Music as The Between: the idea of meeting in existence, music and education.

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Abstract

As a violinist, teacher, and thinker, I am concerned to articulate the relevance of music to the lives of my audience, my students and myself. But my concern is not merely to describe the meanings that people experience when they engage music. Rather, I am interested in constituting the musical relevance that each of us must actualize as we work to make our lives vital and meaningful.

Accordingly, in my study I articulate in philosophical, yet practical, terms, a particular attitude of musical engagement that I call meeting. Grounded in Martin Buber’s idea of human existence as I-Thou, my conception of meeting has a specific character. Each side of the meeting must meet itself in its work to constitute the adequacy of its engagement with the other as it must meet with the other in its work to constitute the adequacy of its engagement with itself. It follows that the essence of human meeting is not merely the “reality” – physical, cultural, intellectual – of people who come together. Rather, the essence is their self-critical thought that is created as they share their lives with each other. The focus, then, is not the meeting’s outcome but rather the meeting itself insofar as it constitutes mutual understanding, communication and love.
Thus, at the heart of my study, I constitute music in the same way, not as a physical or cultural “reality,” but rather as the meeting between music and musical participant that demands that each – music and participant – attend to self and other. The idea that music’s whole being is meeting has profound implications for how we conceive of music education. Accordingly, the ultimate purpose of my study is to bring my ideas of musical meeting to bear upon how we teach and learn music in the classroom.
For Jeffery, my father (1933-2006)
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Chapter I ~ The Study

1 The Argument

1.1 Meeting and Music

My thesis has fundamentally to do with meeting – human, musical and educational. At the root, the origin, if you like, is my wish to articulate what it means to engage music as music. That is, I am interested in the meaning we recognize when we attend to music as it unfolds in terms of the relation – the meeting – we hear between its musical elements: its tones, phrases, harmonies, rhythms, articulations and dynamics. What concerns me is the relevance of this attended musical unfolding – this meeting – to the idea of human existence and, consequently, to the idea of education.

I begin, then, with the argument that we witness our existence – come into it, if you will, – when we self-consciously attend to it. We find music relevant to existence because we witness it in the same way. That is, we do not merely perceive music as it already exists but rather we bring its existence – the music that it is – into being in and through our self-critical participation in its unfolding. In other words, we create musical meaning as it creates its own meaning when, as listeners, performers and composers, we self-consciously recognize a critical relationship between one phrase and another; when we self-reflexively hear a particular dynamic challenging another; or when a tone is revealed to us in the self-critical light of a new harmony. Accordingly, I hold that the meaning that we derive from our musical engagement – our mindful attention to music as it unfolds – has fundamentally to do with participation: the participation we enact as we take part in music’s creation in terms of the relationships we simultaneously recognize and constitute between its elements.

I am less concerned, therefore, with meaning that we ascribe to music in terms of various associations, whether those associations are of a sociological, psychological or musicological nature. It is important to make clear that I am not denying the existence or significance of meaning derived from such associations. My interest, however, is in a specific type of attention to music as it unfolds. It is, of course, clear that we engage music within a specific sociological,
psychological and musicological framework. I, for example, have been brought up, and educated in, the tradition of western art music. I am a white, middle class, European male living in Canada. Accordingly, I come to music with certain assumptions. Nevertheless, I argue that precisely because I recognize that I come with assumptions (even if I do not see their total extent), it cannot be said that they saturate my consciousness any more than I am utterly free from them. Rather, I hold that I challenge my assumptions and, in the light of my challenge, self-critically reevaluate and re-appropriate them. My challenge is not such that it dissolves or resists them, but, rather, such that it reconstitutes them as the core of my existence – meeting.

1.2 Meeting and the Human Being

My idea of musical meeting is directly related to my idea of a meeting between human beings. I find that each idea serves both to reveal and to constitute the nature of the other. Let us turn our attention, then, to examining what is involved in a meeting between two people. Importantly, as I argue that the concept of musical meeting cuts through ingrained attitudes toward music, so I argue that human meeting cuts through notions that “who a person is” is determined by her cultural conditioning. It is the case, of course, that a person from a particular cultural background may meet with another according to a pre-determined concept of how she assumes the other should be met. Because the concept is pre-determined the person fails to fully recognize the equality of the other in the meeting. But the very notion that the concept renders the meeting unequal suggests that the meeting is constituted in relation to the idea of a meeting that is equal. Thus, we understand that a person may come to a meeting with a particular set of beliefs. But we also understand that the meeting is the site in and through which those beliefs are interrogated and, in the very process of that interrogation, mutual understanding, communication and love are found. It seems, then, as if the idea of meeting provides a solution – a site for consensus – that addresses the contradiction of the opposing beliefs in and through which people appear to be constituted. In contrast, however, we find that the idea of meeting is the whole idea. Meeting is its own purpose; it is not a means of convincing the other of the error of her ways. The person’s ways are questioned but the meeting does not find its completion in a final answer. Nor however does it reject completion in the interminable flux of questioning. In contrast, the questioning

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1 “Her,” in this case – and, indeed, generally throughout the thesis (except where I specifically refer to someone of the female gender) – is not intended to be gender specific.
becomes the answer. The meaning of the meeting is constituted in and through the questioning. Thus, the meaning is complete; the meaning is self-critical questioning. But because the meaning is questioning (questioned) it is always to be completed.

It follows, then, that after a “successful” meeting, two people may continue to hold seemingly contradictory opinions. But the difference is that the meaning of their lives – who they are – is not defined by their opinions but rather it is constituted in and through the meeting that is mutual understanding, communication, and love. Consequently, their opinions and their beliefs are witnessed in light of the meeting and not the other way around. In this way, their opinions and beliefs are re-appropriated as metaphors, if you like, for meeting. Thus, a person may hold utterly opposing philosophical views to another but, insofar as each is able to share her view with the other, she finds the power of her life in her sharing and not in her views. Accordingly, when our understanding is adequate, we do not understand a person’s philosophical view literally; i.e., we do not conflate who she is with her literal view. Rather, in the fullest expression of human meeting, a person’s view is recognized as a metaphor for the self-critical attention she pays to herself and to her neighbor.

The power of a person’s life, then, her meaning, her enlivenment, and her agency lie in the meeting between her and the other. While we understand “the other” to be another person it is important to remind ourselves that the other is also constituted as the self. A person meets herself and finds herself in her mutual understanding of, communication with, and love for, herself. In everyday speech we constitute the idea of a person’s “self-meeting” in terms of the concept of self-consciousness, a concept that is also known as self-reflexivity, self-awareness, and self-critique. The relationship between a person’s self-consciousness – her self-meeting – and her meeting with her neighbor is critical. A person’s self-consciousness tests her meeting with her neighbor and her meeting with her neighbor tests her self-consciousness. Each meeting demands that the pre-conceptions, conventions and prejudices of the other be rigorously critiqued. But, again, the meeting does not lead to the “right” answer. Nor, however, is it without consummation. In contrast, its questions recognize that questioning – critique – is the answer. Critique is the standard according to which the questioning is adequately undertaken and answered and, because the answer is critique, it is an answer that must be continually questioned.
1.3 “Music as The Between”

In the most powerful terms – and we must add this qualification for meeting is active and must be self-consciously willed – a person’s whole being, who she is, is her meeting with the other. In view of this idea it is interesting to consider where, in fact, a person is located. For, if she is not merely herself but is the meeting between self and other, she is not merely in her physical body.\(^2\) Accordingly, I suggest that a person’s location is most adequately articulated as what I call “The Between.” The Between is the space that simultaneously cleaves and separates a person and her other. The space is rigorously constituted in and through the idea of the equality of its two sides. Thus, the space is characterized by the ongoing interrogation of that equality, which, simultaneously, constitutes its form as complete and continuously breathes new life into its completion.

In the same way, then, where music is meeting, music, too, may be constituted as The Between. I conceive of music’s Between-ness in the following way. I argue that music is incommensurate with its literal sounds. In and of themselves, the sounds that proceed, for example, from my violin, with their meter, articulation and dynamic level, are not music. Whether the sounds are conceived of objectively or subjectively makes no difference. Constituted objectively, the listener perceives the sound and its meaning in the sound itself. Constituted subjectively, the listener perceives the sound and its meaning in herself. But, in both cases, insofar as the sounds are literal – commensurate with objective or subjective sound – they are merely sounds and not music.

Literal sounds correspond, for example, to what I articulated above as a person’s “literal” philosophical view. Accordingly, just as a person finds her whole life not in her “literal” view but rather in the mutual understanding, communication, and love witnessed in her sharing of her view, so we find music not in the literal sounds but rather in the mutual understanding, communication, and love witnessed in music’s sharing, so to speak, of its sounds with itself and with its musical participants.

\(^2\) For example, if one begins to imagine (somewhat gruesomely) what parts of a person’s body she could lose and still be her whole being we find that she could lose every part and remain intact. A person with no limbs is still a person. A person who is in a coma or who is brain dead but still alive is still a person. A person who is dead and cremated is still a person.
1.4 Music as Thought

Perhaps we can best understand the idea of music’s sharing in terms of the concept of thought. Where music’s sharing is conceived of in terms of “thought,” that thought is fundamentally self-critical. Thus, we find that when a person witnesses music, she does not merely hear literal sounds. Rather, she witnesses music as the thought that thinks the relation between the literal sounds. Music, the musical thought that she witnesses, thinks in and through her, the musical participant. But that does not mean that music – the musical thought – is simply a figment of her imagination. In contrast, the musical participant constitutes music’s thought in and through what she understands to be the thoughtful relationship between the musical elements – tones, rhythms, articulations, dynamics, harmony and so on. The thoughtful relationship that is music impacts the way that the musical participant constitutes that relationship. Thus, while the musical participant understands that she thinks (constitutes) music’s thought, nevertheless, she witnesses music’s thought as meeting her own. In other words, she recognizes that music itself is thoughtful.

Consequently, where music is construed as the self-reflexive thought that critically thinks the relationship between its elements, the assumption that the thought is merely the musical participant’s, given that music is inanimate and apparently unable to think, is false. Equally false is the idea that the thought is simply the music’s, although this falsity seems to be self-evident. It follows, then, that the thought that is music is shared between the music and the musical participant. When we recognize the full implication of this idea, we further understand that the thought of the musical participant, the human thought, is, itself, shared between the musical participant and the music. It does not merely cling to the human being.

1.4.1 Inadequate Thought

Human thought, the thought in and through which a person is empowered to understand, communicate with, and love her neighbor and herself, is constituted in and through the idea of meeting. Importantly, because meeting must be actively engaged, it is possible for the human

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3 I must stress that the idea of thought has to do with how a person lives through, and attends to, her life, both physically and mentally. It has nothing to do with intellectualism, advocates of which, like the advocates of sensuality, deny the very power of their seemingly “critical” advocacy insofar as they reduce human existence from an adequate idea of ongoing meeting to a blind function of intellectual prowess.
being to reduce the full power of her thought to her unthinking adherence to the other’s opinions or to her unthinking insistence that the other conform to her own opinions. But the very fact that she recognizes such adherence to be “unthinking” insists that the full power of her thought exceeds her unseeing adherence to herself or her unhearing adherence to the other insofar as it is constituted as The Between – as between her and the other.

Thus, human thought, meeting and The Between carry within them the standard of their own adequacy. That adequacy is the ongoing sharing or interrogation of each side with and by the other. Accordingly, every meeting contains a standard of meeting, but the standard is not an agreed outcome, result or consensus by which each side of the meeting must abide. Rather, the standard is meeting; the standard is sharing; and the standard is interrogation. A meeting whose sides fail to meet each other, which fail to share with each other their whole being, and which fail to interrogate and re-appropriate their meeting with each other once more as meeting, is inadequate. Because the human being is meeting, where her meeting with self, neighbor, and, in the case of this study, music is inadequate, she finds that she fails to live her life to its full power.

1.5 Education

I argue, then, that if education is to participate in the creation of the full power of a person’s life, in its strongest expression, it must be about the practice of adequate human meeting. Accordingly, it turns out that music, constituted as The Between, is central to education. In fact, while I will argue that all educational subjects are similarly constituted, whereas, for example, literature seems to make sense as a representational art when it is falsely reduced to its literal meaning – a series of narrated events, – music, in contrast, is more difficult to understand when its meaning is reduced to, and perceived as, a series of literal sounds. Thus music, perhaps more than any other subject, insists that its participants either constitute it as The Between or be offended by their struggle to find its literal reduction significant.

2 Purpose

Proceeding, then, from the above argument, I find that the purpose of my study is twofold. First, it is to articulate my understanding of what it means to engage in, or to meet with, music. Second, it is to bring that understanding to bear on notions of how and why we teach and learn
music, both in our everyday lives and in our educational institutions, and to articulate the consequent implications in terms of actual teaching and learning practices.

3 Justification

The arguments behind my desire to articulate what it means to engage music, and, consequently, why and how we teach and learn it, are, similarly, twofold. My first argument is personal and has to do with my ongoing work to become myself as an adequate musician, teacher and person. My second argument is political and has its roots in the current crisis of funding and marginalization that affects music education. While I believe that the study’s justification in terms of the former argument is largely self-evident, the latter needs some clarification.

In recent years, music education has been forced to justify its position in the community and in the school, both to itself and to society in general. Thus, music educators are under pressure to scrutinize the decisions they make with regard to what music, which instruments, whose notation, whose history, what pedagogy, and so on, they teach. Whereas formerly the guiding principle in such decision-making was an agreed upon idea of educational “value,” now decisions are increasingly made according to what I will call the principle of “diversity” (Elliott, 1995, p. 43). The change of principle broadly finds its authority in a particular notion of postmodern critique, which holds that the idea of “value” is a function of western, middle-class, ideology that perpetuates the unjust social practices – discrimination, intolerance and exclusion – of eighteenth century Europe.

Diversity, then, in what I am calling the postmodern view, becomes a value in and of itself. Music is valuable insofar as it can be shown to be “different.” That is, music is valuable insofar as its value is not dependent upon the hegemonic “norms” that saturate our society. When value is located in difference, music is chosen, allocated, played, performed, sung, composed, listened to, improvised and so on, not on the basis of the idea of valuable educational content, but, rather, on the basis that what is chosen is not chosen on the grounds of western ideological standards. Scholars who subscribe to the idea of “difference” assume that the content of music is inseparable from the ideological standards that characterize it. In other words, music has no

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4 The idea of difference here is not the idea that Derrida articulates in his essay “Différence” in The Margins of Philosophy (1982).
content other than what we want it to have and the content we want it to have, insofar as we cannot help but be indoctrinated by western ideology, affirms unjust ideological and social practices. Consequently, we cannot trust what we believe to be music’s content to provide us with a sound basis for choosing which music to teach our students. It seems, then, that the only principle that we can rely upon to be unbiased is a principle that necessarily negates bias – the principle of diversity.

There are two problems with this argument. First, it appears that a person who holds to the principle of diversity assumes that all values are biased (invaluable) and all diversity is valuable. Thus, it seems that, on the one hand, she is unable to distinguish, for example, between a value that is biased in favor of the care and consideration of a human being and one that subjugates the human being, and, on the other hand, she is unable to distinguish between a diverse idea that nurtures the human being and one that destroys her. Second, it appears that a person who holds to the principle of diversity fails to recognize that the principle itself is biased toward something – the principle itself has value. If the person actually recognized that the principle had its roots in value – the very concept that she was hoping to eradicate – she would have to face up to the fact that the principle of diversity was flawed and no more “just” than the idea of traditional value. In terms, then, of music education, we find that as teachers and students we are unable to express the value of music in either traditional or postmodern terms.  

There appears to be no way out of this conundrum. I argue, however, that the idea of meeting, the idea that I am proposing as an attitude of musical engagement, offers us a way. For where a person must challenge the “truth” of diversity with the principle of diversity if diversity is to be true to its principle, we find that the “truth” lies precisely in the challenge. The value of music lies neither in its ideological bias nor in the result of the negation of that bias, the idea of difference as value. The value of music lies in the meeting between the ideological bias and the negation of that bias. The value rests in the ongoing meeting, which is neither an eternal questioning (negation) nor a final answer (ideology), but rather is simultaneously answer and question, complete and incomplete. The person who recognizes the meeting between traditional

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5 Nevertheless, both sides of the argument do express value. But, where many traditionalists fail to recognize the false premise of their value, many postmodernists, while advocating diversity, fail to account for the prejudiced values according to which they actually lead their lives.
value and diversity as truly valuable recognizes it as valuable because she finds herself in it. That is, she finds that it corresponds to, practices, and amplifies her own meeting with herself.

I argue, then, that the twofold purpose of my study – to articulate my understanding of musical engagement and to examine how that understanding impacts music teaching and learning – is justified since, insofar as I am able to actualize my purpose, my study offers music educators a way of constituting musical value. For it turns out that music, teaching, and learning are valuable insofar as a student is able to find herself in the meeting between a concept’s conventional constitution and the self-conscious challenge of that convention.

4 Methodology

I undertake to actualize my purpose in and through a philosophical, rather than an applied, study. Thus, my study involves my thought about musical meeting and education in self-critical relation to the thought of philosophers such as Kierkegaard, Buber and Scruton; to the thought of my professors and peers; and to what I call the “thought” of music. But, while my study is philosophical rather than applied, it is not merely theoretical. In contrast, it is intensely practical. That is, in my study, I seek to reveal the practice that underlies what appears to be simple reality and to reveal the practice that informs the mere formulation of theory.

First, then, I do not intend simply to describe the so-called “lived realities” (Gould, 2008) of human, musical, and educational meetings as they appear to me, even where the description is based, say, upon qualitative and quantitative data. While such data are central to research, I argue that it is a mistake to assume that they saturate the self-reflexivity of the people whose “realities” they describe. Thus, along with the “lived realities,” I intend to articulate the otherness of those realities, an otherness that I recognize as music’s and the musical participant’s self-critical thought for those realities. That thought is not self-evident, even to the person who thinks it, but is recognized in the participant’s thoughtful attention, consideration and concern for her lived reality. Accordingly, because the thought cannot be measured in any conventional fashion, for my study to have actual impact in practical terms on how music educators address musical meeting in teaching and learning contexts, an adequate account of not only the “lived realities” of students but also the thought they have for their “lived realities” must be necessarily articulated in philosophical, rather than applied, terms.
Second, just as I am wary of the description of so-called “lived-reality,” so I am concerned to avoid reducing my study to the replication of “theoretical imperatives” (Gould, 2008). Thus, while I speak of a person’s otherness to her lived reality in terms of her self-reflexivity, I intend to situate my argument continually in the actual drama of human existence. Consequently, I appeal throughout my study of musical meeting to the correspondent idea of human meeting. I provide instances of human existence that I invite the reader to share in, and I invite her to work out for herself the practicality of her “theoretical” ideas, whatever they may be, and the “theoretical” ideas of my study.

Finally, when a researcher is only concerned with lived reality, either, as a part of that reality, she must fail to perceive it, or, insofar as she is able to perceive it, she must perceive it from a position that exceeds it. If she maintains, then, that her lived reality is everything, she necessarily fails to account for her own (theoretical) position. But when a researcher takes up a merely theoretical stance from which she perceives reality, she fails to take her own reality into account. In contrast, my study is reducible neither to a description of lived reality nor to a theory detached from reality. Insofar as my study has to do with meeting I work to include my own position in my critique. Thus, regardless of what I argue, I am concerned to find myself in my argument, such that when the argument is applied to itself, to my life, and to the lives of others it still holds.

5 Problem and Thesis

I am concerned, then, that my thesis should make sense when I hold it against the fullest expression of my engagement in music and in life. Indeed, insofar as my study addresses my whole life – my ideas of existence, of music and of education – it is broad and engages multiple questions and issues. However, given that I constitute human existence in and through existing scholarship, and that my concept of music education evolves directly from what I argue it means to meet music, I have been able to distil the focus of my research into the following question:

How might one constitute the idea of an equal meeting between, on the one hand, music and its participant and, on the other hand, music and itself?

The question leads directly into, and from, my thesis statement. I argue that music self-consciously attends to itself, and, in its self-conscious attention, creates its sounds as music. The musical participant finds herself in music since she must self-critically recognize and constitute music’s attention.
6 Delimitation

I believe that, while my project is broad, my research question and thesis statement are sufficiently focused to constitute a rigorous framework for a doctoral dissertation. Nevertheless, the parameters in and through which I have established that framework need to be delimited.

First, while I use the general term “music,” the musical examples I provide are taken from the musical tradition known as “western art music.” It is not, however, my intention to exclude other musical genres from the idea of musical meeting. I hold that all music may be met. I have chosen western art music examples because I am familiar with the genre.

Second, insofar as I equate musical meaning with meeting, I am concerned with one particular way of arriving at that meaning, a way that involves the musical participant’s attention to music as it unfolds. I do not intend to address musical meaning that is “pre-conceptual” (i.e., music that cannot be articulated in conceptual terms) or musical meaning that is derived from what I call “association.”

Third, I have developed my ideas of what it means to exist as a human being largely in and through selected works of Kant (1981, 1998, 2000), Hegel (1975), Kierkegaard (1983, 1985, 1987, 1995) Nietzsche (1974, 1989) and Buber (2000). While I discuss the ideas of particular scholars in the light of these philosophers’ arguments, for the purposes of the present study I am not concerned with addressing their work in depth.

Fourth, given the breadth of scholarship concerning musical meaning, I have chosen to focus on works by philosophers of music and art whose ideas support my thesis, i.e., Hegel (1975), Dewey (1980), Scruton (1997) and Johnson (2002). However, in order to sharpen my focus, I have addressed literature that may be viewed as standing in opposition to my thesis, especially literature in music education. Nevertheless, I have left untouched the vast body of work that

6 Somebody asked me recently, “why not Schopenhauer?” According to Dalhhaus and Katz, Schopenhauer conceived of music “as the copy of the will itself” (1987, p. 143). But, since Schopenhauer’s concept of the will does not appear to be Kantian, i.e. something that is to be worked out (that comes into being), i.e. given that for Schopenhauer the “the will is beyond the bounds of [a person’s] control” (p. 142), with the result that music “is located beyond the boundaries of cognition” (p. 143), I have not discussed Schopenhauer in my thesis.
addresses musical aesthetics, psychology, sociology and musicology, insofar as I believe it to be unrelated to my central thesis of musical meeting.

Fifth and related to the latter point, in my arguments concerning music’s self-reflexivity in Chapters IV and V, I have addressed issues related to music theory and to musicology. I acknowledge that the extent of my research in both of these fields is limited, although the issues that I address, issues such as tonality and rhythm, are broad. While I understand that it is important to have an idea of the breadth of contemporary research in these fields, my central concern is to constitute the relationship between a specific idea of human meeting and music. In-depth knowledge of research on, say, tonality, may add depth to the relationship; however, I hold that such depth is the concern of future studies, more specifically focused upon tonality. The work of my present study is to establish that the relationship exists.

Finally, in a similar way, my ideas of education and how we teach and learn music are fundamentally related to my ideas of human and musical meeting. Given the limits of my thesis, my primary concern has been to constitute this relationship. I have been less concerned to interrogate the relationship in and through the ideas of other educational theorists.

7 Clarification of Concepts

Related to the delimitation of my study’s scope is the clarification of the concepts that it deals with. In general, in my thesis, I undertake to clarify, or to work through, concepts as the argument unfolds. Thus, while I may use a term – say, “music” or “meeting” – that can be understood in a number of ways, I have been concerned to articulate the concept behind the term in such a way that what the term signifies is clear. In addition, I have tried to be consistent in my use of terms. So, for example, “recognize” is always a positive term, insofar as the concept that it articulates involves a person’s self-conscious participation in the creation of what she beholds, whereas the term “see” is generally negative, insofar as a person assumes that she is detached from what she sees and thus denies her role in the creation of what she actually “recognizes.” The idea that one “witnesses” something aligns with the idea of recognition, whereas the idea
that one “experiences” something aligns with the idea of “seeing.” When a person experiences something, in the terms of my study, she plays no part in what she experiences.

As I undertake to communicate the idea of participatory creation in my writing, I often place the word “self” before a noun or adjective, so that, for example, “critique” becomes “self-critique.” My reason for doing this is the same as the reason I make a distinction between “recognition” and “seeing.” For, whereas, say, the speech “I am critical of you” seems to imply that a person is detached from the you that she critiques, “I am self-critical of you” insists that her critique of the other fundamentally includes her critique of herself.

I recognize that some of the terms I use may appear contentious in the context of other philosophical traditions. An example is the phrase “equal meeting.” It is important to understand, however, that the concept of an “equal meeting” is not reducible to a term that describes the way meetings are. Rather, the term “equal meeting” articulates a concept in and through which meetings become what they are. We recognize that a meeting is unequal precisely because we have a concept of what an equal meeting is.

The concept of an equal meeting involves communication. Thus, the term “communication” does not merely describe the two-way transference of information. The term “communication” articulates a dialogue that is not a negotiation that leads to an outcome but rather is the ongoing process of sharing oneself with the other and inviting the other to share oneself with one.

Finally, in my brief overview of concepts, I think that it is worth clarifying my concept of “love.” In my thesis, love has to do with what I call “love of neighbor” and it aligns with an adequate notion of meeting as ongoing self-critique. It has to do with inclination and what we may call self-love only insofar as a person is self-critical of her inclination and self-critical of her self-love, and in her self-critique – her meeting with them – finds herself and her neighbor as “love.”

8 Procedure

We come, finally, to the question of how I intend to present and to develop my thesis. The structure of my presentation is essentially articulated in my title, “the idea of meeting in

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7 Martin Buber conceives of “experience” in terms of what he calls *I-It*. A person *witnesses* something, however, in terms of the relation (meeting) *I-Thou* – the central concept of my thesis.
existence, music and education.” Chapter II, then, is called “Human Existence as Meeting.” Insofar as this chapter contains my argument that what we find meaningful in our lives is human meeting, we may regard it as the foundation of my study. For it follows that the meanings of music and education, and the extent to which music and education are created and re-created in accordance with those meanings, necessarily relate to the meaning of human existence. In other words, a person finds music meaningful insofar as it touches – challenges, practices and amplifies – the meaning of her existence. But the notion of “what we find meaningful in human existence” seems to be terribly general and appears to fail, as it were, from the outset, to account for the particularity of individual human existence in a multi-cultural world. I address the seeming generalization in and through the paradox that, consistent with Hegel, the particular can only be recognized in the light of a universal whole and that the universal whole can only be recognized in relation to the particular. Similarly, we must recognize that if my thesis is to mean something to a person other than myself and other than a person who is of “my way of thinking,” it must be that we can share an idea of meaning in and through which we can communicate the validity or lack of validity of my arguments.

In Chapter III, as the title “Aesthetics, Music and Meeting” suggests, I examine the relationship of my thesis to the philosophical branch of enquiry known as “aesthetics.” The notion that one meets a work of music in terms of the relationship between its musical elements, that one attends specifically to those elements, and that one derives meaning from one’s musical attention rather than from an associated concept – whether it is a mood, a social attitude, or a particular value or status – has specifically to do with aesthetics. However, insofar as aesthetics seems to locate meaning intrinsically, as it were, in the musical object; insofar as that meaning is understood to be detached from, and indifferent to, the “real” world of “difference;” and insofar as the meaning, nevertheless, is seen to impose its values upon music students, aesthetics has received a bad press in the world of music education. The purpose, then, of Chapter III is to articulate an adequate notion of aesthetics in and through philosophers such as Hegel (1975), Dewey (1980) and Scruton (1997). My intention is to show how the aesthetic philosophy of these writers corresponds to my own idea of musical meeting, and, consequently, to demonstrate that my project is irreducible to the criticism leveled at inadequate aesthetics by contemporary music education.
Chapter IV, “Music as Meeting,” is the heart of the thesis and addresses the central problem, the question of music’s self-consciousness or meeting with itself. It draws largely on Chapter II in terms of the idea that we witness music to be meaningful in and through the work of its elements to become equal to, rather than identical with, themselves and their neighbor elements.

In Section I of Chapter V, the chapter entitled “Music Education as Meeting,” I take the ideas from Chapter II, ideas of what it means to be a person, and constitute, if you will, a theory of education such that education becomes the practice of human meeting, the practice of human self-reflexivity. In Section II of the chapter, within the firmly established context of human, musical, and educational meeting, I bear witness to my engagement with Beethoven’s String Quartet in C# minor, Opus 131. The purpose behind the engagement is twofold. First, I wish to actualize, in a work of music, the ideas of musical self-consciousness and responsibility worked out between Chapters II and IV. Second, I want to create a musical context in and through which to relate my ideas of education to the meeting I call music. The fruits of this relationship are articulated in Section III of the chapter that formulates the idea of musical and educational meeting in actual terms of classroom teaching and learning strategies and ideas.

Finally, in Chapter VI, I draw together the diverse strands of my thesis – existence, music and education – in and through the common ideas of human meaning and meeting. Thus, I return to the main ideas presented in the opening section of Chapter I, ideas of self-critical thought, I-Thou and The Between and I reflect upon the fundamental relevance of “Music as The Between” to our lives insofar as we enact what I call a “musical” existence: an existence whose “whole life” is in the meeting that is mutual understanding, communication and love.
Chapter II ~ Human Existence as Meeting

1 Introduction

1.1 Musical Existence and Human Existence

The central argument of my thesis is that what we mean when we talk about music and, indeed, what music means, is precisely the self-critical interaction between music and itself that is constituted in and through the music’s meeting with the musical participant. Equally, we may say that what we mean when we talk about human existence and, indeed, what human existence means is precisely the self-critical interaction between the musical participant and herself that is constituted in and through the participant’s meeting with the music. Each – music and human existence – fundamentally participates in, practices, and brings into existence the meeting that is the other.

1.2 Purpose

Accordingly, as I argued in Chapter I, we find that not only is the idea of meeting central to what we call music but it is also central to what we call human existence. However, whereas the idea of music as meeting (in the way that I conceive of it) has remained, for the most part, unarticulated by scholars in the fields of music and aesthetics, the idea of human existence as meeting has been articulated by a number of philosophers. Thus, the purpose of the present chapter is to examine the idea of human existence, conceived of as meeting, in and through the philosophies of Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Buber. In articulating the ontology, structure and meaning of human existence argued by these philosophers, I intend to create a framework in and through which to constitute the ontology, structure and meaning of music as meeting. Thus, my thesis hinges on the idea that human existence and music are fundamentally related.

1.3 Questions

Before I examine what it means to be a human being in and through the idea of meeting, I think it would be helpful to outline the questions – the problems – relating to human existence with
which I am concerned. As I stated in Chapter I, in light of my study’s broad concern, i.e., the relevance of music to our lives and, in particular, to education, I am interested in what it is that makes human life meaningful; what it means to witness meaning; what it means to become enlivened; and what it means to feel fulfilled. But, while I ask these questions as if there was only one answer, clearly, every individual witnesses meaning, becoming and fulfillment in unique ways.

First, then, if a person is to articulate an adequate philosophy of human existence, she may not be universally prescriptive. Yet, the very idea that every human being is unique and that her uniqueness must be equally nurtured is an idea that is shared and, consequently, that is universal; or, where it is not explicitly shared, it implicitly acts as a standard according to which, say, the oppression of a person’s uniqueness is understood as oppression. Thus, in an adequate philosophy a person must articulate the paradoxical relationship between the idea of human uniqueness and the idea that human uniqueness is a universal right.

Second, when a person’s philosophy of human existence is adequate she will articulate how the human being becomes unique. She will account for how a person becomes and fulfills the person that she is while, at the same time, allowing her neighbor to become and fulfill the person that he is. Thus, she will articulate how it is possible for a person to find fulfillment in situations that appear to be deadening, restrictive or repetitive. But she will also clarify how a person who seems to be fulfilled – who seems to have everything – can become fulfilled.

Third, then, a person must articulate what it means to be unfulfilled: to fail to become oneself and to be less than fully human.

Finally, in an adequate philosophy of human existence a person must account for how people make distinctions between, say, human becoming and human self-indulgence: between human fulfillment and human emptiness. She must make clear how the value that forms the basis of such distinctions is arrived at such that it is universally applicable, while, at the same time, taking into account the unique difference of every human being.

In the following sections, entitled *I-Thou, Will, Change, Revaluation, Infinite Difference, Interest, and Genuine Actuality*, I intend to address the preceding questions and concerns and the ideas arising from them.
2 I-Thou

2.1 Uniqueness and Universality

I shall begin my discussion by articulating the idea of human meeting in terms that Martin Buber makes systematic in his seminal work, *I and Thou* (first published in 1922). In *I and Thou*, we find that Buber makes a fundamental distinction between two related attitudes of existence. In the first attitude, the relation *I-It*, the human being articulates her existence as a means to some “thing” (Buber, 2000, p. 20). In the second attitude, the relation *I-Thou*, the human being recognizes her existence as having its beginning and its end in human meeting.

In accordance with the two attitudes of existence – *I-It* and *I-Thou* – Buber argues that a person is never merely a singular *I*. Her *I*, he observes, is always constituted in relationship to her *Thou* or reduced in relationship to her *It*. As *I-Thou* a person is self-conscious of herself as her relationship to herself and, in and as relation, she attends to and becomes herself. As *I-It* a person denies that she is her relationship to herself and identifies herself, rather, with the single *I* who “experiences” (p. 21) herself and life as *It*. Thus, the relational term *I-It* articulates the idea that a person who denies her whole being as relation, despite her denial, does not then become a single *I*. Rather, she reduces herself from *I-Thou* to *I-It*. Indeed, it turns out that, as a single *I*, a person is unrelated to herself. She is either entirely immersed in herself or utterly detached from herself. In both cases, the person is unaccountable to herself and, consequently, unaccountable to her neighbor. Since this cannot be the case, we find that the relationship between the two attitudes of existence, *I-Thou* and *I-It*, fruitfully accounts for the idea that every person is ethically accountable but that some people deny their accountability.

The person who is *I-It* reduces the full expression of her being, which is precisely relationship, to one of its sides. As one side of the relation she “experiences” (p. 21), rather than interacts with, the other. Depending on which of the sides she identifies with, she conceives of her experience in one of two ways. Either she conceives of life as an object that she experiences; or she conceives of herself as an object that is subject to (a victim of) the experience of life.

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8 I sometimes interchange the term *I-Thou* with the term *I-You*. They are identical.
9 See page 20.
In contrast, as *I-Thou*, the human being does not experience life; rather, she “takes [her] stand in relation” (p. 20) to herself and to her neighbor. Thus, relation is not a solution to experience. It is not a means of negotiating a better experience. As *I-Thou*, the human being cuts through experience and transforms it in her own image: the image of *I-Thou*. In the transformation the experience becomes a metaphor, if you will, for human, self-critical meeting (Kierkegaard, 1995, p. 209). Thus, all experience, i.e., every apparent way of being and every seeming purpose or feeling, is recognized and re-appropriated in light of *I-Thou: I-Thou* – the relation that is the dynamic interaction between self and other – is everything. Accordingly, Buber writes: “no aim, no lust, and no anticipation [may] intervene between the *I* and *Thou*. Desire itself is transformed as it plunges out of its dream into the appearance. Every means is an obstacle. Only when every means has collapsed does the meeting come about” (p. 26).

It turns out, then, that, while the human being is fundamentally *I-Thou*, insofar as she can reduce herself (or be reduced) to *I-It* – falsely construe her life as a means – it is clearly the case that her “stand in relation” is not a matter of course. On the contrary, precisely because her “stand in relation” is a meeting, the human being must actively step into it. Thus, where existence is meeting and where existence is a relation, a person must continually work to bring her existence into being by actively engaging in it. She must fulfill her relational nature in and through her considerate and attentive participation in herself and in her neighbor. She must “collapse” (p. 26) all other apparent means to existence – knowledge, assumptions, attitudes, characteristics, identities and so on – and re-create them in light of such participation.

We may say, then, that a person must become *I-Thou* and that it is in her becoming that she witnesses her life. But neither does a person, nor can she, begin the process of her becoming from something other than *I-Thou*. On the one hand, it is evident that a person cannot become someone other than who she is; for how would she know when or if she had become that other person? On the other hand, a person cannot become someone who is merely identical to the one she is; for she is already that person. Paradoxically, therefore, a person must be the person she is and, at the same time, become the person she is. Only when a person becomes the person that

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10 Socrates articulates the problem in terms of knowledge in the *Meno*. He argues that “a man cannot search either for what he knows or for what he does not know. He cannot search for what he knows – since he knows it, there is no need to search – nor for what he does not know, for he does not know what to look for” (Plato, 1981, p. 69).
she is, can she witness a sense of fulfillment. Dewey articulates this paradox when he observes that “in a world of mere flux, change would not be cumulative; it would not move toward a close. Stability and rest would have no being . . . . Equally . . . . where everything is already complete, there is no fulfillment” (Dewey, 1934, p. 17). Consequently, when a person is merely in flux – always becoming something new – there can be no point of stability from which she can recognize “herself” as becoming. On the other hand, where a person has already become who she is, she can have no sense of fulfillment and thus no sense of herself.

Accordingly, a person is *I-Thou*; and she must become the *I-Thou* that she is. A person does not step from *I-It* into *I-Thou*. She does not start by believing that she is a means to some thing – to some personal feeling or ideological convention – and then discover, somehow, that her existence is constituted in and through meeting. If a person were to look to experience – to *It* – to explain the means by which she exists, why would it ever occur to her that what she was looking for she had already found? How could she discover that what she was looking for was not to be found among things? What would lead her to recognize that her critical recognition of herself – her meeting with herself – *as the person who is looking* was the beginning and end of her existence? I repeat, then, that a person cannot move from *I-It* into *I-Thou*. Rather, a person steps from *I-Thou* into *I-Thou*. But the place from which she steps is not identical to the place into which she steps. While each *I-Thou* is constituted as meeting and therefore shares its constitution with every other *I-Thou*, each meeting is different.

It follows, then, that, because we do not step from *I-It* into *I-Thou* but begin, rather, as *I-Thou*, we may say that first and foremost every human being is created as *I-Thou*, even if not every human being chooses to affirm her creation. The adequacy of the latter idea may be recognized in terms of the notion of responsibility, a notion I touched on earlier in terms of accountability.

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11 I understand that there may be cultures in which people have an entirely different attitude toward human existence. Our relationship to these cultures, however, is complex. For while we may argue that we should not impose our ideas of human existence – *I-Thou* – upon a culture, our very argument, and the sentiment that is behind it, presupposes that the culture operates according to the same system of values that we do. The idea that it is a violation of human rights to occupy and indoctrinate another culture is a western idea. Thus, in acting in a way that we see to be just we assume that culture has the same idea of justice. In a sense, then, if we are to act in accordance with the idea of human rights, we have no option other than to presuppose that a culture understands what human rights are.
We presuppose that every person has the ability to attend to herself and to her neighbor in a way that she imagines is adequate for all people. We call this ability, “responsibility.” Ultimately, then, we presuppose that a person, regardless of her circumstances, can be held responsible in a court of law.\textsuperscript{12} In other words, we presuppose that she is I-Thou. Naturally, not everything for which a person may be held responsible reaches a court of law. There are many instances of irresponsible actions – actions in which a person fails to account fully for the humanity of the other – that are less explicit. Nevertheless, because every human being, by virtue of her power as I-Thou, may be held accountable for her actions, the distinction responsible/irresponsible still stands; either a person works to meet with herself and her neighbor as she imagines she would wish to be met or she does not.

Sometimes a person’s sense of responsibility for her own life is so deeply suppressed – perhaps through years of victimization – that it seems, indeed, that she is not responsible. It seems that she does not meet with herself. In fact, it seems, rather, that she is commensurate with herself: commensurate with her role as a victim. I argue, however, that the very idea that such a person is a victim constitutes her within a frame of reference that understands that she is not merely a victim. She is always someone who is also other than her role as a victim; she is always I-Thou. In fact, it turns out that someone who is merely a victim – who has no idea of anything other than her role – cannot be properly constituted as a victim. For while we may consider her to be a victim, because she can have no idea of what it means to be anything other than a victim, she will be unable to recognize and participate in the process in and through which she becomes the full sense of herself. Thus, we must presuppose that a victim, even if she has suppressed all sense of herself, nevertheless has a sense of herself as I-Thou. Furthermore, the whole idea of counseling presupposes that a victim fundamentally knows what it means to meet herself. Counseling is set up to help a person who has repressed her sense of self to regain that sense.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{12} Unless the person is mentally challenged.
\textsuperscript{13} I must emphasize that by insisting that all people are I-Thou, that all people are responsible for their own lives and that all people voluntarily play the roles that they play, I am by no means suggesting that becoming I-Thou, being responsible or recognizing that one’s role is voluntary, is a matter of course or that it is easy. I understand that there are many people, who due to systematic suppression and subjugation that forces them to conform to certain roles or functions, find it almost impossible to re-create themselves as I-Thou. But the principle that every person has the power to become herself in and through her responsible engagement in herself and in her
In summary, then, insofar as it is the case that we are all universally constituted as *I-Thou*, it is possible for us to recognize one another and share with one another the unique meaning of our lives. Thus, as *I-Thou*, a person is both unique and universal. Reduced to *I-It*, however, a person is neither unique nor universal. Reduced to *I-It*, a person seems to be identical to whatever it is one considers her purpose or role to be. One may conceive of her role in terms of her identity as “mother,” “wife” or “academic.” But whether one conceives of her identity in terms of one role or in terms of multiple, different, roles, her “identity” – in terms of her role – seems to be finite; it seems to be *It*. Consequently, she appears to be the same as others who play the same roles. But still, someone might say, while it is true that many people play the “same” roles, what is different about this person is the way that her roles are combined. The question then becomes, how are the roles combined? Who is the person who says “I am mother, wife and academic?” The person who articulates that “I am mother, wife and academic” and who profoundly recognizes herself in her articulation – who thinks, profoundly, about what it means to be her roles and how they critique one another – becomes *I-Thou*. As *I-Thou* she is bound by no roles; as *I-Thou* she is infinite. Thus, as *I-Thou* she is unique.

### 2.2 Existence as Fulfillment

I have argued that the human being’s existence is constituted in terms of the relation, *I-Thou*. At the same time, however, I have indicated that the human being can reduce herself to *I-It*. I have discussed this reduction in terms of a separation of the *I* from the *You*. On the one hand, a human being reduces herself to merely an *I*, assuming, unquestioningly, that all that she is is what she appears to be: all that her life comprises is the appearance of the everyday. On the other hand, dissatisfied, perhaps, with the everyday, the human being reduces her life to the negation of the everyday. She constantly strives toward the fantasy of another life. Thus, she reduces her life to *You*. But just as the *I* that has been made commensurate with the everyday is utterly unknowable, so the *You* that is the negation of the everyday is equally unknowable. *I* is only recognizable in and through *You*; and *You* is only recognizable in and through *I*.
In a sense, then, where we fail to find our I in our You (and vice-versa), it might seem that our lives are punctuated by the back and forth swing of a pendulum, oscillating between I and You: between everyday appearance and the negation of or resistance to that appearance. In contrast, Buber’s concept, I-You, constitutes human existence on an entirely different basis. Thus, human existence is not merely a question of degrees; it is not merely that the human being must find a point in the pendulum’s swing at which she can lead a “balanced” life, somewhere between her immersion in the world and her alienation from it. On the contrary, as I-You, the human being becomes the pendulum; she encompasses the two poles of the pendulum and the movement between them. As I-You, the human being who seemed to be commensurate with I, or the human being who appeared to alienate I and strive for You, is constituted in and through her critical recognition of her self and in her light – in the light of the human being as relation – the reduction I and the reduction You is transformed. Thus, I-You is the human being who says, but who recognizes her critical relationship to herself in the fact that she inadequately says, “I am simply who I am.” I-You is the human being who says, but who recognizes her critical relationship to herself in the fact that she inadequately says, “I am not who I am.” In each case, the person becomes who she is as she recognizes herself as the person who speaks and as the person who has a self-critical relationship to the content of her speech. The relation is everything. Again, it is not a means of establishing the correctness of a particular opinion. Rather, in light of the relation that is “truth” the opinions are revaluated in terms of their adequacy as a site for human understanding, communication and love.

We may say, then, that where it may seem that a person’s life is constituted in and through her ceaseless search for the solution of her existence, in actuality she is already the solution: she is I-Thou. She affirms and amplifies her existence as I-Thou when she meets what we may call her “searching gaze,” turning it, as it were, back in upon itself. Thus, where a person’s gaze seems to focus on what she experiences and conditions of her life – the mundane pattern of existence or the seductive scent of an alternative world – the person engages her gaze and makes that engagement the centre of her existence. Thus, her fulfillment as I-Thou arises indifferently from the midst of the things upon which she seems to gaze or which seem to direct her gaze: things such as poverty, wealth, power, weakness, health, illness, romance, hate, irritation, boredom, happiness, despair, emptiness, fulfillment, and so on. Accordingly, no matter the conditions, the difficulty the person has is not her subjugation by or of these things. Rather, her difficulty is to
recognize herself as the person who bears witness to these things and to recognize that her recognition – the meeting – is everything. I must emphasize that the meeting does not magically eradicate the things upon which a person gazes. On the contrary, the meeting is only possible because there is a person who gazes on things. But with the meeting the centrality of the thing upon which the person gazes is utterly subverted such that the meeting of the gaze becomes the whole of the person’s existence and the object or thing upon which she gazes is transfigured in the meeting’s light.

It is the case, then, that as academics, educators, parents and students we often fail to recognize that our relationship to our existence (our gaze) – to ourselves and to our neighbor – is everything. Thus, we take it for granted that we can relate to existence – can recognize our gaze – and we move immediately on to what the purpose of existence might be. Were we to stop with our relationship to existence we would find that the I that articulates existence is fundamentally implicated in it. We would find that we cannot account for existence without accounting for the relationship of the I to it. Similarly, we would find that we cannot account for the I without articulating the relationship of existence to it. Thus, human existence is a person’s relationship to her existence. Human existence is I-Existence; it is I-Thou.

I suggest, therefore, that human existence is not something that we can experience and then record, analyze, embrace or reject; rather, human existence is something that we relate to and bring into being in and through our relation. Thus, as we recognize and articulate the human being we speak her into existence. Accordingly, Buber writes that the “primary words [I-Thou and I-It] do not describe something that might exist independently of them, but being spoken they bring about existence” (Buber, 2000, p. 19).

It follows, then, that the idea that existence is the relationship between the human being and existence is an idea that embraces the entirety of a human being’s life. I-Thou is not one of a number of partial attitudes to existence, each of which stands (and is somehow allowed to stand) in contradiction to the other. Rather, I-Thou is the only attitude; it is the whole attitude. In light of I-Thou all partial attitudes are recognized as partial. Equally, in light of I-Thou, all totalitarian attitudes are recognized as totalitarian. Accordingly, we must be careful not to confuse the wholeness of I-Thou with totalitarianism. The distinction that matters in human existence is not between totalitarianism and what is partial; rather, the distinction that matters is between a
person’s whole being as I-Thou, on the one hand, and the reduction of her whole being to totalitarianism or what is partial, on the other hand.

Postmodernist advocates, like the French philosopher Lyotard, seem, however, to want to make a distinction between what is partial and what is total. Lyotard and others have affirmed the “multiplicity of absolutely incompatible statements” (Lyotard, 1984, p. 57) against the modernist ideas of “consensus” (p. 61), “little narratives” against “grand narratives” (p. 61) and the particular against the universal. Put simply, however, where the particular saturates itself and where the universal saturates itself, each, the particular and the universal, is identical. Either each is the totality of whatever it is, or each is merely a part of whatever it is. Since whatever it is cannot be seen, since there is no bigger picture – no consensus of what constitutes the bigger picture – there is no way of knowing whether or not what is said to be partial is, in fact, partial or what is said to be universal is, in fact, universal.

Having said that, however, we recognize that claims of universality result in human atrocities insofar as they fail to account for particular differences and force all people to be the same. Equally, we recognize that claims of the particular result in atrocities insofar as they justify actions toward certain peoples that cannot be held to account other than in and through a shared and universal sense of human dignity. Insofar as our recognition is allowed to stand, we must share some sense that is in excess of the universal and in excess of the particular that allows us to recognize and critique the “universal” as universal and the “particular” as particular. I argue that our shared sense is the idea of I-Thou. In our participation with ourselves and all other people we come to a shared, self-critical sense of understanding, communication and love. In the light of this shared, self-critical sense we recognize that universal doctrines and particular inclinations that reduce the relation we call human existence to one of its sides are inadequate as a site for I-Thou.

I-Thou, then, is a person’s whole life. But, as “whole,” I am not suggesting that the human being can “see” herself entirely. On the contrary, it is by virtue of the fact that she cannot see herself entirely that she must meet with herself. It is by virtue of the fact that she is partially obscured that she must work to become herself. Judith Butler acknowledges the latter paradox in her book Giving an account of oneself (2005). She observes “that reason’s limit is the sign of our humanity” (Butler, 2005, p. 83). In other words, because our reason or knowledge is not
commensurate with who we are and because we recognize that it is not commensurate, we are also other than who we are. Thus we have room to work to become who we are. Accordingly, a person cannot “see” herself entirely. But she can recognize her whole being. What she recognizes, however, are not her inner feelings or her outer behaviors, her desires or her fears, her prejudices or her conditioning. Rather, what she recognizes is herself as the person that meets with the person who has inner feelings and outer behaviors, and so on.

2.3 The Distinction Between I-It and I-Thou: Paganism and Bad Faith

The fundamental distinction between a person’s “whole being,” on the one hand, and the reduction of her “whole being” to something that is either particular or universal, on the other hand, is the distinction that I have already articulated between I-Thou and I-It. Whereas a person who is I-It seems to direct her actions in terms of the idea that she is either a means to (victim of) her particular inclinations or a means to (victim of) certain universal codes of practice, in contrast, a person who is I-Thou directs her whole being in terms of her self-critical and loving imagination of how she should act, scrutinized by herself and her neighbor. While I have already articulated the distinction in a number of ways, given that it is central to my conception of the value of existence, music and education, I consider that it is worth re-articulating and developing further.

As we have seen, the distinction between I-Thou and I-It is not an absolute distinction. That is, a person who is I-It is never merely I-It. I-It is a category of I-Thou. Thus, a person can only recognize that she has reduced her life to a means, that she is irresponsible and that she has been treated unfairly, in light of I-Thou. Accordingly, the absolute distinction is between I-Thou, in and through which I-It comes into existence, on the one hand, and a state of being in which the two categories do not exist, on the other hand. The latter half of the distinction seems to be I-It insofar as the person experiences life as a means. But, because the person can have no idea that life is anything other than a means, the idea that it is a means can be neither negative nor positive.

Thus, with the help of Kierkegaard, we may constitute the relationship of a human being to I-It in terms of the following two categories. In the first category, Kierkegaard conceives of I-It in terms of what he calls “paganism” (Kierkegaard, 1995, p. 26). In pagan societies – e.g., societies
that we may call “ancient”– the concepts of self-critical meeting, self-reflexivity or love of neighbor in and through which I-It could be self-consciously distinguished as an inadequate attitude of existence did not exist. We find, then, that in his later work Foucault writes that “Plato [as an example of “ancient” society] never speaks of the examination of conscience – never” (Foucault, 1986, p. 368). As a pagan, Plato could not conceive of thinking or of recognizing his existence as a self-critical thinker; rather, he used critical thinking as a tool to identify the purpose of an existence that, insofar as it was only ever an appearance of something else, could never be identified. He could think critically about life; but his critical thinking was not such that he recognized himself in it. Accordingly, pagan existence is never I-Thou. It follows, then, that the pagan can never be held responsible for an inadequate existence. Because there is no concept of adequacy, I-It cannot be recognized as an inadequate category.

In the second category, Kierkegaard conceives of I-It in terms of what he calls “Christendom” (Kierkegaard, 1995, p. 48). While the term “Christendom” relates to an inadequate conception – an I-It conception – of Christianity, I prefer to constitute I-It in and through the more general concept of “modernity.” Thus, I shall refer to members of ancient societies as pagan and members of societies that constitute existence in terms of I-Thou as modern. Accordingly, we may say that Kierkegaard’s category “Christendom” articulates an I-It attitude of existence that may be constituted in modern (rather than pagan/ancient) society.

To help us understand Kierkegaard’s category more fully, I think it is worth drawing on the work of Peter Berger. In Invitation to Sociology (1963) Berger interprets the modern ideas of “Christendom” and I-It in terms of what he calls “bad faith” (Berger, 1963, p. 143). Berger articulates “bad faith” in the following way.

To put it very simply, “bad faith” is to pretend something is necessary that in fact is voluntary. “Bad faith” is thus a flight from freedom, a dishonest evasion of the “agony of choice.” “Bad faith” expresses itself in innumerable human situations from the most commonplace to the most catastrophic. The waiter shuffling through his appointed rounds

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14 The quotation is taken from an interview with Foucault recorded in an anthology of Foucault’s work. The actual text is Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow; with an afterword by Michel Foucault, Brighton: Harvester, 1982.

15 Berger borrows the term “bad faith” from Jean-Paul Sartre.
in a café is in “bad faith” insofar as he pretends to himself that the waiter role constitutes his real existence, that, if only for the hours he is hired, he is \(^{16}\) the waiter. (p. 143)

Thus a person who reduces herself and her neighbor to a role or to an experience, a “He or She, a sum of qualities, a given quantity with a certain shape” (Buber, 2000, p. 31), is in “bad faith.” Unlike the mode of living that I have articulated as paganism, however, the I-It of “bad-faith” carries within it the standard of meeting.

Accordingly, the person who is in “bad faith,” as distinct from the pagan, is held responsible for reducing her life to I-It. To this extent, as we have seen, we presuppose that she is fundamentally constituted as I-Thou. We presuppose that, in Berger’s terms, she has within her the capability of recognizing that she is being dishonest by “[pretending] something is necessary that in fact is voluntary” (p. 143). Thus, “bad faith” can only be named within a context of faith. The relationship between the two is fundamental to the constitution of each. Accordingly, it can never be the case that a person is merely in good faith or simply in “bad faith.” Contained within each attitude of faith is the self-awareness – the power – of the other. Thus, what we may call the absolute distinction is not between good faith and bad faith; rather, it is between good faith/bad faith, on the one hand, and paganism, on the other hand.

In modernity, then, we do not encounter what I have called the “absolute distinction” in our everyday lives. We are all constituted in and through I-Thou. Thus, the useful distinction – the distinction in and through which we live and fulfill our lives – is, indeed, the distinction between good faith and bad faith: the distinction between I-Thou and I-It. Nevertheless, I consider it fruitful to articulate the absolute distinction in my thesis – the distinction between modernity and paganism – since it makes it entirely clear that I-Thou is not an instinctual, natural, human condition. At the same time, however, it is also clear that the idea of I-Thou did not come out of human reasoning – a concept that I shall examine in more detail later on in the chapter (see page 34). The power of the absolute distinction, then, is the fundamental notion that I-Thou came into existence; that it was not always “in the world” (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 55). \(^{17}\) Furthermore, it is

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\(^{16}\) The italics are Berger’s. All italics in cited texts are original unless otherwise indicated.

\(^{17}\) Kierkegaard discusses the paradox of existence in terms of faith. He observes that if faith has always been in the world then “faith has never existed in the world precisely because it has always existed” (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 55). In other words, something can only truly exist insofar as its existence is constantly re-created.
this notion that brings \textit{I-Thou} once more into existence as the reader examines the concept of human relationships in a new light.

It remains, however, that the distinction applicable to our everyday lives is the distinction between \textit{I-Thou} and \textit{I-It}. But the distinction is not merely between the isolated forms, \textit{I-Thou} and \textit{I-It}. Rather, the distinction is between the person who recognizes that as \textit{I-Thou} she must always become \textit{I-Thou} (and consequently fails, reducing herself, sometimes, to \textit{I-It}) and the person who is \textit{I-Thou} but denies that she is \textit{I-Thou} and reduces herself to \textit{I-It}.

Allow me to expand or elaborate upon this distinction. On the one hand, the person who recognizes that her existence is her ongoing work to witness her relationship to herself and to her neighbor, in and from the midst of – and simultaneously regardless of – the things that surround and make her, understands that she must continually undertake and enact that work. However, in that she must continually undertake it, she will, at times, fail. There will be times when she is simply not up to the task of ongoing meeting and will reduce herself, momentarily, perhaps, to \textit{I-It}. On the other hand, the person who is her ongoing work to witness the relationship that is existence but who refuses to recognize that she is that ongoing work and denies that she must undertake to enact it, reduces herself, or makes herself into, \textit{I-It}. We may say, then, that the latter person is in “bad faith.”

Thus, on both sides of the distinction the person reduces herself (or is reduced to) \textit{I-It}. However, there is a difference between a person’s failure to become \textit{I-Thou} and a person who is in “bad faith”. The difference is that, whereas the person who fails to become \textit{I-Thou} recognizes her failure insofar as she wills her success, the person who is in “bad faith” denies her failure insofar as she refuses to recognize her responsibility to succeed.

3 Will

I have argued (see page 24) that the fundamental \textit{I} (the \textit{I-Thou}), the \textit{I}, for example, of the person who articulates human existence, is often taken for granted. So it is with the concept of human will. The human will, according to which the \textit{I} is able to evaluate self-critically its own ideas and

\footnote{While she does not recognize her responsibility, someone else does. A person’s responsibility is not in her. Rather, it is between her and her neighbor. Thus, even though she may not recognize that it is there, it is, in all actuality, there: between her and her neighbor.}
the ideas of others and according to which it is able to direct those ideas in a way that it imagines to be adequate (or direct them in a way that is inadequate), is often assumed to be natural: to be a part of human nature.

3.1 Desire

Certainly, it seems self-evident that human beings have desires, inclinations and needs just as animals do. Such desires appear to be driven by biological instincts. What distinguishes human beings from animals, however, is that human beings can see that they have desires, inclinations and needs, whereas animals simply operate according to them. A human being’s “seeing,” however, is not straightforward. For, in fact, the human being does not merely see that she has desires. Rather, she sees that she has desires and she self-critically recognizes herself as, or in, her seeing. Her recognition of herself becomes the centre of her existence. In light of her centre – her meeting with herself – her desires are transformed from the force that drives her into the context in and through which her self-critical recognition takes place. Her desires are transformed into her own image as she witnesses herself in them.19

Thus, desire – insofar as desire is conceived as a human inclination or instinctual need – receives a totally new expression when it becomes a metaphor, if you like, for the process in and through which the human being meets with and recognizes herself. As a metaphor for human self-recognition, while we still call desire “desire,” insofar as its constitution is infinitely different from mere desire, we may also call it “will.” It follows, then, that what we call human will is meeting. That is, the meeting is not merely something that occurs as a result of the will. Rather, the meeting creates the very will that wills it.

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19 As I argued in Chapter I (see page 12) the key distinction between seeing and witnessing is as follows. When a person merely sees something, either she reduces what she sees to herself or she reduces herself to what she sees. In both cases she can have no sense of herself because she collapses the two sides into one another. In contrast, what a person witnesses is determined in the critical relationship between her and herself (and her neighbor), on the one hand, and her and the thing that she witnesses, on the other hand. Thus, as a person who recognizes, or meets with, herself, the human being witnesses her desires and transforms them into the power in and through which she becomes herself. That is, the human being practices her meeting with herself – her becoming – as she tests the adequacy or validity of what she desires against an idea created in and through her critical participation with herself and her neighbor.
Consequently, we may say that the human will is neither something that is given “naturally” to human beings nor something that human beings have constructed. It is certainly the case that human will does not exist outside of the human being’s willingness to bring her will into existence. Equally, however, the human being does not exist outside of that very will.

Accordingly, as a person “takes her stand in relation” (Buber, 2000, p. 20) to herself and to her neighbor and as she profoundly recognizes the “whole being” (p. 25) of each, such that her whole conception of life – her life and the lives of others – is conceived of in terms of her work to constitute the adequacy of her recognition, she witnesses the power that we call will. That power is the paradoxical sense of loss of self (in terms of self-knowledge) and the simultaneous revelation of self (in terms of relationship). For in taking my stand in relation, I become the relation and, by definition, I lose sight of myself as a singular object. At the same time, I find myself as my relation to myself.

