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MUSIC, RESTORATION, PERFORMANCE AND ONTOLOGY:
A GUIDE FOR THE PERPLEXED

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PART I

MUSICAL ONTOLOGY: A GUIDE FOR THE PERPLEXED

CHAPTER 1
WHAT IS MUSICAL ONTOLOGY?

Introduction

What is musical ontology and why should we as philosophers address it (if ever)?

To answer this question, we might first have a look at the definition provided by one of the most eminent online encyclopedias of philosophy: "Musical ontology is the study of the kinds of musical things there are and the relations that hold between them. The most discussed issues within this field have been the metaphysical nature of works of classical music, and what it is to give an 'authentic performance' of such works"[1]. As a well-known scholar in the field, Julian Dodd, puts it, the issue is: what ontological category do musical works belong to? Dodd labels it *the categorial question* (Dodd 2007, 1): in providing an answer we should be able to determine what kind of entity a musical work is. But ontology of music is also concerned with what Dodd again calls *the individuation question*: how works are identified and distinguished. how are works identified and distinguished? In answering these two questions we are fulfilling the primary demands of musical ontology. From a methodological point of view, ontology of music can be ascribed to the more general field of the ontology of art. According to the philosopher Amie Thomasson (2006), investigating the ontology of art means attempting to answer the question of what sort of thing a work of art is. Therefore, trying to determining the ontological status of a work of art such as a musical work "(…) involves determining the conditions under which a work of art comes into existence, remains in existence and is destroyed (persistence conditions) and also the conditions under which

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[1] Kania, A., Kania, A. *Philosophy of Music*, (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/music/>.*Philosophy of Music*, Stanford Encyclopedia of philosophy

works of art are one and the same (identity conditions)"[2]. In committing themselves to the wide-ranging domain of ontology, philosophers asking themselves what sorts of things works of music are have recourse to an outstanding gamut of conventional and newly proposed ontological categories. Much of the debate on the nature of such works can thus be read as a review of the debate on the 'problem of universals': the range of proposed candidates covers the spectrum of fundamental ontological theories.

Thus far, we have outlined a provisional answer to the first part branch of the question from which we started, that is to say, what is musical ontology. Yet, no answer has been given to the second part of our question concerning the sense of committing to the activity of musical ontology. While ontology concerned with the status of objects which constitute the furniture of the external world is regarded in the philosophical world as deserving of respect *per se* (at least for the old noble tradition this activity boasts), the same cannot be said with regard to wondering about the essential nature of musical products. Only some happy few would presumably appreciate why one should be concerned with musical ontology *without* any compelling reason. Nor would musicians be very inclined to understand why they should care about all these metaphysical brain-teasers. Still, since our main purpose here is to show not only the content of musical ontology, but also the *sense* of it, grant us a little more patience and let us try again from a different angle.

Let's start with a game. Don't worry: it's nothing complicated. You just need some concentration and the Internet. The rest will come to you through the music.

We presume that all of you, just like everyone else in the Western world (and in the Eastern too, arguably) know the very famous tune *My Favorite Things* from the 1959 Rodgers and Hammerstein musical *The Sound of Music,* famously sung by Julie Andrews in the 1965 movie. In the film, the lyrics make a reference to the sort of things the main female character, Maria, loves the most, such as *"Cream colored ponies and crisp apple strüdels, doorbells and sleigh bells and schnitzel with noodles, Wild geese that fly with the moon on their wings".* The idea is that when bad times are coming, she can fill up her mind with these selected things and start feeling better.

All you are asked to do for the moment is to think about this song. Just imagine it in your mind for a few instants (1).

Done? Then, try to hum it. Begin silently, then sing it softly with low voice. You probably don't remember every word, so just hum intone the melody (2).

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[2] Thomasson, A. L. (2006), *Debates about the Ontology of Art: What are We Doing Here?.* Philosophy Compass, 1: 245–255, p.245

Now, please look for the video of *My Favorite Things* on YouTube. Be careful to search for the original American soundtrack (3). Below you can find a possible link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=33o32C0ogVM

Listen to it.

As you already know, *My Favorite Things* became a jazz classic in the early Sixties, thanks to the famous interpretation by the saxophonist John Coltrane, who used the song almost as his own signature, varying and modifying it as well as using it for improvisations. Coltrane's nearly 45 versions differ as significantly from each other as they differ from Rodgers and Hammerstein's originally conceived work.

Choose a video of one of Coltrane's versions online (4). You can find one from his 1961 album of the same name on this link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQsvMf8X0FY

Now, take a look at the original score of the song (5) (here is the first page as an example, but the complete score is available online at:

http://operalady.com/vocal/My%20Favorite%20Things.pdf)

Then cast a glance over Coltrane's saxophon version (6)

And over the piano arrangement (7):

Even those unable to read music will notice how the three scores). Significantly, the only thing which remains unvaried is the title, *My favorite things*. If you could play the three on the appropriate instrument, though, you would notice that this impression is somewhat misleading: eventually, you would still be playing the very same song. Yet the question remains, what is this song?

Following this last remark we are compelled to get to the heart of the matter. Consider this fact. Apparently, the things you have just been requested to do (thinking about a tune, humming it, listening to one version, then another, reading the score and the other arrangements) all concern the same object we call *My Favorite things*. We made reference to it as a song, though either a tune, a melody, a standard jazz piece, a work or all those things together still needs to be determined. However, what you have just done (1,2,3,4,5,6,7) has had very different outcomes. Even those unwilling to compare their humming to John Coltrane's mellow saxophone will have to admit that something very different was in the air in the case of (2) and (3). Nevertheless, something akin was in the air too, and it was unmistakably *My Favorite Things*. When you thought of the song, when you tried to sing it, when you finally listened to it and read the score, you focused your efforts on an entity we recognize as having features so distinctive and peculiar that we are made to exclaim, when prompted: ah yes, *that* one! So the issue is to try and understand what the *that* is which always remains the same in all these different versions, resisting our off-key voice, migrating from one score to another, moving from one performer to another, taking on different shades, tonality and sonority, and doing all this without losing its own identity? Things now begin to seem really puzzling. But we can console ourselves: this puzzlement is but the prompting and the starting point of musical ontology. No surprise then if the question of *My Favorite Things* seems so strange, since a paradox is actually inherent to the whole domain of music, making its investigation so appealing to those interested in musical ontology. As in Alan Tormey's terms[3], musical works seem to enjoy a very obscure mode of existence; they are, he says, "ontological mutants". Musical works do not hang on a wall in a museum or sit on a pedestal for us to admire. They are performed. However, the performance is not the musical work itself; it is merely a performance *of* the musical work. You and I and people who lived in the past already dead and others yet to be born can all have the pleasant experience of listening to *My Favorite Things* even though they will be listening to different interpretations and

