." In *Mahler in Context*. Edited by Charles Youmans, 182-188. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021.
- Houlgate, Stephen, "Hegel's Aesthetics", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2021 Edition), Edited by Edward N. Zalta,
<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2021/entries/hegel-aesthetics/>.
- Taylor, Quentin. "Schopenhauer's Metaphysics of Music: Criticism and Retrieval." In the *Schopenhauer-Jahrbuch*. Vol. 87 (2006): 119-136.
- Vandenabeele, Bart. "The Sublime in Art: Kant, the Mannerist, and the Matterist Sublime." *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Vol. 49, No. 3, (Fall 2015): 32-49.
- Wicks, Robert. *Schopenhauer's 'The World as Will and Representation': A Reader's Guide*. New York: Continuum Books, 2011.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Translated by D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness. New York: Routledge Classics, 1977.