3.2 The Categorical Imperative

Kant articulates the concept of human will in *The Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* (1981). According to Kant, the human will is essentially constituted in and through the idea of what he calls the categorical imperative. The categorical imperative holds that a person must will her action “according to that maxim whereby [she] can at the same time will that it should become a universal law” (Kant, 1981, p. 30). There is just one maxim that can be made “universal law”: the maxim that a person “should treat himself and all others never merely as a means but always at the same time as an end in himself” (p. 39). Accordingly, the primary concern of all willing is the nurture and sustenance of every human being as an end in herself – as a being with dignity and worth – and never merely a product of, or a means to, some other, greater purpose.

But it is not merely that a person begins with “will” and wills the outcome of the categorical imperative: wills herself to treat others and herself as ends and never merely as means. Rather, the categorical imperative, in its very enactment, brings about the will that creates it. Thus, enacting the categorical imperative in one’s life is not a choice insofar as one can choose to will it or not to will it. For in not willing the categorical imperative – the idea of meeting – one denies the very source and origin of one’s will.
Paradoxically, then, it is the categorical imperative that empowers a person to choose willingly not to enact it. But it turns out that her choice is a false choice. For her choice contradicts, and ultimately disables, its own power. There is only one choice that a person can make. That choice is the choice to meet oneself and one’s neighbor in a way that one could imagine to be good for all other people. All other reasons, justifications and forces that seem to drive will are challenged, re-evaluated and re-articulated in the light of that choice.

3.3 Heteronomy

Thus, we find that what is good cannot be found in things such as “intelligence, wit, judgment, and whatever talents . . . one might want to name . . . such [as] . . . courage, resolution, [and] perseverance” (p. 7). All these (and more) are what Kant calls heteronymous principles. Heteronymous principles fall into two categories. In the first category the human being assumes that what is good is in accordance with her “inclinations” (p. 24). Kant describes such inclinations as “physical or moral feeling[s]” “of happiness” (p. 46). In the second category, the human being assumes that what is good is in accordance with so-called “principles of perfection [that act] as a possible effect [and subsequent cause] of [the] will” (p. 46). The principles of perfection are constituted in terms of society’s doctrines – both secular and divine – that appear to be eternal and immutable truths.

3.4 Autonomy and Good Will

In contrast to the heteronymous principles according to which human beings might seem to will what is good, Kant constitutes good in terms of what he calls the autonomy of the will. In other words, the concept “good” comes into existence, not in terms of its association with something outside of it, but as human will that wills its own existence. Thus, Kant argues that “there is no possibility of thinking of anything at all in the world, or even out of it, which can be regarded as good without qualification, except a good will” (p. 7). It is not that “good” is a qualification of the will. Rather, human will, in and of itself, is good. Thus, “bad” is a reduction of the full expression of human will, in terms of self-critical participation, to heteronomy: the idea that human existence is willed according to either inclinations or principles of perfection. Thus, we may say that “good will” is precisely the process of working out what is good between human beings, not as a means to a “good” end, but as the end that, in and of itself, is good.
Accordingly, we must not imagine that what is “good” is reducible to a pre-determined idea of what “should” be worked out. Certainly, what “should” be worked out in terms of the assumptions of what is “right” – in other words, in terms of heteronymous principles – is clearly a force that seems to be present in the working out. But while the working out may be reduced to that force, ultimately, because the reduction is recognized as inadequate, the full power of the self-critical meeting is in excess of that reduction. Thus, it is the meeting and not the force of the assumed “should” that is the standard of what is “good.” While the meeting – the good – can be reduced to the “should” of heteronymous principles, it cannot, by its very nature, be those principles.

When what is good is falsely determined according to a heteronymous principle, the “goodness” of every cause according to which a person enacts her apparent will can be contradicted by another cause. Every heteronymous principle can be countered by another heteronymous principle. But the answer to the question “what is good?” is not to embrace every, contradictory, heteronymous principle. The answer is not to celebrate blindly the supposed “goodness” of all causes according to which it seems that a person might will something. For how, then, would one distinguish between a cause that nurtured a person and a cause that destroyed her? On the contrary, the answer to the question “what is good?” lies on a wholly different plane. The answer lies in the very concept of the will that wills the heteronymous causes. But it is the will that is “good” and not what it wills. Thus, it turns out that a person’s “whole life” (Kierkegaard, 1983, p.123) is in her recognition and enactment of will as meeting. The will becomes itself – becomes the good – as the person who wills critically shares her ideas of a particular cause or outcome with herself and with her neighbor. Importantly, her self-critical sharing becomes the central concern of her existence while the idea that she is sharing (the particular cause or outcome) becomes the context in and through which her sharing takes place. Thus, the idea is infinitely transformed from its appearance as a literal cause or outcome into a site of self-critical human participation and fulfillment.

In summary, then, the idea of “good” is not measured in terms of what the human being accomplishes through her willing; rather, what the human being accomplishes is re-constituted in light of the “good will” that self-critically enacts its accomplishment. The accomplishment becomes the “good” only insofar as it is a metaphor for “good will.” Accordingly Kant writes that
Kant here states in the clearest possible terms that it is the will, and not that which it wills, that constitutes the notion of good. The will comes into existence in the self-critical meeting between people. It is certainly the case that the meeting must have a social, political or ethical context, but the context is transformed in light of the meeting and not the other way around. Thus, summarizing the above passage in terms of meeting, we may say that even if the meeting should accomplish nothing, yet would it “like a jewel still shine by its own light” (p. 8).

4 Change

In The Gifts of the Jews (1998), Thomas Cahill argues that

the Jews started it all – and by “it” I mean so many of the things we care about, the underlying values that make all of us, Jew and gentile, believer and atheist, tick. Without the Jews, we would see the world through different eyes, hear with different ears, even feel with different feelings. And not only would our sensorium, the screen through which we receive the world be different: we would think with a different mind, interpret all our experiences differently, draw different conclusions from the things that befall us. And we would set a different course for our lives. (p.3)

The distinction that Kant makes between the autonomy and the heteronomy of the will is a distinction that can only be made within what Cahill articulates as the Jewish beginning in his bold and remarkably frank account of the origin of what I call the modern world. The following section examines the distinction between the pagan and modern worlds (a distinction I articulated on page 26) in and through Kierkegaard’s work Fear and Trembling (1983).

We will begin our discussion, however, with Nietzsche. Nietzsche articulates the modern beginning, like Cahill, in terms of the Jews. He writes that the “the Jews, that priestly people…in opposing their enemies and conquerors were ultimately satisfied with nothing less than a radical revaluation of their enemies’ values” (Nietzsche, 1989, p. 34, my italics). Nietzsche articulates the Jewish revaluation as a “change” (p. 86). The “change” was (and is) “an animal soul turned against itself’ (p. 85); it was (and is) “man’s suffering of man, of himself” (p. 85). Nietzsche tells
us that “the change . . . was not a gradual or voluntary one and did not represent an organic adaptation to new conditions but a break, a leap . . .” (p. 86). According to Nietzsche the change was “so new, profound, unheard of, enigmatic, contradictory, and pregnant with a future that the aspect of the earth was essentially altered” (p. 85).

Kierkegaard’s pseudonymous author, Johannes de Silentio (hereafter indicated simply as “Kierkegaard”), articulates the “change” in and through the biblical character, Abraham. He sharpens and amplifies the concept of the “change” by making a distinction between Abraham and the pagan king of Greek myth, Agamemnon. Kierkegaard begins Fear and Trembling with a commentary on the story of Abraham and Isaac found as in Genesis, chapter 22. “By faith”, he observes, “Abraham emigrated from the land of his fathers and became an alien in the promised land. He left one thing behind, took one thing along: he left behind his worldly understanding, and he took along his faith” (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 17). Throughout the work, Kierkegaard makes the distinction between, on the one hand, the “knight of faith” (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 41), expressed in the biblical character, Abraham, and, on the other hand, the “knight of infinite resignation” (p. 38) expressed in the character of the pagan, Agamemnon. Whereas the former falls into what Kierkegaard calls the religious category, the latter falls into what he calls the ethical category. The ethical category, in turn, is the mirror image of, and collapses into, what Kierkegaard calls the aesthetic category. Thus, on the one hand, we have the modern, religious category and, on the other hand, we have the pagan, ethical/aesthetic category.

20 Nietzsche continues the sentence arguing that the “change” was “a compulsion, an ineluctable disaster which precluded all struggle.” The idea that the “change” was a “disaster” is central to Nietzsche’s work (in terms of the his notion of “ressentiment” [Nietzsche, 1989, p.5]) but it does not alter one’s understanding of his argument – the understanding that the change took place.

21 These are technical terms. What Kierkegaard means by them must not be confused with their more general use in English, or indeed Kierkegaard’s use of them in his other works. In Fear and Trembling “ethical” is conceived of as a negative term insofar as it describes a pagan position. The exception is when “it receives a completely different expression, such as, for example, that love to God may bring the knight of faith to give his love to the neighbor” (p. 70). The latter exception is also found in Judge William (in Either/Or, Part II [1987]) where there is a conception of the ethical that is truly religious. In general, “aesthetic” is a negative term for Kierkegaard. In Fear and Trembling it specifically refers to a mode of existence found in the pagan world. In other works, such as “The Musical-Erotic” (in Either/Or Part I [1987]), Kierkegaard uses the term in a more conventional way: in a way that has directly to do with art and music, specifically Mozart’s opera, Don Giovanni. However, while Kierkegaard argues in “The Musical-Erotic” that music can only be recognized as erotic insofar as it is a denial of the
4.1 Knight of Faith

Let us begin by examining the religious category. Kierkegaard argues that the “knight of faith” (p. 41) constitutes the meaning of her existence in and through “faith” (p. 7). One way that Kierkegaard articulates the notion of faith is through the idea of silence. He observes that “Abraham cannot speak because he cannot say [to Isaac] that which would explain everything” (p. 115). Abraham cannot “explain everything” because his intended actions cannot be explained in a way that they can be understood literally. In comparative terms, his intention to sacrifice his son Isaac cannot be explained in the same way that the Agamemnon’s sacrifice of his daughter Iphigenia is explained: in terms of the universal good of the people. Rather, Abraham’s intended sacrifice of Isaac, demanded by God, can only be made sense of insofar as it is witnessed as an expression of his personal faith. Abraham cannot explain his faith to Isaac. Isaac must witness Abraham’s faith insofar as he participates in it: insofar as he constitutes his own and Abraham’s existence in relational, rather than in fated, terms. Thus, in light of Abraham’s incapacity to make himself understood in a way that the world (of fate) could understand him, Kierkegaard contends that “faith is namely this paradox that the single individual is higher than the universal” (p. 55). In other words, he embraces the paradox that the critical relationship of the single individual to himself has greater authority, meaning, and value than the idea of some kind of collective fate.

It follows, then, that, insofar as Abraham constitutes his life faithfully as the single individual, he is higher than, in excess of, or incommensurate with, what we may call fated notions of right action that appear to saturate existence in the modern world and that did saturate existence in the world of Agamemnon. Consequently, we may say that Abraham recognizes that his actions do not have their primary purpose or cause in some end to which he and all other human beings are merely means. Insofar as Abraham is higher than the universal, he recognizes his end in himself. But by recognizing his end to be in himself, I do not mean that he is commensurate with his end. I mean, precisely, that, as simultaneously himself and for himself, he is able to recognize himself and that he recognizes that he has his “whole life” (p. 123) in his recognition. In other words, he

Christian love of God and of neighbor (remaining, otherwise, as simply sensuous), he himself apparently fails to recognize that, insofar as music is a denial of love of neighbor, it must ultimately be constituted in and through love of neighbor – in and through the “religious.”
must constantly work to recognize and to meet with himself. In his meeting with himself, because the meeting insists that he be both himself and other than himself, his meeting embraces all “others” – all other people.

As we have seen, Kierkegaard articulates Abraham’s meeting in terms of faith. Abraham comes to the meeting through faith and the meeting constitutes faith. For not only must he have the faith to give up worldly understanding and come to the meeting, but also he must constitute the very substance and certainty of his life in a meeting that, by virtue of its two sides, he can never fully know. The fullness of Abraham’s life as meeting can only be fulfilled, actualized and witnessed in and through the participation of the other member of the meeting. Thus, he cannot “explain everything,” for “everything” is a meeting that unfolds but cannot be simply known. Accordingly, Abraham must remain silent insofar as his silence involves profound communication (speech) as he waits faithfully for the grace of the other’s participation in his creation.

4.2 Ethical Hero

In contrast to Abraham, Agamemnon – Kierkegaard’s example of the ethical category – can “explain everything” (p. 115). Agamemnon does his “ethical” duty insofar as he publicly sacrifices his daughter, Iphigenia, to the Greek goddess, Artemis, who is preventing the Greek fleet from sailing by causing the winds to be unfavorable. In other words, Agamemnon’s sacrifice of his daughter appears wholly justifiable insofar as it is a sacrifice of the individual for the good of the whole nation. Kierkegaard describes Agamemnon as a “knight of infinite resignation” (p. 38). In other words, the Greek King resigns himself and his daughter to fate but in such a way that his resignation is entirely understandable to himself, to his daughter and to everyone else.

We find, then, that Agamemnon can “explain everything” because “everything” is fated: what is going to happen has already been decided. Neither he, nor his daughter, nor anyone in Mycenae can question that fate. Thus, while Agamemnon may well find the sacrifice of Iphigenia distressing, his distress does not involve the kind of suffering that is born out of the notion of

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22 Nietzsche’s articulation of the pagan’s distress in terms of punishment serves to illuminate the nature of the distress Agamemnon may well have experienced. He writes that “the person upon
freedom: the idea that a person’s life (and thus her death) is lived, not according to an unalterable and necessary fate, but rather in terms of personal responsibility.

Ultimately, then, in terms of freedom – terms that Agamemnon is unable to recognize – neither Abraham nor we are merely concerned with literal death. Rather, we are concerned with the violation or denial of the sovereignty of the human being. The human being’s sovereignty is recognized in her critical relationship to herself. The idea that her life is fated denies the idea of that self-critical relationship. Because every human being shares in the idea of her own sovereignty, every (modern) human being can profoundly recognize what it means to have that sovereignty negated. Consequently, (as members of modernity) we do not merely grieve a person’s physical death; rather, we grieve the violation of her sovereignty by what appears to be time, illness, accident, ritual or senseless violence that is beyond our control, i.e. fated. Neither Agamemnon nor his daughter has any idea of the sovereignty of human life; thus, neither can mourn its violation.  

4.3 Aesthetic Hero

Whereas the “knight of infinite resignation” resigns herself to the fate for which she has been destined, the individual constituted in and through the aesthetic category “follows [her] heart’s desire” (p. 15). However, while she follows her heart’s desire, she has no idea where it is leading her to or where it has led her from. Accordingly, the aesthetic individual cannot “explain” (p. 115) anything – either to herself or to the world. Thus, there is, indeed, a silence between her and the person (self or neighbor) standing next to her, but the silence is empty. It is not the dynamic silence of faith that is meeting; rather, it is the silence of nothingness. Kierkegaard describes the generations born into the emptiness of silence as emerging, one “after another like forest

whom punishment subsequently descended, again like a piece of fate, suffered no ‘inward pain’ other than that induced by the sudden appearance of something unforeseen ” (Nietzsche, 1989, p. 82).

23 It is interesting to compare and contrast biblical martyrdom with pagan sacrifice. A person who martyrs herself does so because she recognizes that her existence is not reducible to her physical life. She refuses to deny herself – her meeting – and in her refusal is put to death. The pagan sacrifices herself, not because she recognizes herself and refuses to deny her recognition; rather, the pagan sacrifices herself for the general good. But it turns out that she has no idea of herself, nor does she have any actual idea of the good that is general.
foliage...[passing] through the world as a ship through the sea, as wind through the desert, an unthinking and unproductive performance” (p. 14).

4.4 Conclusion

Whether the silence is empty, in the case of the aesthetic hero, or whether the silence is non-existent, in the case of the ethical hero (who can “explain everything”), the outcome is the same. Neither the individual who can explain nothing nor the individual who can explain everything has any notion of anything other than the nothing or the everything that she is. Consequently, we find that each position collapses blindly into the other. For it seems that where nothing is known nothing can be known, with the consequence that the idea of “not knowing” disappears. Equally, however, it appears that where everything is known nothing can be not known, and then the idea of “knowing” disappears. Thus, it turns out that where everything is known nothing is known and that where nothing is known everything is known.

It follows, then, that it is (virtually) impossible for us to place ourselves in the shoes of the ethical or aesthetic heroes of ancient Greece since we witness ourselves and the world in which we live in a wholly different way. Nevertheless, it is fruitful to continue to articulate the “change” that constitutes our difference because, while the “change” is actual, it is not something that merely took place in the past. Rather, the “change,” its ongoing articulation and practice, is something in which each of us has his or her “whole life” (p. 123).

5 Revaluation

We find, then, that with the “change” many of the concepts or ideas that we take for granted in our everyday lives came (and come) into existence. One such idea is the idea of human value. The idea of human value is central to existence, to music and to education. Thus, as human beings and as music educators, how we constitute what is valuable is a question that impacts each of our lives. One way of talking about what is valuable is in terms of what is good. In the section entitled Autonomy and Good Will (see page 32) I argued with Kant that there is only one thing that can be said to be unconditionally good and that is a “good will” (Kant, 1981, p. 7). Accordingly, we may also say that there is only one thing that is unconditionally valuable and that, too, is a “good will”.
5.1 Revaluation as Will

Let us remind ourselves, in the terms of my thesis, what “good will” is. Put simply, a “good will” is commensurate neither with the whim of human inclination nor with the product of social doctrine. Rather, a “good will,” in its strongest expression, is constituted in the site between a person and herself and between a person and her neighbor. The space that is the “between” is created in and through the meeting. It is a space that is enlivened and invigorated by the self-critical imagination of each person: an imagination concerned with revaluing how that person should meet the other in light of the other’s imagination of how she should be met and her own imagination of how she would wish to be met. Thus, the space that is the “between” is structured in and through the dynamic interplay of the revaluation of each side of the meeting. If one were to give the interplay a name, one might call it “good will”. Thus, the will empowers revaluation, but we may also say that the will is revaluation.

5.2 Revaluation as Equality

Accordingly, as revaluation, will has content; there is something that is being willed. What is willed is the revaluation of how a person adequately addresses, treats or cares for herself or another person. One way of conceiving of the adequacy of a person’s treatment of self and other is in terms of the idea of equality. Thus, we say that we must treat people in a way that is equal to how we would wish to be treated. But the idea of what constitutes equality is not one that can be pre-determined or fixed before the meeting. Equally it is not one that is fixed as a result of the meeting. Equality is worked out in the meeting. Equality is the meeting. Each side of the meeting critically engages and re-engages itself and its neighbor in accordance with the idea of equality. Each side interrogates and is interrogated, challenges and is challenged, and loves and is loved in every moment of the meeting. Thus, each participant in the meeting constantly re-articulates her “equal” position with regard to herself and to the other as she constitutes and re-constitutes the idea of equality.

We find, then, that the idea of equality has neither “natural” nor “supernatural” authority that decrees what action is equal. Rather, as we have seen, equality comes into existence in the self-critical interplay between people. Thus, while the concept of equality exists (and perhaps it is the only thing that exists), its existence cannot be measured in empirical terms; rather, its existence must be witnessed.
The idea that equality must be witnessed articulates the paradoxical nature of its existence. Equality must be witnessed, but at the same time it can only be witnessed because it is witnessed. In other words, while considerate actions, constituted in and through the idea of equality, are witnessed between people, it is only in their witnessing – in the equal (adequate) sharing of the idea of what constitutes equal consideration between people – that the concept of equality comes into existence.

Allow me to amplify what I mean. I have suggested that equality is not something that one simply sees. I do not “see” a person attending to another in a way that is equal to the way she would wish to be attended to. Rather, I recognize a person’s attention to be equal. I find that her equal attention corresponds to, challenges and amplifies my own idea of equal attention. Thus, we may say that I interpret, rather than perceive, a person’s equal attention to her neighbor. In my interpretation I actually play a part in constituting the attention as equal. Accordingly, we may say that I both witness equality and I participate in its constitution. Thus, the concept of equality that I witness is complete but, insofar as I witness it, it must always be completed.

5.3 Revaluation as the Human Being

Up until now I have written about the equality between two people. But, we may ask, in what way is each person “equal?” What, in other words, is the value of a person such that we can say that her value is equal to the value of her neighbor? Clearly, value cannot be established in terms of things, as Kant indicated – physique, intellect, power, status and so on. Even if all human beings had the same things or if they all had different things, neither the sameness nor the difference in and of themselves could establish a person’s “value.” The question is not whether “the same” constitutes value or whether “difference” constitutes value. The question has an entirely different focus. The question is what is the value of the authority that argues the relative value of “same” and “difference”?

I suggest that we may presuppose that the value of that “authority” is not something that is arbitrarily given and taken away according to a person’s whim, nor is it commensurate with a doctrine that is absolutely decreed by a society or a divinity. Thus, whatever its value, we must be able to show how the authority that constitutes a person’s value as this or that is implicated in or related to the idea of human value in such a way that the value is not reducible to a personal whim or to a social doctrine. In other words, the authority must be able to constitute the value
but, at the same time, constantly critique its constitution such that it is always holding up mere whim to public scrutiny and simple doctrine to personal testing. Accordingly, the value of a human being, the value that the authority articulates, must be a value that the authority, i.e., the human being and her neighbor, is constantly reevaluating. It follows, then, that at the forefront of a person’s value – the value that is equal in value to the value of all other people – is the idea of revaluation. A person is valuable insofar as she can reevaluate her value. A person is valuable insofar as she is able to meet self-critically with herself.

5.4 Revaluation as Value

Value, then, is revaluation. Revaluation has a context; there is always some “thing” that is being revalued. But the “thing” is not, in and of itself, of value. It becomes valuable as it, itself, participates in the enactment of revaluation. So the human being, as a “thing,” is not valuable. She is valuable insofar as she participates in the revaluation of her value (revaluation).

In summary, we say that every human being has dignity and worth and that therein lies the principle behind the idea of universal equality. We find that the human being’s dignity and worth – her value – is her ability to meet with and revaluate the value of her own existence. Hence, we may say that we witness a person who has a self-critical sense of herself – regardless of her circumstances – as having dignity. Accordingly, we may say that a person is equal to another person, not in terms of the circumstances of her life but rather in terms of her equality to herself. Thus, a person is equal to her neighbor insofar as she is equal to herself; and she is equal to herself insofar as she is equal to her neighbor. It follows that a person who believes herself unequal to her neighbor cannot be equal to herself: she will be unable to meet herself. In the same way, a person who believes herself to be unequal to herself – who is unable to meet herself – will be unable to meet with her neighbor.24

24 Kierkegaard conceives of the relationship between a person’s active belief in her equality to herself and her active belief in her equality to her neighbor as what he calls “the Christian like for like” (Kierkegaard, 1995, p. 376). He argues that the “Christian like for like” is articulated in and through the statement from the Gospel of Matthew, “be it done for you as you have believed” (p. 378). If you believe yourself to be equal with yourself (and work to constitute your equality), if you believe yourself to be valuable, you will become equal to your neighbor and you will become valuable.
It turns out, then, that while it might seem as if the idea of equality speaks to the idea that one must balance the value of one thing to match the value of the other, in actual fact the idea of the equality between the two values becomes, itself, the absolute value. Where \( x = y \), it is not a question of turning the value of \( y \) into \( x \) or the value of \( x \) into \( y \); nor is it a question of eradicating the equals sign (=) to allow the different values of \( x \) and \( y \) to stand. In contrast, the equivalence (=) becomes the value in light of which the values of \( x \) and \( y \) are constituted as simultaneously the same and different. Each, \( x \) and \( y \), becomes the relational context in and through which the value “equivalence” (=) is worked out. At the same time, however, the way that each context interacts with the equivalence (=) is utterly unique.

6 Infinite difference

One may say, then, that there is a literal difference between \( x \) and \( y \). But the difference between the equivalence between them, on the one hand, and the literal difference of \( x \) and \( y \), on the other hand, is infinite. In *Works of Love* (1995), Kierkegaard articulates a difference that is infinite – an “infinite difference” (Kierkegaard, 1995, p. 209) – between what he calls “metaphorical speech” (p. 209) and what, for the sake of clarity, I am going to call “literal speech.” While, Kierkegaard argues, both forms of speech “use the same words” (p. 209), he observes that “there is a world of difference between the two” (p. 209). The person who uses “literal speech” does not yet recognize that her speech is a metaphor for her self-critical participation in herself and in her neighbor. In other words, she does not yet recognize that what she says is not commensurate with the literal signification of what she says. She does not yet recognize that, insofar as the meaning of what she says is worked out between her and herself and between her and the person to whom she is speaking, the meaning of what she says is always in excess of its literal meaning.

It is interesting to articulate Kierkegaard’s notions of “literal” and “metaphorical” speech in and through the idea of “silence” (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 88) that the philosopher articulates in *Fear and Trembling* and that was discussed earlier (see page 36). It may be said that the ethical and the aesthetic heroes’ uses of speech are literal. The one literally says everything and the other literally says nothing; but, as I pointed out earlier, neither everything nor nothing – when each is commensurate with itself – can be known. Thus, each – the ethical hero and the aesthetic hero – is silent (communicates nothing) but the silence of each is empty. We can imagine, perhaps, a person – our “modern” version of the ethical hero – who talks ceaselessly in accordance with the
convention and pattern of her day, but whose speech is empty; despite all of her details, she fails to communicate. We can also imagine a person – our version of the aesthetic hero – who sits in silence at the table, hidden in the private, whimsical, inscrutability of her consciousness. But her silence is vacant; she literally has nothing to communicate. In contrast, the “knight of faith” uses metaphorical speech. She may say much and she may say little, but her speech always contains the silence that is the other’s (her and her neighbor’s) thoughtful response. The knight of faith speaks, but what she says is always mindful of her and her neighbor’s participation in, or interpretation of, the meaning of her speech. She listens, but her listening is always heavy with her attentive response.

The “literal” person, then, seems to live her life in one of two ways. Either she lives in the literal silence of her accordance with the ideological example that is set for her by the tradition of her society. Or she lives in the literal silence of her accordance with her private whims and inclinations. In contrast, the person whose speech is “metaphorical” and who recognizes such speech, constitutes her life in terms of the silence that is heavy with the weight of communication – the silence that Kierkegaard calls “spirit” (Kierkegaard, 1995, p. 209). That is, she finds the meaning of her life in her critical and loving relationship to herself and to her neighbor.

Accordingly, we find that the “infinite difference” is not the difference between one literal meaning and another literal meaning. Rather, the infinite difference is between the literal meaning of speech and meaning that is constituted on an entirely different basis. Whereas a person who reduces speech to its literal signification looks toward what it literally signifies, the person who understands speech metaphorically recognizes that the speech is primarily about the creation of the speaker and the listener.

6.1 Metaphorical Speech

Consider the following illustration. If a student says, “I am going to study the violin,” she can be understood to mean one of two quite different things. On the one hand, she can be understood to be repeating, simply, what we might call the traditional or conventional example of society.²⁵

²⁵ Where “society” means the education system, a student’s parents’ expectations, her own assumptions and so on.
Such a tradition might hold, for example, that, for whatever reason, it is “proper” to study the violin. On the other hand, she can be understood to be modeling, so to speak, her critical and loving attention to her life and how she lives it. Whereas the student’s literal duplication of society’s example refuses interpretation insofar as it involves her blind recitation of the words “I am going to study the violin,” I argue that the same words, spoken by the student as a metaphor or a model for her critical relationship to herself, both invite and require the speaker and listener to participate in creating their meaning. Thus, depending on the context, tone and gesture of the student’s speech, one may recognize in her words a kind of gap or question mark in and through which she and the person with whom she is communicating are empowered to interpret what it means for a human being to study the violin. Accordingly, it is not so much that the student’s words mean that she is going to study the violin; rather, the words mean or bring into existence the self-critical participation that the idea that she is going to study the violin engenders. The literal reality of her study of the violin is given an entirely new expression when it becomes a metaphor for her participation in her existence. But, as Kierkegaard would argue, the student’s literal study of the violin is not lost; rather, it becomes the basis in and through which the student’s engagement in her existence takes place.

6.2 Infinite Difference and Literal Difference: the Distinction

I have argued, then, that the difference between a literal understanding of the student’s words “I am going to study the violin” and a metaphorical recognition of the words is a difference that is “infinite.” The idea of “infinite difference” is distinct from the idea of literal difference. Literal

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26 Kierkegaard tells us that the person whose language is metaphorical is conscious of herself as “spirit” (Kierkegaard, 1995, p. 209). A person who is “spirit” recognizes that the meaning of her life is found in her critical relationship to herself and to her neighbor. A person who is what Kierkegaard calls sensate-psychical locates the meaning of her life in the immediacy of things or in the negation of things. It is not entirely clear whether Kierkegaard considers that the “sensate-psychical” person is in “bad faith,” in that as spirit she denies that she is spirit, or, is a member of the pagan world, in that she has no idea of herself as spirit. On page 26 I wrote about an “absolute distinction” between the modern and pagan worlds. In a sense, one could interpret the “infinite difference” as also lying between the modern and pagan worlds. In terms of my present study, however, I consider that it is more fruitful to articulate the “infinite difference” within the modern world. That is, the “infinite difference” exists between a person who speaks metaphorically and a person who denies metaphorical speech, believing, instead, that her speech is literal.
difference occurs within the literal world: the world that is reduced to literal appearance. In the world of literal appearance there appears to be a literal difference between one thing and another thing. For example, there is a literal difference between the male person and the female person, the black person and the white person, the rich person and the poor person, the European and the non-European and so on. The speech that articulates the literal difference is spoken literally, and its literal signification – a signification constructed in and through society – is understood to saturate it. I am not suggesting that the literal signification of the speech is limited to one particular signification articulated by such and such a person. A particular speech may have many literal significations if each signification is spoken literally and understood literally. Thus, Kierkegaard’s distinction between literal signification and metaphorical meaning is not the same distinction between, say, the apparent signification of speech and the implied or hidden signification of speech. Each signification, whether apparent or hidden, is literal; that is, each understanding of the speech reduces the speech’s role to a signifier of something.

There is a literal difference, then, between the literal signification of, say, the spoken word “male” – whatever that signification is – and the literal signification of the spoken word “female.” In the past, the literal difference – the difference between what each utterance implies in terms of status, worth and so on – has been challenged such that there has been a move, in terms of feminism, to eradicate the literal difference. More recently, however, the move has been toward the celebration of the literal difference rather than its eradication. However, in order to celebrate the literal difference between the instantiations “male” and “female” we have to recognize that the difference is something that matters to us. The literal difference, in and of itself – whether it is a physical difference, a difference in intellect, or a difference in concerns and so on – is empty. It is as replete in meaning as, say, the literal difference between the window before me and the tree that I see through it. The difference only becomes interesting if I can constitute it in terms that matter to my own existence, whatever that existence is.

Accordingly, given that the difference is interesting to us, we must recognize that the difference between the utterance “male” and the utterance “female” is not merely commensurate with the literal difference between the two utterances’ “literal” meanings. In contrast, taking as an example the spoken word (and its context) “female,” while it can be reduced to its literal meaning (whichever meaning that is), in its fullest expression the spoken word (and its context) involves a person’s self-critical thought of what it means to be “female.” In Kierkegaard’s terms
the spoken word “becomes the metaphorical” (p. 209); it becomes the context in and through which the person, regardless of her gender, practices becoming the person that she is in and through her critical participation in herself and in her neighbor. She critically participates in herself as she engages herself in the question of what speaking the word “female” involves. Accordingly, both the spoken word “male” and the spoken word “female” fundamentally share the same constitution. Each shares the idea that its speaking is not merely the literal signification of a list of performative actions attributable to the state of being one or the other. Rather, each shares the idea that its speaking has an entirely different meaning, i.e., the meaning that in and through the word’s speaking the person participates in her own becoming. At the same time, however, while each word shares its fundamental constitution with the other insofar as each word is a metaphor for self-critical participation, each act of participation, by definition, is unique. It is the latter uniqueness – difference – that, as I take it, we must celebrate. It remains, however, that the uniqueness or “difference” of each act of participation can only be recognized because it is participatory. A person can only celebrate the uniqueness of each spoken word – each concept – because she shares in that uniqueness. Thus, the difference that is celebrated is not the literal difference between “male” and “female;” rather, the difference that is celebrated cuts indifferently across all literal boundaries. The difference is the “infinite difference” – the unique creation of the person in and through self-critical participation.

In summary, the difference between the spoken words or the concepts “male” and “female” is not merely a difference that is seen and measured. Rather, a person witnesses the difference. Insofar as a person witnesses the difference, the difference “becomes the metaphorical” (p. 209). As the metaphorical, the difference has an entirely original expression. For rather than merely focusing on the political and social differences between the two words, a person recognizes herself in the very act of her focusing. As such, she recognizes not only that she is fundamentally implicated in the creation of the difference but also that the difference that she witnesses reveals herself to herself and is thus implicated in her own creation. Accordingly, insofar as a person

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27 Gender performativity is a concept developed by Butler. She writes that gender is “the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions [and that it] is obscured by the credibility of those productions – and the punishments that attend not agreeing to believe in them” (Butler, 1990, p. 140).
witnesses the difference, the difference is not constituted in literal terms; rather, it is constituted in metaphorical terms – terms that are infinite.

7 Interest

I have indicated that an utterance or concept becomes interesting to us when its uniqueness is conceived of metaphorically: when it becomes a metaphor for self-critical participation among people. The concept of interest is central to my study in two respects. First, insofar as the idea of meeting – human, musical or educational – is “rigorous” (p. 380), i.e., constituted as a “duty” (Kant, 1981, p. 12) or as a “moral task” (Kierkegaard, 1995, p. 51), the notion of interest brings to it what Kierkegaard calls “leniency” (Kierkegaard, 1995, p. 380). Second, it is important, particularly in light of the educational implication of my study, to distinguish interest as that which is “between I and Thou”28 (Buber, 2000, p. 29) from “self-interest” or “inclination” (Kant, 1981, p. 12) that “cling[s] to the I in such a way as to have the Thou only for its ‘content’” (Buber, 2000, p. 29).

7.1 Rigor

First, insofar as we may align the idea of interest in a meeting with Kierkegaard’s concept of leniency, we must examine the context in which leniency is conceived. In other words, we must examine the seemingly opposing idea of rigor. I begin, then, with the notion of a meeting that we may call “rigorous” insofar as Kant distinguishes between an inadequate and an adequate attitude of meeting: love as inclination versus love as duty.

Love as an inclination cannot be commanded; but beneficence from duty, when no inclination impels us and even when a natural and unconquerable aversion opposes such beneficence, is practical, and not pathological, love. Such love resides in the will and not in the propensities of feeling, in principles of action and not in tender sympathy; and only this practical love can be commanded. (Kant, 1981, p. 12)

In other words, the meeting I-Thou must be willed and its willing must “exclude the influence of inclination and therewith every [heteronymous] object of will” (p. 13). It is not good enough, Kant tells us, for a person to take part in the meeting because she has an inclination to do so.

28 It is interesting (!) to note that the etymology of the word interest is Latin. Est means, “it is” and is the third person singular of the verb esse, to be; inter means between. Hence, interest translates as “it is between.”
First and foremost, then, she must will her meeting; she must scrutinize her “pathological” (p. 12) motives in light of what we may call the *practicality* of human dialogue.

Thus, Kant’s notion of “practical love” (p. 12) allows no room for simple feelings of “happiness” (p. 12) as an effect of an inclination that is acted out. Rather, “happiness is a duty” that is enacted “out of respect for the law” (p. 13). The law in question is Kant’s categorical imperative – a concept I explicated on page 31, a version of the biblical command, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22: 39). Therefore, Kant’s concept of “practical love” corresponds to Buber’s notion of meeting. However, when couched in terms such as “duty,” the “categorical imperative” and “will,” it seems unduly rigorous and devoid of the positive aspects associated with such meeting.

When it comes to love, Kierkegaard is also rigorous. He makes a distinction between what he calls “Christian love” (Kierkegaard, 1995, p. 44), on the one hand, and “preferential” or “erotic” (p. 44) love, on the other hand. “One must … make very clear … that Christianity has thrust erotic love and friendship from the throne, the love based on drives and inclination, preferential love, in order to place the spirit’s love in its stead, love for the neighbor” (p. 44).

Thus, Kierkegaard argues that “erotic love and friendship are good fortune” (p. 51) but that, as “a stroke of good fortune” (p. 51) rather than as practically constituted between *I* and *Thou*, “erotic love” can only be explained in terms of “riddles” (p. 50). In contrast, then, what he calls “spirit’s love,” like Kant’s “practical love,” constitutes love in and through the “Christian” (p. 44) command to re-evaluate one’s love in light of principles of love that one could imagine to be acceptable for other people. It is in this light that Kierkegaard talks about the “moral task” (p. 51) of Christian love. In that it is a “task” it might seem to the reader that love is simply hard work. Kierkegaard argues, however, that it is precisely in terms of the hard work that is “love” that the neighbor (including oneself) comes into existence. He observes that “it is in fact Christian love

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29 “Erotic love” is what Buber articulates as “feelings.” It arises in a person and not between a person and her neighbor. The person who is “sensate-psychical” (Kierkegaard, 1995, p. 209) experiences erotic love, but, because she has not yet become conscious of herself as spirit, she cannot articulate it metaphorically. In this respect, while the “sensate-psychical” person uses language to talk about her love, she denies her responsibility for it. Thus her love is a “riddle” that can be explained only in terms of destiny and “fortune.”
that discovers and knows the neighbor [together with the self] exists and, what is the same thing, that everyone is the neighbor. If it were not a duty to love, [a moral task], the concept ‘neighbor’ would not exist” (p. 44). It might seem, then, that the concepts of “duty” and of “moral task” contain little of the attraction that one would normally associate with love.

7.2 Leniency

Kierkegaard, however, argues that the person who truly embraces the “rigorousness” of the “duty” and the “moral task” of “love of neighbor” finds in that “rigorousness” what he calls the “greatest leniency” (p. 377). One way of construing Kierkegaard’s argument – the idea that we find in meeting “the greatest leniency [in] the greatest rigorousness” (p. 377) – is in terms of the concept of “interest.” Thus, Kant redeems the notion of love as a “duty” insofar as he aligns it with interest. “Interest” he argues, “is that by which reason becomes practical, i.e., a cause determining the will” (Kant, 1981, p. 59). In other words, an idea that is interesting is one that is recognized to have a shared applicability among people and that, insofar as it has a shared applicability, constitutes the will. Kant’s notion of “interest” seems to soften, so to speak, his notion of “duty.” The reader understands what it feels like to be interested, and the possibility arises that love as a duty is not merely dogmatic; rather, some notion of personal engagement is involved. Kant warns, however, that the mere “feeling” of interest, in and of itself, is an inadequate notion of interest. He argues that “some people have falsely construed…[feeling as] the standard of our moral judgment” (Kant, 1981, p. 46). Thus, a person may feel interested, but her feeling is not, in itself, the basis of interest. The basis of interest is the ongoing, self-critical referral of what is interesting by a person to herself and to her neighbor. The feeling of interest, however, is not lost; rather, it is re-appropriated in light of the interest that is practical – that is worked out among people.

It is important to understand, then, that, while the “meeting” (in terms of my thesis) has rigorous standards, it involves “leniency” or what we may call feelings of interest. In fact, it involves what Kierkegaard calls the “highest passion in a person” (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 122). But the “highest passion” that is interest is, nevertheless, constituted in light of the concepts of “duty” and “moral task” and not the other way around. Accordingly, insofar as duty and moral task have to do with the human will that is worked out practically between people, so interest is utterly practical. In that it is practical, there is no empirical cause in nature that leads to it. A person
becomes interested in something as she expresses an interest in it to herself and to her neighbor and not because she “feels” interested. Thus, interest, in the strongest sense – conceived of as the “highest passion” – is its own creation. As its own creation, rather than the result of a person’s feelings, interest has an indirect relation to the person who is interested. In that it has an indirect relation, we are offered an explanation as to why a person does not automatically enact love of neighbor as a duty, or moral task, and why, indeed, in the absence of an automated response, the concepts duty and moral task exist.

7.3 Interest is Indirect

In terms of love of neighbor, the indirect relation of interest to the human being works in the following way. Love that is willed in accordance with a person’s duty does not result in interest that manifests itself directly in a person’s feelings; rather love’s interest is in itself. Love’s interest is in love. Another way of formulating this is to argue that a person who loves her neighbor loves her for the sake of the interest she has in loving her neighbor. Accordingly, she is not directly “in love” with her neighbor; rather she is in love with loving her neighbor. But that is not to say that love is merely generic. While the idea of being in love with one’s love of neighbor is universal, the love of neighbor with which one is in love is utterly particular: unique to the relationship between the particular neighbor and oneself.

In the same way, then, a person who is interested in her own life is not in love with herself; rather she is in love with the love that she has for herself. Thus, the love that she has for herself is not immediate; rather, it involves a critical re-appraisal of her own concern and attention to herself. She becomes attentive to that to which she pays attention. The person who loves according to her “duty” does not simply react to whatever she feels; rather, she continually re-appropriates her immediate feelings in the face of love.

Accordingly, we may say that the idea of interest impacts a person indirectly when she must work to enact her love and, in her enactment, realizes that her love has become profoundly interesting. In contrast, the interest of love that is founded upon an erotic inclination or preference is directly located in the person and is fuelled by her immediate feelings; we may call this interest “self-interest.” The person who is ruled by “erotic love” (Kierkegaard, 1995, p. 44) loves the other because it makes her feel good. While she seems to have her interest in the direct object (person) of her desire, it turns out that the object of desire is merely a means to her own
satisfaction – her self-interest. Consequently, we may say that erotic love, even when it has apparently to do with the beloved, is really about the lover.

Self-love is directly appealing, whereas the interest constituted in and through “love of the neighbor” (Kierkegaard, 1995, p. 44) is indirect and less (directly) appealing. Paradoxically, however, self-love excludes the self-critical interests of the self in the immediacy and compulsion of its feelings. Self-love blows hot and cold, regardless of what we may call a person’s “best interests.” It causes, in fact, a person to deny her “best interests.” It causes her to deny the self-critical and self-actualizing meeting in and through which she is constituted. In contrast, the interest that constitutes the person is worked out and re-worked out between a person and the world. Its working out must be a duty in that the “working out” is not fuelled by interest but is the very thing that creates interest. It turns out, then, that our duties are “[interesting to] us because [they are] valid for us” (Kant, 1981, p. 60): their enactment is precisely what makes us human.

7.4 What is interest?

Interest, then, is constituted in and through human relationships. It lies fundamentally between I and You. I, by itself, is uninteresting. Likewise, You, by itself, is uninteresting. What is interesting is I-You. In fact, I-You is the only thing that is interesting.

A person constitutes interest as I-You when she articulates her interest in something in terms of human interaction rather than in terms of the thing itself. Thus, a particular concept, say, becomes interesting insofar as it fosters mutual understanding, communication and love. A person recognizes that the concept is interesting when she witnesses that its self-critical depth – its notion of its own adequacy articulated in and through the people who relate to it – both invites and insists that she work it out according to her own standards of self-critical engagement. In other words, a person finds a concept interesting insofar as its creation involves the practice of her own creation.

In the same way, we may say that a neighbor becomes interested in another person insofar as she finds in that person a correspondence to herself. The correspondence that the neighbor finds is the person’s interest in herself: the person’s self-critical work to articulate her meaning to herself and to other people. But because the person must articulate her meaning, we can say that her
meaning is not self-evident. Consequently, we can say that a person contains, as it were, a silence or a gap in her existence that demands the ongoing work of her interpretation and her fulfillment. While the silence or gap demands ongoing interpretation and fulfillment, it also invites participation. Thus, the neighbor is invited to participate in creating the person’s meaning – her interest in herself. Accordingly, the neighbor does not merely see that a person is interesting; rather, the neighbor recognizes that she is interesting when, in and through her participation in the person’s interest, she finds her own interest in her.

The gap, then, both cleaves a person in two and simultaneously makes her whole as it invites and requires the participation of the other. The gap in a person’s being – in her constitution – invites her neighbor to enter and to meet with her. At the same time, however, the gap only exists insofar as the meeting exists. In other words, the gap only invites the neighbor to enter if, in fact, the neighbor steps forward to the gap. The one (the meeting) does not precede the other (the invitation). In the same way, interest, like meeting, requires a person to will her own engagement in it. A person’s interest in something does not precede her engagement in it. A person’s interest does not give her engagement a push in the right direction. If some feeling of interest does precede the engagement, by no means can the feeling become the reason for the engagement. Engagement, by definition, involves a person’s active participation in becoming engaged. Thus, a person may not rely upon feeling; a person must become responsible for her own interest, just as she becomes responsible for her own meeting.

But, still, we must remember that, just as interest does not lead to engagement or to responsibility, so responsibility does not lead to interest: responsibility is interest. A person becomes interested the moment she becomes responsible. Thus, no matter how hard we try to find a cause for interest – and in education we try very hard – interest is always the cause of itself. A person becomes interested because she is interested. She is interested for no other reason than that she wills her interest. Accordingly, we are presented with the question – a question that I will address in my final chapter – how, then, do we, as teachers, create or arouse interest in our students?

7.5 Faith

We may say, then, that if a person is to become interested in something she must trust or have faith in the idea that she will become interested; for, nothing (no-thing) other than her faith can
lead to her becoming interested. But we must be careful not to reduce faith or what is interesting to the blind adherence of a person to her inclination or to her indoctrination. Faith is precisely “faithful” because it does not rest on an impulsive “feeling” or immutable “principle” (Kant, 1981, p. 46). Rather, faith is an attitude of existence whose meaning or constitution must be constantly worked out in and through meeting. Thus, a person steps forward to the meeting in faith, trusting that it will be interesting. While her step is “faithful” it is not blind. She wills her step with her eyes open. Her eyes are open insofar as she is already constituted in and through the idea of self-critical meeting. Thus, a person’s step forward into faith is not from non-faith; rather, a person steps forward into faith from faith insofar as she must faithfully enact her faith.

In terms, then, of faith – as I indicated in an earlier footnote (see page 42) – Kierkegaard cites the “Christian like for like” (p. 376): “Be it done for you as you believe” (Matthew 8: 13). The person who believes\(^{30}\) that she will be interested in the meeting, insofar as her belief already involves her self-critical meeting with herself and her neighbor, steps forward and is interested. The person who does not believe that she will be interested does not come forward and consequently is not interested. Thus, interest is remarkably straightforward, although, as I have noted, remarkably problematic for anyone whose responsibility it is to foster interest in others. If one believes one will be interested, one will be interested. For interest is not located in the thing of interest; rather, it is located in one’s self-critical meeting. Consequently, even if it is the case that a person comes forward, through belief, to a meeting that is uninteresting, she will find

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\(^{30}\) “Belief” in today’s postmodern, post-colonial climate is a slippery term. “Postmodern scholars (postmoderns) invite us to partake in processes that reveal the structures [of the Enlightenment that saturate our beliefs and] that enable us to generate understanding or meaning, and then consider how those structures sometimes limit what we can think about and how we can act” (Ford, 2005, p. 36). Our “beliefs,” believed by “us” to be true, justify the status quo of the white, male, European middle classes, while perpetuating racism, misogyny, colonialism and classism. Frustratingly, “postmoderns” are unable to articulate or seem, at any rate, unwilling to articulate, how it is, that they are able to “consider how those structures sometimes limit what we can think about and how we can act” given that they have cited the structures as the cause of their “[consideration], understanding [and] meaning”. Astoundingly, they simultaneously acknowledge this fact and ignore it. It is not, I argue, that scholars should throw out their critique of Enlightenment patriarchal values but rather that they should, in their thinking, recognize and account for the paradox that it is precisely the Kantian (Enlightenment) philosophy of “practical reason” and the “autonomy of the will,” its foundation and its progeny that allows them to critique patriarchal values.
interest. For in faithfully coming forward she has already begun to engage in a meeting with herself. Her discovery that the meeting that she had intended to engage in is not interesting can be articulated in affirmative terms – in terms of her own meeting with herself. In practical terms, then, the meeting’s lack of interest encourages a person to articulate for herself why it is not interesting and how it could be interesting. However, if a person prejudges a meeting as uninteresting before she steps forward to it, in her pre-judgment she excludes not only the meeting that she pre-judges but also the meeting with herself, whose outcome, in a sense, she had already decided. In this respect, a meeting can only be evaluated insofar as it is enacted.

In the same way, belief is only to be trusted insofar as the standard of belief is under ongoing interrogation. Thus, the person who believes she will be interested will be interested as long as her belief is not in bad faith, as long as she does not allow her belief to rest in her inclinations or in the doctrines of her society. The person who believes she will be interested constantly reevaluates her belief and in her ongoing revaluation is interested. For, like responsibility, belief does not lead to interest. Belief is interest in that it fundamentally involves one’s ongoing meeting with oneself and one’s neighbor.

Thus, in the strongest sense, belief is not in “things.” Rather, a person believes in belief, where her belief – her faith – is constituted in and through the ongoing process of her critical participation in herself. Accordingly, a person’s belief utterly transforms the nature of the “things” that she seems to believe, or not to believe, in. She recognizes the “things” in light of her belief and not the other way around. The things provide the context in and through which a person lives and enacts her belief, but the belief, in and of itself, is not affected by the things. Rather, the things are infused with the power of the person’s belief. That is not to say that all things become believable (insofar as belief is reduced to things). On the contrary, all things are transfigured in and through the standard of belief; all things are transfigured in and through the standard of self-critical participation; all things are transfigured in and through the standard of interest. Again, it is not that all things are interesting; rather, a person can only find something uninteresting if, in fact, she engages it in an interested way. Thus, non-interest can only be recognized in and through the standard of interest.
Consequently, when Kierkegaard writes in the first half of his formulation, “love believes all things – and yet is never deceived,” that “love believes all things”31 (Kierkegaard, 1995, p. 225), he means that love believes in itself and that through this belief all things are transformed insofar as each thing is recognized in terms of the standard of love. That is not to say that all things are loving. Rather, all things are infused with the standard of love, a standard that can only be recognized and critiqued in and through love. Thus, what Kierkegaard actually observes is that “love believes all things – and yet is never deceived” (my italics, p. 225). Put in another way we may say that love believes all things and precisely because it believes all things it is able truly to recognize deception.

8 Genuine Actuality

I have argued, then, that interest lies between one person and another person or between a person and herself. Given the centrality of the idea of what I have called The Between in terms of human interest, human love and human existence, I would like to consider the question of where a person is to be located in terms of her personhood. Where, for example, is what Hegel calls a person’s “genuine actuality” (Hegel, 1975, p. 8)? Is a person’s “actuality” commensurate with her “reality”? Is a person commensurate with her physical presence? Or is her actuality found, as Buber suggests, in the apparently theoretical place “between I and the Thou” (Buber, 2000, p. 29)?

A way of addressing these questions and of constituting the relationship between “actuality” and “reality” was presented to me in an informal seminar on Kafka’s short story, “The Metamorphosis.” In the story Gregor Samsa, a traveling salesman living with his parents, wakes up one day as a bug.

As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from uneasy dreams he found himself transformed in his bed into [an enormous bug]. He was lying on his hard, as it were armour-plated, back and when he lifted his head a little he could see his dome-like brown belly divided into stiff arched segments on top of which the bed-quilt could hardly keep in position and was about to slide off completely. His numerous legs, which were pitifully thin compared to the rest of his bulk, waved helplessly before his eyes. (Kafka, 1974, p. 9)

A participant in the seminar asked the question, “did Gregor really turn into a bug?” The answer came, “he didn’t really but he actually did.”32

“Genuine actuality” is the ongoing discovery and the re-articulation of the reality that one exists and that one’s neighbor exists. This discovery and this re-articulation are made in and through human meeting. The meeting, then, in actual terms of existence, is more real than “reality,” if by reality one is referring to the reality of “things.” “Things” can have no knowledge of themselves as “things” and thus cannot “discover [or] know” (Kierkegaard, 1995, p. 44) that they exist.

The location of a person’s “genuine actuality,” as Kafka’s story shows us, is not correspondent with her “reality.” Gregor’s reality is his physicality as a human being: “the color of his hair or his speech or his goodness” (p. 31). Consequently, we may say that Gregor’s reality “dwells” in him. He, however, dwells in his actuality. His actuality is constituted in and through his treatment of himself, and the treatment he receives from his parents, his sister and his employers. Consequently, Gregor, his parents, his sister and his employers believe him to be, and reduce him to, an insect. Thus, Kafka’s story invokes Kierkegaard’s “like for like” (Kierkegaard, 1995, p. 382): “be it done for you as you believe” (p. 378). Gregor believes that he is a bug; therefore he becomes a bug.

A human being becomes herself in and through her meeting with herself. Accordingly, while her reality is her physically independent body, I, her actuality is her relation I-Thou. It is in light of I-Thou, then, that her reality is recognized and becomes her actuality. A person who denies her actuality can only deny it in and through actuality. That is, she can only deny it on the basis of her faithful meeting with herself and with her neighbor. Thus, insofar as she denies her actuality in and through meeting, she is in “bad faith.” In “bad faith,” then, she reduces herself to her reality.33 Paradoxically, however, her reality cannot be properly recognized, since she has denied the actuality in and through which she is empowered to make the recognition. Consequently, a person’s reality disappears and is interchangeable (able to be metamorphosized) with any other

32 I am indebted to Lee Danes, a Ph.D. candidate at York University, Toronto, for the articulation of this insight.
33 “What is rational is [must be/become] actual, and what is actual is [must be/become] rational” (Hegel, 1962, p. 10).
thing. Thus Gregor, in denying his actuality as  *I-Thou*, reduces himself to his reality, a reality that he is unable to distinguish from the reality of a bug.

I argue, then, that a person’s “genuine actuality” is constituted in *I-You*. I actually find myself in you. *I* find myself in the *I* of my *You* and in the *You* of my *I*. So where, in the reality of time and space, am I? One might say that I am in the reality of my physical body but only insofar as my physical body “dwells” in my actuality. My actuality is infinitely in excess of my physical body. As I write this, I am sitting alone at my desk. The reality of my situation is that I am a physical body alone at a desk. But I am not actually in isolation. On the contrary, I am in constant dialogue: with myself, my family, my friends, my professors, and the authors with whose works I engage.

But “where” does the dialogue take place? Where is the meeting? For it is true that none of these people has any literal knowledge of the dialogue in which they are participating. But does that mean that the dialogue takes place only in me? Must I conclude that there is no meeting *between* us; that my dialogue is, in fact, my fantasy that allows me to deny the reality of my isolation? In this respect, the actuality of my meeting with these people does indeed involve leniency in that I am free to imagine them as I believe them to be. At the same time, however, it also involves rigor because the very power of my imagination is disciplined by the ongoing discovery and re-articulation of the knowledge of the actual (not simply fanciful and not merely real) existence of myself and of my neighbor. This rigor, if indeed my imagination is rigorous, will reveal itself in my writing in that it will, itself, invite meeting (re-evaluation). The test of the actuality of my meeting with my self, friends, colleagues and fellow human beings versus the fantasy of my escape will be the “genuine actuality” of my thesis.

Despite, then, the reality of the literal absence of a person’s neighbor (and the *Thou* of a person’s *I* is also physically absent – as is the *I* of her *Thou*) and despite the fact that the neighbor does not literally “know” anything about it, the neighbor participates in the meeting that constitutes a person’s actuality. Does this mean that one can meet with a fictitious person like Gregor? Certainly, but with a fictitious person who engages meeting; who is constituted as *I-Thou* in and through the narrative – as a character aware of herself. Thus, we can engage Gregor, not as a bug who is unaware of itself as a bug, but rather as a whole person who denies the self-awareness of his wholeness.
In conclusion, then, the “genuine actuality” of a person lies in the meeting “between I and Thou” (Buber, 2000, p. 29). A person is not merely I, saturated by the reality of her everyday life. Nor, however, is she simply You, isolated from her I as she observes her apparent reality, but, in her observation, is forever alienated from it. Rather, a person is actually I-You. That is, she finds herself in and through her meeting with herself and her meeting with her neighbor. In the meeting the human being collapses “every means” – every “experience” infused with “aim . . . lust . . . [or] anticipation” – and takes her stand in relation. In light of the relation every means and every experience are transformed insofar as they become an expression of, or a metaphor for, the meeting I-You.

Thus, the point of the meeting is not to resolve the issue of which means or which experience a person should adhere to. Rather, the point of the meeting is itself. A person’s “whole life” (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 123) is in the work of her meeting. The meeting constitutes her joy, her pain and her fulfillment. Consequently, while it might seem to us that the idea that we are self-reflexive, self-conscious human beings who engage in human relationships is obvious, the idea becomes less obvious – in fact, it becomes strange34 – when we strip away from the idea the “experience” (Buber, 2000, p. 21) of indoctrination and inclination. In other words, we recognize the centrality of human meeting when we interrogate everything that has been conditioned by societal customs or doctrines, on the one hand, and everything that relates to private feelings, whims and impulses, on the other hand, and we witness the meeting that we must continuously work adequately to meet.

We may say, then, that, on the one hand, a person exists in the secure pattern of her everyday life. In and through the pattern the person repeats the types of human relationships that she believes to be appropriate; she plays out the human encounters that she supposes are “natural;” and she rests easily in the belief that the pattern that she sees is the only pattern. If one tells such a person that her “whole life” is in the enactment of her relationships, she will not be surprised, since, on reflection, she can see that she adheres to the “natural” pattern of life: the pattern

34 “What we are used to is most difficult to ‘know’ – that is, to see as a problem; that is, to see as strange, as distant, as ‘outside us’” (Nietzsche, 1974, p. 301).
wherein the human being or the animal instinctively seeks out a partner, protects her loved ones, lives together in a community and so on.

On the other hand, however, there is the person who sees that the pattern that guides her everyday practices – the pattern of human relationships – is a false pattern that has been constructed by the human being to perpetuate certain conditions that favor certain sections of society. Thus, she understands that within every human encounter there are invisible, normative assumptions at work that distort the so-called equality of the encounter. Accordingly, if one says that the human being’s “whole life” is in her relationship to herself and to her neighbor, the person will certainly think that what one has said is obvious, insofar as certain attitudes of human relationship rule our lives. But she will also think that the obviousness of what one has said is something that must be challenged and rejected. In other words, in her challenge, she will have to look beyond the pattern of human relationships to a conception of human existence that is somehow different.

Accordingly, on the one hand, we find that the human being experiences a kind of easy comfort in the pattern of her relationships – eased by her pretence that the pattern is necessary – even if that comfort is somewhat stale. On the other hand, we find that the human being is frustrated by the pattern and searches for other ways of conceiving of her life. But while each human being – each person – may believe that what she is talking about when she talks about human relationships is human meeting, in fact, what she is talking about is a type of relation that reduces meeting to a pre-determined set of rules (or rejects it in favor of spontaneous, gut, impulses).

In contrast, then, true human meeting, while it necessarily has a structure or a pattern, renews itself and its structure at every moment. The very notion of human meeting involves each participant in the meeting constantly working to meet with herself and with her neighbor in a way that she imagines to be adequate. The adequacy of her meeting is continuously being reevaluated as she witnesses herself and her neighbor in a new light.

Consequently, where the relationship of one person to another is reduced to a necessary pattern (or negated as a necessary pattern) it is not that the concept of the relationship, in and of itself, is inadequate; rather, what is inadequate is the reduction of that relationship to a pattern. The idea that human meeting constitutes a person’s “whole life” is an idea that has precedence – it is familiar – but, simultaneously, it is utterly new. The idea is established in and through the notion
of human existence as history – it is not merely plucked out of the air on a whim. But, at the same time, it is not simply commensurate with a traditional pattern. An adequate meeting, by its very nature, is new in every moment.