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[3] Alan Tormey, *Indeterminacy and Identity in Art*, Monist, 58 (1974), p. 207

performances at different times in different places. What is this thing we all have the chance of listening to? What is this one particular musical work called *My Favorite Things?*

Unlike paintings and sculptures[4], it is unclear what kind of entity objects like *My Favorite things* are; but it is clear that many of the candidates are not suitable for identifying musical works: "Works cannot, in any straightforward sense, be physical, mental, or ideal objects"[5]. For instance, it is self-evident that *My Favorite Thing* does not exist merely as a concrete, physical object; it does not exist just as a private idea inhabiting the mind of Rodgers and Hammerstein or that of Coltrane. Nor is it identical to any one of its performances, for example that of Julie Andrews. You might witness different performances of this song, as you did in (3) and (4), but neither of them is *the* song because they are both performances *of* it. There is also no reason to favor one performance over all the others, say Coltrane's 1961 version rather than his 1975 one. What begins to emerge while reflecting upon these issues is that all the difficulties we have are nonetheless consistent with the same fundamental problem of figuring out the identity (or the status, as it is usually put), of musical works.

So it's time to go back to the very beginning and reread the definitions we have given.

It should be easier now to understand what Dodd means when he speaks about the "*categorial question*" and "*individuation question*" musical works philosophically engender. Ontologists of music, in all their writings throughout the last decades, have tried to address the kind of puzzling questions we have just encountered.

In the first section of this Chapter, we will see how they have done so.

We shall reconstruct the debate using the standard categories currently used by critics[6] which divide musical ontologists into two main categories, the realists or *Platonists,* on the one hand, and the anti-realists, or *Nominalists*, on the other. A general remark is needed now. The use of Platonist or Nominalist (or Realist and anti-Realist) terminology is currently standard, yet it does not entail any philological reliability, as if one were to imply that Plato ever discussed the status of musical works. That would be *nonsense*, at least for obvious historical reasons.

Nominalists identify musical works with concrete objects, arguing that they should be considered as sets of concrete particulars: i.e., scores and performances (Goodman 1968, Predelli 1995, 1999a, 1999b, 2001, Caplan and Matheson 2006, Tillman 2011). Contemporary Nominalists' discussion concern the ways in which works *qua* concreta can be

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[4] Even if the discussion concerning the ontological status of non-performative art is opened. See:
[5] Goher, L., *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, OUP, Oxford 2007, p.2
[6] See Kania, A. 2008, Goher, 1992, Kivy, 2002, 2007

mereologically thought. Conversely, Platonists conceive musical works as abstract objects. According to Kania (2008) we should distinguish between what may be called a "hard Platonism (simple Platonism, as he puts it) – i.e. works are eternal existents located neither in space nor in time (Kivy 1983a, 1983b, Dodd 2000, 2002, 2007) and a "soft Platonism" (or complex Platonism in Kania's terms): the idea that musical works come into existence as the products of human action (Wollheim 1968, Wolterstorff 1980; Levinson 1980, 1990c; S. Davies 2001; Howell 2002; Thomasson 2004b among others). Besides these classic viewpoints, we shall sketch out three more alternative views which cannot be reduced to either of the two perspectives indicated above. The first is *idealism*, whose origins are usually brought back to the works of Croce (1922), Collingwood (1938) and Sartre (1940), holding that musical works are but mental entities, namely imaginary objects and experiences.

The second is quite a complex view we may call the *performative-view* of musical works: the idea being that musical works, just as every other form of artwork, are to be ontologically regarded as *compositional actions* taken by a specific composer in a specific time. A version of this theory was formerly defended by Gregory Curry in his 1989 essay "An Ontology of Art" where he proposes an *action- theory* of works of art and, more recently, by David Davies (2004, 2011).

The third is hardly conceivable as an ontological view, as it posits itself almost outside the range of conventional debate on the status of works of music. His main proponent, Ross Cameron (2008), calls it the *eliminativist* view. According to eliminativists, "there are no things that are musical works"[7]: even though in ordinary language we do make reference to them, we should not grant them any ontological consistency.

In this overview, we shall look at these significantly different theories in order to pinpoint their main positive and critical aspects. An account is considered successful if it is able to meet a set of specific demands which the experience we just had with *My Favorite Things* was meant to highlight. These represent some of the *desiderata* any satisfying ontological proposal concerning musical works should take into account.

First, *repeatability:* the fact that musical works are repeatable and thus resistant to identifications that are too straightforward. In Dodd's words: "A work of music is *repeatable* in the following sense: it can be multiply performed or played in different places at the same time, and each such datable, locatable performance or playing is an *occurrence* of it (…)As I see it, the central challenge in the ontology of musical works is to come up with an

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[7] Cameron, Ross P., *There are No Things That are Musical Works,* Brit J Aesthetics (2008) 48 (3): 295-314

ontological proposal (…) which enables us to explain what such repeatability consists in, whilst doing maximal justice to the way in which we conceive of musical works in our reflective critical and appreciative practice."[8]

Second, *audibility*: musical works are audible through their performances. When we listen to a performance of a musical work, we do not just listen to the performance of the work, we also listen to the work itself. Thus, it seems that in listening to a performance of a musical work, we are, as Wolterstorff remarks, "hearing two things at once"[9]. An account of musical works must explain how it is possible for us to listen to a musical work by listening to a performance of it.

Thirdly, *creatability*: musical works appear to be creatable, that is to say, that they are created by their composer just as a painter or sculptor creates something by producing a painting or sculpture. The idea that musical works are created is presumably an intuition most or all of us share and would find difficult to give up.

Since those are the main features responsible for making music ontologically puzzling, any plausible answer to the categorical question regarding musical works must take them into account, otherwise it fails. As we shall soon see, this is quite a sticky point; and furthermore, deciding between theories of musical ontology is not simply a matter of finding an equilibrium between the benefits of a theory and its cost, since one has formerly to decide what counts as a benefit and what as a cost, i.e., the evaluative background to be adopted in analysis. Indeed, much concern has recently been devolved to methodological questions, concerning how we should adjudicate different views in musical ontology (Kania 2008c, D. Davies 2009, Predelli 2009, Stecker 2009, Dodd 2010): "(…) quite a bit of the argumentation for ontological theses is not strictly deductive. It often resembles an inference to the best explanation. More specifically, much argumentation in this arena looks like this: desiderata are presented; various views are rejected for failing to meet the desiderata; one view is then defended as meeting them best. So we need some way to evaluate claims that such and such is a desideratum, D, for an adequate ontology of music, as well as "best-meets D" claims that are put forward to defend a favored view."[10] As we shall see, respect for our pre-theoretic intuitions and pragmatic considerations currently represent the most popular *criteria* for

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[8] Dodd, Dodd, J. (2009), *Teaching & Learning Guide for: Musical Works: Ontology and Meta-Ontology*. Philosophy Compass, 4: 1044–1048

[9] Wolterstorff N., *Works and Worlds of Art*, Oxford Claredon Press 1980, p. 41

[10] Stecker R., *Methodological Questions about the Ontology of Music,* JAAC Vol. 67, No. 4 (Fall, 2009), p. 375

choosing among different ontologies, yet they are not the only ones that have been questioned in the literature.