We find, then, that the human being is the meeting I-Thou; but she can neither rest in the assurance that she is I-Thou nor can she negate it. The human being is I-Thou, yet she must always become I-Thou. Therein lies the simultaneous tragedy and salvation of human existence. On the one hand, because a person must work to become the person that she is, she can sometimes (tragically) fail. On the other hand, precisely because a person must work to become the person she is, she is empowered to recognize her becoming; she is empowered to witness fully her existence.

I shall conclude this chapter, as I began it, with the idea of music. The central notion of my dissertation – the notion that is to be presented in the following chapters – is that music is meeting. Music becomes itself in and through its meeting with itself and with its participants. Accordingly, it is possible for music to be performed, to be listened to and to be composed and for that music to fail to become itself – to be adequately recognized as music – insofar as the musical meeting is inadequate. At the same time, precisely because music is meeting, the musical participant can recognize music – she can find the music in herself – and she can witness its and her mutual becoming.

In summary, as I indicated at the beginning of the chapter, I recognize a profound correspondence between the constitution of the human being as self-critical meeting and the constitution of music. Thus, in the present chapter, I have undertaken to articulate human existence as meeting in and through the ideas of a number of philosophers including Buber, Kant, Kierkegaard, Hegel and Nietzsche. It remains for me to explore the correspondence of their ideas to music, a correspondence that, as I have already mentioned, is largely un-articulated by philosophers, music scholars and educationalists. It is the exploration of this correspondence – the idea that music meets with itself and is met – that is the focus of the following chapters.
Chapter III ~ Aesthetics, Music and Meaning

1 Introduction

When music is constituted in terms of meeting – as the mutual attention of the music and the musical participant to music’s unfolding, – we may argue that its meaning has fundamentally to do with the philosophical concept known as “aesthetics.” That is, it has to do with a particular notion of aesthetics constituted, among others, by philosophers such as Hegel, Dewey, Scruton and Johnson. I conceive of this notion of aesthetics in the following way. Central to my thesis is the insistence that a meeting between people is enacted for its own sake; it is not the consequence of an outside cause. A person meets with, recognizes and attends to the other’s existence because, in her attention, she meets with, recognizes and attends to her own existence. In the same way, then, a person meets with, recognizes and attends to music because, in doing so, she meets with, recognizes and attends to herself. I understand this attention, that is at once both personal and social, to be aesthetic.

The word “aesthetic” has been used in a variety of ways. We have seen, for example, that Kierkegaard uses the term in a very specific way, to articulate a particular mode of existence found in the ancient world. In my study, however, unless I am talking specifically about a particular author’s concept of aesthetics, I use the term to articulate an attitude of existence that involves the reciprocal consideration and evaluation of self and other. When the term is attached to another concept such as “experience,” “interest,” “judgment” or “value,” it interrogates and re-appropriates the concept. Thus, the concept “interest,” as a qualification of and qualified by the concept “aesthetic,” is not simply a characteristic of something that pleases me or something that pleases you; rather, aesthetic interest is a characteristic of something that has a personal applicability to me that can be worked out socially – between me and you. Aesthetic interest in art, then (whether performed, composed, painted, read, listened to, looked at), is not interest in art for the sake of the art – “art for art’s sake.” But equally it is not interest in art merely for the sake of the private individual, where the art is seen as a means to, for example, increased intelligence, financial gain, happy (or sad) feelings, health benefits, social status or social
bonding. A person’s aesthetic interest in art is an interest in art for no reason other than the mutually reciprocal sakes of both the art and herself (and all other selves).

1.1 Purpose

I conceive, then, of a direct relationship between aesthetics and my idea of musical meeting. Accordingly, the purpose of the present chapter is to acknowledge and discuss concerns in the field of aesthetic inquiry that might be understood to support, challenge, undermine or even oppose my thesis. Given the strong polemic against aesthetics in the last thirty years, the bulk of the chapter will be concerned with addressing aesthetics’ strongest critics rather than delving in depth into works that essentially support my position. Consequently, while I include in my account the work of Hegel, Dewey, Scruton and Johnson, I will discuss the work of authors such as Bourdieu (1984) and Eagleton (1990) as well as criticism coming more directly from the field of music education itself. My address is by no means exhaustive. I have chosen to deal with works that [a] seem to me to encapsulate the main concerns that scholars and critics have with regard to aesthetics and that [b] provide me with an opportunity to begin to articulate my own ideas in relation to them.

In short, if my project is to resonate in the contemporary world of music education, I want to demonstrate that what I am talking about, when I talk about meeting in aesthetic terms, or aesthetics in terms of meeting, is not what scholars and critics are now at pains to eradicate from a multi-cultural, egalitarian music curriculum. I want to demonstrate that what I am talking about is fundamentally meaningful to human existence – not in a merely theoretical way, where talk about “creativity,” “transformation” and “meaning” collapses in upon itself. Rather, I want to demonstrate that what I am talking about, when I talk about aesthetics, is something that can be witnessed by students and teachers alike in a truly practical way as something that challenges and leads them to reevaluate and re-appropriate their lives.

1.2 Meaning

Challenge, revaluation and re-appropriation are concepts central to meaning. Something is meaningful for a person insofar as it impacts her life. The impact works in two ways. First, something that is meaningful invites a person to rethink and rearticulate her attitude to human existence. Second, something that is meaningful becomes meaningful because a person engages
in the rethinking and the re-articulation of her attitude to human existence. We might also say that something that is meaningful to a person interests her – where interest is fundamentally *I-Thou*. That is, first, it is something whose significance demands that she share it with, or make it known to, herself and to other people in a way that she/they will recognize that significance. Second, it is something that becomes significant as a person shares it with, or makes it known to, herself and to other people in a way that she/they will recognize that significance.

Meaning, then, is not the cause of some effect. It comes out to meet a person insofar as she steps forward to meet it. In terms of music, the music does not cause the meaning that a person witnesses; equally the person does not cause the meaning that she witnesses in listening to it. The person and the music participate in the creation of meaning and create the meaning of participation. Thus, meaning is fundamentally aesthetic, insofar as it has as much to do with a person’s active attention to herself and how and why she constitutes something as meaningful, as it does with her attention to the object that she witnesses as having meaning. We may say, then, that a person enacts her aesthetic attention to the music for no other reason than to attend to the music which attention she witnesses as a heightened, self-critical attention to herself.

### 1.3 The Meaning of the Color Yellow

I argue that the idea of aesthetic attention is central to musical meaning. When aesthetic attention is absent, however, it is still possible for a person to delude herself that the meaning she feels is meaningful. For example, a person might say that painting her room yellow is something that matters to her. But so long as she is unable to articulate, either for herself or for others, why it matters other than that she “feels” that it matters, the significance of a yellow room remains hidden. Unless she can talk about why yellow is meaningful to her, rather than, say, blue, the importance of her choice of color remains arbitrary. She may feel that she is compelled to use this color, but, since the compulsion could presumably alter at any moment according to whatever whim drives it, it can hardly be called meaningful in human terms. In other words, the meaning that she “feels” is delusional.

It may be, however, that a person will argue her right to “feel” meaning without being able to express it. While the feeling, insofar as it cannot be articulated, continues to be meaningless, what becomes meaningful is the “right” that the person works out in dialogue, to argue that one’s feelings, whatever they are, are meaningful. But while saying that the argument concerning her
“right,” as an equal human being, to debate what is and is not significant, is, indeed, meaningful, it is not the same as saying that whatever she declares to be meaningful is, in fact, meaningful. Where the former involves communication and thus a very actual sense of challenge, revaluation and re-appropriation on all sides of the debate, the latter is private and cannot possibly impact a person’s life in any way that she can recognize.

Perhaps it seems to a person that it is a matter of considerable importance that she paint her room yellow because yellow was the color of her bedroom in her childhood home. The color has strong associations that have to do with her parents, her siblings, her childhood friends and, as such, with herself. In talking about why the color yellow is meaningful to her, she can communicate its significance in terms of an association and in a way that makes sense for other people – and for herself. We can understand why she associates the color yellow with the creation of actual meaning in her life because we understand that her human relations are significant to her. However, when asked what it is about the color yellow that is, itself, meaningful, she is unable to articulate it in any other terms than the ones already spoken. Thus, the color yellow, in and of itself, does not participate with her in creating her meaning. It acts as a trigger for it, but that trigger is replaceable by anything else that reminds her of home – a certain carpet, a set of curtains, a picture, a smell and so on.

We understand the person’s choice of yellow as meaningful, in and of itself, only if the person can articulate the color’s participation in that meaning. For example, the physical color might participate through its interaction with itself, with the light from the window, or with the colors around it. The person recognizes this interaction to be significant such that the significance acts as a standard for her own person (and the people around her) insofar as it challenges what she constitutes as significant in her life, revaluates it and re-appropriates it.

1.4 The Three Routes of Meaning

Emerging, then, from the discussion of what constitutes meaning are three alternative routes. The first route is really a denial of routes two and three. Thus, I am reluctant to call the first route a route; and yet, since denial can only be recognized as denial if it involves the affirmative negation of that which it denies, it is a route that a person must choose to go down. Accordingly, then, I derive meaning via the first route when I deny that I am able to express the imperative of
my choice of yellow and, consequently, in the imperative’s hidden and presumably volatile state, I deny that it cannot be considered meaningful in human terms.

I arrive at meaning via the second route through a number of different connections. Primarily, however, I constitute the meaning of the color yellow in terms of its association to something that becomes meaningful in and through its interrogation within a context that constitutes notions of truth and deception. For example, my choice of yellow becomes meaningful insofar as I have the right, as an equal human being, to choose it. Or, the color yellow is meaningful to me because it reminds me of a time in my life, the meaning of which is worked out in a critical dialogue with myself.

Finally, I derive meaning via the third route when I am able to articulate how my interaction in relation to the color’s interaction with itself fosters the recognition of my own life in a way that challenges it and causes me to reevaluate and re-appropriate it.

1.5 Musical Meaning and the Second Route

I hold that arguments concerning the meaning of music can be identified as following one of the three above routes. I will begin with route two. A person derives musical meaning via route two when she takes the musical association that she finds affective (in whatever way) and evaluates that association in the wider context of her life: within an ethical context of truth and deception. Thus, a piece of music that a person associates with “sadness” is meaningful, not because it means sadness to her, but because she interrogates the concept “sadness” in and through her life such that the interrogation challenges her and causes her to reevaluate and re-appropriate that which she values.

Meaning that is derived via the second route is related in different ways to the music with which it is associated. Nevertheless, the binding factor of the second route is that the meaning that is arrived at is always arrived at in a context other than that which the music provides. For example, it is possible that meaning may come to be associated with a person’s right to choose her own music: to buy, teach, perform, record or talk about whatever music she wishes. This meaning involves participation insofar as a person enters into dialogue with herself and other people and articulates the centrality to her existence of her equality in a way that all other people
can recognize and understand it. The music itself, however, does not participate in the meaning. The same meaning could be witnessed with regard to the “right to choose” any other artifact.

Thus, musical meaning, arrived via the second route, is frequently confused with the intrinsic value of the music itself. Drawing, again, on the idea of a person’s “right to choose” her own music, it seems that sometimes a person who argues her “right to choose” conflates her right with the “right” for her choice to be right. Johnson refers to the latter conflation as “pseudo-democracy” (Johnson, 2002, p. 26). He points to television shows that make artistic judgments upon the basis of telephone voting where every vote, and thus every viewer’s opinion, carries an equal weight. Each viewer has the “right to choose” the particular voice or song he or she considers is best. However, just as the concept of the “right to choose” is not based simply on a “feeling” or an “impulse” but is the working out and the constitution of a person’s private feeling of personhood in and through her public attention to, and care for, herself and all other people, similarly, the validity of the choice she makes is not a private affair; rather, her choice must be challenged and then reevaluated and re-appropriated in the public arena. Thus, in the world of politics, democracy is not reducible to an election. It may be that a particular person or political party is the choice of the majority: a majority made up of individuals exerting their right to the freedom of choice. But while the value of democracy lies in each person’s right to choose a candidate, it does not lie in the candidate chosen. Democracy does not include the individual’s right to have chosen the “right” candidate. The value of democracy lies in the extent to which the majority choice is then challenged, reevaluated and re-appropriated as it is worked out over the period of office in terms that can be recognized as being applicable to all people. It may be that the choice of the majority turns out to be the “wrong” choice! Accordingly, while a person’s right to choose a work of music is of significance in her life, the question of whether a work is actually meaningful, in and of itself, or why it is actually meaningful is not answered by simply following this second route of meaning.

Like the color yellow, a work of music might come to be associated with a certain time in a person’s life, a particular friend, a special “feeling” or “mood.” In this respect, we might say that musical events – intervals, keys, melodies, harmonic progressions – serve to represent, point to or trigger a connection with, certain states, moods, characters and so on. The music might serve to trigger connections in a number of different ways. Some philosophers have argued that the musical sounds literally resemble natural sounds, such as birdsong. Others maintain that the
musical sounds represent emotions: that we hear, for example, a state of sadness in the music (Kivy, 1980; Goodman, 1976) or that the music expresses the contours of our inner life (Langer, 1957). Still others contend that music operates in the same way as a language (Raffman, 1993; Lerdahl and Jackendoff, 1983; Nattiez, 1990). But whether or not these resemblances, representations and theories of syntactical structure are relevant to the music, in and of themselves, they do not provide a theory of musical meaning. For example, music that represents “sadness” becomes meaningful when a person contextualizes “sadness” in her own life. She participates with herself in exploring the concept of “sadness;” the music does not participate because, as a representation that is confined to a single concept (or a row of isolated “concepts”), it can neither respond nor can it invite response. Like a broken record, the representation reiterates “sadness, sadness, sadness.” Meaning, then, is created, without the music in and through the percipient’s participation with herself. Consequently, I am not arguing that a person for whom a work of music represents sadness does not witness meaning. What I am arguing is that for a person to find “sadness” meaningful she must provide the context in and through which the meaning of “sadness” is worked out.

It is irrefutable that certain musical turns of phrase, harmonies, keys, and even whole works bring to mind different states of mind – ideas, moods and emotions – for different people. The Language of Music (1991) by Deryck Cooke is concerned with articulating a musical vocabulary that might serve to categorize these connections. Cooke argues that it is possible to show that certain musical devices have become conventional insofar as they are employed throughout the history of tonal music to the same effect. For example, he maintains that composers have “persistently used” the “rise from the tonic to the dominant through the major third…to express an outgoing, active, assertive emotion of joy” (Cooke, 1991, p. 115).

The idea of a musical vocabulary, in terms of certain musical conventions, is found in both the sociological and the psychological fields of musical inquiry. For example, feminists argue that certain types of melodic interval, tonality and rhythm have become associated with a particular gender through their employment in the accompaniment of arias of specifically male and specifically female characters in opera and oratorio. Similarly, in the field of psychology neuroscientists in synaesthesia argue that human beings make connections between dark colors and low pitches. Consequently, insofar as dark colors are associated with the night and sinister goings on, low music can signal mystery, suspense and horror.
Music that derives its meaning from what it is associated with is often witnessed as an “impression.” Again, while the impression bears a description that is attributed to the music, its meaning, in terms of its impact on a person’s existence, is constituted in and through the broader context of her life. Thus, a person listening to or performing a work of music might identify one or more of the musical “signals” or “conventions” and combine them to create for herself an overall impression such as “soothing,” “sad,” “wistful” or “abhorrent” that she then constitutes within the wider context of her life in terms of its meaning to her. In fact, it is possible that she may construe meaning in terms of two or more different impressions that arise from the same piece of music. Interestingly, however, as Johnson (2002) points out, where it is the case that music presents conflicting impressions, its meaning and its reception become problematic. Thus, works chosen for CD compilations with titles such as *Classic Moods* or *Classic Relaxation* are chosen because they present a “unity of affect” (Johnson, 2002, p. 35). In the same way, the desire for a single impression is evident in the flattening out of the dynamic range of music played on many radio stations.

### 1.6 Musical Meaning and the Third Route

Meaning that is arrived at via the third route relates to a person’s articulation of musical meaning as the meaning that she witnesses in the music, as it unfolds, in terms of its simultaneous meeting with itself and her active meeting with it. In other words, a person recognizes the music’s active participation in its own meaning, as it responds to, and invites the response of, her own participation. We may call the constitution of meaning in and through the mutual participation of participant and music “communication.” Thus, a person may associate the music that she meets with many things, as she associates the friend with whom she meets with her time at high school, a special hobby or a particular taste in fashion. But, like the meeting with a friend, the meeting with the music involves present communication that cuts through all past and future associations. It involves the challenge of both the person/participant’s and the music/participant’s existence and the subsequent revaluation and re-appropriation of the existence of each as meeting.

The meeting, then, is with the musical events as they unfold: their relation to one another, the relation of the poignancy and interest of that relationship to the history of music, and the relation of all those relationships to the self-critical nature of the musical participant. It is the latter meeting that I shall explore further in Chapter IV. For the present my focus is upon the idea of
aesthetics. Thus, I argue that as a person critically attends to the music, she attends to herself and therein lies the weight of aesthetic meaning in the context of musical interaction.

1.7 Meaning that is Not Meaningful

I maintain, that, insofar as meaning is genuinely constituted via routes two and three in terms of a person’s simultaneous attention to herself and to her neighbor, each route is equally valuable. The “genuine” quality of this constitution can only be witnessed in and through the act of mutual attention. In other words, it can only be witnessed in and through the act of meeting. But it is important to recognize that, insofar as meaning is constituted in and through an act of mutual attention, where that attention is less than mutual, the meaning will be less than adequate. Thus, it is possible for a person to claim that music is meaningful but for her claim to be false. It is not that there is a fixed standard that declares it false; it is simply that her meaning is not participatory. Since the person’s meaning is not participatory, she remains unaffected by it and it remains unaffected by her. The meaning neither challenges her, nor is it challenged by her. Consequently, it leads neither to her nor to the music’s revaluation and re-articulation as I-Thou, the full power of her/its existence.

In terms, then, of the first route, musical meaning is either wholly subjective or wholly objective. In both extremes the meaning of the music cannot be explained other than in words (or gestures) that simply repeat that it is meaningful. Either, it is meaningful because I say that it is meaningful (subjective) or it is meaningful because you say that it is meaningful (objective). It is a matter of little significance whether the meaning comes from somewhere within the percipient or somewhere outside of the percipient. In neither case can it be recognized for the simple reason that the meaning does not involve the active participation of the person who must recognize it. Thus, it seems that the music means x, but x cannot be articulated.

A word we might assign to the meaning “x” is sentimentality. A sentimentalist allows herself to be saturated by an apparent emotion to the extent that she becomes its vehicle or its means, abdicating all responsibility for it. In denying her responsibility for what is meaningful – affirming, in other words, the emotion x – not only is a person at the mercy of however the music may choose to manipulate her, but also she is denying the power of her existence which is to re-create that existence as participation. In fact, in affirming the music’s meaning to be unknowable, she is attempting to bypass the work of actual meaning and, as Scruton argues,
“have her emotions ‘on the cheap’ . . . [and have] the pleasure of an active emotional life, without the cost of it” (Scruton, 1997, p. 486).

In summary, then, routes one, two and three are all to do with aesthetics. That is, they all talk about (or, in the case of route one, deny) meaning in terms of a person’s participation with, and attention to herself and to her neighbor that is, in itself, valuable. But only the third route locates meaning fundamentally within musical participation. Thus, it is this third route with which I am concerned in this study and that I explicate in terms of the I-Thou relationship and meeting. In the following pages I will use my three routes of musical meaning as a frame of reference in and through which to discuss the scholarship and criticism dealing with aesthetic meaning in music education.

2 Aesthetics

2.1 Aesthetics and Experience

Two authors in particular – Dewey and Scruton – have helped me to articulate my approach to aesthetics. In Art as Experience, John Dewey distinguishes “esthetic experience” (Dewey, 1980, p. 274) from experience related to what he calls “the beauty parlor of civilization.” He writes that “esthetic experience is experience in its integrity . . .. To esthetic experience, then, the philosopher must go to understand what experience is” (p. 274). In other words, aesthetics is far more than the superficiality of pretty forms and decorations: it speaks fundamentally to the nature of human existence as we live it.

In the third route of meaning, I emphasize the centrality of communication: the process of sounding out the applicability of a person’s concern for a relationship that she recognizes between musical events as a concern that is valid for all people. For Dewey, communication is central to aesthetic experience. First, he is clear that communication, and therefore art, is not about “announcing things, even if they are said with the emphasis of great sonority. Communication” he tells us “is the process of creating participation, of making common what had been isolated and singular” (p. 244). Thus “communication” is a fundamentally social phenomenon: it involves meaning that is worked out between people. To this extent, communication involves imagination. A person who speaks must imagine how his interlocutor is receiving his speech, just as his interlocutor must imagine the context in which his speech is
being spoken. Thus, Dewey reminds us that “it is more or less commonplace to say that a person’s ideas and treatment of his fellows are dependent upon his power to put himself imaginatively in their place” (p. 348). He quotes Shelley who writes in the *Defense of Poetry* that “the imagination is the great instrument of moral good . . . to be greatly good [a person] must imagine intensely and comprehensively” (Dewey, 1980, p. 347). Aesthetic experience, then, is a participatory experience that is simultaneously offered and invited by both the artwork and the percipient. Participation involves imagination, for the one must be imaginative enough to recognize the other’s offer and her invitation and must respond likewise.

Where Dewey guards against an attitude that isolates aesthetic experience as a signal, an “announcement” or a decoration in the “beauty parlor of civilization,” Scruton is concerned to distinguish “aesthetic interest” from the idea of musical meaning construed in terms of what the music represents, resembles or indicates by virtue of an underlying syntactical structure. For Scruton, like Dewey, the object of “aesthetic interest” is the “revealed presence of the world – the world as it is encountered in our experience (the *Lebenswelt*, to use Husserl’s term for it)” (Scruton, 1997, p. 5). In musical terms, Scruton is concerned to address what we understand in a work of music when we attend to the musical equivalent of the “revealed presence of the world” as it unfolds: a work of music’s melody, harmony, rhythm and dynamics, and the relationship between them. Aesthetic interest is not simply the meaning that the music’s appearance signifies to us. Equally, it is not simply the meaning we impose upon it. Rather, aesthetic interest has fundamentally to do with expressive communication. That is, aesthetic interest involves expressive interaction on the part of all the participants: music and listener/performer/composer. “Listening to music,” Scruton writes, “is an expression of aesthetic interest, and music is understood through the aesthetic experience” (p. 344). In other words, aesthetic interest does not cling to the listener who receives the music’s expression. The listener, equally, expresses her interest in the music; that is, she steps forward, with a simultaneously receptive and engaging attitude to meet with the music. At the same time, the music invites the listener’s expression through its own expressive nature. Scruton’s elucidation is helpful: “the expressive [phrase] or gesture is the one that awakens our sympathy [or antipathy], the one that invites us into a mental orbit that is not our own” (p. 157). The aesthetics of music, then, in Dewey and Scruton’s philosophies correspond to my third route of musical meaning and have fundamentally to do
with how we respond to the life (our own life and the lives of others) that we witness in and through our interaction with the work of art or music.

2.2 Aesthetics and Distinction

Not all scholars and critics agree, however, about what it means to interact with, or to experience, a work of art. In the past thirty years sociologists have argued that our response to the life that we witness or to the art work that we create is a conditioned response. For example, the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu maintains that what he calls the “aesthetic disposition,” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 3) assumed to be a universal attribute of all human beings, is, in fact, an “historical invention” (p. 3) that is “insensibly” (p. 3) or we might say, unconsciously, acquired by people of a certain “habitus” (p. 101): a specific class, educational level and upbringing. People whose habitus is of a certain quality – a bourgeois quality – perceive objects of art with what Bourdieu calls a “pure gaze” (p. 3). The “pure gaze” allows these people to see beyond the art work’s function and perceive only its form. Bourdieu argues that as an attitude of appreciation the “pure gaze,” along with works of art designed to cater to it, is considered by our society to be the only legitimate way of appreciating art.

While a person who perceives a work of art with a “pure gaze” considers that her perception is “a gift of nature” (p. 1), universally given to all people capable of recognizing and working with it, Bourdieu argues that such a “gift” – the “aesthetic disposition” – is possessed only by those with

35 Bourdieu argues that when a person attends to the form of a work of art she excludes “the external referent [of the art work], [the inclusion of] which involves [the artwork’s] subordination to functions – even if only the most elementary one, that of representing, signifying, saying something” (p. 3). For Bourdieu, then, functional art “says something.” But what is the “something” that it actually says? First, as a function, it is the case that the artwork might signify a religious ritual, represent a social convention, act as a tool for courtship or signal a certain atmosphere or mood. But while the artwork might say “ritual,” “convention,” “courtship” or “mood,” these concepts in and of themselves “mean” nothing in the way that my study understands meaning. The signification of a religious ritual is meaningful only if one begins to talk about how the ritual critically relates to one’s own life and the lives of others. But in talking about such a relation one’s focus has already moved away from the work of art.

36 Other forms of art and appreciation are held to be inferior, although, as Bourdieu notes, it is the case that the “pure gaze” can be turned upon art works created before the invention of the aesthetic disposition or even contemporary arts devoid of aesthetics such as “popular photography.”
the requisite “cultural capital” (p. 12): the learned set of ciphers needed to unlock the codes of legitimate works of art. The requirement of a cipher to unlock the artwork’s meaning, a cipher given only to those of a certain habitus, indicates that the work is somehow detached from society in general. The everyday experience of the working class person is not sufficient to enable that person to understand what is going on in a work of art. Thus, the argument of Bourdieu – apparently drawing on Kant’s famous “autonomy of the will” (Kant, 1981, p. 44 – see Chapter II) – is that the artwork that yields to “aesthetic” understanding is not a product of everyday life; rather, it is understood to be self-contained or “autonomous.” Autonomous art is somehow detached from the wrangling of economics, politics, gender, race and class and, like the principles of the class of people who foster and nurture it, fashions itself according to its own sense of higher order and truth. Thus, elevated above the demands of the everyday, the autonomous artwork is able to “impose its own norms on both [its] production and [its] consumption” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 3).

In summary, then, Bourdieu maintains that the autonomous artwork fosters and perpetuates human values whose worth is established, not in and through society as a whole but rather in terms of ideals that purport to transcend everyday life. One such ideal, he argues, is the “aesthetic disposition” (p. 3). The centrality of the “aesthetic disposition,” in terms of artistic understanding and participation, not only excludes people and art works that are not the product of a particular “habitus” but also nurtures ideals that disregard and discriminate against people who do not adhere to it. Furthermore, since the “aesthetic disposition” is a “gift of nature,” the exclusion of, or discrimination against, those who do not “naturally” practice it, is made to appear natural.

Recently, however, a number of studies have shown that the relationship between the “aesthetic disposition” and Bourdieu’s idea of “cultural capital” – the association of a certain kind of artistic appreciation with what is considered valuable in worldly terms, the very thing, in other words, that Bourdieu critiques – is no longer relevant. For example, Chan and Goldthorpe, in their 2007 study, “Social Stratification and Cultural Consumption: Music in England,” revealed

37 The norm imposed is the attention to form, an attention whose meaning is hidden to all except those who know what the form symbolizes.
that what now counts as meaningful is not cultural consumption (in terms of the “aesthetic disposition”) but material consumption. Thus, a person’s “habitus” – her class, education, upbringing and the supposed associated cultural refinements or non-refinements that go along with them – has no bearing on her perceived status as a human being. Mark Bahnisch, in *The Australian*, cites an interview with Goldthorpe who argues that “status is now attached to material consumption, not cultural consumption” (Goldthorpe quoted in Bahnisch, 2008, para. 7). Bahnisch concludes, then, that “people with status show who they are through expensive cars and houses, rather than by going to museums and the like. Not only has a distinctive working-class culture dissipated, but also a distinctive bourgeois culture. In effect, there is only pop culture” (para. 6). In other words, according to Goldthorpe, whether or not the “pure gaze” exists, its ethical weight, in terms of society’s inclusion or exclusion of certain groups of people, has dissolved.

Ultimately, however, the existence (or not) of a correlation between, on the one hand, a person’s status in terms of her class/education/upbringing and, on the other hand, a specific cultural activity, is of little relevance to this study. Equally irrelevant is the question that asks whether that specific cultural activity is still “valued” by society or whether the idea of value, in terms of “cultural capital,” is meaningless and redundant. What I believe is relevant to this study, however, is whether the “aesthetic disposition,” a disposition that I equate with the idea of meeting, is a disposition of artistic engagement fundamental to all human existence. Or whether, as an ideological device designed to legitimize the aesthetic paradigm as “natural” while at the same time ensuring that paradigmatic art remains opaque to a certain class of people, it is an invention that maintains the “natural” inferiority of the working class and the “natural” superiority of the bourgeoisie.

### 2.3 Aesthetics and Ideology

Terry Eagleton develops the latter critique – the idea that aesthetics is a bourgeois invention designed to legitimize the ideology of the middle class – in his book *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (1990). His critique is more complex than Bourdieu’s since he acknowledges that aesthetics is “double-edged” (Eagleton, 1990, p. 9) – that it is paradoxical – but ultimately avoids dealing with his acknowledgment. My point in addressing his critique is to demonstrate that it is precisely the paradoxical nature of aesthetics that constitutes it as a concept fundamental to
human existence and that, consequently, any critique that fails to address its paradox is inadequate.

Eagleton attributes the birth of aesthetics to Baumgarten, an eighteenth century German philosopher. He argues that the concept of aesthetics was invented in the Enlightenment period to articulate the “sensate life” (Eagleton, 1990, p.13), an aspect of existence that “post-Cartesian philosophy” (p. 13) had overlooked. That this important area of existence be addressed became, he maintains, a necessity for any political order to “flourish” (p. 13). In short, according to Eagleton, aesthetics was an attempt on the part of the upcoming bourgeoisie to reign in the area of “experience” within “the majestic scope of reason itself” (p. 17). This, Eagleton argues, was the project of the Enlightenment philosophers, and, in particular, of Kant.

It follows, then, that, insofar as Eagleton conceives of aesthetics as a move by the middle classes to rationalize “sensate life” and create a normative order that served their best interests, he is critical of aesthetics. At the same time, however, the writer indicates that it is precisely aesthetics that empowered the bourgeoisie rise to power. In other words, it is precisely because of an attention to a person’s “sensible life” (p. 15) – because of an attention to, or care and consideration for, her individuality – that first, a person from the peasant class was able to throw off the yoke of feudal absolutism and become middle class and that second, the middle classes were then able to meet, as it were, the aristocracy. Thus, aesthetics cannot be merely interpreted as a concept that was invented by the bourgeoisie once they were in power; indeed, it was aesthetics that gave them that power.

Accordingly, it would seem that as “the anthropological foundation of a revolutionary opposition” (p. 9), it is clear that aesthetics has fundamentally to do with everyday life; it has to do with political and social reform. One might think, then, that before a critique tries to show how aesthetics is detached from everyday life – such as Bourdieu’s idea of the “pure gaze” – it must surely account for aesthetics’ involvement in everyday life. But this is not the case. For, as we have seen, Bourdieu maintains that the “pure gaze” was invented not only to see legitimately beyond the political and social inequalities of the everyday but also to validate those inequalities,

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insofar as people in the lower orders “naturally” lacked vision to see beyond them and gaze on the higher order. However, as Eagleton shows us, it was precisely the people in the lower orders that had “aesthetic” vision. For it was their attention to their individuality – an attention that ran contrary to the social and political norms of feudalism – that empowered them to become the middle class. Thus, while Eagleton contends that “the aesthetic is …the very secret prototype of human subjectivity in early capitalist society,” it is, he argues, “[at the same time] a vision of human energies as radical ends in themselves which is the implacable enemy of all domino or instrumentalist thought” (p. 9). Consequently, he cogently articulates the paradox that “if we can and must be severe critics of Enlightenment, it is Enlightenment which has empowered us to be so” (p. 8).

What is remarkable, however, is that Eagleton fails, as I indicated earlier, to work through the latter paradox, focusing, rather, on aesthetics’ function as a theoretical construction designed to perpetuate values that serve a particular ideology: an ideology of exclusion that subjugates people who do not meet its criteria. In other words, like Bourdieu, he concentrates on the reductive nature of aesthetics and seems to forget his own assertion that it is precisely in and through aesthetics that exclusion can be recognized.

Eagleton concludes by proposing that “the universal . . . is not some realm of abstract duty set sternly against the particular; [that] it is just every individual’s equal right to have his or her difference respected . . . [and that] to acknowledge someone as a subject is at once to grant them the same status as oneself, and to recognize their otherness and autonomy” (p. 415). But it is unclear how Eagleton’s proposal articulates an idea that is radically different from the idea of human equality, the idea behind, say, the American and the French revolutions. Thus, Eagleton concludes with a position that he claims is radical but, in fact, is one that he has already attributed to the Enlightenment. It is a position before which, he argues, “bourgeois liberal thought generally halts” (p. 414). However, if his original assertion stands, his assertion that aesthetics is “the anthropological foundation of…revolutionary opposition” (p. 9), presumably his position is precisely one that bourgeois liberal thought has empowered.

In summary, then, Eagleton appears to recognize the paradoxical nature of aesthetics. But, in his refusal truly to work out what that paradox means, he ends up with a position that is simply a version of the ideological position he is apparently critiquing – the ideology of the aesthetic. To
address, adequately, the idea of aesthetics we must recognize how the idea of an equal attention to self and neighbor (in and through an equal attention to art) can be idealized to produce an ideology that reduces the idea of equal attention to a set of codes and practices that are anything but equal; but, at the same time, we must recognize that it is only in and through the idea of equal attention to self, neighbor and art that the reductive ideology, as unequal, can be recognized.

2.4 Aesthetics and Kant

Central to the critique of Bourdieu and Eagleton, and with justification, is Kant’s work on aesthetics, the *Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment* (2000). On the one hand, Eagleton reads Kant’s idea of “disinterested and free satisfaction” (Kant, 2000, p. 95), his quintessential attitude of artistic judgment, as an attempt rigorously to rationalize and to universalize artistic taste while appearing to allow the subject the freedom to exercise her own taste. Thus, Eagleton notes that “only certain sensations are fit for aesthetic inquiry . . . Reason . . . selects those perceptions which already appear to collude with it” (Eagleton, 1990, p. 33). On the other hand, Bourdieu makes a distinction between the category Kant calls the “taste of the senses” and the category he calls “the taste of reflection” (Kant, 2000, p. 99). Bourdieu argues that whereas “the taste of reflection” “expects the work of art, a finality with no other end than itself, to treat the spectator in accordance with the Kantian imperative, that is, as an end, not a means” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 488) in contrast, “the taste of the senses” is “the crude, vulgar taste which revels in imposed enjoyment” and that treats the spectator as “a means” (p. 488). Thus, Bourdieu interprets what he sees to be Kant’s elevation of the “taste of reflection” above the “taste of the senses” as the constitution and practice of the distinction that separates the elite, bourgeois class from the working class.

We will leave aside, for the moment, Eagleton’s critique of Kant which rests both on Eagleton’s inadequate interpretation of Kant’s concept, “the autonomy of the will” (Kant, 1981, p. 44), and on the inadequacy of Kant’s idea of aesthetic judgment. However, we may say that Bourdieu is wrong to equate what he calls the “Kantian imperative” (p. 488), the idea that the human being is an end and never a means, with the “pure taste of reflection.” Kant is clear that it is practical judgments and not aesthetic judgments that are constituted in and through what Bourdieu calls the “Kantian imperative” – the idea that the human being is an end in and of herself. Thus, Kant argues that the “pure taste of reflection,” along with “taste of the senses,” makes “aesthetic (not
practical) judgments about an object” (Kant, 2000, p. 99). While both the “taste of reflection” and the “taste of the senses” are aesthetic judgments, Kant does make a distinction between them, but the distinction he makes is not the same as the distinction between the idea of the human being as an end (constituted in terms of practical reason) and the human being as means. According to Kant, the “pure taste of reflection” lies between the “taste of the senses” – the merely agreeable – and what, in other work, Kant calls “practical reason” – the good. Thus, “the judgment of taste [the pure taste of reflection] is not a cognitive judgment, hence not a logical one, but rather aesthetic” (Kant, 2000, p. 89).

Accordingly, where it might seem to Bourdieu that Kant is making the same distinction in art that he makes in terms of human existence – the distinction between ends and means – this is not, in fact, the case. Consequently, the legitimacy of the “distinction” that Bourdieu makes becomes unclear. Allow me to articulate what I perceive to be his lack of clarity in another way. Bourdieu critiques the distinction between “the cultivated bourgeoisie [on the one hand] and the people, the imaginary site of uncultivated nature, barbarously wallowing in pure enjoyment [on the other hand]” (p. 490). We have learnt that he considers that the latter distinction mirrors what he (falsely) understands to be Kant’s distinction between the morality of the “taste of reflection” and the immorality of the “taste of the senses.” Since his concern is to reveal the cultivated/uncultivated distinction to be false, he is equally concerned to reveal that the correspondent distinction end/means, as moral/immoral is similarly false. The falsity of the latter distinction, however, implies that it is valid for a work of art to impose “enjoyment” upon someone. It follows, then, that one must similarly conclude that it is also valid to impose one’s desires upon another a human being (including oneself) – to treat him or her as a means. However, as we have seen, Bourdieu’s whole book speaks against this. Namely, it speaks against the treatment of the lower classes as a means to some grand design in which the bourgeoisie is the end.

Finally, I would like to make the following observation with regard to Kant’s notion of aesthetics. Whether or not Kant’s category – “the taste of reflection” – is a useful one in terms of understanding aesthetic judgment is a question for an in depth study of the Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment, which I cannot provide here. It is the case, however, that on the final page of the Critique, having reiterated time and again the distinction between the three categories – the agreeable (taste of the senses), the beautiful (taste of reflection) and the good
(practical reason) – Kant inexplicably aligns the “taste of reflection” with “practical reason” – the development of moral ideas (a position that supports the argument of my thesis). Bourdieu, however, gives no indication that he recognizes the contradiction between the argument in the final paragraph and the rest of the work.

2.4.1 Aesthetics and Practical Reason

Both Bourdieu and Eagleton fail to deal adequately with the ideas of practical reason and aesthetics that Kant articulates in his three great Critiques (1997, 1998, 2000) and in the Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals (1981). As I have already suggested, Kant’s notions of aesthetics are, indeed, confused and confusing. However, his idea of practical reason is truly aesthetic. I feel that it is important to articulate what I recognize to be an adequate relationship between practical reason and aesthetics because the relationship is central to an adequate interpretation of aesthetics and thus to an adequate understanding of my thesis, music as meeting.

We find that central to Kantian “practical reason” (Kant, 1981, p. 22) is the idea of the individual’s value that is equal to herself and to the value of every other individual – an idea that I discussed in Chapter II (see page 41). Thus, it is in and through practical reason that the so-called “autonomous” (Eagleton, 1990, p. 9) individual is required to witness the other as an equal, with individual desires, hopes and concerns and that she is simultaneously required to witness herself as an equal with correspondent or equal desires, hopes and concerns.

Consequently, one way of articulating the idea of practical reason is to say that it is fundamentally about a person’s critical attention to her neighbor, attention that is worked out in and through her critical attention to herself. It follows that, insofar as a person’s attention is constituted according to the idea of the mutual value of both self and neighbor, her attention is not blind. It is driven neither by inclination nor by indoctrination.

First, then, we may say that a person attends to herself and to her neighbor in a way that is equal to the way that she imagines she should attend – when she and her neighbor scrutinize her imagination of what constitutes “should.” Second, a person does not practice her attention because her attention will accomplish some result; rather, she practices her attention precisely to

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39 I discussed the ideas of value and equality at some length in Chapter II. The present discussion re-articulates those ideas in relation to the idea of aesthetics.
attend to herself and to her neighbor. It is in her attention that she truly recognizes herself and her neighbor as valuable human beings. In summary, a person’s self-critical attention to herself and to her neighbor – what Kant calls “practical reason” – may be said to be truly aesthetic insofar as it finds the meaning and the value of what it attends to precisely in itself.

Still, whereas it might be clear to the reader that a person can attend to another person (and simultaneously to herself) for no reason other than to enact such attention and that, in this respect, her attitude or disposition might be articulated as an “aesthetic” attitude or disposition, it is perhaps less clear why such an aesthetic attitude or disposition might be enacted with regard to art. Why should a person attend to an artwork for no other reason than to attend to it? Is an artwork on the same level as a human being and is not this precisely what Bourdieu is critiquing?

In answer to these questions I begin by arguing that the aesthetic attitude, in regard to the idea of the equality of human value, is one that cannot be turned on and off: it runs as a standard through every action, every utterance, every thought of human life. In every human activity a human being is confronted by the equality of herself and of her neighbor. Whether it is standing in line for the bus, shopping for groceries, reading a novel or meeting a friend, a human being’s primary concern must be to act in a way that she imagines is accountable to her value and to the value of every other human being. Insofar as her actions do, indeed, account for her equal value, we say that a person does herself justice or is honest with herself.

Most activities in which a person engages require that she be honest with herself rather than with the activity. We would probably not think to say that a person should be honest with the activity of grocery shopping or the activity of exercise. A person shops and exercises in light of her honesty with herself. For example, in terms of exercise, a person researches which particular routines are of benefit to her and, as such, establishes a standard of exercise that she tries to equal. Her standard is under constant revaluation as she finds a particular routine too difficult, too easy or of minimal benefit. My point is that, insofar as she recognizes her equality to herself – her value – she is honest with herself in terms of setting realistic exercise targets, achieving those targets, and reassessing the value of those targets in critical relationship to the value of herself and of other people.

Thus, we say that a person is honest with herself and not that she is honest with her exercise routine; the exercise routine does not offer her a self-critical evaluation of her honesty that she
must equal. Accordingly, a person cannot find herself – her value in terms of her self-critical evaluation – in her exercise routine. Rather, she finds her value in herself. However, just as we would say a person should be honest with herself, so we say that she should be honest with her neighbor. Thus, there is one activity that sets its own standard of equality against which a person’s honesty can be measured and in which, therefore, a person can find herself. That activity is the activity of “meeting.” Accordingly, when one meets with another person, the quality of the activity of meeting is not only reliant upon one’s own powers of self-critique or the critical powers of other people outside of the activity of the meeting – as is the case with the activity of exercise. Rather, the activity of meeting itself enacts its own self-critical standards in and through which the adequacy of one’s meeting is revaluated and revealed to one in a new light. The adequacy of one’s meeting – one’s attention to oneself and one’s neighbor – constitutes human value. Thus, we may say that the act of meeting – unlike the activity of exercise that is a means to an end outside of itself – has its end in itself. Consequently, we may say that the activity of meeting is truly aesthetic.

The argument of this study is that a person’s meeting with a work of music operates in the same way as a person’s meeting with her neighbor. In other words, a person does not evaluate her attention to music merely in light of her own and her neighbor’s self-critical powers. Rather, as meeting, music itself plays a part in the critical evaluation of the person’s attention that is attentive to it. Thus, where a person’s value is the ongoing revaluation of her attention, she finds herself – her value – in music’s revaluation. Accordingly, insofar as music participates in establishing its own and its participant’s equal value, we may say that it has fundamentally to do with practical reason. At the same time, insofar as a person attends to music for no other reason than she finds herself in her attention to it, we may say that music has fundamentally to do with aesthetics.

I maintain, then, whereas it is improbable that one would ask a person to be honest with the activity of exercise, it is probable that one ask a person to be honest with her neighbor and it is similarly probable to say that a person should be honest with a work of music. But how, then, is the activity of music different from exercise?

In a sense, a person who attends honestly to herself must engage every activity – exercise, meeting and music – with the same willingness and responsibility. However, with an activity
such as running, it is immediately evident that the activity is not equal to itself. A person can set a standard of running that she must equal, but the activity itself does not contain or create that standard. When one attends to a work of music, however, I believe that it is possible to make the argument that the music is equal to itself. That is, it is honest with itself insofar as it is constantly working to recognize and enact its own equality. Thus, it is not merely that a person, insofar as she is equal to herself, works to execute a particular passage of music as she imagines it should go; rather, the music challenges her imagination as it works through its own standards of equality in very much the same way that a partner in a meeting does. Similarly, the individual’s idea of herself as an equal to herself is amplified as the correspondent ideas of equality in the music challenge her ideas and lead her to reevaluate and re-appropriate them. Thus, the person who meets the music meets with herself.

2.4.2 Bourdieu again

In the light, then, of the concept of aesthetics for which I am arguing, Bourdieu’s critique of the “aesthetic disposition” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 3) as an attention to artistic form fails to understand [a] the correspondence of artistic value to human value and [b] that each value can only be constituted aesthetically. That is, the value of the human being and the value of art can only (and must) be revealed through an ongoing self-critical consideration for its own value. Thus, whether or not Bourdieu’s description of the “aesthetic disposition” accurately describes bourgeois artistic attitudes, as a concept his “aesthetic disposition” is inadequate because it falls short of a more adequate notion of aesthetics, a notion fundamental to the value of human life. Bourdieu, of course, would agree that his concept was inadequate, not in light of a larger notion of aesthetics, but rather because he maintains that the whole notion of aesthetics is falsely construed. But if aesthetics is falsely construed, what is the standard of truth in and through which that falsity can be recognized?

The standard of truth is precisely that of the equal value of every human being, which, as I have undertaken to articulate, is constituted in and through an aesthetic attention – a non-functional attention – to every human being as an end in herself. The moment the attention is non-aesthetic, the moment that it has a function, the moment, for example, that I attend to you because I want you to give me money, the equality of human value is lost. The standard of truth, then, that reveals Bourdieu’s “aesthetic disposition” to be false is, in itself, an aesthetic standard. Thus, the
question is not whether or not “aesthetics” exists; rather, the question is whether or not art, and specifically – in the case of my study – music is capable of amplifying aesthetic attention, and therefore human worth and dignity in the way that human meeting is.

2.5 Hegel’s Aesthetics

Hegel makes a fundamental connection between aesthetics and human existence. Thus, in his treatise on aesthetics, he firmly establishes art in the practical realm or in relation to what he calls “the Concept” (the idea of human equality) placing it “in the same sphere as religion and philosophy [where] it is simply one way of bringing to our minds and expressing the Divine, the deepest interests of mankind, and the most comprehensive truths of the spirit” (Hegel, 1975, p. 7).

Hegel’s central claim is that

the universal and absolute need from which art (on its formal side) springs has its origin in the fact that man is a thinking consciousness, i.e. that man draws out of himself and puts before himself what he is and whatever else he is. Things in nature are only immediate and single, while man as spirit duplicates himself, in that (i) he is as things in nature are, but (ii) he is just as much for himself; he sees himself, represents himself to himself, thinks and only on the strength of this active placing himself before himself is he spirit. (Hegel, 1975, p. 31)

Hegel thus argues that art exists insofar as it plays out the relationship between a person and herself, a relationship that he calls “spirit.” In the relationship a person is a physical entity, like other things “in nature.” But she differs from things in nature, in that she exists “just as much for [herself].” Someone who exists for herself cares about how she exists. Her care is not a blind adherence to her whims; rather, she places herself “before herself” and, in her meeting with herself, holds herself to account. In a similar way Hegel argues that while art is physically comprised of words, sounds and images that occur in nature, it exists “just as much” for itself. That is, it plays out, in its unfolding, a meeting that corresponds to a human being’s placement of herself before herself. Human existence is not the goal of human meeting: human existence is human meeting. Thus, artistic meeting is not a route to human existence: it is what human existence is about.

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40 Eagleton misconstrues Hegel in claiming that he “grants art a lowly status within his theoretical system” (Eagleton, 1990, p. 1).
We see that Hegel uses the word “spirit” to articulate human existence as human meeting. For Hegel, a person becomes spirit on the strength of her “active placing of herself before herself.” Spirit is self-reflexivity or what I have called “meeting.” Thus, Hegel keeps “spirit” within the practical realm of human existence; it has both form – in the form of the human being – and content – in the active placing of the human being before herself. In Hegel’s formulation, the human being is reducible neither to her human form nor to her content as the “active placing.” Each – form and content – interpenetrates the other.

In Hegel’s concept of art, then, form and content are similarly related. The relationship does not reduce the meaningful content of a work to its form; nor does it reduce the significance of a work’s form to a generalized content. Hegel is clear that “art has to harmonize [form and content] and bring them into a free reconciled totality” (Hegel, 1975, p. 70). The reconciliation, however, has nothing to do with “universal consensus” (Lyotard, 1984, p. 65), in the postmodern understanding of the concept – the idea of a “grand narrative” (p. 64) that legitimates the disregard of the particular for the supposed good of the whole. Reconciliation has fundamentally to do with meeting (the basis of all genuine critique – including, I argue, that of postmodernism). Hegel articulates the meeting of form and content in and through what he calls “romantic” art (Hegel, 1975, p. 79) – art created in what I have articulated as the modern era. He distinguishes romantic art, on the one hand, from “symbolic” art (p. 76), which leaves the two sides, form and content, “unconquered” (p. 76) and unrelated, and, on the other hand, from “classical” art (p. 77), which collapses each side into the other in “complete unification” (p. 79). Through this distinction, the reader comes to understand that what Hegel means by “reconciliation” is utterly

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41 The latter reduction is commonly found in contemporary sociological critique. Scruton provides an example. He argues that the claim that “Heavy Metal” music expresses (means) “the alienation and frustration of modern youth” (Scruton, 1997, p. 149) fails to distinguish the expression of one piece of “Heavy Metal” music from another. Thus, a piece of music’s individual form is sacrificed to a general idea of its content. The reduction also moves in the opposite direction. The idea that a piece of music’s meaning is co-extensive with its form is an idea that was expressed by the Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce who, like Kant, regarded artistic meaning as intuitive. That is, he maintained that the meaning “of a work of art is integral to the form in which we discover it” (Scruton, 1997, p. 143). In other words, what a work of art means is identical to the form in which it appears; it does not have a content that can be interpreted – either in relationship to the form or independently of it.

42 Hegel’s “romantic” art is not merely art created in what we now call the “romantic” period. Nor does it have to do with “romantic” love.
different from what he means by “unification” – a term which he uses with regard to “classical” art (rather than “romantic” art) and its “complete unification of spiritual and sensuous existence” (p. 79).

2.5.1 The Romantic, The Classical and The Symbolic

Hegel’s three categories of art – the “romantic,” the “classical” and the “symbolic” – recall Kierkegaard’s categories of human existence from Fear and Trembling (see page 36): the “religious,” the “ethical” and the “aesthetic.” I think it would be fruitful to explore Hegel’s categories in more depth, since, just as Kierkegaard’s religious category corresponds to the idea of human existence constituted in and through I-Thou, so Hegel’s conception of the romantic form of art corresponds to my conception of music as meeting. Furthermore, Hegel’s articulation of romantic art constitutes his strongest notion of aesthetics, the focus of the present chapter.

I have indicated that central to the distinction Hegel makes between romantic art, on the one hand, and classical and symbolic art, on the other hand, is the relationship between form and content. The romantic work of art’s form is related to its content such that neither is the form sacrificed to the content nor the content to the form; rather, that each – form and content – interpenetrates the other. I would like to explore this relationship in more actual terms. Insofar, then, that we may conceive of a piece of music that is written, say, in sonata form to be romantic art, we find that the music’s meaning is not commensurate with its form. Rather, the music has a content – a meaning – that is in excess of its form. The content of the music is precisely the music’s challenge of its form – of itself – and its subsequent revaluation and re-appropriation of that form.

Similarly, a work’s meaning is not merely commensurate with its content. In fact, content, insofar as it is without form, is merely “a wild, fermenting power…writhing in dark passions [producing] everything, be it significant or insignificant” (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 15). Thus, the

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43 Hegel writes that “the romantic form of art cancels again the completed unification of the Idea and its reality, and reverts, even if in a higher way, to the difference and opposition of the two sides which in symbolic art remained unconquered” (p. 79). Scruton seems to ignore Hegel’s idea that “romantic…art cancels again the completed unification” and conflates Hegel’s idea of romantic art with classical art, concluding that in “Hegel’s view . . . form and content are inseperable” (Scruton, 1997, p. 151).
form of the work of music gives the “fermenting power” structure and direction. However, in
romantic art, the music’s form does not suck the meaning out of the “fermenting power” – the
content – collapsing it, as it were, into appropriate moulds and shapes that have been deemed
“beautiful.” Rather, the music’s form provides the “fermenting power” with a context, as it were,
in which to make sense of itself. It turns out, then, that the music’s content – its meaning – is
precisely its work to “make sense of itself.” Thus the “fermenting power” critically reflects upon
itself in and through its form and creates an entirely different structure – a structure of “infinite
difference” – that has nothing to do with the content’s mere conformity to (unity with), or its
simple resistance to, its form. Rather, the “entirely different structure” has to do with music’s
self-critical meeting. Consequently, we may say that the content and the structure of the romantic
form of art – in this case music – is music’s meeting with itself.

Thus, where “truth” is the ongoing process of working out the critical relationship between form
and content – whether it is the form and content of art, or the form of everyday life and the
relationship of that form to some meaningful content – Hegel writes that “art’s vocation is to
unveil the truth in the form of sensuous artistic configuration, to set forth the reconciled
opposition [of form and content] and so to have its end and aim in itself, in this very setting forth
and unveiling” (Hegel, 1975, p. 55). The question of how art and music, in particular, achieves
this is the central concern of this dissertation.

In light, then, of the romantic form of art, we recognize that Hegel’s symbolic and classical
forms of art correspond to the ideas that art is commensurate with its content, on the one hand,
and commensurate with its form, on the other hand. It is useful, once more, to note the
relationship between Kierkegaard’s categories of the aesthetic and the ethical and Hegel’s
categories of the symbolic and the classical forms of art. Where Kierkegaard locates the aesthetic
hero and the ethical hero in the ancient world, so Hegel locates symbolic art in ancient Egypt and
classical art in ancient Greece.

Accordingly, Hegel argues that in ancient Egyptian art the “Idea, still in its indeterminacy and
obscurity, is made the content of artistic shapes” (p.76). The “Idea” of art – the ideal, so to speak,
of artistic beauty – insofar as it is indeterminate, i.e., “a wild, fermenting power” (Kierkegaard,
1983, p. 15), without a form in and through which to manifest itself, is symbolized rather than
represented in the art work. For example, Hegel observes that an “unknown block of stone may
symbolize [say] the Divine, but it does not represent it. Its natural shape has no connection with the Divine . . . . When shaping begins, the shapes produced are symbols . . . but in themselves are fantastic and monstrous” (p. 76). We learn, then, that “the [symbolic form] of art is . . . rather a mere search for portrayal than a capacity for true presentation; the Idea has not found the form even in itself and therefore remains struggling and striving after it” (p. 76).

In ancient Greek art, however, the Idea – the ideal of beauty – finds its determinacy in the human form. The human form is “the shape peculiarly appropriate to the Idea itself in its essential nature. With this shape . . . the Idea is able to come into free and complete harmony” (p.77). In classical art we may conceive of the Idea as the “spiritual” (p. 78) or what Socrates calls the “soul” (Plato, 1981, p. 117). Thus, since the Idea is “the truly inner self” (Hegel, 1975, p. 78) (not to be confused with the self as I-Thou), it is most adequately expressed in the human form. Accordingly, the classical form of art purifies the human form in and through its representations of gods and heroes in the form of statues “in order to express in itself a content adequate to itself” (p. 78). In other words, the content of classical art – the Idea of spirituality – is commensurate with the form in which it appears.

It turns out, however, that precisely because the content of classical art, i.e., spirituality, must be commensurate with the form in which it is articulated – for otherwise the art form becomes merely an appearance of spirituality and not spirituality itself – classical statues (art) may not “[tower] beyond and above [the] expression [of the human form]” (p. 78). Thus, spirituality is “particular and human” (p.79). But because it is “particular and human” it is not “purely absolute,” and, accordingly, is indistinguishable from the human being. Thus, as the mere appearance of spirituality and with no recognizable interpretation or critique of its meaning, the classical form of art is empty. Indeed, Hegel remarks that Greek statues “are portrayed as [being] solitary, [and] alone with themselves in blessed repose, and yet they retain an air of lifelessness, [and] an aloofness from feeling” (Hegel, 1975 p. 503).

With the romantic form of art, then, the spiritual content of, say, a piece of music meets itself, and works itself out, in and through its form, transforming its form in its very meeting. But the meeting is not dependent upon the piece of music’s form – it does not arise as a result of it. However, without its form the music’s meeting cannot take place. In other words, simply by taking the “fermenting power” of random musical sounds and placing them within the strictures
of a musical form is not enough to produce romantic art. Either the random musical sounds collapse into the form – are dominated by it – or the form is collapsed into – becomes – the random musical sounds. It remains, however, that without the form and without the content – the random musical sounds – the romantic form of art, the art that we call music, cannot come into existence.

2.6 Johnson

In his book *Who Needs Classical Music?*, Julian Johnson articulates the form and content of what he calls “discursive music” (Johnson, 2002, p. 69) in terms of Hegel’s definition of art as “the shining forth of a spiritual content through a sensuous form” (Hegel quoted in Johnson p. 59). What is critical, if the definition is not to be dismissed as western hegemonic rhetoric, is our understanding of the words “spiritual content.” Johnson argues that a musical work’s “spiritual content” is its “self-conscious attention to its own musical language” (p. 3), and he spends much of the book developing this argument. In respect of this argument, the book is central to my own research. Johnson derives musical meaning via my third route. Indeed, in terms of meeting, he ends his book with the assertion that art “requires us to come out to meet it” (p. 130). Art’s meaning, then, is found precisely in our engagement with it and not in something that we associate with it. But while Johnson specifically focuses on “classical music” and its role in present day society, I am more concerned with his idea of musical engagement and how his notion of music’s “self-conscious attention” relates to it.

I shall draw upon Johnson’s work in the next chapter. However, before I move on to a discussion of aesthetics in contemporary music education, I would like to comment on Richard Taruskin’s polemical review of Johnson’s book in *The New Republic* (2007). Taruskin, eminent musicologist and author of *The Oxford History of Western Music*, characterizes Johnson’s book as an attempt to cope with what he describes as the “new pressure that classical music go out and earn its living” by “hol[ing] up in such sanctuary as still exists and hurl[ing] imprecations and exhortations” (Taruskin, 2007, section II, para. 2).

Taruskin begins by stating that “the primary assertion [of the book], made on the first page of Johnson's introduction and reiterated endlessly thereafter, is that classical music is uniquely distinguished by ‘its claim to function as art, as opposed to entertainment’” (Taruskin, 2007, section III, para. 9). The phrase that Taruskin quotes actually appears on page six of Johnson’s
book, not on “the first page,” where, in contrast to Taruskin’s own assertion, Johnson’s “primary assertion” is that “central to [his] argument is the idea that classical music is distinguished by a self-conscious attention to its own musical language” (Johnson, 2002, p. 3). Taruskin lifts the quotation concerning “entertainment” and presents it as the “primary assertion” using, in his own text, Johnson’s words, “distinguished by.” The effect of Taruskin’s manipulation of Johnson’s text is to misrepresent the primary concern of Johnson’s work, which is not to talk about why music as entertainment is “bad,” but rather to talk about why “art music” is meaningful, in terms of its “self-conscious attention [to itself]” and why its meaning cannot be accounted for in terms of “marketplace validation” (p. 16). In this way Taruskin avoids ever addressing Johnson’s “central . . . argument” (p. 3).

There is no doubt that Johnson makes a distinction between popular and classical music. But the distinction he makes is not between material, everyday life and some kind of disembodied, spiritual ideal. The distinction, rather, is between, on the one hand, everyday life that is commensurate with itself – or, conversely, idealism that is commensurate with itself – and, on the other hand, everyday life that, through our idea of the dignity and worth of human beings – in terms of law and education (p. 25) – exceeds itself and becomes itself, time and again. The distinction here is the same distinction that Johnson makes between surface and depth: between, on the one hand, materiality that, as identical with itself, is irrevocably opposed to spirituality (and vice-versa), and, on the other hand, spirituality, which is the working through of one’s self-conscious relationship with materiality. Taruskin, in misunderstanding Johnson’s distinction, reduces it to the former opposition claiming that his “harangue” is a “false dichotomization of the material and spiritual (as if, [Taruskin scoffs], classical music did not have a material presence)” (Taruskin, 2007, section III, para. 16).

Taruskin’s main argument is that “classical music is not dying; it is changing” and that the change cannot be stopped. “Belief in [classical music’s] indispensability” he argues, “or in its cultural superiority, is by now unrecoverable, and those [like Johnson] who mount such arguments on its behalf morally indict themselves . . . . What is reprehensible is to see its cause as right against some wrong” (section I, para. 8). What is unclear, however, given Taruskin’s critique, is how he views his own position with regard to “classical music.” How does Taruskin constitute what he calls, in the article, his “beloved repertoire” (section I, para. 7)? The word “beloved” implies that he values “classical music.” In fact, the whole diatribe against Johnson
has the ring, itself, of an offensive against the “wrong” way of talking about “classical music.” I understand that the implication of Taruskin’s critique is that what a person values – say, classical music – must not be at the expense of what someone else values. Thus, all values would seem to be valuable. But if all values are valuable, and someone like Johnson finds value in writing a “defense” (if that’s what it is) of classical music, in which “right” way is Taruskin construing his own, written critique of what Johnson finds valuable?

Taruskin’s “right” way (or is it the “wrong” way?) is presumably to say nothing. His way is to carry on writing volumes on the history of western music as if the music somehow moved through history, its changing path shaped by the fateful hand of society. To this extent, Taruskin’s approach is wholly elite: his music is “beloved” and hence valued. But he is wholly unwilling to address why it is valuable and to share that value with others. Classical music has value, but insofar as its value cannot be worked out in self-critical terms between people – terms of right and wrong – that value must presumably be given through some mystical and transcendent power. Johnson, on the other hand, is concerned to share with others what it is about interaction with classical music that he believes to be meaningful. He publishes his ideas in a book; they can be discussed, rejected and revaluated. Johnson does not hide the fact that he makes distinctions of value. Taruskin, however, does hide the distinctions he makes insofar as he fails to relate the “value” according to which he judges Johnson’s critique to be worthless to the “value” according to which he constitutes “classical music” as “beloved.”

3 Aesthetics and Education

3.1 Reimer, Meyer and Langer

Johnson’s book addresses many of the issues that are found in contemporary music education: issues of gender, race and class. His concern is to show that “discursive music” and the “aesthetic attitude” fundamentally involve the self-critical relationship of music’s form to its content. The active recognition of this relationship in and through musical meeting precludes the reduction of music to a function of either form or content and demands that the strong critique that has been brought to bear upon a music education curriculum, when founded upon such a reduction – the reduction, say, of aesthetics to form – be revaluated. That is not to say that the
critique is misguided. Rather, that is to say that what is being critiqued is merely the reduction of a larger concept – the concept of aesthetics. In other words, it should not be imagined that because aesthetics can be conceived of inadequately the whole concept should be invalidated.

Bennett Reimer formally articulated music education as “aesthetic education” (Reimer, 1989, p. xi) in 1970 in his book *A Philosophy of Music Education*. The book was re-issued in 1989, but its latest version appeared in 2003 under the revised title *A Philosophy of Music Education: advancing the vision* and was in response to strong criticism of the previous two editions from feminists, sociologists and fellow philosophers. The 2003 edition attempts to address the criticism leveled at the previous two editions. However, I do not believe that it offers any more insight into how Reimer actually conceives of the concept of aesthetics than did the previous editions. Consequently, I have chosen to address the 1989 edition, which was the edition that acted as a catalyst for the change in the way that music educators conceived of music education.

In terms of my own project, Reimer begins the book promisingly by distinguishing his idea of aesthetic appreciation from the idea of “arts for arts sake or music for music’s sake” (Reimer, 1989, p. xii). By “arts for arts sake” Reimer means “art or music [that seems to be] unrelated to the everyday lives that we as human beings actually live” (p. xii). Reimer articulates his own idea of “aesthetic appreciation” as a “person’s natural responsiveness to the power of the art of music” (p. xii) – distinct from music’s “many important non-musical or non-artistic functions” (p. xii) – as the proper focus of music education.

From the outset, Reimer articulates his aesthetic position as that of an “absolute expressionist” (p. 27) a term whose authority he locates in Leonard B Meyer’s seminal book, *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (1970). Meyer, and following him Reimer, distinguishes absolute expressionism from, on the one hand absolutism – the location of musical meaning purely in the music itself – and, on the other hand, referentialism – the additional location of musical meaning in external associations. Meyer, however, makes a further distinction that Reimer does not appear to follow. Namely, he explains that the absolutist/referentialist distinction is not the same distinction as the distinction between what he calls formalism and expressionism.

Both formalists and expressionists may be absolutists; that is, both may see the meaning of music as being essentially intramusical (non-referential); but the formalist would contend that the meaning of the music lies in the perception and understanding of the musical relationships set forth in the work of art and that the meaning in music is
primarily intellectual, while the expressionist would argue that these same relationships are in some sense capable of exciting feelings and emotions in the listener. (Meyer, 1970, p. 3)

Thus, while almost all referentialists are expressionists, insofar as they believe that musical meaning is emotional, not all expressionists are referentialists. Accordingly, there are two types of expressionist: absolute expressionists and referential expressionists. Meyer is concerned only with the former.

Meyer develops a theory of musical meaning that he refers to as “embodied” (Meyer, 1970, p. 35). A musical stimulus points, not to extra-musical referents, but rather to other musical events that are about to happen. The emotions that we witness in listening to or performing music relate to whether we understand the enactment of the stimuli/event connection to be successful. In other words, if we expect a certain musical conclusion to a particular musical beginning, and this expectation is disturbed, we feel emotion in the way a “habitual smoker” (p. 25) feels frustrated when, on automatically reaching for his cigarettes, he finds they are not there. Meyer is extremely articulate and thoughtful in his book. In terms of my project I find Meyer’s focus upon the relationship of the musical events and his theory about how this relationship creates meaning for the musical participant to be entirely relevant. I believe that Meyer’s theory offers us a way of beginning to think about musical relationships as meaningful in terms other than those that have purely to do with formal analysis. However, it does not yet provide a way of understanding how the emotions that we feel are meaningful in a way that actually has an impact on our lives. For example, to be meaningful the emotion felt by the “habitual smoker” who found she had no cigarettes would have to be more than a purely private reaction. That is, for the smoker to recognize her emotion as meaningful she would have to work it out in a larger context. Her emotion becomes meaningful when she recognizes that she craves a cigarette but, at the same time, understands that she must control her craving insofar as she must continue to get along with herself and her friends until she has a reasonable opportunity to get one. She cannot simply have a fit in the street or interrupt her meeting to go out to the store. Thus, while Meyer’s theory makes sense on an initial level, insofar as it explains the immediate emotions invoked by a musical phrase, it is, I maintain, the “interrogation of human [emotion], and not the [emotion] itself” (Scruton, 1997, p. 155) that is witnessed as meaningful. How one articulates that “interrogation” in musical terms is the subject of the next chapter.
Meyer’s intention is to articulate the fundamental relationship between emotions witnessed in everyday life and emotions witnessed in musical interaction. He does not conceive of music as a function of human life that is meaningful to human beings insofar as it points to that function. Nor does he collapse musical meaning into the unknowable inner life of its form (or the human being’s form). In contrast, he tries to show how the structure of music actually enacts our emotional lives in such a way that music has a content that is recognizable and relevant to human beings but, at the same time, maintains its musical form. I understand this to be the essence of absolute expressionism, the very corner stone that Reimer claims for his philosophy.

Reimer is ultimately clear that absolute expressionism relates musical meaning to actual “feelings” (Reimer, 1989, p. 28) that are felt in the course of musical interaction and not to “intellectualism” (p. 28). He is also clear that feelings are related to the music itself rather than to an extra-musical connection. However, he is confused and confusing about the meaning of absolute expressionism, and he does not sufficiently articulate how a person’s feelings are related to the musical forms that cause them. In fact, it is not until Reimer is well into the text (page 131) that he makes a brief reference to Meyer’s actual theory of frustrated expectation.

Reimer’s main contention is that “Creating music as musicians, and listening to music creatively, do precisely for feeling what writing and reading do for reasoning” (p. 33). Artistic meaning – as musical creativity – has little to do with concepts that are thought: it has to do with what Reimer calls “perceptual structuring” (p. 87). Each perception produces an utterly unique and subjective feeling that “is not available through concepts” (p. 87). Reimer maintains that, whereas concepts require some kind of consensual or reasoned agreement between thinking people, “the nature of an expressive form is such that a single agreed-upon meaning acceptable to everyone is neither possible nor desirable” (p. 87). Still despite the non-conceptual, unreasoned, un-thought particularity of each student’s subjective feeling, Reimer makes the concept of “sharing” central to his idea of education. Thus, he argues that “the primary function of aesthetic education…is to help people share meanings which come from expressive forms” (p. 95). Reimer holds that art involves sharing in that its “major function…is to make objective and therefore accessible the subjective realm of human responsiveness” (p. 53). However, Reimer has already told us that the “subjective realm” is unique to each student, such that any “agreed-upon” interpretation is impossible. Furthermore, if the music’s meaning is “not available through concepts” (p. 87) it is not clear how the subject herself will begin to articulate to herself her
subjective response. Thus, it is difficult to understand, at least from Reimer’s presentation, how, if education has to do with “sharing,” music education as aesthetic education is educational. I cannot share something with you if neither you nor I can recognize what it is I am sharing.

The latter argument can also be made against Suzanne Langer’s writings on musical meaning in her book, *Philosophy in a New Key* (1957). Langer argues that “music at its highest, though clearly a symbolic form, is an unconsummated symbol” (p. 240). That is, music is a symbol that has no referent. But, according to Langer, the musical symbol is meaningful in itself, without reference to the symbol’s intentionality. The musical symbol has an “inner life” whose meaning functions in terms of its form rather than in terms of what that form refers to. The “inner life” of music is meaningful because it corresponds to the “inner life” of human beings – a life that exists independently of any “agreed-upon” or “recognizable” outer intentions. But I maintain that it is precisely due to its recognition, in and through its outer intentions, that we can even talk about an inner world. If there were an “inner life” that was purely “inner,” we could not discuss it.

3.2 Koza, McClary and Gould

Today, scholars in music education, at least in North America, have moved away from the idea of music education as aesthetic education primarily because of the sociological criticism of aesthetics set forth by writers such as Bourdieu and Eagleton. Reimer’s inability to show how aesthetic interaction is at once universal and particular, simultaneously shared and unique, allows his statements such as the “universal appeal to the human mind and heart” (Reimer, 1989, p. xii) to be interpreted as being willfully insensitive to issues of gender, race and class that are wrapped up in the music’s production. Accordingly, in an article in 1994, the feminist writer Julia Eklund Koza directly attacks Reimer’s work, arguing that “he indicates that socio-political dimensions of music should not be of primary concern to aestheticians and educators. He never discusses gender or power” (Koza, 1994, p. 75).

The sociological critique of aesthetic education is closely linked to feminist critique. In her “feminist critique [of] music education philosophy” (Gould, 2004, p. 70), Gould notes Lamb’s (1993) claim that “aesthetic education is rooted in eighteenth-century sexual, racial, cultural politics that systematically excluded women and non-white men in ways that were decidedly ‘not innocent’” (p. 71). Lamb argues that such exclusion is present in music claiming that “the structural tenets of [western] music resemble male heterosexuality” (Lamb, 1993, p. 8) in terms
of ultimate domination of the principal, tonic theme (male), over and above the secondary
dominant theme (female) in classical sonata form. McClary supports Lamb’s argument in her
analysis of the second movement of the cantata *Wachet Auf* in which she argues that “Bach
brings the musical apparatus of his day to bear on the construction of gender” (McClary, 1987, p.
53). The thrust of McClary’s critique is that, in the dialogue between Christ (Bass) and a Soul
(Soprano), the musical interaction represents the soul as “a nagging, passive-aggressive wife,
insecurely whining for repeated assurances of love” with Christ who “patronizingly [puts] up
with [her] complaining” (p. 53).

This kind of feminist critique claims to interrogate rigorously the idea of aesthetic meaning and
to replace it with a kind of referential meaning. Music’s meaning is understood in and through
the conditions of its production and consumption to which its very existence tacitly refers:
conditions that were inherently misogynist, elitist, racist and so forth. But, as I pointed out
earlier, feminist critique is also concerned to show that, in addition to acting as a signifier for
such meanings, music also embodies them. In the latter respect, feminist readings of music are
not unlike Meyer’s theory of frustrated musical expectation. The tension and resolution of
sonata-form movements invokes very real human emotions: emotions that are found in human
existence and evoked in correspondent conditions. The argument that I made against Meyer’s
theory of musical meaning, however, may also be made against the feminist theory of musical
meaning. It may well be that emotions are aroused through musical tension and resolution and
that this dynamic is consciously or unconsciously witnessed by the musical participant as
corresponding to male/female relationships. What is significant, though, is how these emotions
then become meaningful.

In feminist interpretation, the emotions become meaningful in and through a context that
understands the so-called meta-narrative of tension and resolution in terms of the ethically unjust
subjugation of women by men. But this context is not musical. One cannot understand the
injustice of subjugation purely from hearing it mirrored in the music unless the music itself
provides the larger context of equality in and through which subjugation can be recognized. I am
not denying that the stereotypical male/female relationship might be represented in musical form.
I am denying that its representation, in and of itself, is meaningful in purely musical terms. To
this extent sociological critique and feminist critique constitute musical meaning in terms of my
second route: what is witnessed as ultimately meaningful is not the music but that for which it provides the stimulus.

3.3 Elliott

The predominant music education philosophy to emerge in the wake of the critique of music education as aesthetic education was called “Praxial Music Education” (Elliott, 2005, p. 1). Praxial music education is an idea that David Elliott set forth in *Music Matters: A New Philosophy of Music Education* (1995). Elliott argues that, in contrast to the idea that musical meaning is aesthetic, musical meaning is primarily a matter of action: it is “something people do” (Elliott, 1995, p. 49). In terms, then, of “action,” Elliott locates the meaning of music in the “control” that a person achieves, by virtue of her “musical knowledge” (p. 72), in challenging situations. Thus, musical meaning, according to Elliott, is essentially experienced in terms of mastery or success. Accordingly, Elliott draws on Csikszentmihalyi’s (1997) model of “flow” to explain how “success” strengthens the image of self (Elliott, 1995, p. 114). However, while one may achieve “flow” in musical participation, in and of itself, “flow” is not meaningful. Indeed, Csikszentmihalyi is clear that “[flow] is a source of psychic energy…[that] focuses attention and motivates action. Like other forms of energy, it is neutral” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 140). Thus, if a student achieves “flow” in a musical performance, that does not mean that the musical performance is automatically valuable. It only becomes valuable if a person constitutes it as such. In other words, a person’s musical performance is only meaningful in terms of “flow” if she relates her experience of “flow” to her ongoing work to attend adequately to herself and to her performance of the music in a way that she imagines to be adequate for herself and for her neighbor.

I have included a brief critique of praxial music education in my discussion of aesthetics since while it seems to be opposed to aesthetic education, I maintain that it is not possible to articulate an adequate concept of praxial music education without recourse to the idea of aesthetics. In a sense, then, whereas it may appear that the philosophies of praxial and aesthetic music education are diametrically opposed, however, since each philosophy fails to properly account for the true centrality of aesthetics, each philosophy is the same. Where musical meaning in aesthetic music education is “pre-conceptual,” musical meaning in praxial music education is rooted in the so-called “reality” of practice. Proponents of both philosophies, however, fail to recognize that what
matters in music education is the existence of the human being – the student – who, as truly aesthetic, tests or meets herself and simultaneously creates herself in and through the contexts of both the idea that musical meaning is “pre-conceptual” and the idea that music is “praxis.”

3.4 Westerlund and Dewey

The seeming dichotomy between praxial and aesthetic music education, prevalent in the current music education debate, mirrors the dichotomy that is allowed to come between the content and the form of a work of music if one is not careful to hold them together. Where praxial music education is all about the content of “doing,” with, apparently, little concern for what music is being done (provided that it has just the right amount of complexity for a student to achieve “flow”), aesthetic music education is all about feelings conjured up in specific musical forms. While it is clear that the latter forms must be of a specific “artistic quality” (Reimer, 1989, p. 96), since the relationship between the feelings and the music cannot be “agreed upon,” “artistic quality” is a blind criterion. Accordingly, while the meaning that praxial music education ascribes to a musical work relates to the second route of meaning – that of association – insofar as a particular “doing” is associated with positive action within a broader human context, aesthetic music education ascribes to the first route of meaning: meaning that cannot be talked about. And yet, of course, as we have seen, Reimer emphasizes throughout that musical meaning is shared.

In her article, “Reconsidering Aesthetic Experience in Praxial Music Education” (2003), Heidi Westerlund presents an idea of meaningful musical interaction that relates to my third route of musical meaning. She argues that praxial music education is not exclusive of aesthetic music education and, accordingly, that music’s content or function is no more exclusive of its form than the form is exclusive of its content. She draws primarily on Dewey’s notion of “esthetic experience” (Dewey, 1980, p. 10), which, she argues, is “(1) as much a social construction as [it is] an individual experience; (2) part of everyday life and not transcendental [when transcendence is understood as a detachment from everyday life]; (3) integral to artistic actions and not just a matter of artistic object and the appreciating subject; (4) a matter of quality of interaction in context and not a universal property of an object; and (5) embodied in nature [in a physical form] and not abstract” (Westerlund, 2003, p. 46). While I do not intend to examine Westerlund’s work in detail, on the whole I believe that these claims coincide with my own
project. Westerlund argues that Dewey’s aesthetic experience involves an attitude that is never simply “inward and private” (p. 48). As a person attends to music, she becomes mindful of her attention: she makes her attention public insofar as it becomes known to herself. In this way, her attention to the music fosters her own attention to herself. Because she is attentive to herself, she is concerned with the music to which she attends. One might say that because she cares about herself she cares what she cares about.

4 More Sociological Perspectives

4.1 Adorno

Whereas it may seem that music education as “aesthetic education” (Reimer, 1989, p. xi) is concerned primarily with music’s form and praxial music education is concerned primarily with music’s function, the critical theorist, Theodor Adorno, is concerned to show that the music’s form is identical with its content. He argues, that the musical “fetish” (Adorno, 1978, p. 78) is “akin to a ‘rip-off,’ a fraudulent promise of happiness which, instead of happiness, installs itself” (Adorno, 1976, p. 45). The “musical fetish” is an aesthetic ideal. It is an ideal generated by a capitalist, bourgeois society to stop people thinking about the truth of their condition. Thus, in his book, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music* (1976), Adorno writes that “music [becomes] ideological where the circumstances of production in it gain primacy over the productive forces. What should be shown [in sociology] is what can make it ideological: engendering a false consciousness; transfiguring so as to divert from the banality of existence; duplicating and thus only reinforcing that existence” (Adorno, 1976, p. 223). In this respect, Adorno believes that what he calls the musical “fetish” (Scruton, 1997, p. 468) is “commensurable...with the outside world of social reality. It is the objective reflection of a society that has no better argument for its perpetuation than the tautology of – to use its jargon – being ‘all right’”’ (Adorno, 1976, p. 44).

Thus, on the one hand, Adorno seems to understand music as being meaningful in a negative sense. Music acts as a symbol for a way of life that is “all right” (but clearly, in his judgment, not “all right”). The specific musical interaction is of less concern than the association of certain musical conventions – namely tonality – that represent the status quo of society, leaving it unchallenged. On the other hand, Adorno argues that music’s true function must be to become a “critical instrument” and to “defy aesthetic expectations” (Scruton, 1997, p. 470). In this respect, the task of the artist is to reveal the ideological nature of society: to “reflect without concessions
everything that society prefers to forget” (Adorno, 1973, p. 14). Whether meaning is constituted in terms of a work of music’s reflection of, or its resistance to, the societal norms of its production, it is clear that its meaning is not located in the meeting of its parts and its participants. Rather, the music appears to be meaningful insofar as it is used as a tool to support or critique the validity of a socio-political system. In this respect, Adorno derives musical significance from the second route of musical meaning: that of association.

4.2 Small

The music educator and sociologist, Christopher Small, like Adorno, appears to constitute musical meaning via what I have called my second route. He, too, maintains that music is meaningful insofar as its form is associated with what he calls the form of “ideal [human] relationships” (Small, 1998, p. 183). In contrast to Adorno, however, while Small is critical of the imposition of these “ideal relationships” and their correspondent musical associations on all people, he refuses to evaluate the relationships themselves. However, because he maintains that he is not concerned with the value of the “relationships,” it turns out that the meaning of the music with which the “relationships” are associated is empty.

On several occasions in the past four years, colleagues and critics have related my research – the idea of musical meeting – to the research of Small, homing in, as it were, on the commonality of our seemingly mutual idea of “relationship.” Indeed, it is the case that I find that many of Small’s ideas, taken in and of themselves, resonate with my own ideas. However, central to Small’s argument is his concept of musicking. Musicking, derived from Small’s own verb “to music” – a verb which means “to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance” (p. 9) – “is not concerned with valuation” (p. 9). In contrast, however, my own project has fundamentally to do with valuation. It has to do with the value of listening to, performing or composing music that is constituted in terms of what it means to be a human being.

In Musicking (1998), Small’s central question is “what’s really going on [in musical performance]?” (Small, 1998, p. 10). To this end, he examines the complex web of beliefs, expectations, rituals, visions, gestures and so on that constitute “a ceremony in which the values – which is to say the concepts of what constitute right relationships [in light of expectations, ritual etc.] – of [a particular] group are explored, affirmed, and celebrated” (p. 183). However, because his central question “what’s really going on” is unconcerned with the evaluation of the
“values [that are]…explored, affirmed, and celebrated” and because he presents, as it were, a
description rather than a critical interpretation of those “values,” the relationships that Small
constitutes in and through musical practice are static rather than dynamic. That is, Small gives no
indication that the participants that act within a particular relationship (audience/performer,
music/context) are empowered, by virtue of the relationship, to become self-critical with regard
to their actions.

Small’s focus is the performance context of western art music. Thus, he constitutes the set of
relationships involved in the practice of symphonic performance in the following way. “The
symphony concert,” he argues, “[is] an instrument for the reassurance of the industrial middle
and upper classes, for the presentation to themselves of their values and their ideal relationships,
and for persuading those who take part that their values, their concepts of relationship, are true
and will last” (p. 193). For Small, then, the symphony and the concerto act as a kind of “meta-
narrative” (p. 187). The term “meta-narrative” is pejorative and, as I indicated in Chapter II, used
by Lyotard to refer to the story of modernist emancipation: the overcoming of “one force by [the
individual], and the celebration of victory” (p. 188), the validity of which is founded upon ideas
that are assumed to be universal and true.

It is difficult, at times, to understand “what’s really going on [in Small’s argument]” (p. 10)
precisely because the writer makes value judgments yet claims not to. Accordingly, on the one
hand, Small presents a strong critique of western art music and the concert tradition. On the other
hand, he claims that the practice of western art music represents “ideal relationships” which,
while they do not “actually exist in our lives” (p. 183), nevertheless mirror our “deepest desires
and beliefs” (p. 200). It is this mirroring, he argues, that makes musicking central to our
existence. But it is difficult to see how “symphonic” musicking can be central to our lives if, as
Small claims, the value that it “explores, affirms and celebrates” fundamentally involves its
dogmatic imposition on, and subsequent exclusion of, the musicking of people of other genders,
races, classes and musical capabilities.

I do not believe that the apparent contradiction in the value of symphonic music – the centrality
of its “ideal relationships” versus the negation of people who have different “ideal relationships”
– can be adequately accounted for by declaring that the music is valuable for some people and
not for others. Small tells us that the participants in symphonic practice necessarily constitute it
in terms of its universality. The symphony itself, he argues, involves patterns of conflict and resolution that are assumed by its participants to mirror the “deepest beliefs” of all people. How, then, is it possible for a person, on the one hand, to assume universal meaning in symphonic practice and to find resonance in the unfolding of the symphony as a “meta-narrative,” and, on the other hand, to understand the assumption and the resonance to be only partially true?

First, then, Small argues that symphonic practice is commensurate with a meta-narrative that presents the relationships within its text as “ideal” and good for all people. Second, participants involved in symphonic practice must understand “what’s really going on” and revaluate the universal applicability of the meta-narrative as good, only, for some people. Because Small fails to address how these two seemingly opposed attitudes work together, the reader or symphonic practitioner is apparently left with just two courses of action (which, I maintain, are actually adopted in present day society). Either a person will continue to find symphonic practice, as universal, meaningful but must deny its partiality. Or a person will find symphonic practice, as partial, meaningless, because it belies its partiality by falsely presenting itself as universal. It seems that for symphonic practice to continue to be meaningful for a person who recognizes, and takes into account, Small’s analysis, the act of musicking would have to unfold as a meta-narrative and, at the same time, to critique that unfolding. A person would have to re-interpret symphonic practice in such a way that it re-presents her with relationships that contain within their structure the self-critical awareness that they cannot uniformly impose themselves upon all people. But such a re-interpretation would imply a disjuncture in Small’s complete notion of the symphony as a “meta-narrative.” It follows, then, that if symphonic practice is not merely a fixed set of “ideal relationships” – if it is possible for a person to re-interpret them – Small must re-constitute symphonic practice such that it includes within that practice the power to recognize and critique the assumption that the relationships that it presents tell a universal story.

I argue, then, that the “universal story” is the story of aesthetics – the story of the music’s mindfulness of its own musical unfolding – a story that the musical participant recognizes as her own story and the story of every other human being.

4.3 DeNora

Like Adorno and Small, the sociologist Tia DeNora is concerned with music’s “force in social life” (DeNora, 2000, p. ix). Accordingly, in her book *Music in Everyday Life* (2000), she
concludes that, rather than making something happen, music itself is “a way of happening” (p.158). But my concern, in relationship to her theory, is whether music itself “is a way of happening” or rather, as seems to be the case from the examples she provides, whether music is merely a mirror of “a way of happening,” a “way” that is found in the broader spectrum of human existence. If the latter is true, it is not the music that is the “force in social life;” rather, it is that which it mirrors.

4.3.1 Role Reflection

DeNora relates an interview with a “respondent” named Lucy who finds that it is a “juicy chord” (p. 68) in music that appeals to her rather than a melodic line. “When pressed further” (p. 69), Lucy articulates her appreciation in terms of her role as an alto in the choir. She enjoys being “part of a group” rather than in the “limelight,” consequently she is drawn to chords rather than to tunes. DeNora argues that Lucy “‘finds herself’ . . . in certain musical structures” (p. 69) in the sense that she sees a reflection of her role in music. Thus, the music becomes a mirror in which she sees her “self-identity” (p. 69).

There are two main issues that I wish to discuss in relationship to DeNora’s and Lucy’s interpretation of musical meaning. First, if Lucy finds a juicy chord meaningful because its structural role in the music mirrors her preferred role in life, it is not, primarily, reflection upon the music that she finds meaningful; rather, it is reflection upon her role in life, supported or triggered by the music, that she finds meaningful. Why her reflection upon her role in life is meaningful to her is another question. There are many people who play “alto” roles – roles out of the limelight – in life and, on this account, find life meaningless. Second, the music that Lucy describes is not structured simply in terms of “foreground” and “background.” The two are fundamentally interrelated, as Lucy’s preference of the “juicy chords” over and above the melody demonstrates. Thus, even if it were that the music acted as a mirror for Lucy’s self-identity, neither the “juicy chord” nor her self-identity is commensurate with the background. Rather, she herself “spotlights” (p. 69) herself as she “does her bit” (p. 69). I am not suggesting that a particular genre of music cannot act as a symbol for self-identity in the way that Heavy Metal music acts as a symbol for the “alienation and frustration of modern youth” (Scruton, 1997, p. 149). However, I would like to suggest an alternative interpretation of why Lucy finds meaning in the “juicy chords.”
My suggestion is that what Lucy finds meaningful is the way in which the musical tones relate to one another. What she finds meaningful is the way that the chord subverts the melody, or places it in an entirely new light or the way that the chord evolves, as it were, from the music that surrounds it. Thus, the music does, indeed, play a part in Lucy’s “self-identity,” but not as a mirror. Rather, the music is precisely what DeNora calls a “happening,” a “happening” that she recognizes and brings into being as she makes unique connections between the musical events, connections that simultaneously bring her into being. In other words, as she attends to the musical connections that she makes, she considers and attends to herself. Thus, it is not that Lucy sees an association between the pattern of the music and the pattern of her life that she somehow finds meaningful. In contrast, it is that she witnesses her interaction with the music as being meaningful and finds the meaning of her life in that interaction.

4.3.2 Care of Self

Elsewhere in her book DeNora views music as a “force in social life” in terms of what she calls “care of self” (DeNora, 2000, p. 53). I point this out because I consider that it is important and fruitful to examine how DeNora’s concept of “care of self” differs from what I have articulated as consideration for, and attention to, self. The primary difference is that, on the one hand, in DeNora’s concept, music is a tool that is used by someone to achieve a pre-determined notion of “care of self.” On the other hand, in my concept, the music fundamentally participates in constituting what it means to consider and to attend to oneself and, in its participation, enacts consideration and attention.

Let us explore the latter difference in more depth. DeNora’s respondents constitute “care of self” in the following way:

Music is an accomplice [used] in attaining, enhancing and maintaining desired states of feeling and bodily energy; it is a vehicle [respondents] use to move out of dispreferred states (such as stress or fatigue). It is a resource for modulating and structuring the parameters of aesthetic energy – feeling, motivation, desire, comportment, action style, energy. By this, what respondents often mean is that its specific properties – its rhythms, gestures, harmonies, styles and so on – are used as referents or representations of where they wish to be or go, emotionally, physically and so on. (p. 53)

A person who uses music as “an accomplice” has an idea of a particular state of being she wishes to enjoy. She finds that state’s reflection in musical form and uses the reflection to help her reach it. The “care of self,” in terms of the “desired states of feeling,” is worked out prior to the choice
of music that will bring about that state. For example, insofar as I care for myself and thus wish to feel happy I will play some music that reflects my happiness. But we cannot assume that, because the music reflects my happiness, the music is good for me, any more than we can assume that a particular drug is good for me because its effects reflect my idea of happiness. Thus, “care of [my]self,” insofar as it caters blindly to my desires, may fail to interrogate adequately my “desires” on the basis of what I imagine holds good for myself and for all other people.

The distinction between DeNora’s “care of self” and my “consideration for, and attention to, self” is located in the nature of the relationship between the “desired state” and the music that achieves it. On the one hand, with DeNora’s “care of self,” there is no critical relationship between the two. The “music” simply mirrors the “desired state” that led to its choice: there is no disjuncture or tension between the two. On the other hand, in my aesthetic model, the drama that a person hears and attends to in a work of music takes her out of herself and demands that she reevaluate and re-appropriate her “desired state” – her “care of self” as meeting. Furthermore, her idea of a “desired state” or “care of self” – which is already in dialogue with the music and thus with herself – demands that she reevaluate the music.

5 Psychological Perspectives

My concern in this chapter has been to discuss the concept of aesthetics in terms of its history and in terms of the criticism it has received from scholars in both the sociological and educational fields of research. With this concern in mind, I have been less interested in studies relating to a psychological approach to music and emotion, dealing with human behavior and the physical properties of the brain, although books have been published recently with precisely this approach in mind, including Oliver Sacks’ *Musicophilia* (2007) and Daniel Levitin’s *The World in Six Songs. How the Musical Brain Created Human Nature* (2008). Both books articulate neurological and genetic reasons as to why we like the music we like. However, I maintain that these reasons do not explain why we witness what we like as being meaningful in the way that I have articulated meaning in this chapter. For example, in *Musicophilia* Sacks directly relates the cause or origin of the meaning that we find in music to the neurological hard wiring of the brain. He tells us about Tony Cicoria, a man who became a “‘different person’ . . . musically, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually” (Sacks, 2007, p. 16) after being struck by lightning.
After his shock Tony developed an intense love of the piano. The effect that this type of electrical shock can have on the brain is, of course, fascinating. Yet Tony’s intense love of the piano is no more meaningful, in pure neurological terms, than his total lack of interest in the piano before his shock. Insofar as each state – before and after – is governed by the connections in the brain, each is equal (in terms of neurological interest). Cicoria’s state of musicality only becomes meaningful in relation to the impact it has on the rest of his life. Specific brain connections and their outcomes only become significant within an evaluative context of critical human relationships.

6 Summary

My purpose in this chapter has been to articulate the relationship between aesthetics and the central concept of my thesis – the idea of musical meeting. To this end, my intention has been twofold: first, to examine and account for a variety of scholarly arguments concerning aesthetics and show how they support, or are different from, my own concept; and, second, to articulate why aesthetic interest in music is meaningful and how it may be distinguished from other ways of constituting meaning.

I have articulated aesthetic meaning in the following way. Something that is meaningful to a person matters to her. It matters to her to the extent that it challenges the status quo of her existence, leading her to revaluate and re-appropriate her existence as her self-conscious attention to herself. Accordingly, something that is meaningful involves rigorous public participation on the part of a person with herself, with her neighbor and, in this case, with music. In short, then, meaning is meeting. Consequently, whereas a person who derives musical meaning via what I have called route one deludes herself with regard to that meaning insofar as she denies her participation in its creation, the meaning derived by a person via routes two and three – the route of aesthetic attention to oneself in and through a musical association and the route of aesthetic attention to oneself in and through one’s correspondent aesthetic attention to music – impacts her life insofar as it fundamentally involves her self-critical participation. Accordingly, both routes of meaning involve aesthetics but only the third route fundamentally involves the simultaneous participation of the music and performer/composer/listener and thus can be said to have to do with aesthetic interest in, aesthetic experience of, and aesthetic attention to, musical interaction.
Chapter IV ~ Music as Meeting

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

As I articulated in the previous chapter, I am primarily interested in what I have called the third route of musical meaning, i.e., musical meaning that is constituted in terms of the musical participant’s attention to music as it unfolds as music. I argued that one way that we can articulate this attention is in terms of what we may call the participant’s aesthetic interest in music.

Importantly, aesthetic interest is not merely the property of the participant who directs it towards music. A person who is aesthetically interested in music finds that her interest is equally directed toward herself. In a sense, then, while we may say that the musical participant engenders an interest in music that is aesthetic, equally we may say that music engenders the participant’s aesthetic interest in herself. Music engenders the participant’s interest in herself in and through its correspondent interest in itself. Consequently, we find that the third route of meaning fundamentally involves music’s active and self-critical participation in the creation of its own significance.

Accordingly, it follows that, contrary to a notion that music is simply what it is insofar as it is itself or identical with itself – whether that identity is “subjectively” construed by the participant or understood by the participant to reside “objectively” in music – I argue that music is simultaneously itself and for itself. In other words, music has a self-critical sense of itself that it constantly works to meet. Thus, rather than say that music is identical to itself or that it is what it is, an adequate articulation of its dynamic nature would be to say that it is equal to itself. My purpose in the present chapter is to argue [a] why we witness music’s work to become equal to itself as being meaningful and [b] how, in fact, the music undertakes to constitute its equality.
1.2 Music Matters

Let us begin, then, with the concept of equality, building on the ideas that I have already developed in Chapter II in terms of human value (see page 41) and in Chapter III in terms of practical reason and aesthetics (see page 80).

We may say that a person renders her existence actual – truly witnesses her value – as she recognizes and constitutes herself as equal to herself and, consequently, as equal to all other people. Thus, a person works to treat herself in a way that she imagines to be adequate. The adequacy of her treatment of herself is equal to her imagination of what constitutes adequate treatment, an imagination worked out in and through her critical engagement with other people. Consequently, a person’s recognition of herself as equal to herself is not a neutral observation; rather it is something that challenges her and leads her to revaluate her every action and to re-appropriate her every thought in terms of mutual understanding, communication and love.44

My thesis is that a person’s value is similarly recognized, practiced and amplified insofar as she works to become equal to music. Thus, music, like the neighbor, offers a person a standard of equality in and through which she can meet herself. The standard is music’s equality to, or meeting with, itself. We may say, then, that music amplifies human value precisely because it creates a standard of equality in and through its work to meet the idea of itself. Music actualizes its idea as it works to meet simultaneously the idea, and what it imagines to be the musical participant’s idea, of music.

Thus, the musical participant (listener, performer or composer) takes part in the music’s work to equal its idea of itself just as she would take part in her neighbor’s work to equal her idea of herself. For example, where the neighbor imagines her meeting with herself to be adequate, she holds her meeting up to, say, her friend. The friend questions the neighbor’s imagination and

44 As equal to herself, a person is fundamentally in relation to herself and to all other people. Thus, it turns out that the very nature of the concept that we call “human equality” is I-You. It is striking when one recognizes the simple profundity of what Buber calls his “primary words” (Buber, 2000, p. 19). A person can only be equal as I-You. For, as a single I or a single You she is identical to herself and cannot, therefore, become equal to herself. A person who is not equal to herself is not equal to other people. Accordingly, we find that the value of equality – the value of the human being – fundamentally involves the relation I-You.
challenges her to re-imagine and re-constitute her meeting with herself in the light of her (the friend’s) questioning. In the same way, then, the musical participant witnesses music challenge its own assumptions, assumptions in the guise of formulaic musical patterns, in an effort to keep itself mindful of its own creation. The participant challenges music to revaluate its mindfulness. At the same time the participant is challenged to recognize the music’s mindfulness insofar as her recognition involves her own mindfulness: her own ability to be equal to the person that she is – a person who is mindful.

Consequently, I emphasize that, in accordance with what I argue is an adequate notion of aesthetics, just as the meeting with ourselves and our neighbor matters, so our meeting with music matters; for it broadens, deepens and intensifies the critical sense of our equality to ourselves. It is in this critical sense of equality that we find our existence. Accordingly, human meeting is not an analogy that helps us to describe what is going on in musical participation. Human meeting is equal to musical meeting: the participant witnesses vitality, meaning and interest in each meeting.

2  I-Thou

2.1 Genuine Actuality

What, then, is music? The question of how we conceive of the essence or the substance of music is central to contemporary music education. Our conception speaks to what music we should teach, how we should teach it and its relevance to people’s lives. The question primarily revolves around the following dichotomy. On the one hand, some scholars (Hanslick, 1974; Goodman, 1976; Kivy, 1980) seem to argue that the kernel of musical essence is found in the musical object – the score, recording or performance. On the other hand, others (Reimer, 1989; Elliott, 1995; Bartel, 2002) seem to suggest that music’s substance (or lack of substance) is found in the musical subject – percipient or perceptors.

In contrast, I argue that music’s essence is found in a meeting in which each, musical object and musical subject, works to become equal to itself and equal to the other. Thus, following the distinction that I made in Chapter II (see page 56) between, on the one hand, a person’s reality as

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45 Cf. Kierkegaard’s “essentially human” (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 121)
I-It and, on the other hand, her “genuine actuality” as I-Thou, I find that the essence of music is neither in the “reality” of the musical object nor in the “reality” of the musical percipient. Rather, the essence of music is its “genuine actuality” as I-Thou. As I-Thou music is the dynamic relationship between music and music, and between music and participant.

When the essence of music is conceived of as the dynamic interaction between its participants, the meaning that a person witnesses in her engagement, in whatever capacity, with a piece of music, is [a] always participatory in nature and [b] constituted according to an adequate idea of that participation. An adequate idea of participation is one that is self-reflexively imagined and scrutinized by each side of the meeting. In other words, where the essence of music is between, say, the listener and music, we may say that the listener is able to meet with music insofar as music is able to meet with itself and, in its meeting, challenge the standard of the listener’s meeting.

Let us examine how we may conceive of music’s meeting with itself. Music’s “genuine actuality” lies between the natural reality of its sound elements, on the one hand, and the existence of those sound elements as it re-creates them as music, on the other hand. The musical re-creation of the sound elements is empowered by, or according to, music’s own idea of itself as music. Music’s idea of itself is not something that it plucks out of the air. It is an idea that is in constant, self-critical dialogue with its musical participants. The more self-critical the dialogue, the more profound is the relationship that music constitutes between its reality and its existence and the more genuine is its actuality.

The distinction I have made between “natural sound elements,” on the one hand, and “music,” on the other hand, needs some explanation. As a listener, I hear the reality of music’s sound elements. But, insofar as I hear them as music I hear a disjunction in that reality. In other words, the sound elements do not exhaust the idea of “music.” For, in addition to the physical sounds that I hear, I recognize in music the self-critical thought that exists both within and without those sounds, constituted in and through the way that they are related, such that they play as much for themselves as they play themselves. The musical relation is recognized as a kind of musical interrogation. The sounds scrutinize, as it were, themselves from different perspectives and work out their equality, the one to the other. In and through their mutual scrutiny the sounds constantly create themselves, anew, as “music.”
Accordingly, insofar as I attend carefully to music, I recognize its self-reflexive interrogation. The very act of my recognition fosters and encourages the music’s interrogation: whether as a performer, bringing out this phrase in critical relation to that phrase; as a listener, concentrating my attention on a specific harmonic progression in light of which I hear the melody; or, as a composer, conceiving of the conventional pattern in a new musical light. As the music works to interrogate, as it were, its equality to itself, to achieve integrity in terms of its own standard of musical engagement, its actuality is profoundly witnessed in terms of what Dewey calls “the process of creating participation” (Dewey, 1980, p. 244).

2.2 “Being Together” or “Autonomy?”

The idea that musical meaning is participatory is an idea that is generally welcomed and accepted by today’s anti-Enlightenment (postmodern) thinkers. Indeed, as I noted in Chapter III, Eagleton claims that “the final purpose of . . . our equal rights to participate in the public definition of [the multiple] meanings and values [of, say, music], is that the unique particularities of individuals [and their music] may be respected and fulfilled” (Eagleton, 1990, p. 414, my italics). The general thrust of Eagleton’s critique is that, whereas participatory meaning embraces multiple values and “unique particularities,” meaning worked out by the individual in accordance with her integrity excludes anything that does not match the seemingly transcendent ideas – ideas that are asserted to be true but have no sociological basis – according to which her “integrity” is established. Consequently, while my idea of participation is doubtlessly appealing, my idea that music has integrity may be less appealing and may well strike postmodern thinkers as leaning far too far toward the concept of musical autonomy, individualism and the musical object.

The crux of the problem is that scholars fail to recognize that integrity/autonomy is relational. Even in the field of human relations, commentators often find difficulty in understanding that a person’s integrity is not some kind of isolated and absolute totality; rather, it is a person’s whole, always to be completed, idea of herself that she works out on the basis of her equal relation to herself and to others. Thus, as I have argued in the previous chapters, a person’s wholeness is constituted in the relation I-You. This relation gives an utterly new meaning to the meeting between two people. It provides a simultaneously internal and external standard, itself in constant revaluative dialogue with itself and with the standards of others, according to which the meeting is enacted.
Consequently, my concept of human meeting is not simply a “social” reaction to an inadequate notion of the autonomous individual who is isolated in, and identical to, herself. Neither is it an uncritical idea of “being together” – a kind of anesthetic embrace of all possible contradictory human attitudes. Such a type of “being together” denies the fact that, in the absence of critical standards, a person will either dominate her neighbor or will be dominated by her. In other words, simply living in a society is not co-extensive with human meeting. It may seem as if the individual is naturally constituted in and through the social, but in fact, without a self-critical idea of herself, she remains either identical to, or utterly alienated from, herself as the single I or the single You. To constitute the human being as I-You such that she loses her individual singularity, her location within or without herself, and is constituted in and through her relation to herself, one must approach every human meeting with her as if she were simultaneously other than herself and the same as herself. In other words, a human being is not obvious: one must work to recognize her.

2.3 Subjectivity and Objectivity

Like the idea of the autonomous individual, the autonomous musical object has, on the whole, been rejected in favor of music as a product of social activity. Yet, here too, the idea of the “social” is largely a reaction to the (misconceived) idea of “autonomy” rather than an adequate conception of music’s wholeness as I-You, simultaneously itself – its natural sound elements – and other than itself – its self-critical recognition of and constitution of those elements. The person who conceives of music as “social” in reactionary terms fails to think critically about what is actually involved in musical participation. She simply takes the idea of her participation in music’s meaning to imply that music may mean whatever she wants it to mean. In many cases, then, objective musical meaning – so-called “autonomy” – has simply been replaced by subjective musical meaning. But the idea that everyone constitutes his or her own meaning does not eradicate “objective musical meaning.” Everyone’s private meaning, as subjective, becomes “objective,” – insofar as private meaning is considered (objectively) meaningful – and, as “objective,” each private meaning contradicts – subjugates or is subject to – everyone else’s objective (subjective) private meaning.

Thus, the meeting between music and its participants carries within it that which utterly transforms it from a weak notion of the “social” – a reaction to autonomy – into a strong form of
self-critical participation. It carries, namely, a standard of meeting that music constitutes in terms of its critical attention to itself, which is scrutinized by, and challenges the standard of the listener’s (performer’s/composer’s) critical attention to music and to her own listening. Accordingly, if we are to constitute music as I-You, such that it loses its oppositional – objective/subjective – nature and finds itself as the relation I-You, we must approach the musical work as simultaneously itself and other than itself. The person who adopts this paradoxical approach refuses to allow music to be reduced to, on the one hand, natural sound elements and, on the other hand, the perceived sounds in her head. In contrast, she finds that the “genuine actuality” (Hegel, 1975, p. 8) of music is what she witnesses as the meaningful constitution of its sound elements in accordance with a way that she simultaneously imagines and recognizes to be adequate for both herself and music.46

46 It is fruitful to examine the distinction between music’s “genuine actuality” and its objective/subjective reduction in more depth. First, the “genuine actuality” of music is distinct from its objective “reality.” Music’s reality is constituted in its physical or empirical sounds: in the sequence of those sounds; in their metronomic meter; in the time it takes to play them; in their dynamic; in their harmonic resonance or dissonance; in their organization in terms of form; in the timbre of the instrument used to make them; in their articulation; and in the association of the sounds with certain extra musical things such as mood, emotion and atmosphere. All these things can be measured and used to describe the music in the way that one describes a person in terms of her ethnicity, gender, hair color, personality, and so on. But this description constitutes neither the person’s nor the music’s existence. Existence has to do with the constitution of a human being’s and music’s value as that which is equal to itself; it is not merely a description of the things in it. Second, the “genuine actuality” of music is distinct from a person’s private “fancy” of what the music is. A person may presume that she can hear what she wants to hear in the music and give it whatever value she decides it is worth. Yet this presumption is no more “genuine” than the music’s “reality.” For all that she has done is to substitute one “reality” for another. She has replaced the “reality” of the empirical world with the “reality” of her own fantasy world. Whether a person is in one world or in the other, who is to say which is the more real? There is no way of proving that the empirical world is real by empirical means alone. Equally, there is no way of proving that the world of fantasy is real by fantasy alone. The empirical world and the fantastical world can be evaluated only in light of a person’s self-critical relation to herself and to others.
2.4 Music as Thought

It follows, then, that if one imagines, for a moment, that music can think itself into existence, music’s “genuine actuality” (Hegel, 1975, p. 8) lies in its very thinking. Music’s essence is located in the intentional thought in and through which it arranges its “real” musical elements – tones, phrases, rhythm, harmony etc. – in a way that is equal to/meets with both the demand of the “real” elements and its sense of community, i.e., its own imagination of how those elements should meet. In a way, then, “actual” music is as much that which happens between the musical elements – its thought for itself – as it is the elements themselves. Music has a physical presence. But if music is only its physical presence I argue that it is not music. Thus “actual” music is the same as itself (and as all other music) because it uses elements that are the same as its physical presence and the same as the physical presence of all other music. But music is simultaneously different from itself insofar as it self-critically relates those elements in entirely unique ways.

Thus, it turns out that a work of music that remains, from performance to performance, empirically identical to itself, that has, in every rendition, the same melodic and harmonic patterns, the same dynamics and so on, may be unique in every performance. For the self-critical thought that thinks the music – the relation of music and musical participant – thinks its actuality, every time, in a new way. Conversely, music that is empirically different, that uses different harmonies, different melodic patterns and different rhythms in every performance, may be entirely “the same” if the self-critical thought that thinks it is non-existent. In every performance, despite the music’s physical difference, because the music is identical to itself, seemingly commensurate with its literal sounds, it is “the same.”

The idea that I have arrived at, the idea that music is thought, the self-critical thought revealed in and through the relationships between music’s musical elements – the thought that works to make each relationship equal – is an idea that I presented in Chapter I and that finds resonance in the work of Julian Johnson. Johnson makes it clear that he is not interested in “thought about music” (something that professional musicologists, psychologists, or philosophers might explore); rather, he is “interested in thought in music, or better, music as thought” (Johnson, 2002, p. 60). He relates such thought to “empathetic thinking” in human relations. “The music,”

47 See my discussion on “infinite difference” in Chapter II.
he argues, “invites us to participate in a special kind of thinking that brings together the emotional and intellectual in a uniquely intense and sophisticated manner” (p. 60). As I indicated in Chapter III (see page 89), Johnson’s central thesis is that “classical music is distinguished by a self-conscious attention to its own musical language” (p. 3). Music, according to Johnson, is thoughtful about itself as music. What is significant about this thought is that the thought is participatory. The musical participant plays a fundamental part in creating music’s thought – “music invites us to participate in a special kind of thinking.” But, importantly, it is still only “a part” that the participant plays: the participant does not fabricate musical thought out of thin air.

2.4.1 The Relation of the Participant

I believe that we can say when we “think together” or when we “participate in a special kind of thinking,” the thought that is generated is not simply our own. If one accepts this idea, it is not difficult to accept the idea that the thought that I engage in or participate in, in a room by myself, in dialogue, as it were, with myself, is not simply “my own.” Or, if I do call it “my own,” it is because I constitute “my own” – that which is actually mine, or is actually I – as a dialogue. In other words, I constitute my own thought as the I-Thou relation – which means that my thought is simultaneously “my own” and yet not “my own.” I would like to explore the question of thought and its ownership in an effort to find a way of talking about music’s thought for itself, a concept central to my argument that music, in fact, meets with, and is equal to, itself.

I am talking about music. But, as I pointed out before, while we may speak of “music” as if it were an isolated object, its existence lies between it and the participant, as does, it must be remembered, the existence of its participant. Thus, while I say that music thinks itself into existence, the participant is fundamentally implicated in that thought (and the reverse is true, although, for the moment, I will concentrate on the music). But we know that the thought is not merely the participant’s; for then the music would simply be a “fancy” of the participant. The music’s thought of itself (the thought that is music) comes into existence as (at the same time as) the participant engages in the music and recognizes the constitution of the musical phrases, harmonies and so on, as thoughtful. The participant brings the music’s thought into existence. But the reverse is also true. For music’s thought for itself makes the participant think. Music’s thoughtfulness becomes the participant’s thoughtfulness about herself. Thus, inasmuch as the participant thinks music’s thought for it, music thinks the participant’s thought for her.
This process has a parallel in my imagined meeting with an absent friend. I think my friend thinking. I think the thoughtfulness of her attention to, and her organization of, her life and the lives of others. Her ongoing thoughtfulness, not merely its results, is her meaning. My friend is literally absent, but she exists in my imagination as a thinking (self-critical) person even though I do her thinking for her. But the meeting is by no means one-sided. For, as I think her thinking, she requires me to re-appraise critically my own thinking in terms that are equal to those that I have witnessed in her own thinking. In other words, she thinks for me – even though she is absent.

2.4.2 Composer

Perhaps, though, when I say “music” and speak as if music were able to think about itself thinking, what I really mean to say is “composer.” The composer is responsible for the thoughtful organization of music’s elements that the listener and performer re-cognize (re-know) as thoughtful. Therefore, in a very real sense, one can argue that the thought that constitutes music – the meaning of music – is the composer’s. Still, is it not the case that the composer is equally constituted by the thought of the music?

A composer may conceive of a musical phrase and write a response to it. Where does the response come from? I argue that the response is suggested (or demanded) by the self-critical thought of the musical phrase itself in dynamic relation with the entire history of musical phrases. In other words, the composer witnesses the music respond critically to itself in light of what it imagines an adequate response may be and in light of all other musical responses. Clearly, what the composer witnesses involves her interpretation – her participation – but it is equally clear that the music’s response is not merely a product of the composer. Thus, we may say that the music suggests itself to the composer in the compositional process.

Of course, in and of itself, the existence of a response does not mean that it involves the music’s self-critical thought. It may well be that the response is conventional or banal. Perhaps it is simply a stock reaction of the composer who merely replicates a phrase taken from a bank of pre-existing musical phrases. Interestingly, however, while a “stock reaction” precludes the idea of a self-critical and thoughtful musical muse, independent of the composer, it also precludes the idea of the self-critical composer as the creator of music. For the replication of “stock” musical phrases is hardly what we understand to be “creative.” Thus, even if the composer is influenced
by the “stock” phrases that constitute her musical context (culture, background and so on), if she is truly “creative” she will not allow them to saturate her composition. The response that she composes will contain within it the power of a further, considered response. That power fundamentally involves the power of the music’s self-critical participation in what the composer composes. Accordingly, I argue that the composer reconsiders the response that she composes as the music suggests a different way of conceiving of it. Thus, the creative process is not one-sided. The music reveals itself to the composer as the composer reveals herself to the music. Each revelation has fundamentally to do with interaction, and in interaction both sides are equal. Both the music and the composer, in and through each other, have the power of self-reflexivity: the power to think their own (and the other’s) existence.

In summary, then, the “genuine actuality” of music is constituted in terms of the self-critical thought that thinks it. But it must not be imagined that the thought is located in the musical participant (listener, performer or composer) alone. In contrast, the thought that is music is participatory. That is, the musical participant’s thought that thinks music is challenged by what she witnesses to be music’s self-critical thought: music’s suggestion, so to speak, as to how it should be thought. Thus, the musical participant finds music to be meaningful to the extent that she witnesses the thought that thinks it as being participatory.

2.4.3 Value

Accordingly, we may say that the value of music that we witness as composers, listeners or performers is equal to the level of creative participation. Our participation is itself in critical dialogue with a standard of participation found in music and with a standard contained in ourselves. Thus, while the quality of a piece of music is, in a sense, as good as our own participation in it, our participation is, in the same way, as good as the piece of music. But the circle is not closed. Not only is our participation revaluated by the music, but also it is similarly recognized and challenged by ourselves.

Accordingly, musical value is not mysteriously contained in music in terms of the essence of its beauty or of its Gestalt. Equally, it is not contained in the opinions of the people who make it. Rather, musical value has fundamentally to do with the power of self-critical participation both in and through which music is engaged and in and through which music invites engagement. In this respect, we can say that there is only one value that is valuable – the value of I-You and
equal meeting, a value that is fundamentally human and has to do with those things into which human beings breathe self-critical life. Accordingly, insofar as all music is constituted in and through the relation *I-You*, all music is fundamentally valuable. That is, valuable music is not simply a description of “sonorous patterns” (Bowman, 2002, p. 76), but it carries within those patterns the standard of its own engagement and the standard of a human being’s engagement with itself, herself and her neighbor.

3 *I-It*

3.1 Music as an Object of Empirical Experience

Since all music involves self-critical participation insofar as it carries with it its own standard of musical unfolding, performance, listening and composition – the standard *I-Thou* – all music is valuable. Thus, music cannot be conceived of as simply a “thing,” as *I-It*, or as a Kantian “object of [empirical] experience” (Kant, 1998, p. 111). Music can be reduced to *I-It*, but the standard of that reduction is the actuality *I-Thou*. Human beings do not merely hear music as sounds in nature. Rather, they *listen with self-critical intention* to the organization of the sounds (and the sounds that they organize) that they hear in music. Many listeners deny that their hearing involves “self-critical intention.” The listener hears sounds and assumes that the sounds that she hears are commensurate with music. Thus, she denies her participation – her intention – in music’s creation. What the listener hears, then, is, indeed, music, but insofar as she denies that music is in excess of what she hears she fails to recognize that there is any disjuncture in music that she must work to fulfill.

In the same way, a human being does not merely “see” another person. Rather, she sees the person *with self-critical intention*, an intention that is constituted in and through her relationship to the person, the responsibility that she has for that person and the responsibility that the person has for her. The sociologist Peter Berger holds that the person who fails to recognize that she plays an intentional role in the way she sees the other is in “bad faith.” Accordingly, he might also argue that the person who claims that the music she hears is an object in nature is similarly in “bad faith.” She is in “bad faith” because she “pretends [the music] is necessary when it is in fact voluntary” (Berger, 1963, p. 143). In her pretence that the music is “necessary,” that it is a Kantian object of empirical experience, she denies not only her part in its creation but also its
part in her creation. Thus, not only does she fail to attend adequately to the music, but she also fails to attend to herself as a person who “wills” her existence.

3.2 Sonorous Patterns

While all music must be met and engaged in a participatory manner it is clear that some sound patterns that we call music are, in fact, “sonorous patterns” (Bowman, 2002, p. 76) or objects of empirical experience. For example, pitches, rhythms and sound timbres might be deliberately designed to create a general background atmosphere. The primary concern is the “atmosphere;” the sounds are simply one of a number of means used to achieve that “atmosphere.” Since the sounds form one of a number of means, the sounds are just one “part” of the whole picture that can be described in terms that are identical to themselves as the color “blue” is identical to the color of a person’s eyes that are blue. A person who interacts with the “atmosphere” never attends with specific intention to the sound patterns. Rather, she hears them as an element of the whole atmospheric design whose actuality is witnessed in the self-reflexive organization of such elements. In fact, were she to attend to the sound patterns separate from their larger context, insofar as they have been specifically designed to “fit in,” her attention may be construed as being in a kind of inverse “bad faith.” The person pretends the sounds are constituted voluntarily – by her and by themselves – when in fact they are what they are. Thus, a faithful attitude, an attitude that recognizes human self-articulation as the position from which everything else comes into existence, recognizes that some things are really things – Kant’s “objects of [empirical] experience” (Kant, 1998, p. 111). In other words, a faithful attitude recognizes things as I-It. Sounds strung together in metrical patterns as purely a means to something else, such as a warning that the subway train doors are closing, are properly classified as I-It since in their case the thought that thinks their existence is not interested in them as music; rather, it is interested in the end to which they (the sounds) are a means.

3.3 Sounds or Music?

Like functional sound patterns, my bicycle may be classified as I-It. It is a means by which I get from one place to another or a means by which I become fit. In treating it as an It I am not in “bad faith.” I am not neglecting myself as the person who willed it, for it sits there, independent of my will, an object in experience categorized in terms of its cause and its effect. I continue to attend to myself, to think the life that I critically will in terms of work, leisure, environment and
personal health and the bicycle is a mere function within it. Things only become non-functional when they, in themselves, create, and are created, in and through the self-critical articulation that constitutes a person’s life.

The distinction between, on the one hand, music and existence constituted as I-Thou, and, on the other hand, sound patterns or functional objects of possible experience constituted as I-It, is a distinction that is not always clear. To take the bicycle as an example, perhaps a person may judge a bicycle to be other than simply functional. She may appreciate her bicycle in a truly aesthetic way – attending to its parts, researching the best possible way of calibrating it and so on. Insofar as she attends specifically to it and insofar as it, in turn, could be said to inspire in her new attention to herself and new ways of understanding and building it, perhaps it could be said to be an end in itself. But then the bicycle would cease to be a bicycle as we would commonly think of it. For what is happening in such artistic attention (and that is what it is) is that the primary concern of the cyclist has become her relationship with the bike, her relationship with herself and the bike’s relationship with itself. Transportation and fitness are now secondary concerns. The bicycle has become a work of art: the relationships among its aerodynamic form, its proportions, its color, and its mechanisms speak to, insofar as the relationships are equal to the standard of relationship demanded by the idea of the bicycle as a work of art and the idea of the cyclist and her community’s integrity, the self-critical thought that thought them. The self-critical thought is the work of art: the actual existence of the bicycle. Thus, the “actual” bicycle is willed and understood in terms of the standard of art (self-critical meeting). According to the standard, the bicycle’s categorization as I-It is a reduction of the bicycle’s actual existence (as art) to its real existence as a means.