We started our modest experiment with *My Favorite Things* promising you would be given an explanation not only as to what musical ontology is, but also as to what applying it means, in terms of *sense*, *utility*, *purposes*. If we haven't achieved this yet, it is because the issue is extremely thorny to deal with. Why should anyone committed to music and aesthetics worry about ontology? Is it not, as Bertinetto states, "better and more interesting to search for aesthetic reasons that can explain why, to which degree, regarding which aspects a certain performance is good, bad exciting, innovative, moving, insipid and so on, and to be preferred to other performances of the same work"[11]? If what really matters in our appreciation of a piece of music such as *My favorite things* is the positive experience we have, the emotions we feel, then why would we need to know whether it is a universal entity, a concrete particular, or perhaps a bundle of tropes? Why is an ontology of musical works needed at all? The issue is all but trivial.

An ontological approach to musical works has dominated Anglo-Saxon aesthetics for almost fifty years. Thanks to its high standards of clarity and to the scientifically styled methodology it shares with analytical philosophy, it has gained growing respect throughout the philosophical world and significantly in Europe. Yet, it has increasingly fallen into disrepute[12]. Criticism of ontology of art has recently spread even within the English-speaking world, reinforcing the original attacks by Continental theorists. The relevance of finding a good description for the kind of object a work of music is in terms of conditions of *status* and identity has been challenged, and many have replied negatively as to whether ontology is able to tell us something interesting about music.

There is a vast array of skeptical arguments concerning musical ontology. In most cases, though not always, they coincide with more general criticism of analytical philosophy in general. In the second section of this Chapter we shall try to outline a comprehensive overview of all these objections. We shall divide them into at least three major classes according to differences in the way they interpret the relation between philosophy and musical works.

- The first branch is made up of what we may call, to use Roger Pouivet's suggestion, criticisms regarding the aesthetic experience, more or less informed by the same concerns

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[11] Bertinetto A., *Musical Ontology: a view through improvisation,* Cosmo. Comparative Studies in Modernism, 2, 2013 p. 81
[12] Cfr Goher L., 2007, p. 6

described in Bertinetto's former remarks. Critics from this standpoint claim that ontology is useless with regards to music (and art in general), and that what is really worth investigating is the aesthetic experience we live in our encounters with works. A major proponent of this view is Aaron Ridley, who, in his *The Philosophy of Music*, offers a radical critique of the entire scope of the ontology of music: "When was the last time you came away from a performance of a piece of music – live or recorded - seriously wondering whether the performance had been of *it*? My guess is, never." There is no room for serious ontological investigations of musical works, according to Ridley, since they hardly have significance for us: "(…) in our ordinary – indeed in our actual - aesthetic encounters with renderings of pieces of music, our primary concern, or at the very least one of our most prominent concerns is whether a given rendition is any good; or, if it isn't, whether it is so bad as to merit further action"[13]; thus, "(…) issues concerning work-identity can hardly be very urgent if what we are chiefly interested in is our aesthetic experience of renditions of pieces of music. If we are doing aesthetics, that is, ontological questions deserve a place in the back row, at best"[14]. For aesthetic is committed to evaluative issues, one engaged in philosophy of music should primarily deal with the aesthetic value of performances, unless accepting the fact that what he/she is doing is just an aesthetically inert musical metaphysics rather than musical aesthetics.

-The second challenge to musical ontology comes from philosophers committed to abstract metaphysics, who refuse the very idea of *applied* ontology. This is the standpoint of scholars such as Peter van Inwagen, Peter Unger, just to mention a few. According to them, there could be no serious "*ontology of*" whatever, since regional (or provincial) ontologies, say, ontology of holes[15], cell phones[16], lighters, field grasses, post-its[17], good seasons, *Madeleine* biscuits, works of art, and eventually works of music, are just second-order theorizing. In fact, one could also maintain that there are no such things at all. Yet, if "*there are no ordinary things*"[18], no ontology of artifacts can make sense, included the ontology of stuff like *My favorite Things*. "If there are no artifacts, then there is no philosophical question about the artifacts"[19]. Conversely, metaphysics should deal with fundamental concepts like that of

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[13] Aaron Ridley, *The Philosophy of Music*, Edimbourg, Edimbourg University Press, 2004, p.113
[14] Ibid., p. 114
[15] Roberto Casati & Achille Varzi, *Holes and Other Superficialities*, Cambridge (MA), The Mit Press, 1994
[16] Maurizio Ferraris, *Where are you? An Ontology of the Cell Phone*, New York: Fordham UP 2005
[17] *Il tunnel delle multe. Ontologia degli oggetti quotidiani*, Torino: Einaudi, 2008
[18] Peter Unger, *There are no Ordinary Things*, Synthèse,
[19] Peter van Inwagen, *Material Beings*, Cornell University Press, 1990 p.128

substance, property, necessity, causality, possibility, to which everyday-life objects just as works of music can be reduced. Lowe's objection[20] that there are at least two main lines into which ontology can be divided – one *a priori*, trying to establish what sort of things can exist and co-exist in the same possible world, the other empirically conditioned, trying to establish what sort of things do exist in the real world - is denied in the name of a methodological purism concerning metaphysical investigation.

- The third class of objections is expressed by scholars and musicologists who fear that the so-called unhistorical feature characterizing the ontology of musical works turns out to be misleading. From such a standpoint, theorists have pointed out that musical works are cultural-sociological-historical entities, and thus the methodology appropriate to detect their identity should be quite different from that of general metaphysics. According to Lydia Goehr, a major proponent of this theory, the historical approach consists in the description of "the way the concept of work emerged in classical music practice and how it functioned therein"[21]. Analytical ontology needs thus to be questioned at least because of its "feigned isolation and purity" and its claim of being "'enlightened', and therefore uninfluenced by external sociological, political, and historical consideration, which ends up being a major part of the problem of analysis"[22]. The history of music tells us that the concept of "work" emerged only in the late eighteenth century and from then on began pervasively influencing the way we think of musical practice. As a consequence, its employment is nowadays extended to include domains of any sort of music: jazz, non-western music, popular music etc, so that we may speak of real "imperialism"[23] with regards to the idea of musical "work" in itself. Since ontologists of music treat musical works as if they were abstract or meta-historical objects, they do not recognize them as being fundamentally a product of the dynamic interaction between musical, social, political, ideological dimensions, thus disregarding one of the key features characterizing their identity.