As I say, however, it is probable that the bicycle’s practical function is sacrificed in its becoming I-Thou. It is not that one can say that the bicycle as a work of art is better or worse than the bicycle as a means of transport. The two are fundamentally different. First, then, there is an absolute distinction between the category of objects of empirical experience and the category of works of art, although what belongs to which category cannot be pre-determined outside of the artistic meeting. But, second, because the distinction is not a dichotomy constituted within the same ontological sphere, there is no means of assigning a comparative value to each category. Each category has a separate system of valuation. Objects of empirical experience are valued according to empirical measurements: cost, utility, effectiveness. Works of art are valued
according to human value. Consequently, when it seems debatable as to whether something is a work of art or a functional object, as in the hypothetical case of my bicycle, the scales of valuation can be mixed up with the result that both the value of the work of art and the value of the functional object are denigrated.

The latter confusion concerning art or function exists in the world of musical sounds. While it seems clear, as in my earlier example of “sonorous patterns,” that in some contexts sounds are *used* as means to ends, sometimes the *use* may be transformed, like the bicycle, into a musical end – a work of art – in and through musical meeting. For example, sounds written to accompany a film might be said to be functional and yet, when attended to for their own sake, when “met,” they become music. When such sounds become music, they are then evaluated within a totally different system. Whereas previously the “value” of these sounds was established in accordance with their ability to produce certain cinematic effects, now it is established in accordance with their ability to become equal to themselves and to their musical participants. It is within this latter context that music, as *I-Thou*, may be reduced to *I-It*. In cases, then, where it is not clear that sounds are intended to be music to be attended to, it may be more “faithful” to allow them to be sounds rather than to create them as second-rate (reduced) music. It is the reduction of music to *I-It*, then, as wholly different from sounds that are properly *I-It*, with which I am here concerned.

### 3.4 Music and Bad Faith

Music that is recognized as music but that is treated as if it were identical to the objective reality of its empirical sound patterns or the subjective reality of the perceived sound patterns is constituted by the participant in “bad faith.” The participant, whether music, performer, listener or composer, fails to recognize what she or it knows is the case. She fails to recognize that music is an act of creative participation; that music is not given in nature; and that it exists solely insofar as she wills its existence in correspondence to its own willing.

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48 It is possible that film relates to music in the same way that poetry or texts relate to music or that dance, visual art or acting relate to music. The work of art becomes a *gesamtkunstwerk* where each artistic medium works to meet with itself, the other artistic media and the participants.
3.4.1 Listener

Musical interaction, whose standard is its own equality to itself and to its participants, can fail to meet the standard on three possible counts: on account of the listener, the performer and the music itself.

The listener may deny that she must attend to, meet with or become equal to, music. That is, she may neglect or ignore the work in and through which she is both invited and called upon, in terms equal to the terms by which she makes sense of her existence, to constitute the relationships between music’s phrases, harmonies, dynamics, lyrics and so on. In contrast, she may adopt an attitude that construes listening to music as an essentially passive affair for which she has no responsibility and, rather, allows music merely to act upon her.

We may be reluctant to evaluate the latter attitude as “wrong” in the way we may think that it is “wrong” to abdicate responsibility for a meeting with our fellow human beings. Yet, in merely allowing music to act upon her when its performance, its composition and the musical relationships themselves invite her participation in and through their resonance with the participatory nature of her own existence, not only does a person fail to nourish and attend to her own existence but also she denies it.

3.4.2 Performer

The performer may fail to respond adequately to music in terms of her interpretation. She may assume that music’s reality – its tempo, meter, key, articulation, melody and so on – is identical with itself and identify the highest possible performance with merely the perfect execution of these elements. In respect of the latter, she understands musical elements, such as meter and pitch, as necessary objects whose perfection can be empirically judged: for example, using a metronome or a tuning monitor. While the musical elements of meter and pitch must, indeed, be accurately articulated, music’s actuality (rather than its reality) is the thought that self-critically works to equal an imagined paradigm of meter and pitch worked out as a participant makes sense of the rest of the musical work in terms of itself, in terms of the history of music, and in terms of her own musical integrity. Thus, the successful performer creates music insofar as she works with the music, her own ideas, her teacher, her colleagues and her listeners to become equal to music’s self-critical thought and express that equality in her performance.
Again, while the performer’s denial of her own responsibility in terms of music’s creation cannot be considered unethical, when she reduces her primary concern to the accurate execution of the so-called “reality” of a work of music she limits musical performance to the reproduction of a series of sound elements. In doing so she not only limits the power of music, but, she also limits the power of her own life. She literally practices reducing music, and therefore life, to a series of “objects of empirical experience.”

The listener who hears such a performance, insofar as she is unable to recognize the music’s or the performer’s responsible thought in that performance, is forced to articulate the self-reflexivity of her existence in terms of the performance, negatively. In other words, if the listener is to become thoughtful about her musical interaction, she will have to ask why the performance was bad, how it could have been better and how it compared to other performances. Or she must find a way of articulating her existence through a relationship that draws her focus away from the performance and onto something that amplifies and creates her existence. One might argue that this is the case when one attends a performance given by one’s children or one’s friends. The performance is, perhaps, less than adequate, but the listener has a personal relationship with the performer. She recognizes the hard work and love that has gone into the performance and her recognition is turned in upon herself. The sense that she makes of the performance, and correspondingly of herself, is not limited to the music in that it recognizes the larger context of responsibility in which the performance is enacted.

3.4.2.1 Responsible Performance

The former reflection throws an interesting light upon the idea of a “responsible” performance. The reflection is also relevant to “responsible” listening, composing, and the work of music itself. It seems that a performance that is responsible would have to present the basic elements of the work in such a way that they could be identified as those elements. Thus, a student/amateur performance of a work of music would have to be in tune, rhythmic and so on. However, if “responsibility” is the criterion of an “equal” performance, it must be possible for a student performance to be as “equal” as a professional performance. The latter may be technically more polished and musically more dynamic, but the responsibility that shines through in the student performance may be equal to or greater than the latter. The students push the consciousness of their knowledge of how they imagine the work must be performed – according to the music’s
ideas, their own ideas, and the ideas of others – to the edge of their critical ability. It is this act of profound responsibility that we witness as meaningful. I am reminded here of Kant’s distinction between accomplishment and will, a distinction that I cited in Chapter II (page 34). Kant observes that “if with the greatest effort [the will] should achieve nothing . . . yet would it, like a jewel, still shine by its own light as something that has its full value in itself” (Kant, 1981, p. 8). A performance that is merely accomplished is empty. A performance that accomplishes nothing, and yet is willed in terms of its self-critical participation, is fulfilled. In this way, I suspect, one might hear a wonderful professional jazz performance and a wonderful amateur jazz performance and find them equal.

3.4.3 Music

Music itself may present its musical elements in a way that is uninteresting, banal or repetitive. That is, rather than attending thoughtfully and critically to the relationship between its musical features, music allows its elements to be arranged according to a pre-determined musical pattern or convention. Accordingly, music denies that it is a relation and that as a relation it is equally for itself as it is in itself. It believes, rather, that it is identical with itself. As self-identical, music’s meaning is either locked in itself – hidden from it – or lies beyond itself in the achievement of some purpose or desired effect. Accordingly, music itself may be said to be in “bad faith” insofar as it allows its interaction to be “necessary,” i.e., determined by something other than its self-critical relationship to itself.

Again, in terms of “bad faith,” I articulate a distinction between music and the composer. In respect of this distinction, it is interesting to ask whether or not music could be in “bad faith” when the composer was not. For certainly it is the case that where acting in “bad faith” is the denial of music’s participatory nature, music could fail to invite participation while the performer and listener actively create it. It seems, then, that where the composer continues to articulate the meaning of her existence as her ongoing self-critical thought about herself, insofar as she recognizes a correspondence to music’s existence as its self-critical thought about itself, she is in good faith. That is, in her musical composition she could not be said to be claiming that “something is necessary that is in fact voluntary” (Berger, 1963, p. 143). Still, despite her ongoing articulation of herself and of music, the music that she composes may not, in fact, be
interesting. It may be in “bad faith” insofar as it fails to respond adequately to itself and constitute itself in terms of its self-critical response.

Still, we must ask whether it is possible for music to be responsible for itself in the way that the composer is. Let us consider how musical responsibility works. Insofar as it is between the musical participants, the performer, for example, cannot determine the correct musical interpretation by herself and neither can her interpretation be determined for her. The performer’s ability to interpret music responsibly clings neither to her, nor to another participant. In contrast, we may say that the performer’s musical responsibility is constituted in and through her ongoing imagination of how the other (performer, listener, composer, music) would wish music to be interpreted in light of the other’s responsible consideration for both her or itself and her or its interpreter. Consequently, when we talk about a performer who interprets music responsibly, included in the very concept of her responsibility is the idea that music itself is responsible for the way it invites, nurtures and participates in the performer’s responsibility. Similarly, then, when we say that music is responsible for itself, we include in the idea of its responsibility the notion that the performer invites music’s responsible participation and nurtures it.

It is interesting to consider that the mutual responsibility that is between music and, in this case, the performer does not exist between an “object of empirical experience” and its manufacturer. If we buy a table that is faulty, we take it back. We hold that the manufacturer is exclusively responsible. The same cannot be said for a work of art. We would probably not take an inadequate work of art back. All participants, are, in some way, considered responsible for the work of art’s inadequacy – including the work of art itself.

3.4.4 Composer

Finally, in the same way that the composer may be in good faith while music is in “bad faith,” she (the composer) may be in “bad faith” while music is in good faith. I conceive of this in the following way. If a composer failed to recognize her own existence precisely as her self-critical thought about her life, would it not be difficult for her to recognize music in correspondent terms? I would argue, for example, that the music of Richard Wagner is self-critically thoughtful
about itself as music. I would say, then, that his music is in good faith. Yet the composer was anti-Semitic. In being anti-Semitic, a person reduces actual human existence to the reality of a number of elements, one of which – being Jewish – she considers to be inhuman. In other words, Wagner’s attitude toward human existence is opposed to his music’s attitude toward its own existence. My intention here is not to explore how this can be the case but rather to argue that it is the case. That music has its own consciousness, a consciousness equal to our own, whose existence is relationship, not only allows but insists upon a disjuncture between the musical participants, in this case, composer and music.

Thus, that a musical participant – composer, music, performer or listener – can be in “bad faith” when the others are not does not necessarily make musical interaction impossible. Buber writes that “even if the man to whom I say Thou is not aware of it in the midst of his experience, yet relation may exist. For Thou is more than It realizes” (Buber, 2000, p. 24). Accordingly, even if music is in bad faith, the composer may still articulate her existence through the relation she has to it (and vice-versa) just as the listener may still articulate her existence in and through the relation she has to a bad performance in terms of her critique and revaluation. It seems, however, that the highest possible interaction involves the resonance of music, performer, composer and listener in terms of the correspondence of their mutual understanding of self-reflexive thought as constituting existence.

However, I must emphasize that the centrality of self-reflexivity to musical existence (or its denial), is only recognized in and through musical meeting. Consequently, a participant may never pre-judge another participant to be inadequate (in and of her or itself) and, on the basis of that pre-judgment, refuse to meet her or it. In contrast, a participant must meet with the other, reevaluate her or its meeting, and, upon the basis of that revaluation, make her decision about her participation in future meetings. For example, a listener may not pre-judge a work of music to be second rate. For, if she does, she is in danger of reducing the actuality of her musical interaction to the fixed reality of one side of the meeting – the musical object. However, a listener may judge her meeting with a work of music to be second rate, thereby including her own participation as well as the music’s in her judgment. On the basis of her judgment, a person may

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49 See Wagner’s essay (1910) “Judaism in music” (“Das Judenthum in der Musik”), written in 1850.
choose not to meet with the work of music again. However, because the listener understands that she judges the meeting and not the musical object, she recognizes that she is unable to “see” what she is judging completely. Thus, her judgment contains within it a disjunction – a gap – that may invite, so to speak, herself, her fellow participant and, indeed, the work of music to enter and transform what was a second rate meeting into a fulfilling meeting. In other words, her fellow participant may draw her attention to something in the music that she had formerly failed to recognize and that allows her to engage it in a wholly new way (and vice-versa).

3.5 Musical Experience

Related to “bad faith” is the idea of musical experience. The reader will remember that for Buber “experience” is of It whereas a person takes her stand in relation to Thou. Buber goes on: “The [person] who experiences has not part in the world. For it is ‘in him’ and not between him and the world that the experience arises” (Buber, 2000, p. 21). Thus, we can say that, when a person reduces the “actuality” of musical participation to a fixed reality that is identical to music’s sounds or elements, she conceives of music in terms of an “experience.” That is, she experiences music as it acts upon her rather than interacting with music and musical participants to create it. The musical experience is unalterable. Indeed, it is not unusual to hear definitive statements concerning music, such as “I love this piece” or “I hate that piece” without any indication that the person expressing such sentiments has any personal input into her response.

The idea that music is “experienced” gives rise to a number of misconceptions, three of which I shall enumerate. First, it allows the formation of two opposite positions – objective and subjective – that I have already touched upon. Briefly, on the one hand, a person believes that the music that she experiences is that which universally “is” and must, consequently, be experienced in the same way by all other people. This is the objective position. On the other hand, the subjective position holds that there is no such thing as the universal “is” of a work of music and that everyone’s experience of music is different, but equally valid in its difference. I have shown that each position collapses into the other. What is subjective is held, within the confines of its private particularity, to be the objective doctrine of the person (or people) within those confines, and what is objective can find no other grounds for its universal applicability other than subjective opinion. Neither position admits any kind of self-critical participation between the objective and the subjective or among the various opinions of the musical participants, the
mutual revaluation and re-articulation of which constitute the music that is witnessed. The opposition between objective and subjective musical experience is, for the most part, the central concern in the contemporary music education debate.

Second, the idea that music is experienced independently of participant interaction validates empirical testing. On the one hand, musical experience can be quantified by measuring the universal response to music and, on the other hand, each individual’s different response can be measured. But whether the measurements prove that everyone has the same musical experience or that everyone has a different musical experience, still they do not explore why musical experience is meaningful. A study that addressed the meaning of musical experience would have to show how the various musical participants interacted to create music and how, in and through that interaction, a person became herself. As interactive, however, music ceases to be something that is merely experienced.

Finally, while the percipient of musical experience is essentially passive, musical experience itself is not neutral. Either the experience enhances and supports our physical sensibilities, thoughts and feelings that are familiar and comfortable to us, or it jars upon them. Participation is wholly different. While music may sound “crashing,” the musical participant creates rather than suffers its “crashing.” While it may sound “boring,” the musical participant plays a part in that boredom. For, she may say that the music was essentially uninteresting and why it was uninteresting but that as a participant that she was not bored. Thus, a person who is bored in a musical performance (or in life) reduces both music and herself to an experience that she suffers (or, when she is not bored, enjoys) and for which she has no responsibility.

In contrast, musical interaction is precisely that: the interaction that is witnessed and created between music and its participants. Thus, music as interaction is truly democratic. For a person’s responsibility, in musical terms, is not dependent upon her having been privileged in terms of her exposure to the elements that make up the music she is experiencing. Her primary concern is her interest in the relationship between one element and another. Thus, if she is given one musical element – whether it is a rhythm, a sequence of tones, a rest or a particular timbre of sound – whether or not she has ever heard the element before, she can begin to respond to its relationship to another element in terms of difference and similarity. But musical meaning is not merely in the difference between one phrase and another or simply in the similarity of one phrase to
another. The musical meaning is in the thought that takes the same sounds and the different
sounds and constitutes them, self-critically, in an entirely new way.

4 Music and Meaning

4.1 Introduction

In the first section of this chapter I have argued that music has fundamentally to do with meeting.
It is a participatory act of creation by music, performer, listener and composer that works to
become equal to itself (rather than identical to itself) according to a standard constituted in and
through the self-critical meeting of each participant. Thus, I have argued that music’s “genuine
actuality” – what we witness when we witness “music” – is thought. The content of music is the
thoughtful working out of equal musical relationships between sound elements. I have further
argued that musical thought as fundamentally participatory does not merely cling to human
beings – the performer, listener or composer – but is actually constituted by music itself.

4.2 Similitude and Difference

In this section, then, I intend to explore, in musical terms, how it is that we can recognize
music’s thinking of, or attention to, itself and how, therefore, we can argue that the meaning that
we witness in musical interaction corresponds to the meaning that we witness in human
interaction. I will begin with the idea with which I ended the previous section: that of similarity
and difference. I argued earlier that music, while identical to the sound elements that comprise it,
is, since it self-critically relates those elements, the one to the other, simultaneously different
from itself. Concerning music’s difference from itself I have two observations.

First, the difference is not merely between music as “sound” and music as “thought organizing
sound.” In order for music to think self-critically about the relation of “sound” and “thought
organizing sound,” it must be “infinitely different” from itself; i.e., it must be in a position to
reflect upon the relation of sound and thought. Thus, my second point is that the sound/thought
relation, insofar as music self-critically construes it, has infinite possibilities; it is not limited to
one side (real sound) or the other (theoretical thought). Accordingly, while the musical elements
may be reproduced, time and again in exactly the same, measurable way, the relation of “sound”
and “thought organizing sound,” a relation that must always be re-thought if thinking is to exist,
is always changing. Thus, we can say that music is both the same as itself and different from itself.

Indeed, we can say that a performance of a work of music is already different from itself. That is, in its interpretation of a particular phrase, it has already sacrificed an alternative interpretation that may be equally valid. There is a gap, then, between, on the one hand, the physical presentation of music’s elements or the detached, theoretical organization of those elements, and, on the other hand, music as the participants self-critically think and interpret it. But there is also a gap within the interpreted music: between the interpretation itself and a different idea of its interpretation.

I feel that, for the sake of clarity, it is worth expanding on the relationship between these two “gaps.” The relationship is not dissimilar to the relationship between the two distinctions I articulated in Chapter II with regard to human existence (see page 26). On the one hand, I observed that there is what I call an absolute distinction between paganism and modernity. On the other hand, I indicated that the distinction most relevant to our existence is the distinction found within modernity between I-It and I-Thou. In music, then, we may conceive of the absolute distinction as the distinction between sounds (real or theoretical) and music. The second distinction is between music as I-It and music as I-Thou and relates to music’s inadequate and adequate interpretation. It is interesting to note that, as in human existence, the latter distinction breaks down into a further distinction: namely, the distinction between music as I-Thou that recognizes that it must constantly work to re-interpret itself – to become itself as I-Thou – but that sometimes fails, and music as I-Thou that denies that it must become itself as I-Thou and is therefore in “bad faith.” Clearly, in terms of my thesis, the two principal distinctions, both in human existence and in music, work in relationship to one another. That is, insofar as my purpose is to articulate adequately music as a relation, I argue that we witness it as relation, distinct from mere sound, when we understand that it has a self-critical sense of its adequacy in terms of the distinction between I-Thou and I-It. However, whereas music criticism may well focus on a sense of music’s adequacy in terms of why a specific musical meeting matters in a way that another does not, in my thesis I am less concerned with the adequacy of the meeting and more concerned with the fact that the meeting actually takes place – a point that becomes particularly relevant in section 2 of Chapter V.
Continuing, then, with my discussion of the musical “gap,” while it may be possible to constitute the idea of a gap “philosophically,” the idea is only relevant to my research insofar as it actually impacts the life of the musical participant – insofar as it challenges her, causing her to reevaluate and re-appropriate her existence as relation. First, then, it is necessary to indicate how the musical participant witnesses a gap in music that invites her participation. Second, it is important to show how the musical participant witnesses a gap in her musical interaction in terms of a particular interpretation that she understands (consciously or subconsciously) to involve the sacrifice of an alternative interpretation. I will address the latter argument first in and through a specific musical meeting.

As I listen to the second movement of Bach’s *Concerto in D minor for Two Violins*, I am drawn to each solo violin part as it enters; but I also attend to the bass line and the interjection of the accompanying violins. Because I cannot simultaneously listen with attention to everything that is happening, I must choose and critically interpret what I hear. For example, as I choose to attend to the bass line, I lose something of the solo line. Thus, my attention to or inclusion of the one involves my inattention to or exclusion of the other. As I listen, I constantly work to meet a standard according to which I establish the equality of my inclusion/exclusion of this or that musical line. I constitute the standard according to my own sense of musical integrity or “rightness,” the integrity of other participants – past and present – and the integrity of the music itself. Thus, in this work I witness the challenge to my integrity as an adequate listener, which causes me to reevaluate what it means to listen and to re-appropriate a new way of listening. However, if I listen with a pre-determined idea of effective listening, fixating on one or the other line according to the idea that “here is the tune” or “here is the bass line,” I may lose the actuality of ongoing meeting and equality and become disaffected by the flatness and one-dimensional reality of this or that musical element.

Returning, then, to the first argument, if what I have called the “musical gap” is to mean something in the terms that I have articulated, the participant must witness the musical gap such that [a] she hears a disjuncture in music that [b] she recognizes (consciously or unconsciously) to be music’s considerate attention to its interpretation of its “sound” elements. Her recognition of [b] implies her witnessing of [a]. Insofar as the participant recognizes music’s interpretation of its sound elements – i.e., of itself – she has already understood that music is not simply itself. Music is not simply sounds as they appear in nature. It becomes evident that a participant
recognizes music’s interpretation of itself in and through the words that she might use to describe it. For example, she might describe the music as “thoughtful,” “challenging” or “light hearted.” The musical constitution that these adjectives articulate is not found in the empirical pattern of elements of sound. It is found in the self-critical thought that construes them.

However, while I write that the musical participant describes the music as “thoughtful,” the music’s self-critical thought does not cling to the human participant – composer, listener or performer. For the human participant hears the thought in the music. The descriptions that describe the music – “thoughtful,” “challenging” and “light-hearted” – are not merely figments of the participant’s fantasy. As correspondent descriptions from other participants confirm, there is something in the music that is, say, “thoughtful,” but that something is not empirically definable such that we can say that the description “thoughtful” is coextensive with the nature of the sound that the music presents. Thus, the musical participant finds “thoughtfulness” in the music in the same way that she finds “thoughtfulness” in her neighbor. “Thoughtfulness” is not apparent in a person’s physical nature such that she can be defined as “thoughtful.” “Thoughtfulness” is recognized as the person who is “thoughtful” interacts with her neighbor and reveals her “thoughtfulness” in her attention to her. The music, then, is not “thoughtful” in and of itself. Rather, it is revealed as “thoughtful” in and through its interaction with its participant who then recognizes that “thoughtfulness” and articulates it as such.

Perhaps the best way of articulating this idea is through a musical example. In the first movement of Beethoven’s Emperor Concerto in Eb major, Opus 73, I witness the musical implosion of the dramatic bravado of the fortissimo trill figure as it rapidly diminuendos and is transformed into the lyrical, hesitant second theme. Different sound elements – dynamics, rhythmic devices and melody – appear in quick succession. But the music witnessed is not reducible to these elements. The music witnessed is the same as these elements and yet infinitely different from them. The music witnessed is music’s thought for its elements that it constitutes in terms of “implosion,” “dramatic bravado,” and “lyrical transformation.” But the music’s constitution of its existence in these terms cannot be empirically realized such that one can say: “these terms describe the music as it really is.” The most that the music can do, then, in establishing its existence, is to trust the musical participant to recognize its unfolding in terms of its “implosion,” “dramatic bravado” and “lyrical transformation.” Equally, however, the music
must trust the musical participant to take up its invitation – as I have done – to interpret it: to constitute it in terms of “impllosion,” “dramatic bravado” and so on.

Thus, we may say that “the music undergoes a lyrical transformation.” The musical participant can hear this because the music demands that she hear it. But, contained within the demand is an invitation to the musical participant to constitute the music’s demand for herself. The musical participant must constitute the music’s “lyrical transformation,” as the music constitutes its own “lyrical transformation” and vice-versa. Accordingly, the trust involved in musical interpretation is not just on the side of the music. The musical participant, too, must trust the music’s interpretation of itself. Each side, the human participant and the music, acts as the standard of the other.

Again, perhaps the idea of “trusting” music as an inanimate object seems obscure. However, lately, when I listen to music I have become self-aware that my listening involves faith. The more profoundly I listen, the more detailed my listening becomes. I find that I savor every moment of every gesture as I allow my attention to be drawn now to this, now to that musical figure. First, then, the idea of “trust” (or faith) is evident in the very fact that I allow my attention to be drawn by music. I work not to impose pre-existing ideas on my listening. Accordingly, while I appear to be passive in terms of my trusting acquiescence of the music’s demands, my passivity involves work. At every moment I work to challenge, re-evaluate and re-appropriate pre-existing patterns of hearing. My trust, then, is not an abdication of responsibility. On the contrary, it has to do with simultaneously recognizing music as working itself and working to make sense of it as itself.

Second, faith, where faith is self-critical participation, empowers me to hear music as I hear it. But, again, the idea of faith does not imply that my hearing is passive: faith, by its very nature, contains doubt (critique) and must be constantly re-affirmed. I cannot empirically secure my total hearing, for music is not merely in the physical perception of the sounds. Thus, while my doubt concerning my hearing is justifiable, my only option is faith. The very attitude of faith, in its ongoing affirmation of itself, empowers my attention to music. Similarly, my faith that music’s thought for itself is revealed in and through every moment of its being empowers me to concentrate on “the moment” and, at the same time trust that that “moment” is not an isolated
sound but rather contains music that projects backwards and forwards in terms of its critical relationship to other sounds. Without faith music is reduced to a series of random sounds.

In the same way, in a conversation, I have faith that my interlocutor has the whole conversation in mind (where it has come from and where it is going) in every idea that she introduces. Without that faith, which involves the constant work of locating each idea in terms of the whole, I am unable to make sense of the idea. Each idea strikes me as a random collection of thoughts or words. Indeed, it is often the case that a person will say “trust me” as she appears to be embarking on what seems to be an irrelevant issue. I must also trust my own ability to make sense of her conversation. Without that trust I find myself bogged down, trying to process data. Equally, I feel unable to challenge the conversation when it does not make sense. In this sense, then, we may say that “trust” (love) is always critical.

### 4.3 Tension

The musical participant who faithfully enacts the work of musical meeting is in a constant state of “wakefulness” as she works to make sense of the sounds with which she is presented. We might say, then, that she is in a constant state of tension. But her tension is not simply tense. Tension that is simply tense cannot be recognized as tension since the person who is simply tense has nothing to compare it to. The person who recognizes herself to be in a state of tension (wakefulness) also understands what is meant by release. Thus, tension that is “wakefulness” is the constant interplay and recognition of both tension and release.

We frequently use the word “tension” in relation to music to articulate its dramatic unfolding. Turning, at random, to a page in Charles Rosen’s *The Classical Style* (1997) I read: “this provides two contradictory forces that challenge the weight of the downbeat. The *sfondo* on the tonic in the bass [of Beethoven’s F major sonata Opus 54] reinforces the second sixteenth note, which is the weakest in the bar, making the accent most destructive to a sense of unvaried flow…the *tension* adds dramatic force” (Rosen, 1997, p. 61, my italics).

For some postmodern and feminist music critics, the idea of tension and release as a meaningful way of articulating what is happening in music simply re-enacts and reinforces what they call the modernist and “masculinist messages of power, dominance, violence, and beauty” (Lamb, 1993, p. 8). The idea that the “successful musical piece must resolve the tension of dissonance and
consonance” (p. 8) constitutes the so-called “grand narrative” of human existence that, insofar as it is considered to be universally true, legitimates the exclusion of elements that are dissonant by the consonant norm. Importantly, however, such critics fail to distinguish between, on the one hand, the pattern of tension and release imposed by a work of music on a percipient who experiences it – or, conversely, imposed by a percipient on a work of music – and, on the other hand, musical tension that becomes tension in and through the musical participant’s work for music’s release.

In the first instance, the musical percipient – let us say the listener – experiences music she perceives as tense: in terms, for example, of tonal dissonance and rhythmic disorder. She then perceives it as relaxed: in terms of tonal consonance and rhythmic order. As an experience, music acts upon her (or she upon it). She is not involved in the participatory process of its creation. Now, as I articulated earlier in the chapter, the percipient’s failure to participate in music’s creation may be due to her refusal to attend self-critically to music’s unfolding, or it may be due to the fact that music does not invite her attention – that it imposes itself as an un-interpretable experience. In either case, the listener associates the pattern of tension and release that she experiences with the familiar patterns of disorder and order that she experiences in her society. The meaning that she derives from the musical experience lies in the associated significance that the mirrored experience triggers.

In the second instance, however, the musical participant actually witnesses the drama of tension and release in music. That is, she does not understand the meaning of the pattern of tension and release in terms of its mirrored associations. Rather, she recognizes the meaning of the musical drama as it unfolds in terms of her participation in it. Thus, the participant witnesses music’s tension in its work to become equal to itself, work that she must work to recognize, challenge and re-constitute. Where music’s work to become equal to itself is heard as musical tension, its equality is heard, too, as its release. But equality, as I insist, is not identity. The idea of equality implies the existence of two sides that are different from each other and yet in relation to each other. Thus, even in the idea of music’s equality to itself it is still different from itself. Accordingly, then, music contains moments of tension and moments of release, but each moment, as in life, is full with the power of the other.
For example, the listener may witness tension in music as it works to equal its rising dynamic, its dissonant harmonies and its increasingly complex rhythms. Each musical utterance works to interpret the other responsibly (not merely automatically) and in a new way, upping the stakes and demanding a new and more adequate interpretation. Music’s release, when it comes, is by no means a simple “resolution.” Certainly, the release may resolve dissonant harmony onto consonant harmony, complex rhythm on to regular rhythm and so on. But the resolution must be a response that adequately addresses the music’s tension. Thus, contained within the resolution is the idea of tension or disjuncture. Contained within the musical resolution is the idea of its equality to the musical tension.

In summary, when music is reduced to apparently empirical ideas of tension and release, which constitute and affirm an unequal pattern of the “way things are,” music’s inequality as a meta-narrative of “power, dominance, violence, and beauty” is witnessed, not in music but rather in that with which the pattern is associated. In contrast, the actuality of music is witnessed in the musical tension and release that are created in and through the participation of music, performer, listener and composer all of which, at every moment, are wakeful with regard to its ability to constitute one musical element as equal to another. The question is, how does this work? How are musical tension and release created in and through the idea of equality and how are they witnessed in music?

5  Rhythm

I would like, initially, to address this question by examining the concept of rhythm. In the passage that I quoted from The Classical Style (see page 134), Rosen articulates musical tension in terms of a disruption to the unvaried rhythmic flow of the music. By emphasizing a weak beat – a beat other than the down beat – Rosen argues that Beethoven’s music destroys its “unvaried flow,” a destruction that draws, if you will, the musical participant’s attention to the otherwise natural pattern of its rhythm. In the Hegelian sense the music is itself in its sound elements (unvaried or otherwise) while it is for itself insofar as it reveals its difference to its “unvaried flow.” Its difference, though, is not merely in the reality of the sound disruption, the displaced rhythmic emphasis. The music’s difference is its difference from itself that it reveals in its thought for itself – and in this its difference is infinite. This difference – the music’s infinite difference from itself – constitutes the displaced rhythmic emphasis in the context of regular
rhythmic emphasis. The music’s thought for itself is revealed in each rhythmic emphasis, both displaced and regular. It is revealed in and through the equal relationship of one to the other. Thus, the “displacement” of the rhythm is no more indicative of musical thought than is its regularity. Both concepts represent musical “ideas” that cannot be empirically measured in terms of the sound elements; rather, the musical participant witnesses them in the music.

It is in the context of the music’s infinite difference from itself – its thought for itself – that the musical participant witnesses the music’s tension, heavy with its implied release. But it is not the simple juxtaposition of rhythmic displacement (tension) and normality (release) that the participant recognizes. Rather, she recognizes the music’s work to make sense of or, we may say, to become equal to, the juxtaposition. Thus, the tension is not merely in the appearance of disparate sounds juxtaposed to co-harmonic sounds. Nor is it simply in whatever political or social patterns that juxtaposition signals to the participant. Rather, the tension is in the music that is, precisely, the music’s self-reflexive interpretation of the juxtaposition of its sounds: an interpretation that the participant witnesses, re-interprets and re-appropriates.

But perhaps someone will still say: “but the ‘difference’ of which you speak, the rhythmic displacement, is not really ‘different;’ for the displacement is at the mercy of the pre-conceived idea of what constitutes a normal and acceptable rhythmic emphasis.” My response is as follows. First, when music is fundamentally participatory, the categories of “normal music” and “abnormal music,” as set, predictive patterns, considered respectively “acceptable” and “unacceptable,” do not exist. This is because each, both normal and abnormal music, must constantly work to become itself. The terms “normal” and “abnormal” are used in “bad faith,” for they assume that something is fixed in its characterization when in fact it is “voluntary” (Berger, 1963, p. 143).

Thus, to take one false category as an example, music characterized by a “normal” rhythmic emphasis, is, itself, infinitely different from itself insofar as music, when self-critically aware of itself, must continually work to create itself as normal. Its so-called “normality,” then, is infused with the power of otherness: the possibility of the musical norm’s non-becoming in terms of its failure to think for itself. This possibility insists that music work to become equal to the idea it has of itself as “normal.” If it denies its work, it reduces itself to an un-critical reflection of so-called normality (musical tradition). In its reduction, “normal music” is seen to be in opposition
to “abnormal music” and is either blindly affirmed or blindly denied by way of political, social and academic critique. I write “blindly” because the dichotomy normal/abnormal does not provide a standard in and through which either side can be evaluated. But the answer is not to do away with all evaluation, as is proposed by some postmodern thinking (Johnson, 2002, p. 26). Rather, each idea is transformed in and through an entirely different concept: the concept of equal meeting. Thus, each – normal music and abnormal music – must work to become equal to itself, to its participants and to all other music, whatever music’s supposed categorization. Accordingly, the music of Stockhausen, Mozart, Africa, Bali, Pink Floyd and Arcade Fire must work to equal itself and its neighbor in a way that engages the equal work of the musical participant. It is on the latter basis that works of music must be judged (and are judged) and not in terms of the dichotomy normal/abnormal.

Second, returning to Beethoven’s sonata as discussed by Rosen, it is important to recognize that “difference” is not reducible to the physical difference of a sound accent occurring on the second sixteenth note rather than the first sixteenth note of the bar. Thus, even if a piece of music suddenly turned the history of musical meter on its head, completely destroying the “normal” rhythmic impulse, it could not be more “different” from itself than it is in its self-reflexive introduction of its subtle, sixteenth note, rhythmic displacement. In fact, if it were to present its sounds such that they bore no relationship to one another; such, in fact, that they were arbitrary and utterly alienated from one another, insofar as music may be constituted as “thought” that attends to itself – that attends to its physical sounds in a considerate way – the sounds could not be recognized as music. The music would cease to exist, and only an array of arbitrary noises would remain.

But are “arbitrary noises” not music? Certainly, today we witness so-called “musical” interaction that challenges our ideas of what musical relationships involve, interaction describing itself as serial, avant-garde and postmodern. I would argue, however, that the reason that such musical interaction can exist is because the musical participant can recognize the relational thought (even if that thought is self-consciously not to think it) behind the presentation of the sound elements.

Accordingly, while the “tension” that Rosen recognizes in Beethoven’s sonata is constituted precisely in and through his and the music’s mutual recognition, it is reliant (like the reliance of Buber’s person on It) upon the physical reality of the music’s meter, against which background
the rhythm is organized. Several music theorists have attempted to explain this reality, to explain how it is that a musical participant witnesses rhythm in the way that she witnesses it. On the one hand, Cooper and Meyer (1960), in developing a cumulative theory of rhythmic hierarchy, argue that a percipient derives the reality of the overall metrical structure of a work from stresses that she hears within the surface organization of music. On the other hand, Longuet-Higgins and Lee (1982) propose a generative theory of rhythmic organization, according to which a musical percipient understands the rhythmic surface – the rhythm of, for example, the smallest of musical figures – in light of her grasp of the reality of the underlying metrical organization of the whole piece. Where it seems that the former theory relies heavily on the real perception of stressed tones, the latter relies on the idea of a real meter that exists empirically, independently as it were, of the percipient’s will.

Let us examine the idea of rhythmic reality – surface or background – that apparently exists, independently of the percipient’s will. The real nature of music, sound, is necessarily tied to time. A sound has a particular duration. Without its duration a sound cannot exist. Insofar, then, as music’s physical nature is tied to time, it is unsurprising that it takes on the features that mark time’s passing. The temporal organization of the sounds not only finds its origin in the physical limit of the sounds produced in percussive ways, but also mirrors the ebb and flow of life: the regularity of a person’s breath, her heartbeat or the meter of her walk. It follows the pattern of the seasons: of months, days, hours, minutes and seconds. It copies the meter of the machine, ticking, clunking, threshing or hammering out a rhythmical beat. What music has done, however, is to take the elements of temporal patterns, emerging from daily life, and to relate them together in a system of rhythmic organization that allows for one element to be critically related to another. Scruton enumerates what he considers to be the most important “variables,” as he calls them, in the temporal organization of musical sounds: namely, beat, meter, divisibility, the idea of a down-beat and an up-beat, rhythmic grouping or Gestalt, accent, stress or leaning, tempo, simple and compound rhythm and, finally, cross-rhythm. The system of rhythmic organization means that each of these variables can be related such that the temporal organization of the sounds is not simply coextensive with a fundamental meter found in the natural sound or a pattern derived from stresses in natural perception. Rather, as is the case with what we may call an adequate interpretation of the musical meaning of Beethoven’s sonata Opus 54, rhythm is created in and through the music’s meeting with itself. The music meets with itself and becomes
responsible for its metrical beat. In light of the music’s responsibility its beat is conceived of in a totally new light. While the musical sounds are ordered in a particular way – an order seen, for example, in the displacement of the regular accent – it is in the music’s “making sense” of itself, in this case, sense of its meter (to which it is beholden and has at the same time entirely overcome), that the human participant recognizes “rhythm.”

Thus, the rhythm of music is recognized in terms of the principles – of beat, meter, divisibility and so on – that govern the process according to which each sound/time pattern is judged to become equal to itself and its neighbor; and yet, insofar as rhythmic equality must be constantly revaluated by music and the musical participant, the principles according to which the revaluation takes place are continuously re-created. Hence, the idea that a piece of music is “good” because it conforms to the “normal” principles of rhythm is a reduction, not only, as we have seen, of the idea of what constitutes “normality” but also of the idea of “rhythm.” The idea of “rhythm” is a human, not a natural or a manufactured, concept and is, therefore, in a constant state of becoming that which it is.

Accordingly, then, as a way of recognizing sound’s movement through time, rhythmic principles provide a paradigm according to which the “real” movement of the sounds can be measured. For example, insofar as we are versed in these principles, we attempt to interpret African drumming patterns according to them. But, constituted as the dynamic process of creating equality between sounds, rhythm is not evaluated in terms of the fit of the “real” movement of sound to paradigmatic principles: it is heard in the tension between the two. Hence, a western musician hears African drumming as rhythmic because she hears the “real” sound patterns in relationship to western rhythmic principles. But the former is not reducible to the latter any more than the latter is reducible to the former. The rhythm is the ongoing, self-critical relationship between the two. The drumming patterns are infused with the idea of rhythm in terms of rhythmic principles, which the patterns, in turn, challenge, and ultimately revaluate and re-appropriate in a new way. This is not merely theoretical, as anyone who has a “western” musical background will attest to if she has tried to “make sense” – albeit that that sense is to immerse herself in the music – of African rhythmic patterns.

So, we may say that the music of Beethoven’s Opus 54 sonata, in its regular meter, its perpetuum mobile, the presence of a down beat stress and so on, comprises the sound’s “real” movement
through time which the musical participant – composer, listener, performer, music – constitutes according to certain rhythmic principles. In rhythmic terms, then, we recognize the displacement of the down-beat stress. The displacement challenges and leads to the revaluation and re-appropriation of our principles. It does not usurp them so much as it reconfigures them, once more, as principles that have a history in terms of change. For the natural assumption of how the down-beat should proceed in such and such a musical context contains within it the idea of possible displacement. Precisely this “idea” insists that the rhythmic principles are no longer to be assumed to be natural or exhaustive of themselves. They have a past and a future that are at once what they are and other than what they are. The self-reflexive thought that simultaneously thinks the “past and future” of rhythm – its history – and witnesses its actuality in terms of musical “tension” is the music that the musical participants create.

6 Tonality

In the preceding paragraphs I have been concerned to articulate, on the one hand, the real movement of sound through time and, on the other hand, the participatory creation that we call “rhythm.” I argue that music and its participants have developed a rhythmic system that is historical, i.e., that constitutes the principles of rhythmic organization in the context of which those principles may be challenged and subsequently revaluated and re-appropriated as meeting; as self-conscious of themselves as principles; as, in other words, musical rhythm. In this respect

50 In a sense, then, we may argue that there is a gap between the rhythm that is witnessed by the participant in the music and what I have called the “real” movement of sound through time. But we can also argue that there is a gap within the rhythmic organization: between the idea of the music’s rhythm and the speed that that rhythm is played – the music’s tempo. In this respect, the rhythm is always itself and other than itself in that the tempo in which it presents itself contains the possibility of an alternative tempo that has the power to transform it. Thus, the musical participant actively interprets or chooses a tempo and her choice necessarily carries the weight of the tempi that she has excluded. As a performer or composer, it is likely that such a choice will be conscious. As a listener it is less likely that the choice will be conscious, yet I argue that a listener, when she is participating, hears in the tempo of the music the music’s (and her own) work to become equal to that tempo. For that reason we can say that “the tempo didn’t really work” or “the tempo worked well.” Again, it is never simply the case that one participant failed to make the tempo work – to become equal to itself. It is possible that the listener, influenced by previously slower performances, was unable to become equal to the present performance. It is also possible that other elements of the music’s temporal organization were lost at such a quick tempo – either by inadequate performance or by the inadequacy of the music.
the system is not a means to the end, “music.” The system is equal to the “music” but in such a way that the music is never reducible to it, nor it to the music. A similar system exists with regard to the musical organization of pitch. We call this organization “tonality.”

I will begin by articulating my own idea of “tonality,” a term and concept that can mean many different things to different people. In my understanding, tonality – and what I mean by “tonality” is the same as what Scruton means by “triadic tonality” (Scruton, 1997, p. 247) – is a way of relating one tone to another tone such that the equality of each tone can be established in and through that relationship. The relationship reveals not only the principles according to which tonal equality is established – the principle of how one tone “should” meet another – but also the very idea of what constitutes “tonal equality” – the idea of the music – according to which the principle or the “should” of tonal interaction is challenged as a necessary convention and subsequently revaluated and re-appropriated, once more, as meeting. Thus, in a sense, we may say that tonality, as a system of tonal organization, is not identical to itself. Rather, it is equal to itself, or, in the parlance of my study, the music created in and through tonality “meets” with itself. It is in the meeting, then, and not in the inevitable resolution or resistance of the meeting that the full power of tonality is found.

Many writers have attempted to define “tonality.” While, in its broadest sense, the term is used to define a system of pitch organization – George Perle, for example, talks about the serial music of Schoenberg as “twelve tone tonality” (Perle, 1977) – in western musical thought the term is most commonly used to refer to the “orientation of melodies and harmonies towards a referential (or tonic) pitch class” (Hyer, 2007, Tonality section, para. 1). Scruton argues that, while almost all “traditional” music privileges certain tones, not all music has a tonic. He enumerates four “formal” conditions that “tonicized” music must meet: [a] melodic closure on the tonic; [b] a “loosening of tension” on reaching the tonic; [c] octave equivalence; and [d] other tones are heard in relation to the tonic (Scruton, 1997, p. 240). Scruton contends that his conditions are not “stipulative” (p. 240) but rather that they “attempt to capture a fundamental musical experience – a feature of the intentional world of tones that has been noticed and nurtured by many musical cultures” (Scruton, 1997, p. 240). Thus, he argues that “Indian, Arab, Chinese and Balinese music are all ‘tonicized’ singling out a particular pitch and its octave equivalents as the principal tone, and often privileging the fifth above as a kind of dominant” (p. 246). Scruton makes a
distinction, however, between “tonicized” music and music that is organized according to what he calls “triadic tonality” (p. 247).

6.1 Triadic Tonality

“Triadic tonality” is the term I will use to refer to the “harmonic organization of music from the so-called common practice (1600–1910) [of music in the west]” (Hyer, 2007, *Usage* section, para. 1). The relationship between “tonicized” (p. 246) music and “triadic tonality,” however, is not immediately apparent. For example, while Scruton tells us that the conditions or features of tonicized music “led at last to the discovery of keys, modulations, and triadic harmony” (p. 240), he does not articulate how this discovery unfolds. In other words, while he describes tonality as a “continuous musical tradition” (p. 241), he does not explain how the tradition moved from the tonal music of “church modes” to the “dynamic form” of “triadic tonality” that we recognize today in terms of counterpoint and harmony. In fact, despite tonality’s apparent continuity, Scruton himself implies that there is a disconnect between the “church modes” (p. 241) – modal harmony – and triadic tonal music. He argues that, while modal harmonies are built in the same way as tonal harmonies, in terms of octave equivalence, tones and semitones, “when a modal melody appears in tonal music, as in the masses of Taverner and Byrd, or the *Misere* of Gesualdo, it leaves the surrounding harmonic order unblemished” (p. 241). If, as Scruton states, tonality were a “continuous musical tradition,” where the seed of each new development was recognizable in that from which it developed, surely a “modal melody” would contain within it the power of triadic tonality – what it must become – and impact, in some way, the triadic music that surrounds it. Yet, according to Scruton, this is not the case. I argue, then, that while modal tonality and triadic tonality might seem to exist together on a continuum of tonal development, there is what we may call an “infinite difference” between them. Accordingly, to echo Kierkegaard’s articulation of “metaphorical speech” in *Works of Love* (see page 44), we could say that triadic tonality uses the same tones as modal tonality. However, in that modal tonality is unaffected by its juxtaposition to triadic tonality, it seems that the two tonalities – triadic and modal – are “infinitely different” from one another. The question of what constitutes the “infinite difference” is the focus of my study.

My question concerning “infinite difference,” however, is not the same as the question that asks whether tonal relationships are naturally inherent in the tones themselves or whether they are a
product of the human brain conditioned by cultural practices. I hold that the “infinite difference” of triadic tonality is characterized as the self-critical thought that thinks the relationship between these two alternatives, and, as such is infinitely different from the literal alternatives. In other words, triadic tonality is reducible neither to “nature” nor to “culture;” rather, it is the constant work of a tone to interrogate itself as simultaneously “natural” and “cultural” and to re-appropriate itself as meeting. Perhaps, then, we may say that modal tonality is the reduction of music, on the one hand, to the natural harmonics and overtones of nature, and, on the other hand, to the conditioning of society and culture. An example of each reduction (although it can only now be recognized as a reduction in light of modern triadic tonality) can be located in ancient Greek society where the explanation for how music sounded well was found in the natural “Pythagorean metaphysic of number” (Scruton, 1997, p. 241), on the one hand, and in the cultural mirroring of various states of social behavior, on the other. For example, with regard to the latter “cultural mirroring,” Socrates, in The Republic (2003), dismisses the “Ionian” and “Lydian” musical modes because they cause a person to become relaxed and to drink alcohol. He retains the Dorian and Phrygian modes because, respectively, they “represent appropriately the voice and accent of a brave man [(i)] on military service . . . [and (ii)] in the voluntary non-violent occupations of peace-time” (Plato, 1987, p. 94).

While I describe the either/or of either a natural or a cultural theory of triadic tonality as merely two sides of the same reduction, the either/or dichotomy frames, for the most part, contemporary debate, which is concerned either with the defense of one particular theory or, in a more postmodern vain, with resisting both. Thus, Hyer, in Grove Music Online, writes that a “complication (and recurrent tension) has to do with whether the term [tonality] refers to the [natural] objective properties of the music – its fixed, internal structure – or the [cultural] cognitive experience of listeners, whether tonality is inherent in the music or constitutes what one recent author has described as ‘a form of consciousness’” (Usage section, para. 1).

The history of triadic tonality, then, beginning with its arrival, if you will, within the midst of modal tonality, is not only one that is witnessed within western music as it unfolds in

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51 Hyer does not say who the latter author is, but it is clear from his own interpretation that human “consciousness,” in his understanding, is opposed to “objective properties of the music.”
performance – including, latterly, pop music, commercial music and jazz – but is also one that is simultaneously witnessed within the critical writing concerning western music’s development. That is, tonality is not merely a musical phenomenon, for it is also a human phenomenon, a phenomenon whose adequacy is constituted in and through human self-critical thought. It would seem, then, that any theory that tries to explain why we understand music in terms of triadic tonality is not simply trying to describe a natural or cultural state of musical perception. It is also working to enhance our self-critical ability to bear witness to, and to critique, that perception – to compose, perform and listen to music.

If the explanation of why we hear music constituted in and through triadic tonality as “right” were as straightforward as saying, on the one hand, “because it follows natural harmonic laws” or, on the other hand, “because we have been conditioned to hear it in this way,” it seems obvious to say that the discussion concerning tonality would be redundant. For it would, indeed, be the case that as “natural” each person who can “naturally” hear must hear triadic tonality as “right.” Conversely, if tonality is merely a conditioned state of perception, then, if a person has been conditioned to hear tonality as “right,” she will hear it as “right,” rather like the ancient Greek who, it seems, naturally/culturally (each collapses into the other) heard the Lydian mode as a call to drink alcohol!

The debate concerning the constitution of triadic tonality takes place precisely because percipients are unable to perceive it perfectly and to recognize that their perception is imperfect. On the one hand, percipients within the tradition of western musical practice do not all hear music in terms of the various tonal theories set forth by theorists such as Schenker (1973), Schoenberg (1922), Rameau (1971), Momigny (1980), or Cowell (1969). On the other hand, it is possible that percipients outside of the western tradition cannot hear triadic tonality at all. But, despite the inability of people – western or non-western – to hear and understand triadic tonality in terms of the full range of its power, it is possible to talk about it, as Charles Rosen does, in “axiomatic” (Rosen, 1997, p. 23) terms. For, I argue that when we witness music – participate in its creation in the sense of my study – we witness it in terms of tonality.

It seems, then, that the debate regarding tonality can take place because each side of the argument – the side that argues tonality is “natural” and the side that argues tonality is “conditioned” – contains within it a gap or disjuncture that invites the critique of the other. Thus,
it turns out, composers, musicians, philosophers, psychologists, theorists and music educators who debate the ontology of triadic tonality in musical, philosophical, psychological and educational terms, in their very debate, bring tonality into existence. My point is that tonality, like the very notion of what it means to be a human being, finds its essence or its actuality in and through the question that it empowers: the question of its ontology. In Cartesian terms, we find, then, that tonality (and its musical participants) can doubt that it is a “natural” musical state and it can doubt that it is a “conditioned” musical state. But it cannot doubt that it doubts (Descartes, 1984, p. 19). Tonality’s genuine actuality, then, is to be found in its ongoing work, both theoretical and musical, to constitute itself as doubt – in its ongoing sharing with or questioning of itself in terms of the equality of the relationships between its tones – and, in the light of its power as doubt, to reevaluate and re-constitute its natural and conditioned reality.

6.1.1 Nature

Thus, the meeting that is tonality is recognized in and through the re-constitution of tonality’s reality – “natural” and “conditioned” – as “doubt” or self-critical thought about its structure. First, then, let us examine the thought constituted in its meeting with its nature. Helmholtz (1885) built his acoustical theories on the mathematical theories of Rameau’s Treatise on Harmony (1722) and, before him, of Pythagoras. Helmholtz argued that we hear the major triad as naturally consonant because it is built from the overtones or harmonics of a tone (that becomes the root) that are 4, 5 and 6 times the frequency of that tone. In other words, when C is sounded, sounding with it is the octave above it, the G and C two octaves above it and the E and G. Inherent, then, in the tone C, are the tones, E and G that harmonize it. The overtone series gives us the octave, 5th (and by inversion, 4th) and 3rd of the major scale. The interval of the 4th to the 5th gives us a tone and the interval of the 3rd to the 4th a semi-tone. Thus, from the natural series of overtones we receive the major scale. But the system of equal temperament between the 12 semitones that we use today and that divides up the octave is not co-extensive with this scale. In the natural major scale, when the overtone consonances are perfect, the semitone between E and F, in the key of C, will be longer than half the whole tone between F and G. In the key of F, for example, these intervals will be different, although the notes will be given the same name. Thus, where perfect consonances are the basis of the scale, modulation to another key is “impeded by the very tone of the existing key, which cannot survive modulation. Key-relations
are endowed, therefore, with a baffling complexity, and separate keys seem both to possess and to reject notes in common” (Scruton, 1997, p. 243).

Equal temperament was the solution to this problem. First, it meant that every tone within the twelve-tone system could act as a tonic and find the tones of its major scale within the same system. Second, modulation between keys became possible since all the keys shared the same tones, either as tones within their scale or as accidentals. In short, equal temperament allowed music to use tones that were simultaneously the same as itself – belonging to its tonal centre – and different from itself, belonging to another tonal centre. The relation between this similitude and difference is what makes triadic tonal music unique. Equal temperament is sometimes criticized in terms of the fact that it “irons out” difference. Yet, it is in and through equal temperament that difference is recognized. When music is “natural,” it cannot even conceive of a “different” key, because it is identical to or saturated by the tones of its scale. In its self-identity it is impossible for it to become the scene or the act of the self-critical relationship between different scales.

We recognize, then, that tonality exceeds its nature in terms of the human device of equal temperament that already “denatures [the natural] properties in the interests of creating a regular language of more complex and richer expressive capacities” (Rosen, 1997, p. 25). Scruton argues, however, that the discrepancy between the “natural” and man-made pitch is untroubling because of the human capacity to hear “nearby frequencies as ‘versions’ of a single pitch. The distortions are invariably overridden by the perceived order, as the ear becomes used to traveling without strain between keys” (Scruton, 1997, p. 244). In other words, we hear the equal temperament of triadic tonality as “natural” because it corresponds closely to the laws of physics. Clearly, however, already within Helmholtz’s theory is contained the idea of human thought, both in the system of equal temperament itself and in the human being’s ongoing work to relate the “version” of a pitch to itself equally.

But this is not the only way that tonality exceeds its apparent “nature,” for the idea of a natural relationship between overtones and consonance is no longer accepted. Apparently a major triad – C, E, G – in the bass will create more conflicting overtones than a minor ninth – C to D – in the treble. But we still hear the former as consonant and the latter as dissonant (Scruton, 1997, p. 245). But the urge to abandon the theory that triadic tonality is governed by “natural” principles
that explain our “natural” understanding of its “rightness” in favor of a theory of cultural “conditioning” is based on the assumption that some things are governed by “natural” laws but that we are mistaken in thinking that these laws exist for music. I maintain, however, that the whole premise of “natural” laws is false since it is the human being that has to discover the “natural” law if she is to recognize that it exists. Consequently, even if a law seems to have something to do with the “natural” way something is, it cannot be identical with the “natural” way something is since the human being must “meet,” so to speak, her “natural” self – the self that experiences things “naturally” – in order to witness the way something is. In her “meeting” with herself, precisely because she is not identical to herself, she cannot completely “know” herself. Consequently, the “natural” law is not “natural.” Rather it is human and constituted as I-Thou insofar as its “nature” is constantly being revaluated and re-articulated in terms of the human being’s meeting with herself.

6.1.2 Conditioning

The same argument can be made against the idea that tonality is “conditioned.” For the human being cannot know that tonality is conditioned insofar as her experience of it as “conditioned” saturates her. Thus, the human being, in witnessing tonality as a “conditioned” state, which means that she meets the self that “experiences” it as “conditioned,” already finds in her meeting that she cannot “know” her “conditioning” fully. Rather, her tonal conditioning is constantly revealed to her. Consequently, the idea of her tonal conditioning contains a disjuncture that she is constantly working to make sense of (meet). The disjuncture means [a] that she is always in excess of any idea that she has of herself as being conditioned to hear music in terms of triadic tonality and [b] that, insofar as she works to critically evaluate her “conditioning,” she herself plays a critical part in constituting triadic tonality.

It follows, then, that it is because triadic tonal “conditioning” is imperfect that we can question it and it is in our questioning that we find its essence. Thus, while the flaw in our tonal idiom causes us to doubt its authenticity and opens up the debate about the applicability of the western music to non-western cultures, it is precisely the “flaw” inherent in that idiom that is universal. Thus, the reduction of triadic tonality to the status of a “universal,” superior tonal idiom, on the grounds of its unarguable “perfection” or “natural” properties, must be continuously challenged. However, triadic tonality’s dynamic nature – which contains within it its own gap or flaw that
empowers the musical participant, on the one hand, to work with it and constitute her own musical creation, and, on the other hand, to challenge it as dogmatic and inadequate – is, indeed, applicable to all people.

The essence of triadic tonality that is distilled, as it were, through this discussion corresponds to the Kantian idea of metaphysics. Kant writes in the Preface of the second edition of *The Critique of Pure Reason* that the revolutions in mathematics and natural science suggests that we can (and must) effect a revolution in metaphysics. He proposes that, instead of assuming that all our cognition must conform to objects, we assume, rather, “that the objects must conform to our [subjective] cognition… This would be just like the first thoughts of Copernicus, who, when he did not make good progress in the explanation of the celestial motions if he assumed that the entire celestial host revolves around the observer, tried to see if he might not have great success if he made the observer revolve and the left the stars at rest” (Kant, 1998, p. 110). Kant argues that Newton’s laws would have remained undiscovered “if Copernicus had not ventured, in a manner contradictory to the senses yet true, to seek for the observed movements not in the objects of the heavens but in their observer” (p. 113). “Thus,” Kant writes, “I had to deny [the objectivity of] knowledge [by limiting it to the objects of possible, empirical experience] in order to make room for faith [i.e. practical reason as the subjective basis of all a priori synthetic concepts]” (p. 117). Perhaps, in a similar vein, we must deny the objectivity of tonality by delineating the sound elements of possible, empirical experience (both natural and conditioned) “in order to make room for faith,” i.e., the faith of the human being who makes sense of the relationship between sounds according to the idea of tonal equality, the idea that is constituted in and through the self-critical relationship between all music and all human participants. The human being calls this “making sense,” “triadic tonality.”

### 6.2 Fetis

Kant’s ideas, along with those of Hegel and Fichte, were, according to Rosalie Schellhous (1991), the cornerstone of Francois-Joseph Fetis’s (1784-1871) theory of tonality. Having rejected the mathematical foundations of tonality as argued by Rameau, Fetis embraced German transcendentalism. He believed that “music is human and can be attributed only to what is human” (Schellhous, 1991, p. 223). Thus, he “declared that he too [like Kant] was creating an epistemological ‘Copernican’ revolution” (p. 225). Importantly, Schellhous argues that “both
[Fetis’ and Kant’s] philosophies depart[ed] radically from those of the Enlightenment which had recognized the workings of the faculties of the mind in understanding the world and creating art but had assumed an exact correspondence between the world external to ourselves [nature] and our idea of it” (p. 225). Schellhous goes on to indicate that “music theory provides a cogent example [of pre-Kantian Enlightenment thinking] in the work of Jean-Phillipe Rameau, [who, as we have learnt], strove to account for music on the basis of mathematics and the observation of phenomena. Fetis did not deny the importance of this approach . . .. His theory acknowledges that sound comes from an external source but he attributes its organization to the interior workings of the human mind . . . [Thus.] tonality . . . does not derive its laws from but ascribes them to nature” (p. 226).

Schellhous indicates that Fetis’ theory found little acceptance in his own age as “the growing ranks of scientific positivists” dismissed metaphysical principles. Today, anything that smacks of metaphysics is, on the whole, rejected on grounds of universalism, racism, classicism and misogyny. It is the case that, like Kant, who, Goldberg notes, “insisted upon the natural stupidity of blacks” (Goldberg, 1993, p.5; see also Said, 1979, p.119), the claims that Fetis makes for triadic tonality are essentially racist. According to Schellhous, Fetis believed “that the people of Europe [had] the aptitude to grasp the rapports of tonality because the principle that govern[ed] historical transformation [was] inherent in the physical characteristics of the race. Uncivilized people, by contrast, [were] unable to understand the rapports of tones because of the inferiority of their cerebral conformation” (Schellhous, 1991, p. 234). Consequently, scholars argue that Fetis’ inquiries into non-western music advanced the concerns of so-called “orientalism” (Hyer, 2007, Historiography section, para. 10), an imperialist agenda articulated by Said in his book of that name (1979), that aimed to denigrate African and eastern cultural practices.

However, while Schellhous points out that “Fetis’s ideas about race are offensive in the extreme,” (p. 234) she is right to insist that judgment of his “offence” should be suspended when evaluating his ideas on tonality. The main problem with Fetis’s ideas is that what he considers the essence of tonality, the gradual revelation of the “mysterious laws of the mind” (Fetis quoted in Schellhous, p. 232), remains essentially obscure. In respect of the latter, Fetis stumbles over the concept of intuition. For, while he argues that tonality does not exist in nature, that is, as external, somehow, to the human mind, he nevertheless holds that, if a musical participant “were to have no intuition of [tonality] . . . before the creation of [the] work . . . music could not exist”
(Fetis quoted in Schellhous, p. 226). The mysterious nature of this intuition is what allows Fetis to make his claims about the races that have it and the races that do not. Fetis derives his idea of intuition directly from Kant’s notion of the “taste of reflection” (Kant, 2000, p. 99) which, as I pointed out in Chapter III (page 78), is the attitude in and through which a person intuits that something is beautiful which is neither merely what she finds privately agreeable nor what she works out, in and through meeting with others, to be good.

As we have already noted, however, Kant ends his Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment by claiming that “[intuitive] taste” has, indeed, to do with practical reason, i.e., with morals. It has to do with what is practically esteemed between people to be “good” (p. 95). Fetis understands tonality as something that is human rather than natural in that it corresponds to the workings of the human mind. But ultimately he is unable to distinguish adequately the human mind, which he describes as “mysterious” and “intuitive,” from nature. Kant, in contrast, is clear that the human mind is absolutely distinct from nature insofar as it is constituted in and through a human being’s wholly practical (i.e. un-mysterious) work to become equal to herself and to all other people. Thus, while, as Fetis insists, we must effect a “Copernican” revolution with regards to tonality, insofar as tonality is essentially human and not natural, we must also work to understand how the triadic tonal system is constituted in and through the idea of practical equality between musical tones: an idea that is equal to (and not identical with) the practical reason of the human mind.

6.3 Tonal Equality

I argue, then, that I hear triadic tonal music as “right,” not because it is intuitively “natural” or because my intuition has been “conditioned.” Rather, I hear triadic tonal music as “right” because the work between the tones to become equal to themselves corresponds to my work to become equal to myself and to all other people.

Still, is it not the case that the triadic tonal system’s idea of equality is hierarchical, as feminist musicologists such as McClary (2002) and Lamb (1993) have argued? For it has, as its main focus, a tonic tone, which is followed by a dominant tone, which is, in turn, superior to the sub-dominant tone, and so on. One could argue, then, that tonal equality is already loaded according to the “man-made” system, rather like, in fact, society today. So, a tone that works to become
equal to its position as the dominant tone is buying into the system that presupposes tonic supremacy and is, in fact, perpetuating that supremacy.

I have two responses to such arguments. First, as I have already argued, it is precisely the triadic tonal system (and the same may be said of the correspondent system of democratic equality in life) that brings the equality/inequality of tones into existence. Prior to the system of triadic tonality and equal temperament, tonal relations existed but not in a self-reflexive and dynamic way. A piece whose tonic was C used only the notes of the scale starting on C. Tension, in the form of an alternative tonic, could neither be thought nor actualized. It is certainly the case that pieces may be organized according to different tonics and different scales. But each piece, within itself, is absolute in terms of its singular modality.

Challenge to the absolute nature of a piece’s tonic could only be conceived of and actualized when the system of organization introduced a disjuncture or question mark into the hitherto set tonal relationship. This question mark was precisely music’s self-critical thought for the adequacy of its own tonal organization. The thought was constituted in terms of music’s power to test its tonality against itself and against other possible tonalities. But the thought – the thought that is music’s power – did not precede the idea of tonal adequacy. Rather, insofar as the tones of a scale are recognized, not in terms of their literal nature – as tonic, sub-dominant and dominant (whether that nature is “natural” or “conditioned”) – but in terms of their adequate work to meet themselves and one another equally, that work is music’s thought. Each tone’s literal nature as tonic, sub-dominant and dominant receives a totally new expression insofar as it is understood to share itself equally with itself and its neighbor tone. In other words, its hierarchical position is of secondary concern. The primary concern is that each tone is heard to constitute communication: communication with itself, its neighbor tone and the musical participant.

Second, then, music, in and through which tones or degrees of the scale work to become equal to themselves and to each other, is music that meets with itself. Often, while the music may resolve on to the tonic, its dramatic interaction concerns the ongoing interplay between the dominant and subdominant, their relationship to the tonic and to each other. For example, Beethoven’s *Quartet in C# minor Opus 131*, the work I will “meet with” in Chapter V, ends with a cadence on the tonic major chord. But the cadence is almost irrelevant in light of subdominant concentration in
the music that precedes it. The subdominant argument projects, as it were, beyond the statement of the final tonic chord. The history of tonality, like the history of human existence, is the ongoing work of challenging tonal relationships and of re-creating them in a new and equal way. Music lives, as people live, in meeting: mutual understanding, communication and love. When mutual understanding, communication and love are lacking, triadic tonal meeting, like all meetings, is reduced to the hierarchical system of tones that does, indeed, privilege the tonic according to a pre-determined system of values. In this respect, the work of each tone to become equal to itself and to other tones is reduced to a formulaic pattern. Often, in this reduction (as happens when democracy is reduced to ideology), the resultant representation of sonata principle or another interactive musical form is held up as a musical paradigm of equal tonality. The music’s slavish adherence to the supposed paradigm presents the appearance of equality while, in actuality, it denies its self-reflexivity and its work to become equal.

My characterization of the tonal system as analogous to human society is not new. Several commentators have described tonality in human terms; and, interestingly, the terms have changed in line with the story of human emancipation. For example, Hyer tells us that “in Grundregeln zur Tonordnungsgemein (1755), Riepel compares the six diatonic harmonies in C major to the social and economic [hierarchical] organization of a rural farm. [Similarly] Momigny . . . imagined the tonic as a queen . . . ‘the purpose of all purposes, the end of all ends,’ for ‘it is to her that the sceptre of the musical empire is entrusted’ (Encyclopédie méthodique, 1818) . . . [In contrast] Schenker later wrote of a more egalitarian ‘stable community of tones’ (Harmonielehre, 1906)” (Hyer, 2007, Rhetoric section, para. 5). As I said, my characterization of tonality as human – in terms of the equality of tones – is not new. What I believe is new is that, whereas previous commentators have used the analogy of societal systems to describe the organization of the tonal system, I contend that the tonal system enacts human equality. It is the work of each tone to become equal to itself, to its neighbor tone and to the system that articulates it. It is this work that the musical participant actually witnesses as meaningful. It is this work that impacts the participant’s own existence in a practical way.

6.4 Serialism

I indicated in Chapter III (see page 99) that– in the first half of the twentieth century – Adorno believed that music had ceased to challenge its participants to think about their lives and, in the
comfort of its familiar patterns and idioms, had become a kind of drug which prevented them from recognizing the truth of their condition. In other words, music had given up on what I have characterized as the “work” of tonality and had reduced itself and its participants to the mere appearance of a system that had become clichéd and banal. Where triadic tonality had been creative in the hands of composers like Beethoven, now it was simply used to produce musical fetishes that “distract[ed] people from the truth of their condition” (Scruton, 1997, p. 468).

Accordingly, Adorno believed that music must emancipate itself from tonality. Its salvation, he argued, lay in Schoenberg’s twelve-tone system where every tone had the same weight and was systematically sounded with the same frequency. Yet, while, in a sense, Adorno’s whole project had to do with human equality in the face of what he called bourgeois tyranny, tyranny that he saw mirrored in music and the tonal system, in terms of music, the serial tonal system does not create tonal equality. In this sense, the idea of the enforced similitude of one tone to another is not unlike the idea of communism.\(^{52}\)

For example, a hypothetical analysis of a meeting in twelve-tone (serial) music might be as follows. As a musical participant, I witness each tone as the same in its difference from every other tone and different in its similitude to itself. But I do not witness each tone as simultaneously the same and different – simultaneously the same as its neighbors in that it shares its constitution as I-Thou and different insofar as each tone relates to itself and its neighbors in a unique way. Thus, while each tone is identical with itself, it cannot become equal to itself and its neighbor. It has no shared space between self and other in and through which to work to become the tone – the meeting – that it is.

Accordingly, if a person is to hear a twelve-tone composition as “meaningful,” in the terms of music’s correspondent work to become equal to itself, she must bring the idea of meeting to music. The individual tones, in and of themselves, do not create their own standard of meeting. I argue that, when the musical participant brings the idea of meeting to twelve-tone music, she hears each tone’s isolation from the other as its refusal to relate equally to its neighbor. Thus, she hears it as a kind of active resistance against tonality. If one recognizes a tone’s active resistance to the tonal system as its own inverse effort to become equal to itself – to meet itself – twelve-

\(^{52}\) Adorno, of course, as a member of the so-called “Frankfurt School” subscribed to neo-marxist critical theory.
tone music has essentially to do with triadic tonality. Such a resistance makes sense in terms of the failure of the triadic tonal system, as Adorno critiqued it, to become equal to itself.

Perhaps, in this sense, serial music gives us a way of understanding postmodern resistance to modernism in the idea that the resistance is fundamentally implicated in that which it resists. But, I argue, where a musical participant is unable to bring the idea of tonal equality to serial music, the music will be meaningless to her – at least, in the terms of meaning articulated in this study. Thus, while Scruton describes Schoenberg as a “genius,” he writes that “the possibility remains that [triadic] tonal music is the only music that will ever really mean anything to us, and that, if atonal music sometimes gains a hearing, it is because we can hear within it a latent tonal order” (Scruton, 1997, p. 308), even if that order is recognized in terms of the music’s resistance to it.

6.5 Melody or Harmony?

Triadic tonality, then, is central to the argument of my study, the idea that music meets with itself. Before I leave the subject I would like to examine the idea that it is not simply that triadic tonality is a fixed system that creates a framework, in and through which the appearance of equal tonal meeting can function, but rather, that the tonal system itself, in its very conception, is already that meeting.

I have already noted that the practice of equal temperament constitutes a tone in such a way that it is recognized both as itself and as a version of itself. Rosen pointed out that, since equal temperament is “quite evidently based on the physical properties of a tone, and . . . equally evidently deforms . . . these properties in the interests of creating a regular language” (Rosen, 1997, p. 25), the debate concerning the natural or conditioned basis of tonality is obviated. But there is a further debate that we must address. Theorists have long argued about whether the essence of tonality is scalic or harmonic, that is, whether the centre of a tonal work is a single note, characterized by its position in the diatonic scale, or a triad, characterized by the

53 Scruton points out that the basis of Schoenberg’s twelve-tone system, as constituted in and through the twelve semitones, is derived by way of equal temperament: “Schoenberg attempted to break from tonality by the use of all twelve semitones, in serial organization. Yet the semitone owes its authority to the fact that it is the smallest interval recognized in tonal music” (Scruton, 1997, p. 248).
simultaneity of the root of the chord’s relation to the 3rd and the 5th above it. Again, I want to argue that tonality is found neither simply in the diatonic scale nor merely in triadic harmony. It is found in the self-critical thought that thinks the relationship between the two. Thus, the relationship is not self-evident. The tension between melody and harmony must be actively recognized and re-recognized by every musical participant: through performance, analysis, listening, composition and, importantly, through a heightened self-awareness of the ongoing correspondence of the centrality of self-critical meeting in the participant’s everyday life. For, as I attend with care and self-critical attention to my life, so I attend with renewed care and attention to my music. Because I care, self-critically, about myself (and others), I care about the music I choose to listen to and about my attention to the music in which, as I push my attention to the bounds of its self-consciousness, I hear tension between the tones as they relate melodically and harmonically, vertically, horizontally and within the dimension of self-critical thought.

But how, then, is the tension that is thought constituted? First, we should remind ourselves that the idea of triadic tonality came into existence in and through polyphonic music. That is, in Scruton’s words, triads are “natural consonances which we discover when three or more distinct voices join together without singing in unison or in parallel motion” (Scruton, 1997, p. 253). Scruton neglects to point out, however, that to make this “discovery” we must already have an idea of “natural consonances” indicating the confusion surrounding the birth of triadic tonality. The point is, however, that polyphony reveals to us the melodic nature of harmony and the harmonic nature of melody. Thus, a melody harmonized by repeated chords does not, in itself, constitute triadic tonality. There has to be a self-critical relationship between the melody and the harmony such that neither one is dictated to by the other. The harmony is heard in terms of inter-penetrating melodic voices. The melody is heard to be in dialogue with these voices. It is the case that the dialogue is present in both, even when one – harmony or melody – is not there. Thus, in a solo sonata for cello by Bach, a musical participant can hear the single melody line as simultaneously comprising a number of harmonic voices. Equally, in a harmonic progression the musical participant hears a tone in a chord leading, in a melodic way, to another tone.54

54 In this sense, as Scruton notes, the addition of triadic harmony as an accompaniment to folk songs or other world music (and, conversely, the addition of a melody to existing harmonic progressions) is often reductive. For the accompaniment is not heard in terms of voices with
The existence of a “self-critical relationship between melody and harmony” implies a disjuncture between them. The one cannot be co-extensive with the other. For example, if one imagines that harmony is, in essence, a dialogue between voices, for the dialogue to be ongoing – for the music to develop – it cannot be, simply, that the voices agree. It is true, that the voices might come to an agreement but, contained within the agreement, is the idea of disagreement. Thus, Scruton points to the disagreement contained within the agreed relationship of the diatonic scale to the harmonic system of perfect fifths. This disagreement is articulated in the following way.

Beginning on C, the diatonic scale can be derived melodically by moving stepwise from C through the octave, via B natural, to C. It can also be derived harmonically. Beginning, again, on C, we move to the tone that “most perfectly harmonizes with it” (p. 249) in terms of the natural series of overtones – the dominant G, a fifth above C. This interval is called a perfect 5th and is fundamental to the nature of the tonic within the diatonic scale (and other scales). We then move to the tone that most perfectly harmonizes G – its dominant, D. If we continue in this way, we work through the tones of A, E, B and, finally, F sharp. Re-organized, these tones give us, not the diatonic scale of C major, but the diatonic scale of G major. Thus, contained, as it were, within the implied harmony of the C major scale is the scale of its dominant, G. In order for the harmonically derived scale to become equal to the melodically derived scale, the former must sacrifice the perfect fifth B-F#, changing the F# to an F natural from which note the circle of perfect fifths leads back to C. The resultant interval (B-F) is witnessed by the musical participant as a diminished interval or tritone, which, interestingly, is known in early music as the “diabolus in musica:” the devil in music.

The weight of the tension or inequality that the participant witnesses between the melodic and the harmonic tonal organization is captured in the interval of the diminished 5th. The diminished interval is heard as diminished precisely because it contains within its diminished nature the idea

which the melody is in dialogue. Rather, the chordal structure “imprisons” the melody “in blocks of synthetic sound” (1997, p. 254).

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55 Such must be the case, otherwise agreement could never be arrived at and disagreement could not exist.

56 For the moment, I will resist the “temptation” to explore links between the ideas of tonal sacrifice and the “prime cause of [humankind’s] fall” (Milton, Paradise Lost, “The Argument”) – “Of Mans First Disobedience, and the Fruit/Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal tast/Brought Death into the World, and all our woe, /With loss of Eden” (I:1-4).
of itself as “perfect.” Thus, it is not merely that the F and B naturally (in nature or in conditioning) tend toward their respective resolutions onto E and C. Rather, the musical participant (including the music) works to constitute that resolution in terms of music’s equality to itself. As it stands, the diminished fifth is the sacrifice of the perfect fifth to the melodic scale. The musical participant seeks justice for that sacrifice but not in terms of a revenge killing (the diminished interval of E-Bb⁵) or of a refusal to recognize the sacrifice (a return to the perfect interval B-F#). Rather, she seeks justice in terms of the self-critical self-recognition that the C major chord, onto which the diminished 5th resolves, now embraces. The participant seeks justice in terms of the self-recognition, if you like, of what is involved in the scale’s existence: the mutuality and reciprocity of the chord’s, and the key’s, ontology.

Perhaps this all sounds rather far-fetched. Still, when I hear the diminished 5th’s resolution onto a C major triad, in the context of a triadic tonal work, I do not hear it as “final” as I hear the endnote of an isolated scale as final. The C major triad contains, in its constituent notes (C, E, G), the power of G major and the promise of movement between keys, a promise that is made possible by the sacrifice of the cycle of perfect fifths. Without that sacrifice, the scale and its harmony are forever opposed to each other: the one isolated in C major, the other isolated in G major.

The tonal equality between two keys is an ongoing dialogue whose tension is witnessed in the apparent resolution of one on to the other. Even when a work resolves upon the tonic its resolution is not final. In sonata form, for example, the final V-I cadence contains the standard of the whole argument of the work that is carried on in much the same way that one continues to debate the narrative of a book long after one has read the ending.

Finally, let us consider the sub-dominant tone, F. We may understand that the F of the C major scale is derived harmonically through a series of ascending fifths and by the sacrifice of the F# in the perfect fifth B-F#. Played against the B, F forms a diminished interval that finds its resolution in the equal idea of itself as a major third in C major (C-E), equal, because each side of the resolution contains within it the idea of the other. Thus, we may say that we hear the resolved

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57 E-B natural is the final perfect fifth in the sequence that begins on F and harmonically derives the C major scale. The revenge would be the tit for tat sacrifice of the perfect fifth that brings about C major – the key that has demanded the sacrifice of the G-F# and G major.
major third as at once other than itself (diminished) and simultaneously the same as itself (major) in that it contains and is self-aware of the flaw that empowered its resolution.

The sub-dominant F, then, is achieved through flattening the F# that is reached via a series of ascending fifths beginning on C. It can also be achieved by descending a fifth from C. However, whereas the ascending circle of fifths supports, so to speak, the tonic C insofar as each new tone is the dominant tone of the previous one (G is the dominant of C, D is the dominant of G and so on), a descent from C to F changes the role of the C from supported tonic into the supporting dominant of the new tonic, F. Furthermore, in F major, the chord of G major – the chord, that above all others, constitutes C as the tonic – does not even exist. The sub-dominant, then, is heavily implicated both in the power of the tonic, as the sacrifice that enables it, and in its subversion, as the tone that turns its role on its head. As an altered tone in the circle of fifths (F#-F) it empowers the tonic. As the fifth below the tonic, it weakens it.

6.5.1 The Minor Mode

It seems, from considering the role of the sub-dominant in relation to that of the tonic that we might argue that the subdominant/tonic relation is a kind of indirect relation whereas the dominant/tonic relation is direct. Indeed, Rosen describes the latter relation as stable and the former as unstable. To help understand what he means, let us consider, once again, the circle of fifths starting on C. First, the scale on the dominant tone, G, is *directly* derived from the circle (the F# of the final fifth is allowed to stand); second, diminishing the interval B-F# derives the scale on the tonic; third, diminishing two intervals – E-B (E-Bb) and B-F# (B-F natural) – derives the scale of the sub-dominant. Whereas the circle of fifths beginning on the tonic arrives “directly” at the dominant, two adjustments (of the original circle beginning on C) are needed for it to arrive at the sub-dominant, hence my notion of “indirect relation.”

For the same reason Rosen argues that the minor mode is, similarly, “essentially unstable” (Rosen, 1997, p. 25). The minor mode is derived by diminishing three of the original perfect intervals, D-A (D-Ab), A-E (A-Eb), and E-B (E-Bb). In addition, depending on the scale used (melodic or harmonic), the minor mode changes certain of its pitches – the 6th and 7th – in its ascent and descent. The instability of the minor mode is why, according to Rosen, “pieces in the minor tend to have endings in major” (p. 25). It may also be why we witness music in minor keys as being profoundly moving and often having to do with suffering. One may say that what
we witness in the music, subliminally, as it were, is the threefold sacrifice of each of the perfect intervals. In the face of such sacrifice the musical participant’s sense of justice is heightened and deeply aroused. The power of the music is that despite, and indeed because of, the music’s supreme sacrifice, we witness it as becoming equal to itself. Thus, even in the tragic depths of Shostakovich’s eighth string quartet the music makes sense of itself. The sense is not an answer to the question “why must we suffer?” The sense is precisely the ongoing work of the music to make sense of itself and to think thoughtfully about its sacrifice. Accordingly, music does not resolve its suffering in a way that dissolves it, fights it or makes it go away. Rather, music conceives of its suffering in an entirely different way. Central to the “way” is music’s ongoing work of self-critique, of self-recognition and of becoming the music that it is. In light of this ongoing work, we may say that “music overcomes suffering.” The suffering is still there and in a very actual way, as is entirely evident up until, and beyond, the final bare fifth of Shostakovich’s quartet. But I think that we may say that music’s suffering is transformed insofar as our focus has shifted from the mere presentation of suffering by the music, to the sense that the listener and the music make of it.

The minor scale, then, involves the threefold sacrifice of the harmonic cycle of fifths. The music challenges the sacrifice, revaluates and re-appropriates it such that the tonal resolution that it implies is infused with the weight and recognition of that sacrifice and the power of existence and becoming that it contains.

6.6 Summary

My primary focus in this section has been on developing the broad philosophical idea of triadic tonality as a relational structure in and through which a tone is empowered to make sense of itself in its meeting with itself and with other tones. Such a meeting, I argue, both constitutes and is constituted by the very disjuncture that each relation implies – i.e., the idea of music, not merely as literal sounds but as the self-critical thought for those sounds. The disjuncture disappears, along with the meeting, when a tone is simply the same as another tone (in modes organized hierarchically) or merely different from it (as in serialism). But, because each tone shares the same idea of critical relationship with every other tone yet, at the same time, has an utterly new way of enacting that idea, each tone is simultaneously bound to the other and
separate from it. Thus, since a tone is both bound and separate, we can say that the triadic tonal system both demands and invites the meeting between its tones.

But it still appears, as I talk about a “system,” that even if the system is such that it empowers tones to have a self-critical meeting with one another, the very idea of a “system” devised by human beings necessarily implies the exclusion of other possible systems. My contention, however, is that triadic tonality created the very idea of a “system” and, along with that idea, the idea of the system’s critique.

The revelation that “natural” tones and overtones could be related in such a way that they were empowered to become self-regulating – thoughtful – entities created not only the idea of tonal relationship but also, insofar as the tonal relations regulated themselves thoughtfully according to the idea of equality, the standard of that relationship. In other words, it is possible for me to relate one tone to another or even to alter the pitch relation of a tone to itself as I see fit. But so long as the tonal relations are simply the product of my private opinion they cannot be said to be equal. The remarkable thing about the triadic tonal system is that the meeting between the tones themselves creates a standard of tonal relations against which my efforts are measured. But, equally, my efforts challenge, re-evaluate and re-appropriate the standard that the tonal relations create. In this respect, the principles of triadic tonality are in a constant state of becoming what they are.

Accordingly, with triadic tonality there came into existence in the field of music not only the idea of manipulating tones but, most importantly, the idea of there being an adequate and an inadequate way of manipulating them. It is the idea of “adequate/inadequate” that opens up room for debate and allows us to recognize the tonal system as a system rather than, as I have shown, a “natural” or a “conditioned” state of organized sound, which, insofar as it is naturally or synthetically “hard wired” into us, cannot be critiqued. In a sense, then, triadic tonality contains within its very organization that which invites its own critique, both in terms of the music as it unfolds and in terms of its status as a system in the fields of music theory, musicology, sociology, music education and so on. Therein lies the power of its existence.
7  Form

Triadic tonality is fundamentally related to musical form. Insofar as tonality is constituted by, and constitutes, the equal meeting between tones, tonality constitutes the form or pattern of the work of music in and through which it operates. The relationship of tonality to form is rather like the relationship of the verb “meeting” to the noun “meeting”. The meeting is the form in which the activity “meeting” takes place.

Meetings are often quite formal in nature. One arranges to meet with a person at a particular time and place to discuss a certain topic for a specific length of time. Meetings even have “agendas” and “minutes.” But when a meeting is successful, in human terms, its participants are not merely watching the clock or efficiently ticking off the items. There is actual human engagement, worked out on the basis of one person’s equality to another. It is certainly the case that the engagement involves a sense of where the meeting is going and where it has come from and the timeline according to which it is operating. Without this sense the meeting would lose all sense of itself as a meeting. But the meeting is not reducible to this sense.

The musical form, then, is like a meeting. It has certain formal guidelines in and through which the equal meeting of tones, phrases, harmonies, rhythms and so on takes place. At the same time, these formal guidelines – just as in a human meeting – are constituted in and through music as it moves through the form and as it makes sense of itself. Thus, the musical participant must work, in every moment, to witness the music as meaningful. In this sense, the music’s meaning is not something that can be derived merely from the apprehension of its form. However, at the same time, the equal relation of one musical element to another can only be witnessed in and through the music’s structural framework. Thus, we may say that the musical participant has a subconscious awareness of the music’s form as it unfolds. In a sense, her sub-conscious awareness is a type of trust. The musical participant trusts that wherever music is leading it will make sense of itself, not only with the tones that surround it but also across the expanse of music. Again, as I mentioned earlier, music is rather like a conversation. A person trusts – has faith in – her interlocutor that, wherever the conversation is leading, it will make formal sense of itself.

Accordingly, like the interlocutor, the musical participant works to make connections across the music’s form. She pays profound attention to each musical moment, but in each musical moment she listens for something before or beyond it that will make sense of what she has just made
sense of. Thus, the broader ideas of musical equality – the contrast, say, of the first and second subject or even of the first and second movement – act as a standard for the musical equality of the moment and vice-versa. Music, in this sense, is profoundly historical. For the form itself must work to become equal to itself, across musical works, genres, and eras. It must work to become equal to the idea that it has of itself as a formal context in which music is empowered to meet with itself as if it were meeting with itself, once again, from the beginning.

As we saw in the previous chapter, writers such as Bourdieu argue that certain musical forms create a barrier that impedes the musical enjoyment of those people who cannot understand them. But a musical participant, of whichever “habitus,” unfamiliar with musical form (be it a pop tune, a piece of Jazz, an Indian raga or sonata principle), must begin by reminding herself that music, like all art, has a form. Her denial of this fact cannot simply be called ignorance. Rather, it is “bad faith.” For, in failing to think of the music’s form, she reduces music to something that is necessary (either natural or conditioned) rather than an intentional product of human and musical will. Insofar as music has a form, even though she cannot discern it, she must trust in her ability to hear equal musical relationships: across beats, across bars and across whole pieces. Her “trust” is that which makes her equal to an experienced listener who must also begin, each time, with trust. While the beginner may be uncertain how to construe tonal equality, the experienced listener can have a different problem. For, while a listener may be experienced, it is precisely her experience that can impede her trust. The experienced listener is often tempted to rely upon her experience and, consequently, to neglect her attention to music insofar as she assumes that she knows what she is going to hear.

### 7.1 Notes, Phrases, and Ethics

The fundamental relevance of music to our existence, lies, I believe, in the correspondence of our engagement in it to our engagement in ourselves. Regarding the latter, Kant writes that we use “our reason to push its knowledge to a consciousness of its necessity” (Kant, 1981, p. 61). In other words, we engage our lives such that we work constantly to recognize the image we have of ourselves in a new light, from a new angle and with renewed consideration. In this way we reveal ourselves to ourselves, not as identical but as equal to ourselves and witness a heightened sense of the fundamental relevance of our engagement. This process of self-revelation is the
process in which a person becomes equal to herself. She puts herself in the shoes of as many people as she meets, places herself in foreign learning contexts, pushes the boundary of the situations she fears, interrogates her prejudices, makes the familiar strange, listens in moments of stillness, pays attention to the concerns of others, attends to art, and so on. It is not that she examines her life from a distance. She practices her life and, in and through her practice, she works out, by constantly placing herself before herself, what Kant calls the necessity or what I have called the “meaning” of her existence. Indeed, the practice of her life is her ongoing “placing of herself before herself,” a process I call “meeting,” a process brought into existence through her encounters with other people and, I argue, with music and art.

The practice of life is the practice of music. The music works to recognize itself in a new light, from a new angle or with renewed consideration. Take, for example, the opening bars of Mozart’s Sinfonia Concertante. It begins with two bars (Fig. 1) of the repeated Eb tonic triad. The rhythm comprises a whole note in bar 1 and a half note, a dotted quarter note, and an eighth note in bar 2.

![Allegro maestoso](image)

Figure 1

The rhythmic alteration of the Eb at the beginning of bar 2 and then again in the second half of bar 2 reveals the Eb’s otherness to itself, not merely in terms of the altered rhythmic values but also in terms of the thought that is constantly trying to think itself in a new way. However I analyze the music, I find the two bars interesting. I find them arresting and having vitality even though they are simple repetitions of the same chord. My point is that the interest I witness here is the music’s making sense of itself: its simple interrogation of that one tone.
In bar 72, the two soloists enter, somewhat unusually, on a high Eb held over two bars. The poignancy I find in this 8-beat tone is related to the opening two bars. I recognize the Eb’s ongoing exploration of itself in its work to meet itself. What is remarkable about the music is that, insofar as both it and I work to meet self and other, in our meeting we are always other than ourselves and, consequently, have work still to do. Thus, I can listen again and again to the Sinfonia Concertante and find that each listening impacts my existence, as the music and I begin, again, to make sense of each other.

Similarly, we may say that a tone makes sense of itself during its very sounding. A performer can color the tone with vibrato. Vibrato is the regular oscillation of the tone between the pitch of the tone itself and a slightly higher (or lower) pitch. The oscillation is usually fairly rapid, but it can be slowed down or speeded up depending on the performer’s interpretation of the music. What is interesting is that vibrato is a matter of artistic judgment. A performer can use too much (or too little) vibrato, or it can be too wide or too irregular. In other words, if one imagines vibrato as a tone’s meeting of itself, the meeting must be equal. Thus, we can practice vibrato and ascertain that each pitch in the oscillating tone is equally apportioned. In other words, the vibrato is not mindless. The performer is mindful of the regularity of each oscillation and its adequacy in terms of the music’s interpretation. We can say that each pitch acts as the standard of the other and that, furthermore, the meeting between them – the frequency and amplitude of the oscillation – is regulated by the music that creates the tone’s context. Equally, however, the vibrating tone colors and challenges the musical context. Thus, if one hears a warmly vibrating Eb between one-dimensional tones, the tones might seem dismal in comparison. Then, again, in a baroque context, where vibrato is used sparingly, the vibrating Eb may seem gauche.

Accordingly, in baroque music, rather than using vibrato, tone color is often produced by a variation in sound intensity – by crescendo and diminuendo on a single tone. This technique creates interest. The interest created is that which is between the tone and itself and, by correspondence, between the tone and the musical participant. The musical participant witnesses the tone as working to become itself through playing itself in a new light, with a greater intensity and a lesser intensity. The tone is simultaneously itself and louder and softer than itself. Thus, as a single tone, the tone is not identical to itself; but, insofar as it is interested in itself, in how it might sound “right,” we can say that it is equal to itself. Its equality is not an empirical sameness.
Rather, the tone is equal to itself in terms of the equal self-reflexivity of both its sides, which is not given but must always be re-enacted.

I have used as an illustration of music’s otherness to itself Mozart’s *Sinfonia Concertante*, which is a work composed in an era of western art music known as the classical era. According to various commentators, the so-called “Viennese classical style” evolved from the idea of classical Greek architecture and had very much to do with balance and proportion. Consequently, it is said, musical phrases in classical music are well balanced and well proportioned. But balance is not equality. Balance, in the Socratic world involves tit for tat. I do to you as you do to me, not as I would have you do to me. Thus, a musical phrase that equals itself does not simply balance itself. Rather, it makes sense of its balance. Music has an ongoing sense of itself, as the phrase is played. We may conceive of music’s “sense” in terms of its constitution in and through triadic tonality and in terms of the twofold nature of its individual tones which is recognized in and through the tone’s dynamics and vibrato and the relation of one tone to the other. But music also has a larger sense of itself, as the phrase unfolds and as that phrase relates to the next phrase. The eight-bar phrase at the beginning of the second movement of the *Sinfonia Concertante* (Fig. 2) is divided roughly into 6 and then 2 bars.

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58 For example, Bill Strang writes that the *Viennese Classical Style* is “a style in which [Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven] achieved an equilibrium between structural requirements and emotional content that many consider unsurpassed, and which has become known as Classical. This meaning of the word Classical, ‘balanced, proportioned, formally disciplined,’ also refers back to the cultures of Classical antiquity – that is, to the cultures of Ancient Greece and Rome, which were thought to have established these qualities in their art, perhaps most memorably in their architecture” (Strang, 1988, p. 6).

59 Socrates argues in the *Crito* that he should bow to the decision of the city to put him to death, not because the decision makes sense but because it mirrors the balance of master/slave, father/son and city/citizen relations (Plato, 1981, p. 53).

60 The distinction between ancient classical “balance” and modern “equality” is the same distinction that Hegel makes between classical art – involving what he calls “unification” – and romantic art – involving “reconciliation.” In classical (ancient) art the content of the art is commensurate with its form. In other words, the meaning of the art lies in its identity – its unification – with the perfect symmetry of its phrases. In romantic (modern) art the content is in relationship to its form. In other words, the meaning of the artwork is precisely its work to equal, to make sense of or to reconcile itself with its form.
I suggest that, just as the poignant, but broken, question-answer motif is about to become commonplace, at that very moment, the music propels itself from a sfp into phrases that flow toward its close. Thus, the final two bars and one beat of the phrase do not mirror the first six. Rather, they equal them insofar as the relation between them transforms the whole phrase from one that is a humdrum presentation of conventional sounds into music that thinks considerately about itself as music. The whole phrase is then repeated by the violin soloist and then by the viola soloist. In each repeat, the music explores and makes self-conscious its power, rhythmically, melodically and tonally, becoming, in each instance, equal to itself — equal to the music that it is.

7.1.1 Tempo Rubato

The notion of musical equality was explicated in a very actual way by the pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim in the 2006 BBC Reith Lectures. Barenboim argues that the musical participant witnesses an instance of music’s ethical responsibility to itself in the idea of tempo rubato. The Italian term tempo rubato literally means “stolen time.” Barenboim maintains, and successfully demonstrates, that, when a performer performs tempo rubato, when he takes time in a work of music — time that is more than the music’s tempo would allow — the music and the musical participants demand that the time be given back. When the time is given back — when the performer increases her tempo immediately after her slowing down, in excess of the original tempo — there is an actual sense of musical “rightness,” of vitality, and of meaning. When the time is not given back, the music falls flat and sounds “wrong.” But, interestingly, when the music maintains the same tempo throughout, there is no sense of life. I argue, then, that in the latter case, while the question of ethics does not arise because time is neither stolen nor given back, the music cannot be constituted as equal to itself; it simply is itself. But as itself, it is
ethically indifferent and thus meaningless. In the former two cases, however, the question of equality is paramount and we find meaning in the ethical enactment of the music.

8 Summary

The key concern of this chapter has been to examine [a] why we find music’s work to equal itself meaningful and [b] how, in fact, we witness music’s work to constitute its equality. I understand that people find music meaningful in many different ways. The meaning in which I am interested, however, is the meaning a person witnesses when she attends to the music for no purpose other than her attention. In other words, her attention has nothing to do with what the music represents: it has to do with her recognition of the music’s mindful attention to itself – to its tones, its rhythms, and its harmonies as it unfolds. The music’s mindful attention to itself is recognizable in its work to become equal to itself. Central, though, is the word “recognizable.” The music’s work to meet itself is not empirically definable. Rather, it requires the musical participant to come forward and witness its meeting. Thus, like the music, the musical participant works to become equal to her ability to meet the music and to recognize the music’s equality.
Chapter V ~ Music Education as Meeting

Introduction

My purpose in this, the fifth, chapter of my thesis is to explore how the ideas of human and musical meeting, worked out in the preceding chapters, can be fruitfully brought to bear on the idea of education. In view of my purpose, I have divided the chapter into three sections. In Section 1, I broadly relate the concept of music to the concept of education in and through the notion of meeting. In Section 2, I critically examine my “meeting with” Beethoven’s String Quartet in C# minor, Opus 131, in terms of the musical concepts I have articulated in Chapter IV. Finally, in Section 3, I relate the central idea of Section 2 – the idea of the Quartet’s self-reflexivity – to the principal ideas of Section 1, and I explore how the relationship may be actualized in the music education classroom.

1 Educational Meeting

1.1 Music

I have argued that what we witness, when we witness “music” is, in fact, meeting. The meeting we witness is between music and itself. We witness the meeting, but we also constitute it. That is, music meets with itself in and through our – the musical participants’ – meeting with it. Thus, as I conceive of it, music is not merely physical sounds that emanate from a musical instrument (or the human voice). Rather, it is the thought worked out between music and the musical participants that thinks the interaction between a sound and another sound (including itself) according to the idea of mutual equality.

Thus, the meeting that is between a sound and another sound (including itself) – the meeting that I am calling music – is not static. That is, it is not merely the representation of a particular juxtaposition of two sounds that is always the same and neutral. Rather, music – the thoughtful interaction between music and participant – thinks the meeting in such a way that how the sound sounds in meeting is constantly being re-assessed and re-constituted in terms of the idea of the sound’s adequate response to itself and to its neighbor. To the extent that the listener recognizes that a sound responds adequately to the sounds around it she finds the sounds’ meeting – music – meaningful.
Understanding the relationship of music to music’s physical sound is, I believe, pivotal in recognizing and constituting musical meaning. Accordingly, I consider that it is fruitful to examine, once again, the relationship that I argue is parallel to the musical relationship, the relationship between a person and her physical presence. We may say that a person has character. But a person’s character – who she is – is not commensurate with or reducible to her physical appearance. For example, in such cases where a person’s physical appearance changes through age, through accident or through illness, the physical change is not, as such, commensurate with a change in her character. Thus, in a case where a person’s character does change, the change is not merely noticeable in her physical appearance. Rather, the change is recognizable in how she critically addresses or meets with herself in light of the new physical challenges that she is facing. But it is not simply the case that a person’s character is incommensurate with her physical appearance; it is also incommensurate with what we might call her “attributes.” Accordingly, in the same way, a person is irreducible, for example, to her intellectual attributes. She may be very intelligent or otherwise, but who she is – her character – has to do with how she critically engages the various aspects of her person, one of which is her intelligence. A person inhabits what Buber calls the world of It. That is, she has a body, an intellect, a gender, an ethnicity and so on. But who she is, her character or her personality, is reducible to none of these elements. Rather, who she is is I-Thou: the person who works to make actual sense of herself in light of the reality of these elements.

Similarly, then, we may say that music has character and that its character is what we understand about it to be meaningful. Music’s character, like a person’s character, is not reducible to its physical presence. Nor is it reducible to a sociological idea – such as elitism, intellectualism or misogyny – with which it might be associated. Rather, music’s character is recognized in its work, along with its participants, to make sense of itself as music in light of its physical form or in light of its supposed elitist, intellectual or misogynist nature.

In conclusion, what a listener recognizes as being meaningful in music is the sense that she has of music’s meeting with itself, together with the sense that she has that its meeting meets with her and challenges her to revaluate and re-appropriate her life in an entirely new way.
1.2 Education

I have made a distinction between music’s literal sounds, on the one hand, and music’s thought for those sounds, on the other hand. I consider that a correspondent distinction may be fruitfully constituted in and through education. For, while it may seem that education has to do with knowledge in the way that it seems that music has to do with sound, I argue that education’s relationship to knowledge has as much to do with its thought for its knowledge as it has to do with the knowledge itself. Accordingly I conceive of education as the process whereby a person transforms a fact or a piece of knowledge into an adequate concept, a concept whose adequacy is self-critically worked out among the concept, the person and her neighbor.

To help us understand what I mean by an “adequate concept,” it might be helpful to remind ourselves of the distinction (a distinction I noted in Chapter II) that Kierkegaard makes between “metaphorical speech” (Kierkegaard, 1995, p. 209) and what I have called “literal speech.” I argue that the same distinction can be made between knowledge as a “literal” fact, and knowledge as a “metaphorical” concept. Where a “literal” fact appears to be commensurate with the idea that it describes or points to, a “metaphorical” concept acts as a “metaphor” for the self-critical participation in and through which the concept’s adequacy is worked out.

1.2.1 Adequate Intonation

Let us examine how a concept may be metaphorical. Take, for example, the musical idea of “intonation.” Constituted literally, a student assumes that “intonation” is constant and that its adequate production involves the accurate replication of a series of pre-determined pitches. In contrast, education, in its fullest expression, transforms intonation into a relational, and thus metaphorical, concept.

For example, the intonation of a particular tone is not merely defined in terms of the extent to which it replicates an example of an “in tune” pitch. Rather, it is worked out in terms of the tone’s relationship to the pitches around it. Thus, a violinist does not merely copy the pitch of her strings from the example given her by the piano. Rather, she tunes one string in relation to another. Furthermore, the student finds that pitches are not simply given in nature but are worked out between the series of overtones and the notion of equal temperament, on the one hand, and
the idea of triadic tonality – an idea I have articulated in terms of tonal equality – on the other hand.

Importantly, then, the adequate intonation of a tone in relation to another tone and the adequate concept of intonation in relation to its practical and theoretical history are worked out between the student and herself, between the student and her peers or teacher, and between the student and the body of critical research on intonation. Accordingly, the concept “intonation” becomes a metaphor for the loving and critical attention that a student pays to herself, her neighbor and music as she works out intonation’s adequacy. But the idea of intonation is not lost. It is not the case that it is acceptable for the student to play out of tune so long as she is “taking part.” On the contrary, playing in tune becomes central to her existence. It both creates and practices the idea of the human and musical “integrity” – the idea of relation – according to which it is constituted.

The student practices her “integrity” – she becomes herself – when she genuinely participates in the process in and through which “adequate intonation” is worked out. We find, then, that literal intonation is neutral but that metaphorical intonation has a standard that involves “adequate participation.” Adequate participation is the act of meeting with oneself, one’s neighbor and, in this case, a musical tone in a way that one would wish to be met and in a way that holds good for all other meetings. Thus, adequate intonation is not found in sound. Rather, it lies in the adequacy of each participant’s work to constitute her or its meeting with the other in light of how she or it would wish to be met. Accordingly, the student meets the tone and attends to it, scrutinizing its meeting with its neighbor tones, its meeting with the tones of other instruments and voices, and its meeting with the idea of perfect pitch. She tests her attention in light of how she imagines she would wish to be attended to. Thus, her meeting with the tone acts as a standard for her meeting with herself. Consequently, insofar as she constitutes “adequate intonation,” we may say that she constitutes her own integrity.

Let us consider the idea of integrity further. When I, a violinist, play a note out of tune, if I am honest with myself, I correct that note in accordance with my idea of adequate intonation. I do not deny the bad intonation, deluding myself that the note was in tune. On the contrary, I make the correction because I have integrity as a musician. Because I have musical integrity, I practice intonation that is equal to its own adequacy (my, your, the music’s idea of adequate intonation). But my practice of adequate intonation does not merely replicate a set standard. My practice
creates that standard; it brings the idea of adequate intonation into being. As teachers and musicians we can recognize the latter argument when we consider that a person who does not correct bad intonation quickly loses her ability to distinguish it from good intonation. We find, then, that a person simultaneously practices and creates the idea that she practices when she self-reflexively wills the meeting of the pitch she produces with the idea she has of that pitch.  

Accordingly, we should not imagine that a concept such as “intonation” is a perfect and completed form, separated from the student, and that the student must somehow replicate or match the concept through the gradual accumulation of technique and knowledge. If such were the case, playing in tune – my “metaphor” for education – would be a bit like filling a water jug. When the jug is only half full, one must simply pour in more water. If the note is out of tune, one must merely add sufficient technique to make it in tune. In the first case, a person takes more water and fills the jug. In the second case, the student takes quantities of practice time and keeps adding it until the correct level is reached. Both actions are essentially mechanical and draw on resources that a person has or does not have. In contrast, when a person participates in a concept’s adequate creation, she must not only “match” the correct level but also create the level that she matches. Thus, we find that the student works out an idea of “adequate intonation” and tests the tones that she plays against it. But, because the tone itself is party to her idea of “adequate intonation,” her testing is not a “matching” that measures up or does not measure up. Rather, her testing involves the revaluation and re-appropriation of the very idea against which she is testing the tone.

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61 My practice of adequate intonation creates the very self-reflexivity – what I have called my integrity – that necessitates my practice of it; for it is because I am honest with myself that I correct the out-of-tune note. If I were less than honest and allowed the note to pass, in order to reconcile myself to myself I would have to deny the bad intonation that I had noticed. But my “reconciliation,” then, is not a meeting or a dialogue that is enacted from two distinct and integral positions; rather, my reconciliation is my simple absorption of the part of me that knows the note was out of tune into the part of me that does not want to know that the note was out of tune. The more, then, that I deny my bad intonation, the more I gloss over the disjunction that allows me to recognize it. I fail, in other words, to hear that the note was out of tune. But my failure to hear bad intonation can never be neutralized such that my failure is no failure but simply my personal way of hearing music – my “truth.” For other people will hear the note as out of tune; and, if they do not, if the whole idea of adequate intonation is somehow deleted from our self-consciousness, then intonation (good and bad) will cease to exist along with the idea of music that uses pitch. Furthermore, our existences, insofar as they are constituted and amplified in and through the self-critical awareness practiced in music, will be diminished.
1.2.2 Education and Meaning

We may say, then, that education is relevant to a student’s life because, in and through the continual testing and revaluation of both herself, her neighbor and the concept she is learning, she gives meaning to, and is given meaning for, every facet of her life. Education does not merely involve a student in copying or replicating existing knowledge. Rather, it is about the student’s critical participation in the creation of that knowledge. Because the student has a creative stake in the concepts that she learns, they become meaningful to her. They are meaningful insofar as they are worked out in accordance with a sense of their own adequacy, an adequacy that the student constitutes in accordance with her own adequacy and that is consequently undergoing constant revaluation as she discovers new things about herself and the world. In the light, then, of the student’s educational practice, nothing remains neutral to her; rather, everything is brought into existence and given an ethical weight as she, in turn, is brought into existence and given a correspondent weight.

Thus, in education we find that we make sense of a fact that we know when we test it against itself and against other facts. What we “know” in terms of education is not a fact; rather, what we know is the fact’s self-critical relationship to itself. The adequacy of the fact speaks to our integrity as human beings as the adequacy of our humanity speaks to the integrity of the fact. Education, then, is fundamentally human. Put another way, education is the ongoing act of recognizing the human being. A student learns something when she recognizes herself in it. That is, she recognizes that learning to articulate it truthfully is something that actually matters to her because it involves the truth of herself. Thus, it is not merely the knowledge that matters to her; what matters is the process whereby she measures that knowledge against itself, measures her measurement against herself and against the idea she has of the measurement of others. The knowledge is still important because it is the meat or the body of her work. But it is her work, the work of self-challenge, self-revaluation and self re-appropriation, in accordance with the similarly self-critical idea of something’s adequacy, that is her primary concern. It is this work that she recognizes as quintessentially human.

For example, I know that all living things must die. But my knowledge only becomes truly educational when I recognize myself in it. That is, I do not merely understand “death” as a detached, isolated fact of nature. Rather, when I think about “death,” I think about it in relation
to my life and to the lives of others. My idea of death is challenged and amplified in light of myself; in light of my neighbor; and through art, literature and music. Thus, when I say that I know that I must die I do not literally mean that I know that I will die. Rather, my words are a metaphor for my critical attention to life. Clearly, I can reduce “death” to a literal fact. I know that I will die. But the concept of “death,” in its strongest and most adequate sense, is worked out in and through my creative participation with my neighbor and myself. The literal fact that I will die is not lost! However, it is now recognized from an entirely different perspective: the perspective of life.

Education, then, is not merely about telling the student a fact. It is about the student recognizing herself in the fact, not in terms of how she experiences it, but in terms of how she re-constitutes it as true, insofar as truth fundamentally involves the ongoing work of the student in its constitution and re-constitution.

True education, then, constitutes the truth of a fact as it creates the truth of the student in and through the interplay of self-critique. False education is about teaching students facts that are assumed to be true. The latter distinction is articulated in an article that appeared in the *Globe and Mail* newspaper in 2008. The article was written in light of the decision by the Toronto District School Board to form an “Afro-Caribbean” school. In the article, Margaret Wente addresses the problem of “failing kids” (the problem that the school board sought to address) and implies a critique of the decision to create the school, arguing, in contrast to the school board, that “what [failing] kids need most is not a lesson in identity politics. They will not turn themselves around by having lessons translated into hip-hop or by having more ethnic teachers” (Wente, 2008, p. A21). In contrast, she maintains that “a kid [needs to] feel self-esteem;” a student needs “a way to construct [her] identity” (p. A21). In other words, education is not simply about immersing students in an identity that is assumed to be their “truth” even if it counters an identity that was falsely assumed to be “true.” Rather, it is about a student creating the “truth” of her identity, the very creation of which her self-esteem empowers.

Wente argues that the student creates the truth of her “identity” through acquiring skills and by understanding what its “like to be successful” (p. A21). What Wente means by “acquiring skills” is other than merely the replication of traditions that correspond in some way to a student’s cultural background. Such an idea would suggest that a student’s identity is identical to her
cultural heritage and that it is merely a matter of implanting in her the cultural experience that makes up that heritage to produce magically her identity.

In contrast, a student creates her identity and practices her “self-esteem” when she recognizes her “self” in the skills that she acquires. That is, she recognizes that the skills contain a gap in and through which she is invited to participate in their constitution. The student fundamentally participates in the constitution insofar as she acts as the standard according to which the skills are practiced. Not only, then, do the skills that she learns, insofar as they involve meeting – I-Thou – correspond to her own existence, but also she practices her identity – her sense of self-esteem – as she becomes the site of the power in and through which facts and ideas that she knows or is taught are constituted by her as adequate and inadequate.

Thus, it is not the facts, in and of themselves, that give a student a sense of her identity. Rather, what gives her a sense of identity – a sense of herself – is the fact that she has the ability to constitute “sense” insofar as she is able to work out for herself whether or not the facts are true (make sense with themselves). Similarly, what Wente means is that we are to conceive of a student’s educational “success” in terms other than simply high grades or the student’s ability to get a job. She conceives of a student’s success in terms of her ability to make sense of something for herself such that it makes sense for other people. The student fundamentally recognizes her success as success because it is she who “makes sense.”

1.2.3 Education as its Own Purpose

We find, then, that education, like music, involves a student “making sense” of – meeting – something as she makes sense of – meets – herself and vice versa. A student does not make sense of something merely in order to achieve a certain grade, solve world poverty, make money on the stock market or to find a cure for cancer. These things are, so to speak, the by-products of education’s primary concern, the human being. Thus, a student makes sense of something in order to make sense of herself – in order to bring herself into existence. We may say, then, that a student engages in education for the sake of education. She engages in education, not because she attributes immutable and transcendent principles to it that cut through the need for education’s applicability to everyday life, but rather because the process of education is the process of becoming a human being. Thus, education, as Kierkegaard argues, has “[its] whole life in it[self]” (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 123). Accordingly, if we assume that we are fixed in our
nature – if we assume that our natural physical and natural mental “being” saturates our existence – we shall find that we deny the “whole life” of education in which the human being becomes who she is. In denying that education’s “whole life” is in itself, all our energies are taken up in fashioning it to the specification of the forces that act upon it. Consequently, we reduce education to a tool whereby certain results may be achieved.

Reduced to a tool, education is separated out from human existence. Rather than the ongoing work of being and becoming human, education becomes the means whereby the human being, who already exists, achieves whatever goal it is she feels her existence propels her toward. But because the goal of human existence, outside of human existence, cannot be known, education’s goal is also unknown.

1.2.4 Honesty

Education, then, has its purpose in itself. It is the process whereby a person makes sense of her actions, thoughts and knowledge for the sake of making sense of them. She makes sense of them because the sense that she makes creates her own sense of honesty and integrity. In willing herself to make sense of something, she practices becoming honest and so tests her integrity, sharpens it and re-creates it. Thus, when we say that a student engages a text “self-critically,” we mean that she recognizes and constitutes the text in light of its adequacy in a way that critically accounts for her adequacy. The relationship between the text and its adequacy is not self-evident; consequently the student must work to recognize it. In recognizing the text as a relation – as I-Thou – the student brings it into being. The depth of the text’s self-relation has fundamentally to do with the student’s willingness to push her recognition and constitution of it to the limit of her and its consciousness. The student who pushes her powers of recognition and constitution to the limit fulfills her power and fulfills herself; but the limit is continually pushed and must be continually fulfilled.

Imagine, for example, a conscientious and reflective student. We may say that such a student “learns” when she makes sense of something new that she reads in light of its own adequacy; she constitutes its adequacy in terms of what she already knows. Similarly, the student makes new sense of what she already knows in light of its own adequacy, an adequacy worked out in and through what she has just learnt. But, in addition to making sense of what she learns, she also makes sense of herself as she practices her integrity according to the standard by which she
critically relates a piece of knowledge to the adequate idea of itself. Thus, not only does something make sense to the student, but also it makes sense of the student, as she finds that her recognition and constitution of the critical meeting between the new idea and the old facts practice and amplify the self-critical way of her life.

For example, we say that a student makes sense of music. Equally, however, as I have argued, music makes sense of the student. As she practices music’s meeting of itself, she practices her meeting of herself. It is interesting to consider, then, that while we study the “subjects” of education, we equally become education’s “subjects.” We become the subjects of literature, science, mathematics, geography, art and music, and they become who we are. The self-critical meetings that we set before ourselves in our subject lessons are equal to, or correspond to, the meetings of our everyday existence – the meeting between self and other. Thus, the one constantly interrogates the other, constituting an idea of everyday life, on the one hand, and literature, science or math, on the other hand, that each must work to fulfill.

1.2.5 Results

Education, then, is the process in and through which a person meets the world as she meets herself. It is not a tool used by a person, whose identity is self-evident, to achieve a predetermined result in life. Having said this, we must not conclude that educational “results” are irrelevant; rather, they are given a wholly new expression. Thus, a person must acquire a job. But the job becomes the context in and through which a person continues to become educated – to become herself. The job is not an “end” to which education is a “means;” rather, the idea of a job – of the applicability of education to everyday life – must interpenetrate every moment of education, as education interpenetrates every moment of the job.

It is critical, then, that educators, students and parents continually make a distinction between an educational result, on the one hand, and a result that is an expression of education as human meeting, on the other hand. For, like Kierkegaard’s distinction between “literal” and “metaphorical” speech, “the difference [between them] is by no means a noticeable difference” (Kierkegaard, 1995, p. 210). That is, if one looks simply at the surface of a student’s educational journey, one will not notice the difference between a journey that has its whole life in itself and one that is undertaken simply to arrive at an end. For example, two students may play the same work of music with the same degree of accuracy of pitch, rhythm and dynamics. The first student
sees the goal of her educational practice as the achievement of musical accuracy in terms of pitch, rhythm and dynamics. In contrast, the second student recognizes that her goal is the enactment of herself in and through her engagement in the music’s self-consciousness. Her goal is actualized in her practice and in her performance alike. Every tone that she plays is scrutinized in terms of her self-conscious attention to its “pitch, rhythm and dynamics” and, accordingly, is accurate. However, her accuracy receives a completely different expression in that it becomes the expression of her primary concern: her meeting with the music and with herself.

1.2.6 Practice

Thus, we may say that the student engages music in and through her relationship to herself and, in her engagement, practices becoming the person that she is. The idea of “practice,” in the context of a thesis concerned with music as educational, is particularly apt. We talk about musical practice in terms both of the everyday rehearsal of our musical instruments and of the body of recognized ideas concerning the actualization of musical performance, composition and listening. However, while the former concept of practice is often reduced to the ongoing, never completed, work to achieve a performance result, the latter idea of practice is often reduced to dogmatism that purports to represent paradigmatic ideas of how music is, has been and will be performed. Whereas each reduction of the concept of practice is inadequate, the student’s integration of the one idea with the other re-appropriates her musical practice as something that has its full expression in every moment but, nevertheless, as an expression that must always be actualized. Thus, on the one hand, a student’s daily practice of her musical instrument becomes, in and of itself, the actualization of the power of her musical becoming. On the other hand, the paradigm of musical practice becomes the daily actualization of music that is actual precisely because the individual must, once again, enact it in relationship to herself, the music and all other individuals.

In both cases – daily music practice and the practice we call music – the actuality of a work of music is the remembrance of that work in light of the performer’s, the listener’s or the composer’s imagination of how the work sounds. The meeting between remembrance and imagination gives body to every single moment of musical practice involved in the work and completely re-thinks the idea of musical achievement both as merely a finished product and as simply a process that moves toward that product. Musical practice, constituted in and through the
idea of meeting, is not, primarily, about a “product,” regardless of the skill, dexterity and polish with which it is fashioned. It is not about the delivery of the final performance; the entertainment that the product affords; the escapism or realism that the product represents; or the fame that the product brings to its producers. Nor is musical practice reducible to, on the one hand, the incessant toil of the practice room or, on the other hand, the uncritical inclusivity of “taking part.” In contrast, musical practice is profoundly about education, where education practices human existence insofar as it is simultaneously the product “meeting” and the process of enacting that meeting.

So, if I say that a student practices her instrument for the sake of practicing her instrument, I do not mean that the practice of her instrument is endowed with some impractical or transcendent worth. Rather, I mean that, insofar as she practices her instrument, she practices her existence. Each type of practice – instrumental and existential – tests, and insists upon the adequate fulfillment of, itself and the other. A person brings her integrity, as a thinking, self-aware, self-reflexive human being to bear upon the practice of her musical instrument; and she brings her honesty as a musician – her self-critical awareness of how her performance sounds in light of her idea of how it should sound – to bear upon her humanity.

1.2.6.1 Practicing Self-critique

The notion of musical practice, constituted as a concept whose adequacy must be continually practiced and fulfilled, not only challenges reductive ideas of goal-oriented music education in terms of performance accomplishment and knowledge acquisition but also presses hard on the idea of what is actually involved in teaching and learning. Let us consider how this may be the case. In arguing against the idea that education is merely the transmission of facts and knowledge and for the idea that education is about human meeting, it may seem that I am suggesting that we should be teaching the student to interrogate and to constitute the adequacy of what she is taught in accordance with her own sense of integrity (adequacy). But we must be clear what we mean by “teaching.” For I maintain that the student learns something when she recognizes it as a self-critical concept and when she makes the concept her own such that its work to become adequate is both the creation and amplification of her own work. Thus, I argue that the student recognizes a concept, not in terms of “itself,” but, rather, in terms of I-Thou, in terms of its self-critical structure. She recognizes it because it corresponds to herself as I-Thou.
follows, then, that a student whose existence is not *I-Thou* and who has no idea of self-critique will be unable to recognize a concept that is *I-Thou*. Still, the teacher cannot teach the student to become *I-Thou*. For the very power in and through which the student is able to recognize what the teacher is teaching her – the power of self-reflexivity – is what the student lacks. The teacher can describe what *I-Thou* involves. But while the student might hear the teacher’s words, she will never truly be able to make them her own until she can find the correspondent relationship in herself; and the student cannot even begin to look for such a relationship because she does not know what she is looking for.