These three critical approaches to musical ontology all have, as we will see, strengths and weaknesses.

We will not argue here for any ultimate reason why philosophers and musical scholars should (or should not) ask and try to formulate careful answers to the questions regarding ontology of music. Our aim is far less ambitious. Though, what we want to stress is that any viable

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[20] E. J. Lowe, *The Four-Category Ontology, A metaphysical Foundation for Natural Science*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, p.4-5
[21] Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2007, p. 4
[22] P.6
[23] P.245

demonstration as to why ontology of music ought to gain relevance in the Humanities must first deal with the issue concerning the autonomy of aesthetics from metaphysics and with the thorny question of "the limits of metaphysics". In its struggle against the two philosophical giants of "Kantian" anti-realism and "Hegelian" historicism, the ontology of music always needs to be defended by its own proponents even before having been practiced. However, even if we decide not to embark seriously on such an enterprise, we would do well to dwell a little on the puzzles musical ontology brings up. Whether we are philosophers, musicians or music aficionados, whether we are interested in studies of the analysis and criticism, the editing, the performance of music, the pursuit of particular musicological problems, musical ontology may teach us what kind of issues we need to think about and what sort of considerations we need to take into account next time we listen to a performance of *My Favorite Things*.

CHAPTER 1
WHAT IS MUSICAL ONTOLOGY?

Ontological Approaches

What are the ontological theories of musical works all about?

Since musical ontology is to be understood as a kind of regional metaphysics applied to the particular domain of music, its main purpose consists in a general inquiry concerning what actually exists in the world and what is its nature. Thus, it investigates whether the things we generally refer to as musical works actually exist in the way we intuitively believe they do, say, as particular objects that are part of our ordinary experience. Philosophers have explored a bewildering gamut of ontological options to answer these questions. Yet, each of these options can be read as a possible answer to these two key ontological issues: "What actually exists?" (Do musical works actually exist?) and "What is the nature of what exists?" (What is the nature of musical works?).

Apparently, philosophers committed to musical ontology must all inevitably admit to the existence of works of music. No matter their status (whether they are meant to be artifacts, kinds, actions, or abstracta) musical works must nonetheless be considered real, at least in a very trivial sense. This is partially incorrect, as there is also room on the table for same marginal anti-realist views, i.e. eliminativist or fictionalist. Only a few thinkers writing about

aesthetics have, however, conjectured that we would be better off without committing ourselves to the existence of works, as we shall later see.[24]

Qua applied ontology, the ontology of music is not independent from fundamental or formal ontology, from which it borrows its basic concepts and formal distinctions. Indeed, the notion of applied ontology does not only imply that some ontological theories concerning particular types of things are claimed, but also that a number of general ontological concepts are used with regards to a specific type of thing, namely musical works.

The following schemas offer a classification of the major approaches with regards to fundamental ontology (A) and ontology as applied to works of music (B):

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[24] See, Rudner, 1950, Petterson (1981, 1984, 1990, 2009, 2012) and, more recently, Ross P. Cameron (2008).

A.

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                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │   METAPHYSICAL OPTIONS   │
                    └─────────────────────────┘
                       ↙                    ↘
        ┌──────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────┐
        │     REALISM      │        │   ANTIREALISM    │
        ├────────┬─────────┤        ├────────┬─────────┤
        │ Ontol. │ Epistem.│        │ Ontol. │ Epistem.│
        │ realism│ realism │        │antireal│anti-real│
        │  (1)   │  (2)    │        │  (4)   │  (5)    │
        └────────┴─────────┘        └────────┴─────────┘
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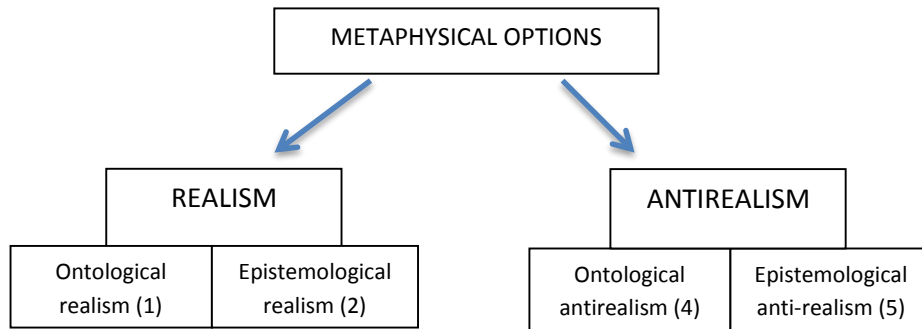
(1) the idea that objects exist independently from us;

(2) the idea that we can have safe knowledge of the objects in the world;

(3) the idea that nothing is actually independent from the human mind.

(4) the idea that what we can truly know is just our knowledge conditions.

B.

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                        ┌──────────────────┐
                        │   THE ONTOLOGY   │
                        │     OF MUSIC     │
                        └──────────────────┘
                       ↙                    ↘
        ┌──────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────┐
        │     REALISM      │        │   ANTI-REALISM   │
        │ IN MUSICAL ONTOL.│        │ IN MUSICAL ONTOL.│
        └──────────────────┘        └──────────────────┘
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Realism or Platonism (1) — Nominalism or Materialism (2) — Idealism or Mentalism (3) — Eliminativism Fictionalism (3.1)

Hard Platonism (1.1) — Soft Platonism (1.2) — Class Nominalism (2.1) — Mereological Nominalism (2.2)
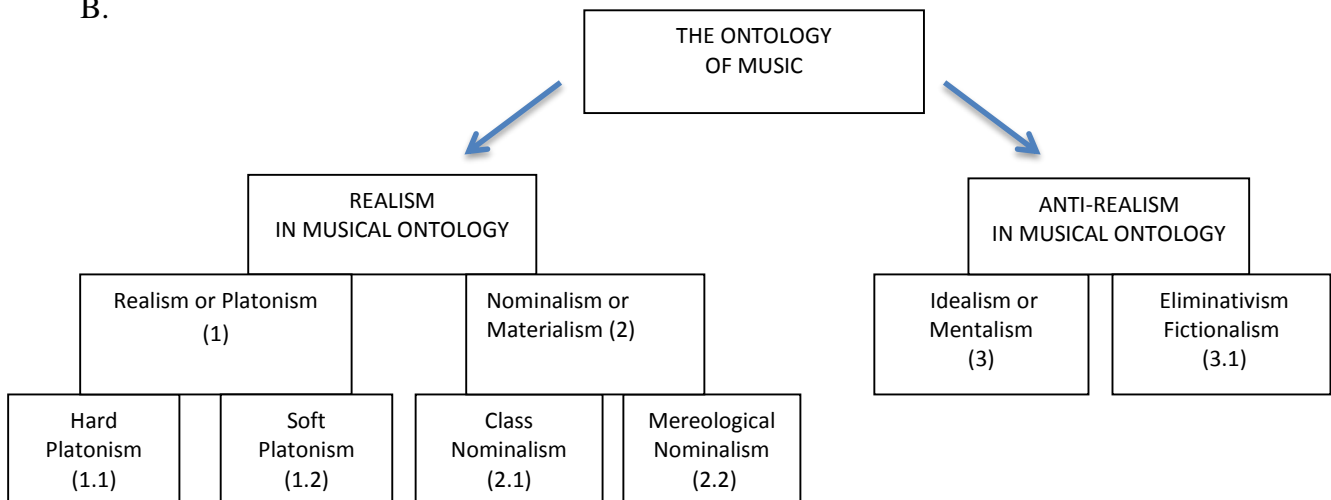
1) Platonism or Realism: musical works are a peculiar type of abstract objects.