1.2.7 An Equal Education

We must conclude that where the end of education – its purpose – is the self-critical enactment of a student’s life, every student engaged in education must already begin self-critically. Thus, the way of music education is practice. The idea of practice presupposes that a student already knows what it is she is practicing and yet, at the same time, because her practice is self-critical, she is constantly expanding and amplifying what she is practicing. Accordingly, while there is movement along the educational way, the movement is not the movement of a student learning to become something that she has not already become. Furthermore, it turns out that one cannot say that a person who pushes her critical idea of a concept to its limits, even though she has only two years of schooling, is more or less educated than a person who has fifty years of schooling. Each person fulfills herself, educationally speaking, as *I-Thou*. She fulfills herself when she meets with herself such that her meeting takes into account everything and everyone she knows. Thus, Kierkegaard writes: “what then is education? I believe it is the course the individual goes through in order to catch up with [her]self” (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 46). At every point along the educational way, educational fulfillment is the process of “catching up” with oneself or the process of what I have termed meeting with oneself. Accordingly, regardless of a person’s worldly status – academic position, age, formal qualifications and so on – because a person is *I-Thou*, because she is other than herself, she has always to catch up with herself. No one person can catch up with herself in a way that is better or worse than another person. A person either “catches up” with herself or she does not. It follows, then, that the professional musician and the beginner may each witness educational fulfillment equally.
1.2.8 Teacher as Witness

I argue, then, that while education cannot be adequately constituted as the teaching and learning of knowledge, even the knowledge of self-critique, it is fruitfully constituted as the practice of self-critique that has already been taught and has already been learnt but that, therefore, must, once again, be practiced: be re-taught and re-learnt. The question for the teacher is: “how does one teach something that has already been learnt?”

Kierkegaard provides us with a way of addressing the latter question with his notion of the witness. As I indicated in Chapter II (see page 36), Kierkegaard argues that “the true knight of faith [the person constituted as I-Thou] is a witness, never the teacher” (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 80). Kierkegaard’s use of the word “witness” is central to understanding the role of the teacher in education today. A teacher does not and cannot teach a student to meet self-critically with herself. What she can do, however, is to bear witness to the idea of self-critique. She bears witness in and through the way that she models her ideas in the lesson, invites her students to participate in her ideas and continually demonstrates to her students her own, ongoing, working out of the adequacy of her ideas. But, although she can only bear witness to her ideas and cannot “teach” them in the sense of convincing her students of them, that is not to say that she simply stands aside and benignly lets her students get on with whatever they want. On the contrary, if the teacher truly bears witness to what it is that is fundamental to a student’s existence insofar as the teacher works everyday of her life to enact that fundament in her own life, she will bear witness with honesty and integrity. Because the teacher has honesty and integrity she will not allow her work as a witness to be anything less than committed, passionate and rigorous. But precisely because the teacher witnesses – rather than knows – what she is committed to, what she is passionate about and what she rigorously articulates, her commitment, passion and rigor ultimately reveal the gap or question mark in their constitution that invites rather than dictates both her own and the student’s participation.

1.3 Summary

In summary, I have argued that education, like music and human existence in general, is the process in and through which a person practices the power of self-critique and creates herself as I-Thou. In her practice, she amplifies her critical sense of herself in and through the idea of an “adequate concept.” That is, a concept is not merely itself but is also its thought for itself. Its
thought for itself is the thought that thinks its adequacy in terms of its equality to the idea that the student, say, believes it has of itself (what it is), the idea the student tests its adequacy against, and the idea (perhaps the teacher’s) that the student tests her own testing against. Thus, the concept becomes a metaphor for the considered attention a student pays to her own integrity in terms of the intensity of her work truly to interrogate and re-constitute a particular idea.

We find, then, that the primary concern of education is not the transmission of concepts but, rather, the recognition of the human being in and through self-critical participation. It turns out, however, that self-critical participation – meeting – cannot be taught or learnt since it is fundamentally implicated in the very acts of teaching and learning. Consequently, my premise is that a student begins with meeting and that an adequate conception of education centers on the practice of meeting. The teacher fosters and encourages the student in and through her practice as a witness rather than as a teacher as the student practices her own capacity to meet with, and recognize, herself.

2 Musical Meeting

2.1 Introduction

The idea of being a “witness to” rather than a “teacher of” the self-critical process of education is central to the attitude in and through which I take part in listening to a work of music. As I stated at the beginning of the chapter, in this, the second section, I intend to bear witness to my meeting with Beethoven’s string quartet Opus 131. Before I begin, however, I would like to articulate the focus of my meeting.

I recognize a distinction between, on the one hand, concentrating on, and participating in, the narrative, if you will, of a meeting and, on the other hand, concentrating on, and witnessing, the I-Thou relation – of a person or an artwork – that allows the meeting to take place. While the two concentrations are distinct, they are also related. Accordingly, I recognize that a person is thoughtful because of what she says and does – the content of her self-critical meeting – and, at the same time, I recognize that her thoughtfulness is empowered in and through her existence as I-Thou. However, the weight of philosophical and sociological literature that offers alternative ways of conceiving of the human being – alternatives to I-Thou – attests to the fact that the latter recognition – the idea that human existence is relational – is by no means self-evident. It is
certainly not self-evident in music. Accordingly, my meeting with Opus 131 is primarily concerned with showing how it is possible to conceive of music as I-Thou rather than articulating or evaluating in critical terms the narrative in and through which we recognize it as I-Thou.

2.1.1 Art, Literature and Music

I feel that it is fruitful to pursue this distinction further. We recognize human interaction in dramatic and emotional terms. For example, we may witness a person’s relationship to herself and to her neighbor in terms, say, of her suffering and of her grief. We are interested in why a person suffers and why she grieves. But it would not occur to us to question the fact that she can suffer and the fact that she can grieve. We may argue that she does not need to suffer or that her grief is false. Nevertheless, our argument is constituted in and through the idea that an adequate or true notion of suffering and grief can be actualized in human terms.

Insofar as human emotions seem to be self-evident in human beings I argue that we find no difficulty in understanding that human grief and suffering are expressed in representational arts such as painting and literature. For example, on the whole, it is not necessary for us to justify that we can witness grief in, say, Ruben’s The Massacre of the Innocents (a painting that hangs in Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto) or that we can witness suffering in Hamlet’s discovery of his father’s “murder most foul” (Shakespeare, 1997, Hamlet, 1.5.27). As a result of the seemingly self-evident correspondence between representational art and human existence, we often reduce the idea that we witness grief and suffering in art to the idea that we see grief and suffering and, consequently, we assume that the grief and suffering that we see are, in fact, inherent in the work of art (or inherent in our subjective idea of it). Thus, we assume that we witness meaning in the painting and in the play because we see that each mirrors the emotions we find in human existence and that each, consequently, has an impact on our lives.

My point is that whether or not we witness meaning in art, it is possible for us to reduce our understanding of how we witness the meaning to the idea that art literally represents or mirrors human emotion. It is equally possible for us to reduce the meaning we witness in the human emotions themselves to the bare state of emotion. Thus, we assume that human grief and suffering are meaningful in and of themselves – whether in the human being or mirrored in art – when, in fact, what we witness as being meaningful is our self-critical participation in them. In other words, I am not suggesting that we simply “see” human grief and suffering and pretend to
feel its meaning (although this is very possible). Rather, I am suggesting that we do take part in constituting the grief and the suffering that we witness but that we attribute what we witness, falsely, to our mere ability to see it.

It turns out, then, that while we may witness human grief and suffering in instrumental music, because music is non-representational, we cannot see it. Music does not literally depict human beings, their actions and their emotions. Music neither shows us a literal image of a murdered child – as does the painting by Rubens – nor does it literally say the words “murder most foul” – as does a figure in the play by Shakespeare. Thus, if we are relying, falsely, upon the explanation that we are able to witness human grief and suffering in music because the music literally mirrors human grief and suffering, we must question the validity of what we witness. It is this question that primarily concerns music philosophers, sociologists and music educators today. One seemingly possible answer is that music is, indeed, representational. Then, it would appear that we can identify various musical devices that depict certain emotional states – devices such as the minor mode, certain musical intervals, a specific musical tempo and so on – and we can understand that certain dramatic devices are analogous to the dramatic conditions that cause, say, grief and sadness in human life. But, if we can say that music is most adequately witnessed in terms of human emotions – in this case grief and suffering – because it mirrors those emotions in and through a kind of musical vocabulary and dramatic representation, and if we hold that musical meaning is at all relevant to people today, we must be able to demonstrate that every musical percipient has access to that vocabulary. Furthermore, we must be able to demonstrate that every percipient understands that a particular human drama mirrored in music – say the drama of conflict and resolution – is meaningful.

I hold, however, that such demonstrations are impossible. Thus, while people do talk about musical meaning in terms of human emotions, when they fail to address the gap between the musical meaning that they say they witness and what others “see” or “hear” to be merely a series of literal sounds, they leave themselves open to the argument that the meaning that they perceive has nothing to do with music itself but rather has to do with the ideology in and through which they have been conditioned to hear it. However, when a person does address the gap between the musical meaning she witnesses and the music she “sees” or “hears” and argues that there is a musical vocabulary whose elements refer to specific human emotions or stereotypical human relations that she witnesses, she limits the people who can “see” or “hear” the meaning of music
to those people who have been privileged to learn the vocabulary and to those who find the kind relations that are depicted meaningful.

It seems, then, that if one is to articulate musical meaning in terms, say, of the human grief and suffering that one witnesses as one meets with it, one must acknowledge that what one articulates has no literal foundation in music’s sounds since there is no literal correspondence to human grieving and suffering that can be seen or heard in music. Where it seems that one can articulate a literal correspondence in terms, say, of a musical vocabulary that paints a literal picture of an emotional state, the correspondence is visible only to those people who understand the vocabulary. This is not the case for literature and painting where it appears that everyone can “see” and “hear” depictions of human emotions that are self-evident.

However, I have argued in my thesis that the meaning that a person witnesses in and through her meeting with a work of art or with a human being is infinitely in excess of the literal or self-evident correspondence that is between the appearance of the work of art and the appearance of the human being. All art has fundamentally to do with human emotions but not merely in terms of the fact that it looks or sounds like the emotions of a person. But, whereas the relationship between painting and literature, on the one hand, and human drama, on the other, is unquestioned, often on account of the literal (false) correspondence between them, the idea that music can be related in similar terms is questioned. Thus, if one wanted to show, for example, that the meaning of the play *Hamlet* exceeded merely the literal representation of the “state” of the son Hamlet’s grief in terms of his father’s murder, one would begin, unproblematically, to discuss how the play and the character interrogated the idea of grief such that it challenged the reader to interrogate her own consciousness. Importantly, because the play literally represents the state of grief in the person of Hamlet and we “know” that people can grieve, even though the literal representation means nothing, it is not necessary to prove, first, that one can talk about the play in terms of the idea of grief.

With music, however, the case is different. Let us examine an example of Kerman’s writing on Beethoven’s Opus 131. He observes that in the opening Fugue “bleaker yet is the matchless place where the canons on A and D turn to the dominant for the resolving section of *strettos* beneath the grieving diminution figure.” He continues, arguing that “strength, not grief, is the final impression conveyed by the great authoritative cello augmentation” (Kerman, 1971, p.
Kerman presupposes that one can talk about music in terms of human emotions – “grief” and “strength” – and can constitute its meaning in and through the way in which those emotions self-critically interact. The problem, however, is that, because there is no literal correspondence between the music and the human being, as I indicated above, Kerman’s presupposition is assumed to be, at best, good for only some people and, at worst, completely without foundation.

In the preceding chapters, then, I have argued that [a] human existence is not commensurate with the human being’s appearance but has, rather, to do with the self-critical relationship of a person to herself and to her neighbor and [b] musical existence is not commensurate with its appearance and has, similarly, to do with the self-critical relationship of music to itself and to its musical participants. The correspondence that is between human drama and emotion and musical drama and emotion lies in the shared constitution of each as I-Thou. Accordingly, the focus of my study is the ongoing articulation of this correspondence. This correspondence empowers one to articulate music in terms that are fundamentally human. It does not require privileged admittance to an elite vocabulary or adherence to the “truth” of stereotypical human relationships. Rather, the correspondence involves the simple recognition that one is a human being and, what is more, that every human being is one’s neighbor.

In terms, then, of music, one continually pushes one’s recognition of music’s self-critical relationship to itself to the limits of one’s own consciousness. Accordingly, while one must begin by recognizing that music meets itself and, consequently, that one can articulate it in human terms, what is critical in relation to the quality of one’s musical interaction is the degree to which one can meet one’s self-consciousness in and through music. It remains, however, that the primary concern of my thesis in general and this section in particular is precisely the idea that we can say that the music meets itself and that in its meeting we can articulate it in human terms. Consequently it is this latter idea on which I shall focus in my meeting with Opus 131. Thus, while I intend, in part, to discuss the content, if you will, of the music’s meeting – and it is clearly the content that determines its educational power – my main concern will be to articulate in more generic terms how I constitute the music’s meeting with itself and my meeting with it.

2.2 Meeting Beethoven’s Opus 131

In my work, then, to articulate “the musical meeting” as a meeting that is possible and that is like other meetings, I will undertake to approach my meeting with Opus 131 as I would approach
my meeting with a person. That is, I will meet with a performance of the music on numerous occasions, practicing, if you will, my listening in terms of my recognition of its musical features and the relationships I constitute between them. But I will also engage the music apart from its performance in terms of the score, music history and analysis.

It may seem that musical history and musical analysis have little to do with the act of engaging the “live” music, so to speak, as it is performed. I argue, however, that music history and musical analysis broaden and deepen one’s sense of the music, just as learning something of a person’s history, independently of one’s immediate meeting with her, broadens and deepens one’s sense of that person. For example, one might read a book that the person recommends, watch a film that she enjoys, or visit a restaurant that she frequents. While one might undertake each of these activities independently of the person, each activity serves to highlight or to critique the sense one has of who she is. Consequently, I will not confine my musical meeting to my “immediate” encounter with the music’s performance; rather, I will also draw on the idea of the music’s history, its underlying structure and so on.

Before I begin my meeting with Opus 131, I think it is worth outlining the meeting’s parameters. First, my meeting with the work is undertaken primarily as a listener. While I will occasionally discuss the music from a performer’s point of view, I do not intend to discuss the work from a composer’s point of view. Thus, I will talk about the music’s consideration of itself rather than Beethoven’s consideration of the music. Second, because my primary intention is to articulate how we can recognize music as meeting with itself, I do not consider it essential to provide a broad descriptive or analytical outline for every movement. Rather, I will focus on the specific musical interactions and ideas in each movement that I consider most fruitfully articulate the notion of music’s meeting with itself.

2.3 Opus 131: outline and context

When one meets with a person, one meets with her in a particular context and often one has a general impression of certain things about her in terms of her age, gender, appearance, occupation and so on. Accordingly, we may begin by setting Beethoven’s Opus 131 in a context and outlining its broad structure. The work was written in 1826 in Vienna at the end of Beethoven’s life. He referred to it as “the greatest of his last compositions” (Kerman, 1971, p.
It has seven movements, each following the other almost without a break. The overall structure of the work is as follows:

No. 1 Opening fugue in C# minor – Adagio ma non troppo e molto espressivo

No. 2 Sonata-principle movement in D major – Allegro molto vivace

No. 3 Recitative in B minor – Allegro moderato – leading to

No. 4 Variations in A major – Andante ma non troppo e molto cantabile – piu mosso – andante moderato e lusinghiero – adagio – allegretto – adagio, ma non troppo e semplice – allegretto

No. 5 Scherzo in E major – Presto

No. 6 Short movement in G# minor – Adagio quasi un poco andante

No. 7 Sonata-principle movement in C# minor – Allegro

In and of itself each “fact” – the brief description of the context in which the work was composed, on the one hand, and the outline of its structure, on the other hand – is flat and meaningless. However, each “fact” takes on meaning when placed in critical relationship to, or becomes responsible for, itself and another fact. First, the knowledge that Opus 131 was written in 1826, at the end of Beethoven’s life, becomes meaningful when that knowledge is recognized in relationship to scholarship that regards his later works as more profound than his earlier works. Considered in the light of such scholarship, the date of the work ceases to be a simple “fact” and takes on a critical weight that must be tested. The date “1826” seems to give value to the work of music, but it is a mistake to believe that the value is identical to the date. The date is invested with value insofar as its value (in terms of the music it signifies) must be worked out. Thus, the musical participant must meet with the music and consider for herself whether or not Beethoven’s “later works” are more profound than his earlier ones. She must consider whether
1826 is a stamp that is indicative of a qualitative difference from music bearing the stamp 1800.62

Second, the outline of Opus 131 becomes meaningful when the musical participant recognizes the work that it describes is unusual insofar as it has seven movements in contrast to other string quartets of the period that normally have four. Taken in isolation, the “fact” that the work has seven movements is unremarkable. However, when the “fact” is placed in critical relation to the history of the string quartet, the idea of seven movements becomes meaningful. In other words, the seven-movement form becomes meaningful when one considers the four-movement form in its light and vice-versa. Each form challenges the “fact” of the other and subsequently reevaluates and re-appropriates itself and the other in dynamic terms of its adequacy. Thus, while the broad, structural outline of Opus 131 might appear dry and expressionless when printed in black and white on the page of a concert program, when the musical participant recognizes the structure in self-critical relationship to its history, it can take on an infinitely different meaning.

2.3.1 No.1

*Form and the expression of anguish*

Opus 131’s self-critical relationship to its history is evident from the outset of the work. Accordingly, where a listener might expect the first movement to be a sonata principle movement, the music presents itself as a fugue. But the music’s self-critique is not merely self-defiance. It does not, for example, replace the sonata form with fugal form because sonata form is the accepted “norm” and opposition to the “norm” is, in and of itself, interesting. The music challenges itself, not because it blindly wishes to oppose itself, but because it wishes to meet itself. “Itself” is meeting.

62 In the same way, Beethoven’s “greatness” as a composer is a fact that is generally asserted by scholars, musicians and listeners. But as a fact it is meaningless, whether it is honored as “the truth” or whether it is dismissed as a “meta-narrative.” The idea of Beethoven’s greatness becomes meaningful only when the adequacy of the idea is tested against itself. Put another way, a person who asserts that Beethoven’s music is “great” must be able to articulate what she means by great, how the music corresponds to her idea of greatness and how her idea of greatness relates to people who question the idea of Beethoven’s musical “greatness.”
In terms of its meeting, the music’s self-critical use of form is rather like a teacher who has always taught philosophy in a particular format and now teaches it in a totally new format. She makes the change, not simply for the sake of the change. Rather, she makes the change in order to give herself and her students a new perspective on the philosophy that she teaches. The students who have witnessed her previous lectures will be struck by the change. But even students who have not witnessed the previous lectures sense something new or unusual about the format of the lecture insofar as the professor is enlivened as she makes her way through the unfamiliar format, making new discoveries.

Accordingly, I argue that, whether or not a person is self-aware of the “norm” of sonata form as first movement form, she will recognize that there is something unique about the fugue. I suggest that what she recognizes as unique is the fugue’s work to become equal to the first movement of a string quartet. In a sense, then, the comparative uniformity of the fugue is constantly testing its adequacy against the usual idea that the first movement sonata form is dramatic. It is not that it succumbs to sonata form but rather that it takes on the idea of dramatic tension and release by re-articulating the drama within the limits of its own form. At the same time, however, the idea of sonata form pushes the music against the fugue’s limits and re-valuates the fugue’s idea of itself. Indeed, Kerman argues that in regard to “the [fugue’s] exploratory dynamic of continuous harmonic variation” (Kerman, 1971, p. 331) the fugue displays “subtle signs that it is part of a work in sonata style” (p. 331).

Rather than make the “subtle signs” explicit, I am going to focus my meeting on a particular phrase. Accordingly, let us consider the opening fugal subject played by the solo first violin. The violin rises from a G# through to a C# and falls to an accented A. The music grows from the piano G# to a sforzando A and then falls away in volume before it winds its way around, and back to, the G#. I witness the music as being “anguished” as the C# lunges toward the A (Fig. 3). The question is why or how do I witness the music in this way? The physical sounds do not literally “grow,” nor do they “lunge,” and nor are they “anguished.”
Let us examine just one of these metaphors, the metaphor, for example, that the music is “anguished.” When I talk about the music being anguished, I am not suggesting that the music depicts, in its sounds and in its shapes, the sounds or shapes of the emotion “anguish.” Rather, I argue that music expresses anguish in terms of the nature of its ongoing work to make sense of itself in relation to itself, to the history of music and to the musical participant. The music’s anguish is located in its recognition that it must necessarily adhere to the tenets of the system that constitutes its existence but, precisely if it is to exist, that it must simultaneously exceed them.

Accordingly, I argue that we recognize anguish in the opening phrase of the movement insofar as the music challenges the conventions in and through which it is constituted and works to re-articulate what it is, its existence, in new and actual terms: in terms, in other words, of meeting. Thus, we re-constitute the music’s literal pitches, their duration and their articulation, in terms of meeting. But the meeting of the opening of Opus 131 does not deal with marginal concerns. It addresses, in the most profound way, the very paradox of its existence: the reality of itself as sound that can be heard as music but that is only fully music insofar as it is recognized to be critical of itself as music. Thus, the sounds of Opus 131 push both our and its understanding of them as sound that is music to the limit. The limit is the edge of sound that falls over into nonsense and the edge of sound that merely replicates the familiar music of the day. The music that is meeting struggles to establish itself on or between this edge, deeply troubled – anguished – by the sense that it will fail and tormented by the doubt of its ability to stave off its inevitable fall from the edge to one side or the other – nonsense or familiarity. Accordingly, we may say that each musical element meets itself and the other in a way that pushes itself, and the other (including the musical participant) to the limit of its or her self-reflexivity.

For example, I suggest that the opening G# meets, rather than simply follows, the critical weight of the silence that comes before it. It is as if the tone must interpret the silence and, having
interpreted it, create a tone – a sound – that equals it. Indeed, we can imagine the first violinist practicing the opening tone in conjunction with the first phrase, working to create a sound that would equal the silence and expectation of the concert hall and meet the challenge of the next note. But the meeting of sound and silence is not merely a matter of conventionally fitting one to the other. For the quality of the silence that the tone must meet is fundamentally implicated in the quality of the tone. Thus, as the violinist plays the tone, the silence that it meets is created in relation to the tone, just as the tone is created in relation to the silence.

Like the G#, the accented A meets the sounds that surround it. It dominates the middle of the first phrase of the fugal subject. One recognizes an uneasiness in its dominance since one hears it (consciously or subconsciously) as undermining the centrality of the Tonic (C#) and the Dominant (G#) both of which notes are not only not accented but occur on weak beats of the bar. But the A does not rest easily in its position. Not only is it a weak degree of the scale but also, while the music before it rises and crescendos to what the listener and the music presumes will be the “high” point of the phrase, in contrast the phrase falls a third to the A. Thus, it seems as if the A’s sforzando is intentional; it is part of its work to equal the situation into which it has been thrust. We may say that the A equals itself, creating a tone that is not merely identical to the sound “A” or even comparable to it. It has the same pitch as the pitch we call A, but the tone A in the fugal subject is infused with an entirely different quality: a quality that is irreducible to the physical pitch. The quality is constituted in the tone’s meeting with the rest of the music.

I will try to articulate what I mean by this. If I sing the phrase at the beginning of Opus 131 to myself and linger on the A, I witness the A as imbued with meaning. I recognize, in the tone, its character or a substance that I can begin to articulate (inadequately) as anguished, tragic, stark and so on. However, the A I play on the piano at the beginning of a rehearsal in order that my students might tune their instruments is invested with no such character. It is simply what it is – the physical pitch, A. I have listened to the Op. 131 quartet many times. In and through my listening, when I mindfully attend to the music, the character of the A is amplified. I account for it, not only in terms of the silence and the tones that come before it and the tones that come after it but also in terms of the whole quartet.
2.3.2 No. 2

History and responsibility

The idea that one musical element or feature accounts for, or is responsible for, another is an idea central to the notion that music meets with itself – that music is both itself and for itself. But it is not merely that one tone is responsible for another; the music’s responsibility works across the entire work. We may say, then, that the music of the Allegro molto vivace is accountable to the fugue and vice versa. But the nature of that accountability is not obvious or conventional. For whereas “conventional” responsibility might constitute the tonal relation between the two movements in terms of the relation of the tonic (C# minor) to the dominant (G# minor) or, at least, of the tonic to the relative major (E major), here the music moves up a semitone to the key of the Neapolitan degree, D major. The listener witnesses the move as a shift or rise, nudged on by the C# octave leap at the end of the fugue and D octave leap at the beginning of the second movement. Furthermore, since the movements are linked, so the full force of the shift can actually be heard.

Accordingly, in the Allegro, the listener hears a totally new and unrelated sound (tonality), embodied in and through a lilting figure in 6/8 time. Interestingly, however, despite the unconventional tonal relationship between the movements and each movement’s contrasting mood, the relationship between the Fugue and the Allegro is not incomprehensible. On the contrary, the listener witnesses the two movements as being profoundly related in terms of the responsibility the one has for the other. While there appears to be nothing in the sound to bind the movements, the listener witnesses each as bound in its meeting with the other. Over the following paragraphs I intend to explore why this is the case.

While the Allegro’s first violin theme is dance-like, by no means, however, is its music merely light-hearted. The music’s character is new but nevertheless that character is invested with its history: the history of the previous movement. Thus, I consider that the music contains an edge or an urgency that suggests its remembrance (and the listener’s remembrance) of the earlier fugue. For example, one might recognize the music’s urgency in the subtle, yet insistent voice of the viola in dialogue with the first violin melody (bars 1-8) as it emphasizes the second beat of the bar, alternating between the notes of F# and G (Fig. 4). The musical drama builds slightly as one recognizes the viola’s music as intentionally probing the first violin’s melody. The viola
seems to press upon the first violin, requiring it to respond. The first violin does respond and slows down the triplet at the top of its phrase (marked *un poco ritardando*) in bar 8.

Figure 4

But while I talk about the viola/violin interaction as “musical drama,” the music’s drama is not something that I can experience when I am merely exposed to the juxtaposition of the violin and viola’s physical sounds. Rather, the musical drama comes into existence when I witness the physical sounds of the two voices meeting with themselves and with each other in accordance with an idea that is in excess of, or irreducible to, the physical sounds. I argue that the idea according to which the sounds meet is the idea of their mutual responsibility, the idea, in other words, of the equal dignity and worth of each.

But what is it, then, that constitutes, for example, the dignity and worth of the violin theme? I suggest that the theme has dignity and worth insofar as it reflects critically upon itself, its history and the viola’s commentary. Thus, the theme’s dignity and worth cannot be empirically quantified in the physical sound; rather, the theme’s dignity and worth can only be witnessed insofar as its response to itself or to the viola is a response that the listener can recognize as enacting self-critique. Consequently, the slight slowing of the first violin triplet in bar 8, taken as isolated sounds, are meaningless. However, witnessed as the violin’s response to the viola
figure’s “prodding” or, indeed, to the violin’s own sense of the lightness of its melody in relation to the weight of the fugue, the sounds are invested with meaning. Put the other way around, insofar as I find the violin melody expressive and moving, I find that it has a critical sense of itself. Thus, one might call the musical dialogue between the first violin and the viola “dramatic” because one recognizes that there is something at stake: namely, the adequate constitution of each instrument’s music as truly self-critical.

2.3.3 No.3

_Difference_

Let us explore the idea of musical response and responsibility further. The third movement begins with an abrupt musical exclamation in B minor. Following on, as it does, almost without a pause, the exclamation is heard as a response to the _pianissimo_ F sharps that end the second movement (Fig. 5). The listener witnesses the response as being dramatic because she recognizes the contrast between “_pianissimo_ F#s” and the “abrupt musical exclamation.” The contrast is constituted in terms of the “difference” between the two musical events. For the sake of my project, it is worth articulating what that “difference” is.

![Figure 5](image)

First, building on the idea of difference developed in the preceding chapters, let us consider the idea of a “difference” between two people. One does not recognize a person as being different from another merely on account of her physical features, her gender or her cultural background. Rather, one recognizes a person as being different in terms of the way she responds to, and considers herself in light of herself, in light of other people and in light of the world in general.
Thus, we may argue that it is a person’s self-reflexivity – her self-critical thoughtfulness – in and through which she addresses herself and her neighbor, and not her physical, cultural and mental attributes, which constitutes or makes up her personality. I do not mean that all people and all personalities are self-critically thoughtful. I mean, rather, that we say that a person is kind, generous, callous, cold-hearted, brutal, considerate, loving, despicable or impatient in terms of our idea that an adequate personality involves the idea of self-critical (loving) thought.

In the same way, then, one musical element cannot be said to be different from another merely in terms of its physical constitution – its pitch, its meter and its dynamic. Certainly, we might say that one note is higher than or longer than or louder than another. But the comparison of two notes, in and of themselves, would not account for the meaning that we witness, when we witness what we may call a “dramatic” difference between two sounds. The comparison would simply articulate an empirical dissimilarity between the dimensions of two sounds. In contrast, we witness one musical event as being different from another and we witness that difference as being meaningful when we recognize that each event is uniquely responsible for the response that it offers to itself and to the other. In other words, a musical event is not meaningful merely because it attends to its neighbor in a certain way. A musical event is meaningful because we witness it as being responsible for its attention.

Thus, we recognize the difference between the musical figure at the end of the second movement and the musical figure at the beginning of the third movement in the same way that we recognize the difference between human beings. That is, we recognize each figure as being different from the other insofar as each is unique in its responsibility for its own response to the other. The uniqueness or difference of each is distinct from, on the one hand, the idea that each figure blindly re-acts according to random events that are always different (but whose difference cannot be recognized), or, on the other hand, the idea that each is driven by a pre-determined or conventional pattern (that is always the same).

The idea that each figure is responsible for its response means that we can construe the response in ethical and, consequently, in human terms. In other words, we can talk about the third movement figure as being “abrupt” as we would talk about a human being as “abrupt.” The music’s response can only be “abrupt” if, in fact, we can hold it accountable for its abruptness.
We can only hold the music accountable for its abruptness if the abrupt response itself is self-reflexive – if it contains the power of a response that is not abrupt.

Accordingly, I argue that the listener hears the music’s response as abrupt because she can hear in it a response that treats the *pianissimo* F#s in a way that is different. She recognizes in it a way that seems, perhaps, to be more considerate. She can recognize the possibility of a considerate response because she can constitute such a response for herself. What is important, however, in terms of the musical meaning that the listener witnesses is not whether the music’s response appears to be abrupt or considerate. What is important is that the music’s response is constituted in terms of the music’s self-critical responsibility for that response and that the idea of the adequacy of its responsibility tests the musical participant’s responsibility for herself insofar as she must work out the adequacy of what seems to her to be a more considerate response versus an abrupt response.

The third movement ends with another “impatient” or “abrupt” gesture – a *forte* E major chord. The gesture makes sense, harmonically speaking, insofar as it is heard as the dominant chord of the key of A major, the key of the fourth movement *Andante*. But, while the harmonic relationship constitutes the music’s empirical structure, the music is not witnessed merely in empirical terms. It is not simply heard as part of a chain reaction of harmonic sounds, each one following inevitably on from the other in accordance with harmonic rules and principles. In contrast, the listener witnesses the *forte* E major chord as responsible for its own sound.

2.3.4 No. 4

*Revelation*

In the same way, then, while we may understand that the tonality of the fourth movement *Andante* (A major) adheres to the overall “empirical” structure of the work, in and of itself, such an understanding does not make the music meaningful. I argue, in contrast, that we witness the music – through the unique sound of A major – as being meaningful in terms of its responsibility or what we can call its “care” for itself. Thus, we may say that we hear the sound “A major” as being warm and considerate. We hear it as such because we recognize that the *Andante* constitutes and reveals relationships between its musical elements (tones, harmonies etc.) that, unlike the anguish of the musical relations in, say, the opening fugal subject, have an
attentiveness about them that reveals warmth and consideration. But does that mean, then, that the *Andante*'s musical relations are simply conventional? Has the music of the *Andante* fallen from the edge I discussed in the opening of the fugue into the familiarity of repeated musical patterns?

On the contrary, I argue that the music of the *Andante* is profoundly self-reflexive. But, unlike the fugue, the music is less concerned with challenging the larger structures and assumptions that confine it and more concerned with the meditative, ongoing revelation or unfolding of itself. Thus, it is not that the music is simply conventional. Rather, its challenge of its conventions is less dramatic and more concentrated and, in that it discovers itself in its challenge, the music is profoundly self-conscious.

I find, then, that I have articulated what we may call two attitudes of musical self-critique characterized, on the one hand, by the anguish of the fugue in terms of its struggle simultaneously to exist in its world and out of it, and, on the other hand, by the quiet ongoing revelation of the *Andante*'s variations. I will categorize the two attitudes respectively in terms of what I call “global” and “local” self-critique.

The distinction between “global” self-critique and “local” self-critique is not a critical distinction; each side of the distinction interpenetrates and amplifies the other. I make the distinction, rather, to articulate, on the one hand, what I consider to be the bias of the *Andante* and, on the other hand, what I consider gives the music its particular character. The *Andante* thinks about itself, overcoming (or perhaps suspending) the doubt and uncertainty that a more global perspective might demand. At the same time, I do not consider that the sublime music of the *Andante* is blind to the global perspective. Rather, I hold that the music’s intense care for, and attention to, its every local detail, enacted in and through what one might call “faith” (in light of the nagging, global doubts), re-articulates the dramatic dialogue that spans the whole

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63 I think it would be interesting to explore the relationship between the dramatic character of Opus 131 – particularly in the first and final movements – and what I have articulated as the thoughtful character of the fourth movement. Both, as we have seen, involve self-critique. But is one type of self-critique – global or local – more adequate than the other? Certainly, the fourth movement has a sense of intense joy and spirituality about it. But are the joy and the spirituality the standards of the outer movements? Is there not a sense that the outer movements, too, even in the drama of their pain and suffering, are intensely alive?
work in the intense concentration of the moment. In other words, the more that the Andante focuses on its music as it unfolds, the more the listener witnesses in that focus a profound self-awareness of the work as a whole.\(^{64}\)

Thus, the opening musical dialogue of the Andante and, indeed, the music of the whole movement might be articulated as a process of loving, self-critical, meditation. The music’s loving, self-critical meditation is not so much about a “global” or dramatic sense of musical justice that involves the challenge and confrontation of one musical figure by another. Rather, the meditation is a more local, gradual and subtle process whereby music that might appear to be mono-thematic and mono-tonal reveals its depth in and through its self-reflexive unfolding. The revelation is achieved through a continual process of focusing the attention of the music and the musical participant in upon small musical details, distilling those details and, at the same time, amplifying and exploring them and so building whole sections of music or “variations” upon them.\(^{65}\)

Thus, there is a sense that the music of the Andante is grounded, constant and at one with itself as it focuses itself and the musical participant in upon its motifs, rhythms and articulations. At the same time, insofar as those “motifs, rhythms and articulations” are amplified and built upon, the music is constantly shifting its ground, renewing its constancy and becoming one with itself. Accordingly, the opening theme appears to be a single line melody accompanied by a pedal note in the viola and off-beat pizzicato tones in the cello. The single line melody, however, is shared between the two violins and, in terms of its two-bar antecedent/consequent phrasing, shared, as it were, between itself (Fig. 6). Thus, while it seems as if the music speaks with a single voice, at

\(^{64}\) I have in mind two correspondent instances in literature where what I call a concentration on the moment or the particular invites a simultaneous connection with the whole. First, are the actions of the character Dorothea who, in George Eliot’s novel Middlemarch, “lived faithfully a hidden life” and whose “finely-touched spirit,” rather than any great acts of heroism, is partly responsible, Eliot tells us, for the fact that “things [today] are not so ill with you and me” (Eliot, 1994, p. 838). Second, are the words of the Elder Zosima in Dostoyevsky’s The Brothers Karamazov. He advises a woman who doubts the existence of God to “Try to love your fellow human beings actively and untiringly. In the degree to which you succeed in that love, you will also be convinced of God’s existence” (Dostoyevsky, 1993, p. 60).

\(^{65}\) This gradual process of unfolding, revelation and amplification might be imagined to correspond to the work that takes place (or should take place) in a “monogamous” human relationship. While the relationship seems “the same” in its daily pattern and in its constitution, in its fullest and most adequate expression, it has the power to grow in richness and depth.
the same time, the voice is twofold, in terms both of the two instruments that share it and of the phrasing of the single melody. Accordingly, while the music appears to present itself as literally “one” voice, it is empowered to become that voice in and through its relation to itself.

![Sheet music](image)

**Figure 6**

I argue, then, that, as we listen to the shape of the opening melody, we may talk about the first and second violin as carrying on a kind of conversation, where the first is slightly more reserved and the second keeps pressing her in an attentive, considerate and loving way.\(^{66}\) Initially, it appears as if the conversation will proceed in alternate two-bar responses, the second violin answering the first violin. However, one hears the first violin’s second utterance (bar 3), insofar as it resolves onto the tonic, as an answer to the second violin, creating a six-bar (rather than a four-bar) phrase. At the same time, the first violin’s answer (bar 3) is heard as a kind of question

\(^{66}\) The conversation begins with a four-note figure in the first violin (A-B-A-G#). As the leading tone of A major, the first violin’s G# is heard by the listener as needing to move back up to the A. The second violin’s four-note response (G#-A-G#-D) takes over from the first violin with the same rhythmic pattern. However, instead of resolving onto the A and tonic harmony, the music extends the dominant harmony, set up by the first violin’s G#, and ascends to a D from which point the first violin repeats the opening pattern (D-E-D-C#), this time finishing on a C# and tonic harmony. The second violin again takes over from the C# and again ends the phrase (C#-D-C#-A) with an ascent, this time to an A.
to the second violin that once more reflects the first violin’s music back to it but also expands it in terms of pitch, taking it to the high point of the phrase. The conversation, then, is not simply a back and forth exchange; rather, included in each response is an invitation for a further response, and the response that comes is not simply a restatement of the former position, for it has changed its perspective in terms of pitch and harmony, altering the way that it is witnessed. Thus, the music coaxes itself out of (or into) itself, amplifying and broadening a sense of profound attention, consideration and love, within the quietude of simple tonic/dominant harmony and a wonderfully simple texture. The listener, then, is similarly “coaxed” out of herself as she constantly works to recognize and re-recognize the music as it unfolds, and, in her ongoing recognition of the music, to recognize herself.

Accordingly, while I have argued that the overall sense of the Andante is that the music meditates upon itself and is constant and at one with itself, still, as the music progresses, it minutely “shifts its ground,” renews and becomes itself, adding a new voice here, a new dynamic there or distributing itself between the instruments in a new way. One particularly poignant moment is at bar 24 (see Fig. 7) when the cello and viola join the second violin’s three-note descending figure, marked [A] in the example.

![Figure 7](image)

**Figure 7**

The figure has been heard twice before in bars 8 and 16 but not in a way that is particularly noticeable. In bar 24, however, the added weight and color of the additional two voices constitute the figure in a new light, inviting the listener not only to attend to it but also to recognize and remember its significance in the past. Similarly, in bar 25 the first violin takes the pedal tone of the viola that has been used extensively throughout the twenty-five bars and re-constitutes it as a
melodic tone. In a sense, then, the Theme reveals itself in and through its own variation. In the same way, each variation that follows becomes its own theme, insofar as the variation reveals the full power of itself in and through further variation.

2.3.5 No.5

*Continuity and discontinuity*

The fifth movement follows the fourth without a break. However, the music’s continuity is undermined; the gruff cello figure at the beginning of the Presto is separated by a silence – a bar’s rest – from the main body of the movement (Fig. 8). The movement also ends with silence. But the silence is not the silence of the cessation of the music. The silence is framed between the final fortissimo chord of E major (bar 496) and the abrupt unison octave G sharps (bar 497) that Kerman describes as “a deaf man’s harsh peremptory shout” (p. 327). Paradoxically, then, the Presto is both part of the continuous narrative that constitutes the work of music and, at the same time, is intentionally separated from that narrative by silence.

We may conceive of that silence as a gap. While the idea of a literal gap in the sound merely contradicts the idea of the sound’s continuity, the two contradictory positions – the literal gap and the literal continuity – are brought together as a paradox. The paradox is constituted in metaphorical terms. That is, the gap in the music’s continuous sound (and the continuous sound between the music’s gaps) becomes a metaphor for self-reflexivity. In musical terms, then, the relationship of the gap to the continuity of the music is not reducible to the literal juxtaposition of non-sound and sound. Rather, the listener witnesses the juxtaposition of the non-sound and the sound in terms of thought: thought that thinks a self-critical relationship between the music’s discontinuity and its continuity. Thus the one, discontinuity, is thought in terms of the other, continuity, and vice-versa. Accordingly, the non-sound/sound relationship is imbued with meaning as the listener witnesses (takes part in) the music’s work to meet with, or to equal, the idea of its silence.
As the listener witnesses the music’s self-critical thought for itself she recognizes that its apparent “childlike” (p. 338) and “sing-song style” (Ratner, 1995, p. 253) does not saturate its totality. The listener understands that the *Presto* exceeds what appears to be its “sing-song style,” and, in terms of its incongruity with the work as a whole, she is able to conceive that the music is critical of its “childlike” nature. Thus, when the music “with an almost absurdly popular ring” (Kerman, 1971, p. 201) begins after its false start in the cello, the listener does not merely hear it as incongruous in contrast to the earnestness of the music she has heard hitherto. Rather, she witnesses the music as being ironic. She witnesses it as both wittily and wittily constituting itself as having an “absurdly popular ring.”

### 2.3.6 No. 6

*Emotion, death and music*

My central argument, then, is that the listener finds the music meaningful because she recognizes that, like any human being, it self-consciously attends to, or meets with, itself. Consequently, the listener can conceive of the music as being ironic insofar as it self-consciously pretends to signify one thing while its intention is to signify the opposite. As ironic, the music exceeds its literal signification insofar as what it is is at once its literal self and its self-reflexive critique of that self.

Accordingly, while we are empowered to conceive of music in the way that we conceive of a person – in terms of emotions such as anguish, joy, surprise and so on – still, insofar as we understand that a person can be ironic, we must remember that she is not commensurate with the
emotion. Thus, while it seems as though we can “see” an emotion in a person, we cannot recognize the emotion, in and of itself. What we can recognize, however, is the human being’s idea of the emotion – her self-critical relationship to it. So, while I may recognize sadness in myself, what I recognize is not merely sadness; rather, what I recognize is my self-critical relationship to sadness. While my “sadness” as a thing in and of itself is meaningless, it becomes meaningful only as an articulation of my existence, in terms of how I deal with sadness, how I overcome it, how I fail to overcome it and so on.

It follows, then, that when I recognize sadness in music, what I recognize is the music’s self-critical recognition of its sadness. Kerman describes the sixth movement of Opus 131 as “mournful.” If his description is to mean anything to us, it is that we have to recognize in the music the music’s recognition of its own state of mourning. Let us consider how this may be the case.

The first sound of the Adagio quasi un poco andante is silence. The second sound is a G# minor chord, held for four beats over the bar line, growing and then suddenly falling away, almost stopping before the viola “reproachfully . . . begins a beautiful mourning song” (Kerman, 1971, p. 339). The chord comes out of silence, crescendos and returns to silence – the gap in the sound created by the subito piano (see Fig. 9).
It is interesting to reflect that cessation or death is a natural property of sound. It is possible for a performer to continue to make the sound, but once she has stopped making it it fades away; the vibrations gradually cease. Thus, it might appear that what we hear in bar 2 of the *Adagio* is the death of the sound as the performers allow it to fade away. I would argue, however, that the music does not merely die; rather, the music attends to its death. In other words, the music draws attention to its dying, considers what that dying means in and through musical interpretation, and re-constitutes the natural dying of its sounds, as the self-reflexive death of the music. That is, the sound dies to its nature – a nature that naturally dies or fades away – and re-constitutes itself in relationship to its nature. Thus, the sound recognizes the idea of its own death, and, insofar as all ideas are self-reflexive, it re-creates its death in its own image. In other words, the music recreates its death, not as a flat, one-dimensional fact but as a self-critical concept. The music transforms the naturally dying sound into music, music that enacts death in its sounds and thus enlivens it.

We may also think about the music’s death in terms of the role the performers play in the *Adagio’s* opening chord. Let us consider the violinist. Because sound “naturally dies,” the violinist must keep the sound going. In a sense, the violinist negates the sound’s natural tendency to die by sustaining it with her bow. But the music asks the violinist to negate her negation. The music asks the violinist to keep the sound going but in a way that does not keep it going. The violinist keeps the sound going such that its “not going” is not its natural death but is, rather, the violinist’s and the music’s creation. The sound’s “not going” is not simply the cessation of its vibrations or the violinist’s inability to keep the sound going because she has “run out of bow.” The sound’s “not going” is intentional and, accordingly, the music and the musical participant recognize it as meaningful. Thus, the music’s death becomes its life.

2.3.7 No. 7

*Music and paradox*

After a final upward reach, the *Adagio* prepares to resolve “mournfully” on a perfect cadence in C# minor. But the resolution, which forms the first note of the final movement, is played *subito fortissimo*. Thus, the listener who meets with the opening music of the *Allegro*, including what I will call its “anapestic figure” (Fig. 10), has an immediate sense of the music’s violence. The appearance of the musical violence seems unprecedented. Nowhere in the quartet – in the intense
anguish of the Fugue, the lilting urgency of the second movement, the profound and joyful contemplation of the fourth movement, the ironic jocularity of the Scherzo or the “mournful” singing of the sixth movement – would the music seem to prepare its listener for the ferocity of these opening bars. Nevertheless, somehow the violence makes sense. That is, while we might consider it shocking and disruptive, we also recognize that the music is somehow “right.”

Figure 10

My main concern, in discussing the final movement, is to make sense of why we might recognize it as “right.” Thus, I am interested in what the violence of the opening anapestic figure reveals about the work as a whole and how the work, and in particular the Allegro, shed light on its violence. Let us begin, then, by tracing the violence back through the quartet. We find its beginning in the abruptness of the third movement and continuing in the muttering cello figure in the sixth variation of the Andante and in the angry G# octaves at the end of the Presto. In fact, in tracing the music’s violence through the quartet, the dominant/tonic relationship between the G# octaves of the Presto and the C# of the Allegro becomes evident. The relationship offers one a way of interpreting the music’s anger. For we might conclude that, insofar as the two events are linked, the vehemence with which they are delivered has to do with the music’s impatience for, or frustration with, what it sees as its inevitable march toward its final tonic resolution on to the C#. In light of this interpretation, the “mournful” music of the sixth movement can be witnessed as a moment of reflection, given the inevitability of the music’s resolution, between the “fateful” tones, G# and C#, and their respective movements.

I would like, then, to end the account of my meeting with Opus 131 by considering the idea that the dramatic intensity of the final movement is actualized in and through the music’s struggle to
challenge and re-appropriate the apparent teleology inherent in its tonal constitution – the inevitability of dominant-tonic resolution. I argue that it is this “struggle” that we recognize as being “right;” that is, we witness it as the music’s loving work to challenge its conventions and to revaluate and re-constitute itself as that challenge.

So how is the music’s “struggle” witnessed? While the listener cannot rely upon her “knowledge” of the profound tonal relationships that constitute the Allegro (she cannot, for example, automatically hear that it moves to E major in the 2nd subject), I maintain that, insofar as she witnesses the music’s meaning in and through her attention to the relationships between its elements, she witnesses its work to make sense of its tonality.

Let us consider, first, the idea of the music’s “struggle” in terms of the quartet as a whole. One may argue that from the beginning of the quartet the music has striven to meet self-critically, as it were, what Kerman refers to as “sonata teleology” (Kerman, 2006, p. 276): a kind of tonal dichotomy involving the tonic’s hierarchical relationship to the dominant. Opus 131 undercuts tonal hierarchy. Not only does the work replace the traditional sonata-form movement – in which the hierarchy is central – with a fugue, but also the fugue itself answers its opening tonic subject in the sub-dominant and not in the expected dominant. Furthermore, the music’s focus on the flat (sub-dominant) side of C# minor is emphasized in its shift up a semi-tone in the second movement to the key of the Neapolitan degree (D major), then to B minor (movement three) and finally to A major (movement four). I suggest, then, that the tonal structure of the entire work is self-critical of itself as a structure that inevitably leads to the tonic insofar as it works simultaneously with and against what we might call its inherent tendency to replicate tonic-dominant hierarchy.

Consequently, when the “savage” (Kerman, 1971, p. 275) dominant G#s resolve onto the tonic C# of the Allegro (by way of the sixth movement), we witness the music as being angry. Perhaps its anger is the result of its impatience to embark upon a course toward final dominant-tonic resolution. I am inclined to take the reverse view. I suggest that the music is angry precisely because it recognizes that, despite its “struggle” to the contrary, its resolution is inevitable. First, the violence of the anapestic figure contains a dogged determination that does not, I argue, herald the “powerful gestures of resolution and synthesis [found] in the last section of the Great Fugue [Opus 133]” (Kinderman, 2006, p. 315). Indeed, the Finale of Opus 131 undercuts its resolution.
Second, the listener witnesses the music as fatefuly drawn toward the end rather than gloriously embracing it. For example, as Kerman observes, “descending fortissimo whole-note scales (bars 312-327) . . . critique [and undermine] . . . the rhetoric of heroism” (Kerman, 2006, p. 274).

Despite the latter “critique,” at the beginning of the Allegro it appears that the music is set upon a course of “heroic” resolution. It begins with a strong tonic-dominant relationship in the opening anapestic figure. First, heard by itself, the figure encapsulates a I-V-I harmonic cadence, the progression that most convincingly establishes the tonic key of C# minor. Second, the music moves to the dominant (bars 9-13) in a modulation that Kerman argues “is hard to credit in a composition that has programmatically avoided dominant modulations up to this point” (p. 273). Thus, there is a sense of bleak “reality” and inevitability at the start of the movement. To the listener, it seems, suddenly, as if the music has been helplessly driving in the direction of the tonic chord from the beginning of the work. All that remains is to enact out its passage to the final, perfect cadence.

Importantly, however, in revealing its “reality,” the music reveals its self-awareness of that reality that, in and of itself, is already in excess of “reality.” The music reveals its “self-awareness” in and through its tonal critique. It consistently subverts the force of the anapestic tonic-dominant figure by emphasizing the flat side of C# minor, an emphasis that reflects the tonal structure of the whole work. The Allegro introduces Neapolitan harmony as early as bar 17, an introduction that foreshadows the music’s shift to the Neapolitan key in the development (bar 117), the re-capitulation of the second subject (bar 216) and the non ligato scales (bar 329) of the Allegro. I must emphasize that the listener can actually witness these shifts of tonality. The most easily recognizable is in the coda, when, following one climatic dominant-tonic cadence after another (bars 302, 313, 321), the music takes the Neopolitan tone and appropriates it as the key tone for a rapid two octave scale of D major (bar 329) culminating in a perfect cadence in C# minor, high in the first violin. The music repeats the scale before resolutely striding forward with the march-like, iambic motif taken from the opening of the movement. Saturated with dominant-tonic harmony the music is, once more, apparently destined for the final, tragic cadence in C# minor. But it pauses, yet again, drawing attention to its resolution and stops, apparently disoriented, on a piano diminished chord (bar 347).

67 Beethoven’s marking – the more normal spelling of “ligato” is “legato.”
From this point on, the music’s character changes utterly. Subdominant tonality and a complete change of mood totally undermine the dominant-tonic teleology, and the music leads to a plagal (IV-I) cadence in C# major. I will return to the end later. What is central, however, is that, on the one hand, the movement emphasizes “sonata teleology” in its all-pervasive dominant-tonic motifs, and that, on the other hand, the movement undercuts “sonata teleology” by emphasizing the Neapolitan and sub-dominant keys.

Accordingly, I argue that the music’s meaning lies in its (and our) confrontation of what we may call the paradox of its (and our) existence, a paradox that I articulated as constituting the kernel, as it were, of the opening bars of the fugue. Insofar as the music is tonal, it functions according to principles that necessarily “direct [its] motion towards an ending-point” (Cook, 1987, p. 67). However, precisely because the music is tonal, it is able to relate to itself and to other tonalities and to recognize its end in a way that is always in excess of that ending-point. Thus, while the music of Opus 131 seems to march inevitably toward its final resolution, insofar as it is conscious of tonal conventions it attends self-critically to its march and, in doing so, creates its music.

By tonal conventions I mean the Schenkerian idea that music is essentially the “prolongation of the major triad” (Cook, 1987, p. 39) whose ultimate goal is always the completion of that triad through a V-I cadence. But, as we have seen, Opus 131 cannot simply be viewed as the prolonging of musical sound that is fated for an inevitable end. As mere “prolongation” Opus 131 might be understood in terms of the conventional mechanisms and devices of tonality that propel it to its teleological end. Insofar as the music self-critically recognizes its “prolongation,” however, it finds itself in its self-critical recognition. The music must continue to find itself, and, in its finding, to attend to, interrogate, and nurture its “prolongation” such that its “prolongation” is infinitely transformed from a series of devices – designed to pass the time of the music’s duration until it reaches its final goal – into the very essence of the music, where the music’s goal or essence is its ongoing unfolding, its constant revaluation and its re-appropriation of itself as meeting. In other words, the music’s “prolongation” is not merely a means to the real (but ultimately empty) end of its existence. For, music has its “whole life” (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 123) in its critical recognition of itself in it.
Paradoxically, then, the more profoundly self-aware the music becomes of its inevitable end and thus the more it becomes attentive to, and considerate of, its own prolongation, the more deeply the prolongation is witnessed and transformed as music, and the more its “end” is transfigured. Consequently, it would be a mistake to view the Neapolitan tonal orientation of the *Allegro* as an alternative to tonic-dominant supremacy. The adoption of an “alternative” would simply involve the substitution of one teleology for another. The music’s “whole life” is precisely in its work to recognize its teleology and through its recognition to transfigure it. If the music simply denied the convention of its dominant-tonic end, it would eradicate the context in and through which it recognizes and becomes itself. Again, however, if the music merely adhered to it, it would lose the self-critical perspective in and through which its “whole life” is constituted.

Thus, the ending of Opus 131 is simultaneously hesitant and resolute, despairing and hopeful, doubtful and yet constituted in and through faith. Consequently, more than anywhere else in the work, the listener is challenged to make sense of the music as it moves rapidly through a series of conflicting psychological states. We have seen that throughout the movement the onward drive of the *Allegro*’s opening music and its associated dominant-tonic orientation has been consistently challenged: by modulations to E and D major in the sublime second subject and its recapitulation (bars 56 and 216), music, whose lateral expansiveness is the antithesis to the driving linearity of the anapestic figure and iambic motif; by the D major fugal section at bar 124; and by the *non ligato* D major scales at bar 329. Yet, with each challenge the music has closed ranks and taken up, once more, its headlong rush to the “ending-point.” However, with the diminished seventh chord at bar 347 the music falters. The raw energy of the anapestic figure is dissipated and becomes a nagging, but spent, insistence that is reiterated over and over in the cello and 2\textsuperscript{nd} violin, while music that hovers between the subdominant key of F# minor and the tonic major makes its agonizing and wretched descent. But the descent is no less inevitable than the onward march of dominant-tonic resolution. Marked *Ritmo di due battute* (two-bar rhythm), the descent is mechanically marked by the reiterations in the cello and the 2\textsuperscript{nd} violin, and the music sinks onto two held diminished chords (bars 363-6). It seems as if these two chords constitute the music’s last breath before it falls to its close. But somehow it continues. Instead of resolving onto the tonic chord of C# minor, the music passes through another diminished chord and its mood subtly changes as it further orientates itself toward the sub-dominant key, F# minor. The bars that follow consist of a repeated rising whole-note figure – C# to F# – passed among
the voices and played against the descending iambic motif. The eight bars of the shared rising figure are repeated, this time with expression (marked *espressivo* in contrast to the *Ritmo di due battute* descent) and in a slower tempo. Thus, the pace of the music becomes calm. But it is not merely as if it were fading to a close. Rather, it is almost as if it were spelling out the sub-dominant tonality, for now we find that the tonic major chord, C#, is acting as the dominant of F# minor. Furthermore, in this slow tempo the iambic motif, earlier the driving force of the music’s momentum toward its ending-point, becomes almost dance like.

Accordingly, out of nowhere the music comes to rest on the C# major chord (that could now be a tonic or a dominant chord) and beneath it the iambic figure ascends through the voices to what, as I indicated earlier, Ratner describes as “the most powerful gesture in the entire quartet” (Ratner, 1995, p. 261) – three fortissimo C# major chords.

How, then, do we meet our human self-consciousness in the close of Opus 131? I suggest that the music challenges us to rethink the inevitable pattern of our lives. But it does not merely offer us an alternative pattern. Rather, it invites us to constitute our lives in an entirely new way. Rather than simply succumbing to the pattern or trying to understand what its purpose is, the music invites us to recognize ourselves in it. Thus, where we see ourselves as either driven by the tonic/dominant dichotomy – the single I – or as forever alienated from tonic/dominant dichotomy – the single You – we recognize ourselves as *I-You* in the dynamic and reciprocal relationship between the tonic and the dominant that is empowered by the participation of the sub-dominant. For placed in relation to the sub-dominant (F#), the tonic major (C#) finds itself as the dominant of F# minor (and vice-versa) and becomes *I-You*. In other words, the sub-dominant provides the tonic with a way of relating to itself, of seeing itself through the eyes of the dominant and of witnessing what it is like to be the dominant, its neighbor. Thus, the focus of the music is turned entirely on its head. For it is no longer about the conventional pattern of the tonic’s conditioned reaction to the dominant and the dominant’s conditioned reaction to the tonic. Rather, the tonic has become self-conscious of its reaction. It critically recognizes its reaction through the eyes of the dominant and it critically recognizes the dominant’s reaction through its own eyes. Thus the work of the tonic is no longer blindly to play to the end its fated relation to the dominant. Nor is it to negate that relation in a permanent beginning. Rather, the work of the tonic – the work of the music – becomes its critical meeting with itself.
In conclusion, then, the final three C# major chords are, as Kerman argues, “hardly convincing.” At least, they are “hardly convincing” if one is hoping for a conventional chord progression that constitutes them as the final chords of a perfect cadence in the tonic key. However, “they are the most powerful gesture in the entire quartet” insofar as they create themselves, as it were, from nothing. They demand that the musical participant either make sense of the “nothing” out of which they are created or hear them as nonsensical. I conceive the “nothing” as no literal thing. The no-thing out of which the chords arise is the musical metaphor for the heightened self-consciousness of the tonic key that must establish itself in and through its critical meeting with itself (via the sub-dominant); its meeting with the entire history of triadic tonal music; and its meeting with the musical participant. The musical participant projects the tonic’s meeting back over the quartet and the quartet’s history, and she projects it forward such that it has a profound impact on the way that she witnesses subsequent performances of Opus 131 and of other music and, therefore, on the way that she witnesses the history of tonality.

2.4 Summary

In summary, then, the main idea emerging from my meeting with Opus 131 is the idea that the music finds itself in and through its critical meeting with itself. But Opus 131’s meeting with itself is in no way conventional. From the opening bars of the fugue it pushes its meeting with itself – with its constitution in terms of overall form, tonality, phrase patterns, dynamics and so on – to the edge of its consciousness. It confronts the paradox that it can only exist in the world of sounds but that, in order to exist, in order to recognize its existence, it must be other than that world. Accordingly, the relations that it constitutes between its musical elements reveal the anguish, anger and joy that it witnesses as it struggles with the simultaneous self-awareness of its fated destiny and of the imperative of its ongoing creation from nothing – from nothing that is conventional or non-conventional.

Insofar as I witness Opus 131’s meeting with itself, its ceaseless work to become equal to itself, I witness correspondent work in myself. For Opus 131’s work is not self-evident. One can only recognize it if, indeed, one can find it in oneself. Still, although one must recognize the music’s work in its correspondence to one’s own work, the music’s work does not merely present one with a mirror image. The correspondence is in I-Thou, but I-Thou, as a meeting, is always changing and developing. Thus, I find myself in the music as I-Thou, but not because it mirrors
me. Rather, because as a meeting Opus 131 invites me to participate in its creation as I invite it to participate in my creation.

3 Meeting in Music Education

3.1 Introduction

In the third section of this chapter I will examine how the idea of musical meeting can be fruitfully articulated in and through the practice of music education. In other words, I intend to articulate the class-room/practice-room application of the broad arguments formulated in and through the relationship between education and meeting in Section 1 and of the more specific arguments concerning the relationship between music and meeting that grow from my engagement with Beethoven’s Opus 131 in Section 2.

The central argument of Section 2 is the idea that Beethoven’s music is responsible for its own musical enactment. I have suggested that it is because we constitute music in terms of its critical thought for itself that we are able to talk about it in human terms. We say that the music is “abrupt,” “anguished” or “joyful” because we understand it to have a self-critical stake in whether it is “abrupt,” “anguished” or “joyful.” Thus, what we may call music’s “humanity” does not lie merely in the states or moods of music that somehow resemble or represent “abruptness,” “anguish” or “joy;” rather, the humanity of music lies in its responsibility for those states.

Throughout my thesis I have tried to express my understanding of music’s responsibility through the idea of its self-critical meeting with itself and, above all, through what I understand to be the correspondence of the musical work to the human being insofar as it works out its existence in terms of its equal relation to itself, its musical participants, and other music. But I find that the full implication of that correspondence is something that is constantly being expanded and re-articulated. Thus, I recognize now, once more, as it were, from the beginning, that, in arguing that music is self-reflexive, it follows that I must meet with music as I would meet with another human being. Accordingly, the full implication of the correspondence between the human being and the work of music is that the work of music must be nurtured, listened to, commanded, empathized with, critiqued, trusted, explored, and delighted in as one would nurture, listen to, command and so on, one’s neighbor.
In and through one’s empathy, critique and delight one brings the music into being. While the music is there before one and exists, at the same time it must be brought into existence. The music is alive but it must be continually enlivened just as one’s neighbor is “alive” but must be brought into life by engaging her in a loving way. Furthermore, when a person engages her neighbor in a loving way, the person’s love brings her, the person herself, into existence. In the same way, then, in attending self-critically to music the musical participant attends self-critically to herself. She enlivens and fulfills herself.

In terms, then, of education, the idea that musical engagement demands the participant’s self-critical work in music’s creation, work that brings the musical participant, in turn, into existence, justifies the inclusion of music in the school curriculum, together with its practice in society in general. We practice music because, in practicing music, we practice becoming ourselves. Thus, music is not simply an analogy for human existence: it enacts human existence. As we participate in creating music we participate in constituting ourselves.

Furthermore, music is not something that is self-evident. Although it exists, it must be constantly brought into existence. Accordingly, the focus of scholars, teachers and students should be the ongoing nurture and critique of music as it unfolds rather than the ceaseless search for a purpose that will justify its existence. Music has its purpose – its “whole life” – in becoming itself.

3.2 Practice

How, then, does the idea of the music’s “meaning” as the correspondent interaction of musical and human existence play out in the classroom? First, quite simply, we must conceive of musical existence as we conceive of human existence; we must meet music as we meet our neighbor. Following this conception, music education becomes about learning to meet the music as a “whole being:” a being that has the power to be self-critical of itself. The question for music education, as I articulated in Section 1, is the question of how it is possible for one to learn to meet music. Let us consider the matter in terms of human meeting. I understand that a person can neither learn nor be taught how to meet either herself or another person. For, unless the person is already able to reflect upon how her actions might affect another; unless she can put herself in another’s shoes and imagine for herself how the other might respond; unless, in other words, she already has an idea of self-critical meeting, she will be unable to recognize or to understand what
she is being taught. It seems, then, that it is impossible for someone to learn or to be taught how to meet with another person.

Thus, in order to maintain that the idea of meeting is central to education, we must presuppose that a person begins self-critically. Accordingly, education becomes about practicing, amplifying and fulfilling what it turns out is already there. In a student’s practice, she both recognizes and, in her recognition, nurtures and amplifies the way in which she critically responds to herself, her fellow human beings and the concepts she is learning. As teachers, we foster her practice. We encourage the student both to become herself and to reflect critically upon, and to amplify, her becoming.

Accordingly, while we cannot tell a student how to meet music, we can ask her to meet music and we can practice meeting with her, bearing witness to our own meeting, and fostering and encouraging her own meeting. Importantly, then, just as we can ask or invite a student to meet a person from any culture and insist that she meet that person with consideration and respect, so we can ask a student to meet a piece of music from any culture. We cannot tell the student to like the music or impose upon her the music’s so-called “values,” but we can require her to attend to it. Thus, we find that the idea of meeting cuts through arguments of “whose music” we should teach students in music education. As educators, our primary concern must be the interaction between the music and the musical participant rather than the reduction of each side to a politically correct musical/human “object” suitable for a pre-determined educational context.

### 3.3 Listening

But how, then, does the idea of meeting music work in terms of a lesson? Let us begin with the practice of listening. Take, for example, a lesson centered on the fugal subject of the first movement of Opus 131. The teacher wants the student to witness the fugal subject because she recognizes that, in order to witness it, the student must participate in the music’s intense work to meet – to create – itself. The music’s meeting acts as a standard that tests the student’s meeting of her own self-consciousness. In and through the music the student challenges her view of what music is and re-appropriates that view as meeting.

For example, as the music falls to the accented sub-mediant in bar 2 (see Fig. 3, p.192) the student must work in relation to the music and to the performer to make sense of the tone in
terms of its articulation, the notes that precede and follow it, and so on. The teacher understands
that as the student makes sense of the tone she imbues it with relational depth and recognizes
herself in that depth. But the teacher cannot *tell* the student to imbue the tone with relational
depth. The student recognizes the tone’s depth when she recognizes that the tone is not
commensurate with its surface, when she recognizes that it invites her participation in what it
constitutes as its thoughtfulness and consideration for itself.

However, while the teacher cannot tell a student to participate, she can foster and encourage her
participation in a number of ways. First, the teacher can act, as it were, on the music’s behalf.
She can set up the musical meeting and invite the student to meet the music. Second, the teacher
can bear witness to the music’s sense of itself – the sense that constitutes the music’s invitation.
She can share with the student how her sense of the music’s self-consciousness challenges her
(the teacher) to meet herself. Third, the teacher can encourage the student to articulate her own
self-consciousness and to explore how her (the student’s) meeting with Opus 131 may amplify
her sense of self.

The teacher begins, then, by inviting the student to step forward, as it were, to the music. Insofar
as the meeting corresponds to a human meeting, the teacher can ask the student to attend to the
music, to actively engage and try to make sense of it. Still, if the student is to make sense of it,
she must be able to witness the music’s meeting with itself and to recognize, in that meeting,
herself. Accordingly, after playing the music a number of times, the teacher may suggest to the
student that the music is not simply what it appears to be. Rather, the music reveals its otherness
to itself as the listener becomes attentive to its appearance and begins to think about the way that
the music is self-conscious of its appearance. For example, the teacher might nurture in the
student the idea of the music’s thought for itself – the thought that constitutes its otherness – by
suggesting to the student that the sound that she hears does not saturate the music. For, while it
might seem to the student that she hears the sound that she hears, the teacher can encourage her
to recognize in the sound something other than what she hears. In her recognition, because she
understands that the sound that she recognizes is not self-evident – because she must work to
constitute it – she understands that she participates in its creation. In her participation, the student
recognizes herself.
For example, on a very basic level, the teacher can encourage the student to recognize in the music the self-critical sound of the violin. The student now hears the music that she hears, but the music that she hears contains its thought for itself as not merely any sound but the sound of the violin. Furthermore, the teacher can “up the ante” by encouraging the student to recognize the adequacy of the violin’s sound in terms of its expression. Consequently, the student hears the violin sound, but she also recognizes in the sound the sound’s concern to equal a sense of its own expressivity. Thus, as the violinist meets the silence that precedes the opening G# of Opus 131, the student recognizes the adequacy of the violinist’s meeting in relation to the history of the quartet and the music that is about to unfold, and, in her articulation of her recognition, the student finds herself. In other words, the student brings the adequacy of the violinist’s meeting into existence and, insofar as she adequately meets the violinist’s meeting in her articulation, she finds that not only is the meeting actual (it is not merely her “opinion” nor is it “an objective fact”) but also in her participation in its actuality she is actual.

In addition to bearing witness to the music’s meeting with itself, I have argued that a teacher may fruitfully foster the student’s idea of her correspondent meeting with herself and with her fellow students. For example, a student may be encouraged to recognize that the words she hears her colleague say do not literally saturate their meaning. The teacher can help the student to articulate the true content of the words she hears in terms of her colleague’s work to attend mindfully to herself and to her fellow student. Thus, the teacher can suggest to the student that, for example, the words “let me see your work” may be understood in two entirely different ways.

First, the words can be literally understood – as musical sounds can be literally heard – insofar as the student assumes that the speaker who speaks them literally wants to see her work. She assumes that the speaker conceives of the value of education in terms of the educational product. The product is judged on a hierarchical scale. Thus, “let me see your work” means, literally, let me see and judge your work. Second, the speaker’s words “let me see your work” can be recognized as an expression of her interest in the student who created it and her reciprocal interest in herself. In reading the student’s work, and reflecting on how the student thinks and why her thinking is adequate or inadequate, the speaker challenges the student and also herself to meet a new standard of thinking. In meeting the new standard she and her colleague recognize themselves anew.
I argue, then, that the teacher can encourage the student to test and to recognize the music’s “true content” – the reciprocity of the music that exceeds its literal sounds – in and through her recognition of the “true content” of her daily interaction. Insofar as the “true content” of her daily interaction has to do with the depth of her attentiveness to her life, she can be encouraged that the music’s excess of its literal sounds has similarly to do with the depth of its attentiveness to itself.

The teacher cannot make the student hear the music in terms of its excess of its literal sounds, but she can create a number of imaginative teaching contexts in which the student is encouraged to witness that excess. A particularly telling way of highlighting the music’s excess of itself – its otherness – is to play a tone or a row of sounds that are identical to themselves, i.e., that are not in excess of themselves. I have already articulated one instance of this in Section 2, where I compared the infinite difference of the A in the opening subject of Opus 131 from the A given by the concertmaster at the beginning of an orchestral concert. A teacher may use a similar technique with the second half of the fugal subject by playing the tones apart from the first half and in as disjointed, flat and sterile a way as possible. It is interesting, in this respect, to have the students play the tones on the computer and constitute them as a subway announcement jingle, a door bell pattern or a mobile ring tone. In contrast, the teacher can ask the student to witness the second half of the fugal subject played on the violin, *espressivo*, and in relationship to the first half of the subject. Insofar as the student recognizes a difference between the contextualized rendition of the phrase, on the one hand, and its alienated version, on the other hand, she can be encouraged to articulate what that difference is in terms of the music’s “responsible” thought for its answer to the first half of the phrase.68

68 In terms of the distinction between literal sounds and music, I have provided two extreme examples – subway jingles and Beethoven’s Opus 131. My primary concern here is to show how a teacher may share with her student the idea that music is not merely identical to its sounds, but, rather, that it exceeds itself as human communication exceeds literal speech. I argue, however, that music, like the human being, exceeds itself in ways that are more and less adequate. Thus, while I am minimally concerned with the adequate/inadequate distinction in the present discussion, I acknowledge that, in order to develop the idea in the classroom that music exceeds itself, I would have to focus upon music whose content constituted its excess in a more, rather than in a less, adequate way.
3.3.1 Listening: Teaching Musical Shapes

If a student is to recognize the meeting between two phrases, she must be able to recognize a phrase. To recognize a phrase, it is essential for the student to recognize basic musical shapes, articulations, textures, harmonies and dynamics. I have used the word “recognize” for I maintain that a student who recognizes, say, a scale, recognizes it because she finds herself in it. That is, she understands that one note meets with another in a way that gives her an idea of the music’s self-critical sense of itself. It is the music’s “sense of itself” that she recognizes, since it corresponds to her own sense.

I hold that all musical shapes – scales, arpeggios, sequences, harmonic progressions and so on – are constituted self-critically – as I-Thou. However, I maintain that musical shapes – and scales are good examples – are frequently reduced to I-It. Composers and performers reduce scales to I-It when they use them as utilitarian devices to fill in melodic structures or to increase their technical dexterity. But perhaps “reduce” is the wrong term. Perhaps musical shapes such as scales and arpeggios begin, so to speak, as the “I-It building blocks” of music and become I-Thou when they are re-constituted in and through music as meeting. However, as we have seen in the case of the human being, I-It is only recognizable from the perspective of I-Thou. Thus, we find that if music began with scales and arpeggios as “I-It building blocks,” it would be impossible to recognize scales and arpeggios as music. Music is irreducible to building blocks, no matter how small they are. Music is the participatory thought that constitutes those building blocks in terms of their equal relation to one another.

Consequently, we find that musical training whose primary concern is to teach the identification of musical shapes in terms of what I call “I-It building blocks” does not and cannot lead to the student’s recognition of music. It follows that an I-It knowledge of musical building blocks is not

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69 One way of illustrating the impossibility of recognizing building blocks in and of themselves as music is through an examination of the so-called musical “sound bite.” An example of such a “sound bite” consists of the three sounds (tones) that herald the arrival of email in the inbox of my Mac computer. But I do not hear the sounds as music or as a musical shape, I hear them as three sounds that signal the arrival of mail. Thus, as functional sounds they can be recognized neither as I-Thou music nor as music reduced to I-It building blocks (scales and arpeggios). I argue, then, that all music and all musical recognition begin as the relation I-Thou. That is, all music has a sense of itself as the musical participant has a sense of it, as music. This sense is in excess of the music’s physical sounds or even of the pattern of its sounds.
a pre-requisite to musical understanding. Rather, the pre-requisite to musical understanding is the ability to make self-critical connections between the music itself and the musical participant.

Let us consider how an infant learns. An infant does not learn, first, to identify a person’s features and then to recognize the person. First, it recognizes the person (I-Thou) and from that position it begins to recognize that person’s features (I-It). Thus the infant’s parents are always understood to begin with love – with I-Thou – in light of which they re-create the I-It world of gender, skin color, facial expression, tone of voice and so on. We understand that the infant’s parents presuppose the adequacy of their beginning. Thus, they do not question whether or not love is the right place to begin, whether the infant is capable of understanding love, or whether they should offer the infant an alternative to love. The parents begin with love and, in their beginning, the infant finds its beginning. It is through love, then, and not prior to love that the infant recognizes its mother or father in her or his physical features, tone of voice, habits and so on.

In the same way, we may say that the teacher begins with love. She begins by bearing witness to the music’s self-critical engagement as I-Thou. The student finds her own beginning in the teacher’s love – her interest, passion and self-critical engagement. In and through her beginning she recognizes music. She recognizes its physical elements – its scales, arpeggios, chord progressions and so on – in light of the beginning and not the other way around. Thus, it is possible for a teacher to articulate the physical features and workings of a scale. But her articulation should always be in the dramatic context of music as self-critical participation. It is the case that there has to be a point in the teacher’s lesson where she must tell the students that such and such is called a scale and that a scale functions in this or that way. But, lest the scale be simply reduced to its form, it is imperative that the teacher simultaneously encourage the student to recognize the scale’s sense of itself – its role, if you like – within a piece of music or its sense of its adequacy in terms of phrasing, articulation, tone and dynamics.

Returning, then, to Opus 131, the teacher can teach the student the form of a scale and encourage her to hear that form in terms of the descending notes at bar 313 in the final Allegro. But if all that the student does is merely to take a copy of the teacher’s example, to place it against the music and to identify the descending notes as a scale, the teacher’s lesson and the music will remain meaningless. For the lesson to be meaningful the student must recognize herself as I-
*Thou* in the music. Thus, from the outset, the teacher must bear witness to how her “example” of a scale is undermined by the scale’s dynamic self-reflexivity. In other words, she must work to show how the scale’s uniqueness, in terms of its meeting with itself, its meeting with the movement and, indeed, its meeting with the whole work (in terms of sonata teleology), precludes all possibility of its being reduced to an “example” of a generic set. Thus, the scale becomes the site of the student’s thought for herself as she construes the concentration of its relational meaning. Accordingly, the teacher may encourage the student to hear the form of the scale at bar 313 and, at the same time, to recognize the music as turning the form into meaningful content. She can encourage the student to witness one tone as leading critically to and from its neighbor tone; to recognize the scale’s downward thrust in the first violin in dynamic relation to the rising contrapuntal motif in the other instruments; and to hear the scale as actualizing (not merely being) its *fortissimo* dynamic.

Thus, the teacher can teach the student the formal concepts of music. At the same time, she should insist that the concepts that she teaches are not closed. Rather, they must become what they are in and through the music’s and the student’s shared work in their creation.

Finally, a teacher may encourage a student to hear a particular feature in a piece of music in terms of its historical development across the work or in terms of the wider context of its musical history. For example, in the *Andante* of Opus 131, a teacher may draw the student’s attention to the relationship between a particular variation and the variation’s theme. In and of itself, even if the student hears a similarity between the two features, the relationship is meaningless. It only becomes meaningful when the student recognizes herself in the loving and critical meeting of the variation with the theme as the past feature is brought to bear upon the present feature and as the present feature sheds a new light on the nature of the past feature.

The meeting between the variation and the theme bears witness to the formal intentionality of the movement in terms of its structure as a theme and variations. At the same time, the “formal intentionality” – the idea that the music is structured as a theme and variations – requires the listener to attend to connections between the variation and the theme. Thus, in addition to the critical relation between the variation and the theme, there is a further critical relation between the idea of the music’s form, on the one hand, and the idea of the music’s content – the variation/theme meeting – that enacts that form, on the other hand. If the student is to find the
music meaningful, it is important that she be able to recognize that critical relation. It is important, in other words, that she have a strong sense of the music’s form as well as a strong sense of its enactment of that form in and through its content. Thus, the student must be taught about musical form; but, even in its teaching the theoretical idea of the form must be worked out in and through music.

3.3.1.1 Musical Form

In a sense, then, we may argue that the concept of musical form is a self-critical concept. That is, while we may talk about “sonata form” as if it were commensurate with a number of pre-determined principles, we find that its apparent commensurability contains a gap. That gap is the concept’s thought for itself. That is, when the student begins to learn about the concept of sonata form, she finds that the musical works composed according to its principles, the essays written on it, and her own idea of what it is about, all reveal anomalies and disconnections that speak to the concept’s critical thought for itself. Thus, the concept, say, of sonata form becomes interesting to the student as meeting. As meeting, the student is given a way of conceiving of its relevance to her life. Accordingly, I argue that we find sonata form particularly interesting when we witness music – as we saw earlier in the final Allegro of Opus 131 – that subverts its form and yet adheres to it.  

The teacher, then, may teach the student the concept of sonata form, but she should teach it in relation to the music. She should teach it in such a way that the student can witness a direct meeting between the form’s apparent principles and its enactment in a work of music or between

70 While it is certainly possible to engage the music of Opus 131 without knowledge of music theory (as it is possible to meet a person without knowledge of her ethnic background, medical condition, financial situation and so on), as I argued in the previous section, an idea of tonality, harmony and rhythm sharpens a student’s recognition of the musical issues at stake and deepens her understanding of how the music addresses them. What is critical, however, is that the teacher find a way of bearing witness to the concepts of music theory in a manner that places them, as I have repeatedly argued, in critical relation to themselves. Thus, in teaching the broad concept of triadic tonality, the teacher might begin by examining with her students the C# minor scale in critical light of the primary intervals that comprise it – the perfect octave, the perfect fifth and the minor third. She may encourage the student to work out how the scale relates to these intervals – harmonically and melodically – and how the other notes of the scale are positioned in relation to them. Furthermore, she could raise the key tone to D (The Neapolitan) and ask how the rise affects the intervals (given that the other tones remain the same) and what the student (and the music) must do to re-articulate the intervals as perfect and minor.
the form’s principles and a broader idea of music’s historical development. Whatever the meeting, the student must be able to recognize a gap or question in the concept into which she can enter and through which she can participate in the concept’s (and her own) creation.

3.4 Performance

Music, in its strongest sense, is a metaphor for the critical participation in and through which the human being comes into existence. It shares its metaphorical characterization with the human being who, similarly, is not literally herself but is the site of the relation I-Thou by which power she and her neighbor are created. We find, then, that music can be constituted and addressed in terms that are essentially human. Thus, for the performer it may prove fruitful to consider the act of musical interpretation in terms of her considerate engagement of a human being.

I conceive, then, of musical interpretation as the process in and through which a performer meets with, or gets to know, a work of music. As she meets with the music, she recognizes and nurtures the music’s sense of itself and brings that sense into existence. Thus, while the performer must actively interpret the music, she must also allow the music to speak for itself. She must empathize with what she recognizes to be the music’s primary concerns in terms of its own existence; she must foster and encourage those concerns in and through her playing, drawing the music out of, and into, itself.\textsuperscript{71}

3.4.1 Physical Readiness

I hold that the idea that we meet music as we meet a person has significant implications for how we teach instrumental performance. I will consider the idea in terms of the study of my own instrument, the violin. First, constituted as I-Thou, we understand that one person approaches the

\textsuperscript{71} It is important to note, however, that not every meeting that the performer has with the music will be profoundly empathetic and meaningful. As in a human relationship, periods of uneventful but nevertheless thoughtful routine are central to the relationship. Accordingly, the performer must be prepared to spend considerable time with the work, quietly, but thoughtfully, practicing the music. What the performer must avoid, however, is stale iteration of a daily routine, enacted in the mindless playing of the same passage over and over again. Consequently, the performer might want to prepare her musical meeting away from the practice of her instrument, researching the music’s history, studying the musical score and thinking about how she might best nurture the music.
other with an attitude that is critical and loving. I argue that the attitude is not merely enacted in the person’s mind. Rather, it is embodied in the physical gestures of the person’s approach or in what we may call her “body language.” Thus, where it is possible for a person’s demeanor to appear “stiff” or “inflexible” in a meeting and for her to express that “stiffness” and “inflexibility” in the way she presents herself, when a person is “loving” there is something in her physical movement that speaks to her attitude of love. Accordingly, when a performer approaches a work of music in a loving way, she can be encouraged to actualize her approach in terms of her physical flexibility and empathetic gestures. Her flexibility and her gestures not only empower her interpretation of music but also empower her technical ability to play the music.

“Stiffness” and “inflexibility” limit a student’s technical facility. Consequently, the teacher encourages the student to become relaxed. That is, the teacher encourages the student to loosen her shoulders and to engage only those muscles that she needs to make the violin sound. Where the student is tense she is unable to distinguish which muscles she needs and tightens them all, inhibiting and impairing her technical control of her playing. The student’s tenseness arises from her lack of muscle control and from her fear of losing the control she has in pressured performance situations (Steptoe, 1989; Kivimäki, 1995). The term “relax,” then, does not refer to an attitude of musical engagement that is merely easy, indifferent or sloppy. It specifically refers to the physical readiness (which relates, of course, to the mental readiness), if you will, of the person to engage in musical performance. The readiness is characterized by a violinist who is self-conscious of her muscles as “awake” and, in their “wakefulness,” constantly working to re-awake and relax them. Thus, a violinist who is “relaxed” is one whose physical state of readiness allows her to be attentive, concentrated and interested.

But perhaps the term “relaxed” is inappropriate. Often, in fact, a relaxed performance is inadequate insofar as the performer focuses on her relaxed posture and attitude and, in the process, loses the intensity and concentration of the music. The teacher recognizes that the student must be able to loosen her muscles in order to engage them effectively in her playing. However, she finds it impossible to articulate the student’s task in terms of the student’s musical performance since it is precisely the student’s performance that causes her to be tense. Thus, it may happen that the student relaxes – loosens her muscles – insofar as she disengages herself, both physically and mentally, from the musical performance with the result that the student’s
performance becomes disengaged. It lacks concentration and interest precisely because the student is concentrating on the relaxation of her mind and her body.

I propose, then, that the idea that a student meets with a work of music in the way that she meets with her neighbor allows her to conceive of an adequate physical and mental approach to music as she conceives of the music. The approach is better articulated in terms of “readiness” than in terms of “relaxation” but, nevertheless, it involves the “loosening” and the re-engagement of both the student’s muscles and her fear of performance. For just as a person meets her neighbor with her whole being so that her very meeting involves the ongoing interrogation of her attention to her speech, her physical attitude, her interest, her well being, her gestures and so on, so a violinist meets with a work of music. Accordingly, in her very meeting, the violinist self-critically attends to the music as she attends to her performance of it; she self-critically attends to its technical challenges as she attends to her technical ability to meet those challenges; and she self-critically attends to its gestures as she attends to her own physical movements.

The idea of musical meeting is not the final solution to performance anxiety or to the physical problems of playing an instrument. Rather, it offers a way of conceiving of musical performance that allows the performer to attend simultaneously to herself – to work through her physical and mental anxiety – and to the music.

Accordingly, a teacher can encourage a student violinist to meet the opening tone of Opus 131 with an empathetic gesture of the bow that both coaxes the tone from the string and softens the debilitating tension in the student’s shoulders. The gesture enlivens the music. The student’s loving (critical) self-awareness of her own movements – the circular movement of the bow arm, the slight give in the knees, and the inward breath – brings the loving (critical) self-awareness of the music into existence. Each of these movements speaks to the thoughtfulness and consideration with which the student addresses the opening tones, a thoughtfulness that is witnessed in and through the sound that is produced. Thus, the gesture, which is a self-conscious gesture enacted in and through a sense of the student’s responsibility, amplifies the student’s self-consciousness of her own body and, consequently, fosters the muscle control she needs to “coax” the tone from the violin. Not only, then, does the idea of meeting enliven the music, but also it enlivens the student through a dynamic sense of herself, fundamental to which is a dynamic sense of her own body.
3.4.2 Musical and Technical Integration

The idea that musical performance corresponds to human meeting integrates technical and musical considerations. This latter integration might seem obvious, but it is the case that many students and teachers consider that one must master instrumental technique before one considers the music’s interpretation. In such a case, the teacher or the student deprives both music and the technique of the self-critical relationship between the two concepts that allows the student to make sense of the one in light of the other. Without an idea of music, the student’s technique is meaningless; without an idea of what the student is technically capable of, music’s interpretation has no foundation.

For example, I have witnessed a number of student rehearsals where the student teacher addresses technical issues at the beginning of the rehearsal and musical issues at the end, but with neither one element sustaining or supporting the other. In other words, on the one hand, the technical practice seems unconnected from music and consequently somewhat directionless. On the other hand, the musical practice may fail if the student players do not have the technique to realize the musical demands of the teacher. However, when the two elements are integrated, the technical practice leads at every moment into the music and the musical practice fosters and enhances the student’s technique.

Thus, as the student engenders and up-builds the music, simultaneously recognizing and nurturing its critical sense of itself, she engenders and up-builds her technique. As she works to actualize her technique – to create, for example, a more intense vibrato or a greater bow control – she discovers new ways of conceiving of music.

3.4.2.1 Technique

The idea that a student can “actualize her technique” – bring the technique that she has into being – corresponds to the idea that a person can, and must, become herself. In other words, like the human being and like music, a student’s technique is not simply what it is. For, the student discovers that her technique contains within itself, so to speak, an adequate idea of the technique it must become. My point is that instrumental technique is fundamentally relational. That is, an adequate technique is to be worked out between a student, her teacher and the music that she is playing. It may seem to the student that the possibility of an adequate technique is irrevocably hidden from her insofar as she is either locked within the idea of her own (inadequate) technique
or locked out of the idea of a perfect technique. In contrast, the student creates the idea of an adequate technique as she holds her own technique up to the critical light of music, her teacher and her peers.

Thus, a student may bring, say, the idea she has of vibrato – an idea constituted through her interaction with her teacher, a particular recording, or her interpretation of the work of music – to bear upon her current technical ability. Because the notions both of vibrato that is adequate and vibrato that is inadequate involve her creative input, importantly, the student recognizes herself in them. In the same way, then, she finds herself in her technical practice to close the gap between the two notions. Consequently, it becomes clear that the primary concern of the student is her sense of self that she finds in her relational work in practicing an adequate vibrato, rather than in achieving adequacy itself. Adequate vibrato, then, becomes a metaphor for the student’s meeting with herself. Accordingly, her practice is not confined by or to the goal of achieving a perfect vibrato. Rather, the goal of her practice is constantly to participate in the creation of herself. Thus, the student is free to conceive of her practice from any number of angles provided that each angle is self-critical. For example, she can consider the movement of the left arm, critically relating it, for example, to the natural quivering of a tree bough set in motion by the wind; she can listen to recordings of other violinists and try to articulate what it is about their vibrato that she likes; or she can read Werner Hauk’s book *Vibrato on the Violin* (Hauk, 1975). What is important for her is to constitute a sense of vibrato in and through the idea of an adequate interpretation of a musical tone or phrase.

### 3.5 Teaching: Teacher Modeling

Where “vibrato” is a metaphor for the student’s meeting with herself, the teacher’s task is to foster the meeting. Thus, in every moment of her teaching, a teacher must bear witness to the idea that one meets music and technique as one meets with oneself and one’s neighbor. The idea empowers the student to find herself in music/technique as it empowers her to find music in herself. At the same time, the teacher’s lesson becomes interesting to the student precisely because she finds herself in its participatory structure. But the interest that the teacher’s lesson

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72 The literal idea of adequate vibrato is not lost but it is seen in a new light. As the student constitutes the adequacy of herself, so she constitutes the adequacy of her vibrato.
generates is not self-evident. For, because the lesson is constituted in the idea of meeting, if the student is to find it interesting, she must step forward to meet it. Thus, the teacher cannot make the student believe that her lesson is interesting. What she can do, however, is to model her own meeting with music and invite the student to participate in it.

Allow me to amplify what I mean. Imagine a teacher who is teaching a student the theme from the beginning of the Andante in Opus 131. Insofar as the teacher models her meeting with the theme, she does not merely perform an example and ask the student to replicate it. Rather, the teacher performs the theme but in such a way that the student is invited to participate in her performance. The teacher’s invitation is recognizable to the student in terms of her (the teacher’s) interpretation of the music.

I conceive of the relationship between the teacher’s interpretation and her invitation to the student to participate in the following way. The teacher’s interpretation of the music is her work to make sense of it. Because she must make sense of it, it follows that music’s sense is not self-evident. Thus, she highlights the gap in the music between its sounds and the mutual sense she and it make of those sounds. The musical gap presents both an invitation and a command to the music, to the teacher and to the student to complete it. I argue that the student witnesses music’s gap when she understands that the teacher’s musical interpretation is adequate. In other words, when the student can recognize a sense of the music’s integrity, wholeness, honesty, and richness in the teacher’s interpretation, she is empowered to conceive of an interpretation that is less than whole. The teacher can highlight the student’s conception and propose to the student that it indicates that music is not simply commensurate with sounds, whatever the sounds are and however they are played. Rather, music exceeds its sounds. Whereas we perceive sounds neutrally, we recognize music’s excess of its sounds in terms of adequacy and inadequacy. Thus, what the student recognizes as adequate music is the mutual interpretation of its sounds in which she is invited and required to participate.\(^\text{73}\)

\(^\text{73}\) The idea of a gap is also fruitful when conceived of in terms of a teacher’s gesture. Whereas we may consider that a detached, blank, and mechanical gesture – whether it is a conducting gesture, the gesture of the violinist or the gesture of the teacher in front of the class – prohibits participation insofar as it appears to be closed and “gap-less,” a gesture that is focused, engaged and concentrated can be seen to foster participation insofar as it contains a flaw or a gap. Accordingly, a conductor can foster participation in her orchestra in and through a gesture that
Thus, depending on how the teacher performs the theme of the *Andante*, she may draw the student’s attention to the music’s work to become adequate, as, for example, each two-bar phrase in the *Andante*’s opening music works simultaneously to meet itself and, at the same time, to meet, and account for, the next two bar phrase.

But the teacher does not merely invite the student’s participation in and through her performance; she also encourages the student to take part in a critique of her performance. In other words, she models the reflective process by which she arrives at her musical and technical choices. In a sense, then, the teacher models for her students, and for herself, her practice. Importantly, however, the teacher’s model is not to be pre-determined by her practice. The teacher might plan, in her lesson, to model the theme, and she may well have practiced it. But the meeting that she models in the lesson should be an actual meeting insofar as she genuinely meets with her model. That is, the teacher may bring to her lesson a model built upon her remembrance of the models of past lessons and her imagination of the models of future lessons. The model may well be articulated in the form of a lesson plan and of a set of aims and objectives. But, precisely because the lesson is a meeting, the teacher should not replicate her model. Rather, she must meet with it as she teaches her lesson. But that does not mean that she should dispense with her lesson plan. For, whereas the teacher must beware of her lesson plan becoming a mere example, without the lesson plan, the teacher may not be properly prepared and the lesson is in danger of becoming a mere example of the teacher – of her inclination at the time of the lesson or of her ideological conditioning. Thus, while the teacher can draw on practice that she has worked out in the past, in each lesson she must actively meet her practice and create a “live” teaching model that truly engages the student.

I witnessed an instance of what we may call “teacher modeling” in a recent teacher education class. A student teacher was teaching the class a particular bowing. However, in the course of his demonstration he realized that the bowing that he was demonstrating did not work out. He had expresses her own self-critical engagement. Clearly, there are many different kinds of conducting techniques, some minimalist and others expansive. I argue, however, that whatever the nature of the technique, an “adequate” conductor expresses her intensity, engagement and concentration in music in and through her gesture that communicates to the orchestra or ensemble the conductor’s self-critical sense of herself – the gap in her whole being – that invites each musician to create music with her.
not fully thought through the implications of the bowing’s relationship to the music, and he ended the demonstration in a part of the bow that did not make sense for the type of articulation he required. However, rather than becoming flustered and quickly moving on from the issue, the teacher proceeded to work out, in front of the class, how the bowing might make sense. He invited the students’ advice and help; and he continued to bring to bear his musical concerns on the type of bowing chosen, encouraging the students to do the same in their own ideas. Students were able to follow, engage in and be interested in every step of his meeting and were thus encouraged to challenge themselves in making sense of that meeting.

3.5.1 Teaching: I-Thou and Opus 131

Central to the interest of the student teacher’s lesson was the fact that he presented his students with a problem that could be worked out in and through the critical relationship of one side to the other. On the one hand, he constituted the bowing of the music in relationship to his interpretation of the music. On the other hand, he constituted the bowing in relationship to itself. The latter relationship involved the meeting between his enactment of the bowing and his imagination of how the bowing should be enacted. I argue, then, that it is essential to articulate a concept or an idea that one is teaching in terms of the critical relationship between, on the one hand, the concept itself and a related concept and, on the other hand, the concept itself and its idea of itself. Without a clear idea of the concept as I-Thou, the concept remains closed to the student. She has no way of participating in its creation and, consequently, no way of recognizing it.

I noted earlier that a student’s vibrato practice was not reducible to the successful execution of vibrato but rather was a metaphor for the student’s meeting with herself. Drawing, then, once again, on Kierkegaard’s idea of metaphorical speech (Kierkegaard, 1995, p. 209), we may say that a concept that is constituted in and through I-Thou acts as a metaphor for human existence. So, while the concept “bowing” literally has to do with the action of moving the bow across the strings in a certain way, when the student or teacher constitutes it self-critically, in terms of its relationship to itself (an adequate idea of bowing worked out between the music, performers and so on) or to another concept (the idea, say, of musical meaning), it becomes a metaphor for her existence. Thus, the word “bowing” still refers to the literal action, but the concept now has a totally new expression. In educational terms, it has become the concept in and through which a
student tests and becomes herself as she tests and enacts the adequacy of her bowing in relationship to a particular piece of music.

Thus, we see that the teacher must begin by bearing witness to the concept that she is teaching in terms of its metaphorical constitution, I-Thou. Let us imagine, in light of such a notion, how one may develop a lesson plan around the anapestic figure at the beginning of the final Allegro of Opus 131. I propose that one begin by placing the figure in the context of the whole work. The teacher can suggest that the student explore the relationship between the anapestic figure and the opening fugal subject in terms of the tones each musical phrase has in common. The task encourages the student to recognize the relationship between the anapestic figure and the fugue as the student’s recognition of the actual existence of the relationship in the music reveals the validity of the task to her. When the student understands that each tone (save the E) is shared between the fugal subject and the anapestic figure, she can recognize the self-critical intent on the part of the music. It is this intent – insofar as the intent bears witness to self-critique – that imbues the description of each surface tone with critical depth and meaning and that the student can witness and find interesting. In contrast, the question, “what are the notes of the anapestic figure?” requires simply a descriptive answer; it has no critical depth. Incanting the tones C#, E, G#, A, B# is a meaningless activity.

The idea of the figure’s critical depth can be explored in a number of ways. For example, while the figure constitutes a ferocious and dramatic musical exclamation, each half of the figure can be analyzed simply in terms of an ascending arpeggio and a falling interval. The teacher can ask the student to explore the relationship between the intervallic shape of the figure and its ferocity and drama. First, then, the student would have to identify the arpeggio, the falling minor sixth and the final semitone of the first half of the figure. To work out the figure’s relationship to its character, second, she could alter its intervallic make-up by changing one of the intervals – perhaps by a semitone – and evaluating the effect that the alteration has on the figure’s character. To the extent that it has or does not have an effect the student can begin to explore the nature of the relationship between the music’s character and its appearance.

The teacher may choose to format the above task as a technical rather than a musical exercise. She can encourage the student to use her understanding of the intervals involved in the figure to recreate the figure in different minor keys. In this case the student’s task would be to explore the
critical relationship between the figure’s intervallic pattern and the student’s technical ability to finger that pattern starting on different notes and in different positions. Thus, the student would bring the figure’s pattern to bear upon her left hand dexterity and practices by relying upon her ear rather than upon her reading of the notes. Or she could bring her left hand dexterity to bear upon the music insofar as her technique improves and she is able to push her interpretative limits.

Finally, a teacher may ask a student to explore the relationship between, on the one hand, the figure’s dramatic ferocity and, on the other hand, an adequate performance gesture. For there is a sense, particularly at the beginning of the final Allegro, that the gesture of the musician must meet the music in terms of her posture, flourish, intensity and violence, all of which are played out in the music. The teacher may also encourage the students to present a dramatic tableau – a frieze of the gestures involved; or she may ask them to mime the gestures; or she may encourage them to perform the gestures using the rhythm and open strings (single notes, beats or whatever); and finally she may ask them to perform the music.

The primary concern in all of the above lesson outlines is the notion of bringing one idea to bear upon another, relating them in such a way that each literal idea becomes a metaphor for self-critical participation. In and through the metaphor, the student gains a sharper and more profound sense of herself. The lesson will remain interesting for the student so long as the critical intensity of the metaphor is sustained. Thus, the teacher must constantly work to re-articulate and re-fresh the metaphor. As metaphors for human existence, in and of themselves, the musical exercises are meaningful in educational terms. But they are also meaningful insofar as they intensify the student’s recognition of certain musical relationships in, say, Opus 131, which enable her to hear new relationships that, in turn, challenge and sharpen her sense of self.

3.5.2 Teaching: Questions

It is important, then, for the teacher to engage the student in work that requires her (the student) to relate a concept to an adequate idea of itself and to another concept, and to test the relation against a sense of her own honesty and integrity. It is in and through this critical “test” that the student deepens and broadens a sense of herself.
One way that the teacher can do this is to ask the student a question that clearly articulates the two sides of the relationship – the concept and itself or the concept and another concept – in and through which the student must work out the answer. The question might be as simple as “what do you think the instrument playing the music sounds like?” The two sides of the question are “you,” on the one hand, and the sound of the instrument, on the other hand. The student is thus empowered to work out an answer in and through the “knowledge” that she already has. First, she has witnessed a number of sounds in her life. Second, she can hear the sound of the instrument. The question is how the two relate. Paradoxically, in constituting the relation she creates “new knowledge,” but, at the same time, the new knowledge is not “literally” new. Rather, it is “literal” knowledge that has been transformed into “metaphorical” knowledge – knowledge that is a metaphor for meeting – in and through the student’s self-consciousness, engendered by the interaction of the knowledge with itself and with other knowledge. Accordingly, the answer that the student constitutes is complete. But its completion is not found in the literal accuracy of its constitution. The complete answer is given an entirely new expression. For, insofar as the student’s answer is created in and through the interpenetration of different types of knowledge, it becomes a metaphor for meeting. As a meeting, the newly created knowledge contains a gap – a question – that means that it must be worked out once more.

In contrast, the question “what instrument do you think is playing the music?” does not provide the student with a framework in which to work out the answer. The student is asked to simply replicate old knowledge – the name of the instrument that she knows creates a particular sound – rather than on her ability to make critical connections and create new knowledge. The question reduces her thought (“what . . . do you think”) to her ability to match one sound with an example of another sound for which she can recall the label. If she is unable to do this, her thought is stifled. For she cannot “think” something of which she has no idea. Consequently, when the teacher receives no answer to her question, she might well rephrase the question in relational terms. For example, she might say “you remember the music in Prokofiev’s Peter and the Wolf? Do you remember this sound in that music?” Immediately, the student has a framework within which to begin to think – to make connections between one thing and another.

When a teacher asks a student a question, she is often looking for a particular answer, an answer that will fit in with her lesson plan. In such a case, the teacher is interested in the student’s
answer insofar as it corresponds to what she wants to hear. Thus, on the one hand, the teacher’s question tends to sound contrived because the teacher loads it heavily in favor of what she considers to be the correct answer and what she wants the student to say. On the other hand, if the teacher does not load the question but leaves it open-ended, she often has to reject the student’s answers until the student finally arrives at the answer the teacher wants to hear.

In wanting to foster the student’s own self-reflexive meeting, the teacher recognizes that to ask the student questions about the concepts that she is teaching is a way to do this. At the same time, however, the teacher has considered the lesson thoughtfully and has a direction in mind that she would like it to go. The question is, then, how the teacher can encourage the student to reflect self-critically upon her (the student’s and the teacher’s) ideas in and through the asking of questions and yet, simultaneously, and without seeming to be dogmatic, guide the lesson in the direction she wants it to go. My answer is that when a teacher constitutes her question in terms of the framework in and through which the student is enabled to work out the answer, the teacher can, to a certain extent, empower the student to constitute an original answer – an answer in which the teacher is genuinely interested – while, at the same time, fulfilling the idea she has of her own lesson. Because the student’s answer is, itself, a meeting and because it includes a gap, that gap can be interpreted by the teacher such that it leads to her next point. What is wonderful, then, is that the teacher’s “next point” is re-articulated in light of the student’s answer.

For example, the teacher’s question “would you say that the mood of the music at the end is different from its mood at the beginning?” might produce the contrived answer “yes” or the wrong answer “no” from the student. The teacher’s purpose, in asking the question, is to encourage the student to play the end in a different way. With each answer (no or yes), however, the teacher’s purpose is weakened since, on the one hand, “no” negates the teacher’s purpose, and, on the other hand, “yes” may well be contrived and manipulated. In contrast, the question “what do you notice about the relationship between the beginning music and the ending music?” empowers the student to offer a genuine interpretation. At the same time, it allows the teacher to challenge that interpretation and it permits her interpretation to be challenged. It may be that the interpretation the teacher now chooses is not the one she originally had in mind. The point is, however, that the aim of the teacher’s lesson is not simply to adhere to her plan, a plan that the student, in offering a different interpretation, will have weakened. The aim of the teacher’s
lesson is to foster the student’s ability to interpret the music in critical relationship to herself, to the teacher and to the music, an aim that is empowered by the self-reflexivity of the music.

3.5.3 Teaching: Aims and Objectives

Finally, then, I would like to discuss the purpose of a teacher’s lesson. I have argued that the ultimate goal of music education should be to amplify the student’s self-critical sense of her existence in and through her engagement of music that meets, so to speak, with itself. Thus, whatever lesson plan a teacher creates, her goal is always clear: the practice of the student’s power of self-critique. The goal is achieved in and through the student’s meeting with music. Consequently, the stated aim and objective of a lesson on the 2nd movement Allegro of Beethoven’s Opus 131 might be to sharpen and deepen the student’s sense of adequate musical phrasing. But, while it may appear that “adequate musical phrasing” is the aim and objective that students are to attain, such is not the case. Rather, the teacher’s aim and objective are the practice of adequate musical phrasing that, at the same time, is equal to the practice of the adequate human being. As the student engages the music self-critically in terms of phrasing, she engages her entire being.

Accordingly, it is of the utmost importance for the teacher’s teaching objective to have self-critical depth. Like an adequate teaching question, the objective must constitute the structure in and through which it, together with the student, can expand and amplify itself. So, the concept “musical phrasing,” in and of itself, is not an adequate teaching objective. The concept “adequate musical phrasing,” however, is an adequate teaching objective. It contains within itself the depth of its inadequacy. Thus, “adequate musical phrasing” is an adequate objective but only insofar as it is clear that the musical phrasing’s adequacy is something that is constantly being worked out in and through its practice by the musical participants. If the teacher and the students view the objective as a pre-determined and fixed idea that the students must copy, then the lesson will go nowhere. The teacher will spend the whole time getting the student to copy musical shapes that the student can or cannot copy. In contrast, when the concept of “adequate musical phrasing” is constantly being created and tested in and through the student’s participation, it becomes a metaphor for the student’s participation in her own existence.

But the student’s participation does not take place in a vacuum. The student must participate with something. We find, then, that a student’s participation in adequate musical phrasing is equal to
the extent to which the work of music – in this case Opus 131 – invites the student’s participation and includes in its invitation a standard of creation. Thus, as the student interprets the musical phrases, her knowledge of phrasing is challenged, and both it and her existence are subsequently re-appropriated as meeting.

In conclusion, the aim of the teacher’s lesson is itself metaphorical. While it apparently aims to exemplify the literal idea of correct phrasing, it gives that aim an entirely new expression in light of which the idea of “correct phrasing” is not lost but transformed. The entirely new expression involves human and musical participation – self-critique and love.

3.6 Conclusion

In summary, my concern in Chapter V has been to articulate how the practice of music fundamentally involves the practice of education and how the ensuing relationship, music education, becomes a metaphor for human existence. That is, we find that music education is fundamentally meaningful to human beings because it involves critical participation between a human being and herself, a human being and her neighbor, and a human being and music. In her critical participation a person recognizes and becomes herself.

The idea that the central concern of music education is a person’s recognition of, or meeting with, herself, rather than the mere mastery of “music” or of “education,” informs the idea of educational practice. Teaching and learning are not about achievement for achievement’s sake. Nor are they about the acquisition of skills and knowledge. Rather, teaching and learning are about fostering and encouraging the intensity, attention and integrity with which a student shares her life with herself, her neighbor and music.
Chapter VI ~ Conclusion

The stated purpose of my dissertation is to show that music is self-conscious of itself as music. As self-conscious, I conceive of music’s essence – its actuality – as constituted in and through what I have called music’s meeting with itself. Where music is meeting I understand that music attends to and makes sense of itself in a way that takes into critical consideration – is mindful of – how its musical elements interact, both in terms of their subversion of, and adherence to, the conventions that inform them. Thus, the central claim of my thesis is that the musical participant recognizes music’s meaning, not in terms of its musical elements – sounds – but, rather, in terms of music’s mindfulness. In other words, a person recognizes music’s meaning in its thought for its sounds, and she witnesses music’s meaning insofar as she shares in that thought and becomes mindful of herself.

The quality and depth of music’s mindfulness – and thus the quality and depth of the participant’s mindfulness – is found in what I have articulated as music’s work to become equal to itself. I suggest that music creates the idea of its equality – an idea that corresponds to our own concept of equality as human beings – in and through the adequacy of its self-critical meeting. When musical meeting is adequate, music, along with its participants, thinks its meeting in a way that is not merely conventional but rather that takes its conventions, challenges them, and, in its challenge, revaluates and re-articulates them as the site of meeting. Thus, music becomes equal to itself – and to its participants – but not in terms of its balance with, or identity to, itself. Rather, music becomes equal to itself as meeting. That is, music’s equality is not worked out in the perfect symmetry of, say, two consecutive phrases. Music’s equality is witnessed in the work of each phrase to push its knowledge of itself to the limits of its consciousness and to test the self-consciousness of its neighbor phrase.

I hold, then, that musical meeting is not synonymous with resolution. It is not a means of negotiating a mutually satisfactory outcome – say, the tonic resolution of sonata form – the seeming “truth” of the how music “should” be met. In contrast, the meeting – the constant re-articulation of music’s self-consciousness – is the truth. But, precisely insofar as a participant in the meeting must work to meet the other – to look music or the neighbor, as it were, in the eye –
and to recognize in the meeting the other’s “whole being,” the meeting has a standard. The standard is not a pre-conceived way of seeing fashioned with a specific view in mind. Nor is the standard merely the negation of a way of seeing. The standard is, rather, the ongoing re-focusing, re-engagement and re-meeting of the sight, the actualization, if you will, of sight as a metaphor for recognition.

Accordingly, the musical meeting, in terms of its quality and depth, is under constant review. But the review is not a means to determining quality and depth. The review constitutes quality and depth. In other words, the value of music is not something that is arrived at by virtue of the meeting. The value of music is meeting. Thus, in the terms of my thesis, there is nothing outside or inside of music that is valuable other than the idea of music’s – the interaction of music, performer, composer and listener – constant revaluation of itself. The idea corresponds to, amplifies and enriches the sense of our own value. So, I find that Beethoven’s Opus 131’s critical testing of the conventions of its form; its simultaneous subversion of and adherence to sonata teleology; the tension of its key relations; and the transfiguration of its phrases across the music all work to push my knowledge of myself to the limits of my consciousness as I work to become self-conscious of the music.

Perhaps the most straightforward way of conceiving of music’s meeting with, or its equality to, itself is through the performer’s relationship to the music. I understand that the performer thinks the music’s thought of its meeting with itself as she meets it (thinks it) in her performance. That is, the performer seeks to perform a tone or a phrase in a way that expresses, or does justice to, the music’s consideration of itself. If music were simply identical to itself, there would be only one way to perform it. One would speak, not so much of musical meeting as of musical replication. But because the performer is continually recognizing new ways that the music conceives of a particular musical relationship – in the way that one notices a neighbor’s attention to herself in a new way – we understand that music is constantly re-interpreting itself as the performer both recognizes and constitutes that re-interpretation. Thus, the performer meets the first tone of Opus 131. But even when she has met the tone, there is a sense that there is space for further interpretation. It is not that her interpretation is inadequate. Rather, her interpretation suggests other interpretations, other ways of breathing life into the opening G#. The idea of “other interpretations,” however, does not merely cling to the performer. It is true that the performer must actively recognize the possibility of “other interpretations” (they are not self-
evident). Still, when the performer does recognize them, it as if the music itself has suggested them to her. The music proposes its own re-interpretation.

The music’s meeting with itself is brought into existence in and through the performer. But, equally, the performer’s meeting with herself – her self-critical idea of how the music should be played in accordance with her own sense of integrity – is brought into existence by the music. This sense of the music’s agency is not entirely foreign to our everyday speech concerning music. We may say, for example, that the music suggests an interpretation to the performer, that the music demands adequate fulfillment, or that the music challenges the performer to make sense of it. Consequently, neither the performer’s meeting with herself nor the music’s meeting with itself is isolated within one (the performer) or the other (the music). Each meeting comes into existence between the one and itself, on the one hand, and the one and the other, on the other hand.

I have noted in my thesis that, whereas it seems problematic to talk about music’s meeting with itself given that music is inanimate, it seems unproblematic to talk about the meeting between the performer and herself given that the performer is animate. However, I indicated that just as the performer is not reducible to her “animate” biological being, so music is not reducible to its “inanimate” physical sound. I understand that the assumption that a performer is commensurate with her biological being constitutes a “reduction” when I try to articulate the performer’s location. Where is the performer? Is “she” in her head? Is “she” in her heart? Or is “she” in her whole body? Does the performer disappear when her body is gone – when she is no longer physically present? Similarly, the assumption that music is identical to physical sound is clearly recognized as a “reductio” when, as I observed earlier, I consider the infinite difference between the physical “A” sounded as the tuning pitch for the orchestra in a concert and the “A” in the opening subject of Opus 131.

With regard, then, to the simultaneous relation between and incommensurability of [a] the person and her body and [b] music and sound, I propose that we constitute the performer and music as The Between. First, a person is The Between. She is the relation – the relation between her and herself. At the same time, she is the relation of The Between that is herself to The Between that is her neighbor. Second, music is The Between. It is the relation that is between the music and itself. Simultaneously, it is the relation of the musical Between to The Between that is the
musical participant. The idea of The Between cuts through all ideas that reduce existence and
music to what is animate and what is inanimate. But while The Between is not reducible to
physical animation neither is it reducible to thought that somehow transcends that animation. The
Between has fundamentally to do with the human being’s practical acts in and through the world;
but it is not the same as those acts. It has fundamentally to do with the musical elements as they
are sounded in the performance, but it is not identical to those sounds. The Between exceeds the
human being’s acts and music’s sounds insofar as it endeavors to meet the idea of how those acts
and how those sounds might best be enacted and sounded.

My idea of The Between is derived directly from Buber’s relation I-Thou. I-Thou is the relation
of a person to her Thou where her Thou is both herself and her neighbor. The human being is
created in and through the relation. The relation is not a means – a site of negotiation – by which
a person works out the true course of her life. Rather, when a person “takes her stand in
relation,” she discovers that the true course of her life lies in the relation. But it is also the case
that the person who fails to take her stand in the relation is not merely I. She does not eradicate
The Between and become, on the one hand, commensurate with the reality of her physical body
and its circumstances and, on the other hand, identical to the thought that falsely transcends her
reality. Her existence is still relational but, in denying the full expression of her life that lies in
the ongoing recognition and articulation of her equality to herself, she reduces herself to an It – a
thing – to which she is victim or which she victimizes.

The attraction (or distraction) of I-It to a person is that it seems to be graspable. On the one hand,
the reality of life – in terms of a person’s needs, her desires, and her experience – can be seen
just as the reality of music – sounds – can be perceived. On the other hand, the theories that are
neatly worked out away from life – that do not have to be lived – are also attractive. They
apparently provide their proponents with concise (if ultimately false) maxims of action. In the
same way, theories of musical meaning, detached from performance, seem tenable so long as
they are not called upon to account for what the listener actually witnesses. I-Thou, in contrast,
cannot be grasped in the same way. I-Thou is not self-evident. The site or space that is between
the I and the Thou – the site I am calling The Between – is constituted in and through human
thought; but, unlike the detached theories of life and music – the theories that a person thinks, as
it were, from a distance – it turns out that human thought is itself The Between. The very thought
that thinks The Between is constituted in and through it. Human thought is relational. The human
being thinks when and as she meets the other (self and neighbor). Thus, I understand that The Between does not exist outside of human thought. But, equally, human thought does not exist outside of The Between.

Because The Between is human thought – the thought that constitutes what Kant calls human will – a person who chooses to “grasp,” as it were, I-It, in doing so denies the power of her thought – her self-reflexivity – and denies the power of her will that enables her to make that choice. Thus, the idea that existence, music, and education are adequately conceived of in terms of I-Thou and inadequately conceived of in terms of I-It is not a “moralistic” or “judgmental” idea. The idea of I-Thou is not merely an ideological device – an ideal or refined notion – that negates the down to earth reality of I-It. A person, in her fullest sense, is self-conscious – she exists as I-Thou. As I-It, she fails to become her existence. Accordingly, there is no purpose to human existence or education other than to create the context in and through which existence, music and education are recognized and fulfilled as I-Thou. We have “[our] whole lives” (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 123) in that purpose.

Human existence shares its meaning with, and amplifies it through, music – in terms of the constitution of each (existence and music) as I-Thou or The Between. It follows, then, that where education is the practice of human existence, music is fundamentally educational. I conceive of its educational power in a number of ways.

First, as I-Thou, as a meeting that is simultaneously complete and continually being completed, music embodies the idea of education as practice. Where education’s goal is self-critique a student begins self-critically. She begins with the goal she must achieve. Without this beginning she cannot begin. She cannot become self-critical without already having an idea of what it means to be self-critical. Thus, when a student’s musical practice is adequate it is not about her starting from a point of non-achievement and moving to the point – the result – of achievement. In contrast, it is about her recognizing what she can do and amplifying her recognition. As she amplifies her recognition of her musical technique and musical interpretation, pushing it to its limit, she sharpens and nurtures her self-consciousness – her sense of herself. Thus, musical practice is in and of itself the beginning and the end of music. The hours spent in the practice room and the concert performance are transformed in the light of meeting.
Second, the idea that music is *I-Thou* refuses to allow it to become merely a physical exercise or simply an intellectual one. As a student attends to music she attends to its whole being and, consequently, to her whole being. She meets, in other words, with music as she would meet with a person. Ultimately, then, all concerns – technical and musical – are revealed in the light of the central concern, the human being and music as *I-Thou*.

Third, music, as *I-Thou*, is not self-evident. By this I mean that the student cannot directly see music’s mindfulness. Rather, music, as self-reflexive, insists that the student work mindfully to recognize it. Furthermore, while I argue that all subjects in an educational system conceived of as *I-Thou* constitute a metaphor for the student’s self-reflexive – self-critical – participation, many subjects appear to be “useful” and educationally valid when seen (reductively) as a means to an educational result. For example, it might seem that the literal reproduction of a number of facts deemed necessary to “get ahead” are the legitimate concern of education in a world hit by recession. When what “seems” to be legitimate is accepted as such, music becomes surplus to the education curriculum. For, it is not easy to reduce music to a means to some end considered to constitute worldly success. Thus, music is only truly recognized as educational when education is properly conceived of as *I-Thou*. In its strongest expression music demands that the student engage it, and thus herself, metaphorically. It demands that the student step out of her familiar self, challenge the honesty according to which she construes the music, and test the integrity according to which she construes herself.

Finally, the idea that one meets with music as one would meet with a person impacts on how we teach music. For example, we can ask a student to meet a work of music just as we may ask her to meet a person. Accordingly, what is important is not what the music is – its genre, its ethnicity and so on. What is important is that the student engage the music self-critically and lovingly. What is important is that the student begin to articulate what it is that she finds interesting or uninteresting about the music. What is important, then, is that the music (and the music lesson) invite her engagement, cause her to challenge its adequacy, and lead her to revaluate and reappropriate it as meeting.

As teachers, we can create and foster the critical context in and through which the student may begin to articulate her ideas. The context has fundamentally to do with the relational nature of music. Music is not fixed, for it is constantly working to become what it is in and through the
student’s articulation. Thus, as teachers, we should not say “play it like this.” Rather, we should encourage the student to recognize that our (the teacher’s) own performance involves our critical meeting with music – a meeting that is worked out between what the music suggests to us and what we suggest to the music – and that the student’s own performance of music must, in the same way, be a meeting. Fundamental, then, to the idea of music education is the notion that music is not simply what it appears to be; rather, it is always working to become what it is in and through our participation. Accordingly, the teacher can encourage the student to test what she hears or plays against what she imagines she hears or plays and what she imagines she hears or plays against what she hears or plays. The goal – the content – of education is the student’s ongoing testing of one thing against another in the critical light of her shared ideas with herself and her neighbor. Everything else – results, success, and achievement – is constituted in and through this one central goal.

We live in a time when it seems easy to allow ourselves to be distracted from the “one central goal.” Global issues of climate change, economic downturn, over population, exhaustion of energy resources and, most recently, “swine flu” (not to mention personal health and financial and family issues) threaten to disorient us by leading us to concentrate on the means by which we can achieve the perfect “end performance” – to use a musical analogy. In other words, we find ourselves seeking, as our primary concern, a solution to our problems rather than working to recognize ourselves, which very recognition is “the music” – is the beginning and end of existence – in whose light all solutions become metaphors for the human being’s ongoing work to meet with and become herself.

I conclude my thesis, then, with the idea that meaning – at once human, musical and educational – is found in the notions of mutual understanding, communication and love in and through which a person profoundly witnesses the vitality and wonder of her existence. I understand that a person’s conception of what music education involves – its significance in her life – is radically transformed in light of this meaning. Thus, I argue that we live life musically, we engage music musically and we educate musically when we meet the other – self, neighbor and music – and find, in our very meeting, the genuine actuality of our existence. Where our lives are practiced and conceived of in the fullest possible way, our practice and conception of them is musical insofar as we transform every means or device directed toward an apparent end – a solution to
worldly survival— in and through the primary human concern of critical, thoughtful and loving relations. Music, as The Between, is a metaphor for existence, for education and for itself.
Bibliography


Music Scores and Recordings