1.1) Hard Platonism: musical works are eternal existents discovered by composers;

1.2) Soft Platonism: musical works are "indicated types" of abstract structure created by their compositors.

2) Nominalism: works of music are concrete objects (score, performances etc.). The underlying assumption is that nothing exists but particulars.

2.1) Class Nominalism: works are reduced to the class formed by the set of compliant performances of one score.

2.2) Mereological Nominalism: Works are reduced to fusions or set of concrete objects (performances, scores).

3) Mentalism or idealism: musical works are mental entities in the head of their composers.

3.1) Eliminativism or Fictionalism: musical works have no ontological consistence. Strictly speaking, they do not exist as objects in the world.

As musical ontology is directly reliant on fundamental ontology, different perspectives regarding the nature of musical works depend on the general ontology to which one is committed. The ontological context *latu sensu* helps making the different options concerning the status of musical works clearer. A claim such as "musical works are concrete particulars" can have two very different meanings according to what types of entities one is willing to accept as part of the real world. Both Nominalists and Platonists may agree that musical works are concrete particulars; though they would be in serious disagreement as to what this statement actually means. Indeed, the first would say that only entities such as particulars exist, the second would affirm rather that they are to be intended as instances of universal entities. Therefore, even confronted with the same performance of a musical work, they would go through very different experiences. Platonists would say they are not really *hearing* the work they are listening to but just a concrete instance of it, as the work in itself is an abstract non-perceivable structure. Nominalists would assume they will never listen to that very same musical work again, for "the work" is but the set of all its diverse performances. Therefore, though it is still a matter of discussion whether or not different ontological approaches have an influence on the content of the aesthetic experience one may undergo[25], commitment to general ontology definitely bears on how one interprets the status of musical works.

Between these two extremes many others are possible which are milder than Platonism and stronger than Nominalism, so that the spectrum of the ontological theories is in fact a continuum. In the following we will simply analyze some reference positions, contenting ourselves with pointing out where issues and answers overlap.

However, before addressing any realist approach to musical ontology, we must address an intermediate approach which can hardly be subscribed either to realism or to anti-realism.

This is the theory claiming the mental nature of musical works.

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[25] See the critical discussion in Chapter 2 concerning the relation between the ontology of music and musical aesthetics.

Idealism in musical ontology

According to Idealism, musical works are ideal objects existing in the mind or in the imagination of the composer who created them. Thus, they are not in any proper sense material entities. This radical denial of the materiality of musical works (and of works of art in general) originally stemmed from the writings of Benedetto Croce, starting with his 1902 *Aesthetic: As Science of Expression and General Linguistics*[26]. The assumption of the non-materiality of musical works is explicit in Croce when he asserts that works of art cannot be physical entities since they are "supremely real" whereas the physical world is "unreal." Croce is generally considered an idealist when it comes to general ontology, as someone believing there is nothing besides the mind. In that sense, it would not surprise us that he takes works of art to be, together with everything else, ideal or mental objects. Yet Croce accepts the usual distinction between mental things, say, beliefs, thoughts, dreams, and physical things, say, chairs and flowers as well[27] and even with such a distinction, he regards artworks *as* mental things. In other words, works of art are for Croce *doubly* ideal. No room, though, to say that due to their immaterial nature works of art are any less real. To this extent, his idealism cannot be reduced either to a form of realism or anti-realism.

For sure, Croce's most important English-speaking follower was Robin George Collingwood[28] whose translations helped increasing the Italian philosopher's knowledge and reputation outside Italy. Talking of a "Croce-Collingwood" theory of art, as generally done in literature, may be viable enough for our purposes, but we have nonetheless to stress that many differences exist between these two authors which often are disregarded. To cite just the most relevant one, Croce's account, unlike Collingwood's own theory, does not really hold the expressive content of works of art as something "in the artist", giving emphasis instead to its form and its "universality".

But let's proceed step by step. In order to synthetically outline Croce-Collingwood's theory of artworks, it seems worth clarifying in what sense works of art, and specifically, works of music, are to be intended not as physical objects or finished artifacts, but as conscious imaginative activities through which creative expression takes place. The starting point of this conception seems to consist in a set of central beliefs concerning the meaning of the term

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[26] Croce B., *Estetica come scienza dell'espressione e linguistica generale, 1908*
[27] Croce's idea that works of art are mental objects does not simply result from his general idealism. Sometimes, he speak for convenience of the 'spiritual' and 'physical', in order to make the point that the physical object is only of practical, and not of aesthetic significance (P*hilosophy, Poetry, History: An Anthology of Essays*, edited by Cecil Sprigge, London: Oxford University Press, pp. 227–8).
[28] R.G. Collingwood, *Principles of Art*, Oxford, Oxford, Oxford UP, 1938

"art". According to Croce-Collingwood's theory, art has been historically subjected to a number of misinterpretations which have ended up reducing it to a form of craft or technical knowledge.[29] This idea of art as craft is, from the idealist standpoint, popular as well as erroneous at least for two main reasons. First, it shapes a mistaken interpretation of the relationship between art and emotions, arguing that the aim of art is to stimulate emotions in the observer. Second, it misread the activity of art creation, supporting the view that creation consists only in the transformational process of artistic materials. On the contrary, Croce-Collingwood's theory argues, whereas the artist *qua* creator of the artwork does express his own emotions in the work of art, it has no interest in provoking any specific effect on his audience. Moreover, this act of expression does not require the possession of any precise technique, nor it is otherwise finalized than to the exploration and detection of the artist's emotions. For a work to exist, no concrete action of production is demanded, unless falling back into the common-place blending of art and manufacture. For art creation is an activity of imagination, idealists hold, the real work of art is not *that* something which we can view or listen to, rather *that* we can imagine and visualize in our mind. The making of a musical piece is the making of the imaginary piece. Writing it down to share it with other people is not creation, but fabrication:

"When a man makes up a tune, he may hum it or sing it or play it on an instrument. He may do none of these things, but write it on paper […].He may do these things in public, so that this tune becomes public property […] but all these activities are accessories of the real work, the actual making of the tune is something that goes on in his head, and nowhere else."[30]

Thus the imaginational work of art exists properly only in the mind of its creator. What is left to the audience is the attempt to reconstruct this ideal object through the concrete *recording* of it made by the artist. "What is meant by saying that the painter records in his picture the experience which he had painting it? […] It means that the picture, when seen by someone else or by the painter subsequently, produces in him (we need not ask how) sensuous-emotional or physical experiences, which […] are transmuted in a total imaginative experience identical of that of the painter."[31] Yet this recording is often incomplete and partial

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[29] Croce devotes some energy to discrediting the 'technical' theory of art, but Collingwood offers a more organized and detailed analysis of why art is not 'craft', though arguably the main points are Croce's.

[30] Collingwood, R., *Principles of Art*, p. 134

[31] Collingwood, *Principles of art*, p. 288 . Note that Collingwood devotes sections to a topic ignored by Croce: the problem of what way the responses of the audience can constrain the object presented by the artist.

so that: "the audience as understander, attempting an exact reconstruction in its own mind of the artist's imaginative experience, is engaged on an endless quest. It can carry out this reconstruction only in part."[32]

Therefore, the work of art is a purely mental object that can, at best, be transmitted from one mind to another *via* tangible recordings. But who warrants that the audience's mental reconstruction is the very same work formerly imagined by the artist? Who guarantees that its identity is actually respected? Indeed, as far as the artworks are regarded *qua* mental entities, their identity conditions are different from that of ordinary objects, thus independent from their external structure. We postpone these sort of criticism to the section called "privacy".

Croce-Collingwood's theory hasn't received a good reception in the analytic literature, at least because it seemed reluctant to the kind of enquiry pursued by scholars concerned with ontology of art. If everything is mental, question the peculiar status of works of art makes no sense at all, since their status coincides with that of thoughts, feelings and affections, say, mental states in general. From the idealist standpoint, the ontology of art (including the ontology of music) *qua* separate and autonomous discipline has no *raison d'être.*

But aside from its challenging the project of the ontology of art, idealist claim about works as "expressions" of private mental experience has generated historically a lot of philosophical controversy. Eventually, idealism has turned out to be a most inadequate proposal. Though only poorly sketched above, Croce-Collingwood's theory as a whole is sufficiently well before us now to address some general lines of criticism.

Problematic Equation

Idealism invites us to think of works of art as experiences, those of the artist and/or those of the audience. A strong objection is that such an approach ends up postulating a conflation of an experience and the object of the experience. It is one thing to admit that a work is the product or the expression of an aesthetic experience and that it is planned to elicit similar kinds of experiences in the audience; it is something else to say that the work is itself an experience and nothing more. Early criticism of this kind were professed in relation to Croce's aesthetics by Louis Arnauld Reid already in 1926. Reid criticized the ambiguous employ of the term "artistic experience" to equate the experience of the artist making the work and that of the audience appreciating it as justified on the basis of a philosophical standpoint as

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[32] p.289

opposed to the empirical standpoint.[33] More recently**,** Guy Rohrbaugh has stressed that what imagination consists in, according to idealism, is the highlighting of some aspect of reality and the mitigation of other, so as to allow richer experience than those of mere perception. Imagining in this sense is what doctors do when they suggest a diagnosis from the patient's symptoms and what physicians do as well when they hypothesize the physical nature of subatomic particles on the basis of their reactions in some standard conditions. In all these situations, abductive imagination, to use Peirce's terminology, plays a central role. Still, it is not enough to demonstrate that the reference object (i.e. a peculiar disease, the existence of non-visible particles) is just a fancy in the mind of the observer.

Intermittence

Idealism, qua anti-materialist (though not anti-realist) as to the nature of artworks neglects the physical dimensions of art, beginning with the artist's encounter with materials and media. This assumption endorses one puzzling implication regarding the way of existence of the work of art. Being a mental object or an imaginative experience happening in the mind of an individual, the work can cease to exist in the absence of the right sort of imaginative attention and return to existence when the same sort of attention is directed upon the physical system that constitutes the recorded base of the work. So, idealism seems to imply, works of art have a sort of intermittent existence. Mozart's Don Giovanni existed each time someone has thought of it with the necessary amount of attention and ceased to exist each time there was nobody thinking of it (which is, fortunately enough for his composer, highly unlikely). Philosophers (including Wolterstorff 1980, and Currie 1989, 57) have questioned the sense of assuming that the existence of a work is intermittent. It seems fair to say that Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* remained an (existing) musical work throughout the centuries during which it lay almost ignored and unnoticed. As Wolterstorff puts it, "Have not Beethoven's quartets, Rembrandt's prints, and Yeats's poems existed at least ever since their composition?"[34] Essential insights about the enduring or perduring nature of works of art have led scholars to seek for some alternative to idealism according to which works' continuous existence be eventually plausible.

Privacy

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[33] Reid L.A., *Artistic Experience*, Mind, 1926, *pp. 181-203*

[34] Wolterstorff, N., *Works and Worlds of Art*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1980, p.43

It has also been argued that the idealist equation of the experience and the object of experience challenges our trust in art communicability and defeats the notion of aesthetic community and audience, thus undermining the rationale of art criticism or interpretation. Idealist reduction of artworks to experiences would transform works from being public, culturally-determined entities, into something private; indeed, to say that a work of art is identical with a mental representation is to say that it is necessarily private. But this forces idealists to face far more serious consequences. Since different listeners have different intuitions of the same work, say, Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, consequently one Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, idealists must accept, is different from any one else's. Thus, strictly speaking, there is no such thing as Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, understood as a work of art; what really exists is only the set formed by Mozart's Don Giovanni-for-x; Mozart's Don Giovanni-for y etc. Moreover, all these mental representations cannot be compared, since comparisons between different mental experiences would be logically impossible in the absence of any higher standard of assessment. It follows then that from the idealist standpoint art becomes a realm of dreams and fancies; which is not in fact contradictory in principle, but very unappealing though, especially for any scholar seriously concerned with art investigation. Such a difficulty disappears on the other hand as soon as one gives back due importance to the concrete object the work is instantiated in. Subsequently, one's representation would again be correct or incorrect if it fulfills the identity conditions of the concrete object. Since the failure of idealism, many philosophers have concluded that any plausible theory concerning the status of works of art needs at least to show a minimum of commitment to the object the work, broadly speaking, is. More recently, similar criticisms have been raised by Jerrold Levinson against Roger Scruton, whose account is considered heir to Croce-Collingwood tradition of Idealism.

Externalization

Idealism implies a sharp division between the moment in which the image takes form *in interiore homine* and that of its physical externalization. For art is only found in the first stage, what remains is mere technique and craft, things only contingently related to the work of art in itself. The writing of a score, the touch of fingers upon the keyboard, the singing of a melody are not, properly speaking, art. Those activities, though not artistic *per se*, represent nevertheless what make it possible for others to have the intuition formerly experienced by the artist. Technique, in Croce's words, is thus "knowledge at the service of the practical

activity directed to producing stimuli to aesthetic reproduction" The physical work is thus necessary only for the practical business of the *communication* of art intuition.

"It is, no doubt, very difficult to perceive the frontier between expression and communication in actual fact, for the two processes usually alternate rapidly and are almost intermingled. But the distinction is ideally clear and must be strongly maintained… The technical does not enter into art, but pertains to the concept of communication"[35].

But are we sure that such a partition between the phase of creative ideation and that of material communication is actually plausible in the terms Croce posits it?

If we examine for a moment the process of music composition, we will find there is an overlap between the creative imagination and the practical use of the keyboard (as well as other instruments), in order to reproduce little by little the imagined structure of sounds. Compositions is indeed the result of the cooperation and positive feedback between the faculty of imagination and the concrete production of sounds. Even if tradition has credited composers like Beethoven or Mozart with the capacity of composing symphonies in a fully mental way, most composers need to use an instrument as a tool for composing, as they need to hear, even sketchily, how what they wrote sounds like. And if we consider the process of painting the conjunction between the intuitive faculty and of the manual capacity to control the brush, mix the colors, spread the paint appears even clearer.

Over-generalization

Reducing all art to imaginative experiences, Idealism must address at least two more problematical issues. The first is that if every aesthetic experience is art, then how can we explain why we do not create a "work of art" each time we stare aesthetically at a beautiful landscape or at a romantic sunset (unless we draw it or paint it or take a photo of it). Idealism thus omits a primary philosophical distinction between art *appreciating* and art *doing*; between reading and writing, looking and drawing, listening and playing, dancing and watching. Of course the first members of these pairs all entail a mental *action* of an aesthetic kind, but still it seems worth maintaining the boundary line (though flexible) between art creation and art contemplation, as that between the artists and the audience. The second problematical issue with Idealism is that it has, to use Danto's catchy phrase, "one and the same way to explain everything in art"[36] Rejecting the claim that works of art are identical

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[35] Croce, B., *Philosophy, Poetry, History: An Anthology of Essays*, edited by Cecil Sprigge, London: Oxford University Press. Pp. 227–8

[36] Danto, A., *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*, 1986

with the material work, Idealism is no longer able to explain the specific differences among the arts. Undoubtedly it can be argued, without risk of monism, that various types of art share a number of relevant features which enable us to talk of them in terms of *family resemblances*. And perhaps it is true that all arts have some poetic, allusive or aesthetic qualities in common, which we tend to identify synaesthetically beyond the limits of single artistic types. Yet, it seems that any viable proposal concerning the nature of works of art must allow something in its structure that permit to distinguish, for instance, a poetry from a tune in a non-contingent way. An idealist could reply that such a distinction is ensured by the material medium of works; but, since from an idealist standpoint the material is in fact extrinsic to the work of art in itself, that would be tantamount to saying that intrinsically all arts are the same. Then the issue remains.

Nominalism in musical ontology

What is Nominalism concerning musical works? What implications does Nominalism have on our relationship with music? Is Nominalism able to meet the list of *desiderata* any viable theory about musical works must have?

Before getting to the heart of the issue, some preliminary considerations are required to better determine where Nominalism fits in the general frame of ontological theories of musical works.

According to Kania[37], ontological theories of musical works fall into two major domains, according to whether or not they take musical works to be abstract objects of some sort. Accepting the existence of abstract objects means to generally adhere to a form of metaphysical realism, understood as the claim that objects in the world, works of music say, exist independently of our thoughts or perceptions. Indeed, anti-realists either deny the existence of the kind of entities normally accepted by metaphysical realism or doubt their autonomy from our conceptions of them. For example, anti-realists in musical ontology think that musical works are not mind independent. They do not question the existence *latu sensu* of musical works but rather challenge their independence from the mind, believing them to be linguistic or social constructs of some kind. Inasmuch as it claims that works of art cannot be separated from the mental experiences they engender, idealism can be regarded as a form of anti-realism. Again, idealists do not believe the world includes musical works as does tables and pens, since its containing them depends upon our having thought about them. Nor, on the

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[37] Cfr Kania, A., *Platonism vs Nominalism in Contemporary Musical Ontology*, in *Art and Abstract Objects*, edited by C.M. Uidhir Oxford University Press, Oxford 2013

other hand, are idealists simply Eliminativists or Fictionalists concerning musical works, i.e., holding that the world does not contain any, just like Cameron Ross[38]. So Idealism's ontological commitment to music is, once more, quite ambiguous.

But what about Nominalism? Nominalists hypothesize musical works as being just *concreta* of some kind. If we accept that realism is the theory postulating the existence of musical works *qua abstracta*, then any proposal regarding musical works as mere concrete objects could not, properly speaking, be considered realist. This way of conceiving the relation between realism and anti-realism brings us to regard Nominalism as a kind of anti-realism, for it denies the existence, and therefore the reality, of abstract objects *tout court*. But then why have we formerly included it in Realist ontologies?

Consider what Nominalists might claim about entities regarded by Realists as abstract objects, e.g. symphonies, quartets, sonatas. They would have two general options: either to *deny* the existence of the so-called entities in question (as, again, Eliminativists would do) or to accept the existence of these entities arguing they are just *particulars*.

Most Nominalists prefer the second choice. Indeed, what Nominalism finds unacceptable in entities like symphonies, quartets and sonatas is to consider them as simply *abstracta* of whatever sort, not to think of them as *existing*.

Since Nominalism does not reject the existence of musical works as mind-independent entities nor does it deny the actual existence of musical works as concrete objects but simply discards them as *abstracta,* then it is, at least in this sense, a form of Realism.

To avoid misunderstanding, though, we should introduce a further distinction between two different types of Realism: Metaphysical realism concerning abstract objects on the one hand and metaphysical Realism concerning external objects on the other. Metaphysical Realism concerning abstract objects is trust in the existence of abstract objects, like numbers, properties, kinds. This first type of Realism typically claims that properties (e.g. redness), kinds (e.g. gold) and causally-inert objects (e.g. numbers and symphonies) are to be credited with a form of existence. In fact, there is good reason to think that musical works cannot be so easily compared to numbers, properties or kinds, since they are created, are submitted to better or worse performances, and depend on the cultural context of their creation, though musical works seem to share with other abstract objects a very peculiar relation with space and time, different from that of ordinary objects of experience like tables, roses and women.

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[38] Cameron's point is that the creation of an object is not its bringing into existence but rather the intentional arrangement of entities that existed already by a composer into the piece it is now.

Metaphysical Realists when considering abstract objects believe that positing the existence of *abstracta* is indispensable to our best theory of the world, despite its odd, puzzling, barely understandable nature.

Metaphysical Realism when considering external objects, conversely, holds that the world's constituents (objects, animals, human beings) exist mind-independently; this claim does not imply that constituents have such or such ontological status. Note that this 'mind-independence' in question is epistemic; so we may also label this second type Epistemic Realism. Epistemic Realists can adopt an agnostic attitude toward the theoretical entities posited by metaphysical Realists as abstract objects, whilst continuing to believe that whatever entities the world actually contains would exist independently of our conceptions and perceptions of them. Currently, there has been much debate in the philosophical world concerning the spread of a new kind of Epistemic Realist movement, arisen from the alleged ashes of postmodernism. The most common complaint, however, is that the notion of mind-independent existence used as a manifesto by metaphysical Realism is in fact obscure or cognitively meaningless, as Logical Empiricists had formerly noted: "(…) The statement asserting the reality of the external world (realism) as well as its negation in various forms, e.g. solipsism and several forms of idealism, in the traditional controversy are *pseudo-statements*, i.e., devoid of cognitive content."[39] We shall not address this debate here, but it is worth remarking that it may also have some relevant implications for the philosophy of art.

Coming back to our first concerns, it should be clearer now why we have included Nominalism among Realist ontologies. Nominalists with regard to musical ontology maintain a form of Epistemic Realism which denies the positing of musical works as abstract objects.

But what is this ontological option grounded in?

Musical Nominalists usually justify their choice by resorting to standard arguments for Nominalism in general. As Kania has recently stressed[40], this usually means appealing to problems of causal interaction with abstracta, particularly in relation to the creation of musical works. Abstract objects are, by definition, objects that exist outside of space; this presents a problem if they cannot enter into causal relations and therefore cannot interact with our perceptual apparati. Caplan and Matheson, for example, advance a Nominalist account explicitly to avoid the problems of perceptibility that Platonists must address: "If musical

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[39]R. Carnap. *Replies and systematic expositions*. In P. A. Schilpp, *The Philosophy of Rudolf Carnap* , pages 859–999, Open Court, LaSalle, IL, 1963, p.868

[40] Kania, A., *Platonism vs Nominalism in the Ontology of Music*. In *Art and Abstract Objects*, Oxford , Oxford UP 2013

works are abstract objects, which cannot enter into causal relations, then how can we refer to musical works or know anything about them? Worse, how can any of our musical experiences be experiences *of* musical works? It would be nice to be able to sidestep these questions altogether. One way to do that would be to take musical works to be concrete objects".[41] On his part, Cameron Ross, in trying to motivate his reliance on a "radically minimal ontology", makes a plea to the arguments concerning the senselessness of the alleged "created abstract entities" which do nothing but complicate our ontology: "The ontological scruples we have against created abstracta should mandate only that there are no created abstracta in our ontology (…)"[42].

These concerns for a simpler or more concise ontology arguably stem from the Nominalists appealing to something like Ockham's Razor, "entia non sunt sine ratione moltiplicanda". Ockham's famous principle of parsimony states that only necessary entities should be accepted, since "Pluralitas non est ponenda sine necessitate" and "Frustra fit per plura quod fieri potest per pauciora". According to musical Nominalists, rejecting abstracta allows us to save the simplicity of the theory and its ontological lightness. On the other hand, the slogan "Don't admit something to your ontology unless you have a good reason to admit it" is used more to minimize the entities posited to ground fundamental ontology rather than simply to define what entities exist. Indeed, Cameron Ross continues: "(....) the principle of ontological parsimony must tell us to judge theories by what entities they admit to their fundamental ontology— that is, what entities do truthmaking work; what entities are ranged over by the perfectly natural quantifier—rather than what entities they claim exist."[43] Behind the notion of Nominalism is the (quasi-moral) principle not to incur unnecessary ontological costs. Therefore, according to Nominalism, even in the field of musical ontology a theory without abstracta is preferable to one that posits them, since there's a larger cost to accepting the second than the first.

The Roots of Contemporary Musical Nominalism: Goodman's Theory of Art

The choice of Nominalists' not to attribute any form of abstract existence to musical works makes them speak *as if* there were works, whereas only concrete performances and copies of the scores exist. Works are then identified with classes or sets of performances of a given

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[41] Caplan and Matheson, *Defending Musical Perdurantism,* Brit J Aesthetics (January 2006) 46 (1): 59-69, p.59
[42] Cameron Ross, *How to have a Radically Minimal Ontology*, *Philosophical Studies* 151 (2): 249 – 264, 2010 p.259
[43] Cameron Ross, 2010, p.262

work. Thus, as Lydia Goher puts it: "Works are no more than linguistic items, general names or descriptions serving as convenient ways to refer to certain classes of particulars just as a surname conveniently picks out the member of a family class who are biologically or legally related"[44]. Such a viewpoint was formerly advanced by Nelson Goodman in his "Languages of art". Before addressing the variety of contemporary ontological theories which go under the term Nominalism nowadays, we must briefly address Goodman's own Nominalist argument, whilst referring the reader, for that which concerns the heated debate prompted by Goodman's book, to the enormous amount of literature that already exists on this subject[45]. Goodman starts his analysis by asking why forgeries in arts such as painting and sculpture can exist while no forgeries are possible in literature and in the performed arts such as music and drama. He explains this by referring to the different nature of the former with respect to the latter; while painting and sculpture are indeed singular arts (*autographic*, he says), music, drama, dance and all other performing arts are to be considered multiple (*allographic*). There can be forgeries of existing works only in singular arts, since it is not possible to determine whether or not an object (a painting, a statue) is an instance of a work without determining how it was generated. This means that the identity conditions of singular artwork include, and cannot be divorced from, the history of production of the work itself. Indeed, the forgery of a piece of art is something that shows itself as having a history that it actually lacks, whereas having that history is a necessary condition for being *that* authentic artwork. In the case of painting this is quite clear: a painting is presented as emanating from the genius of Veermer while it is rather the result of Han van Meegeren's talent as a forger. Only if this turned out to be untrue and the painting were to be reattributed to the seventeenth-century painter, could it count as an authentic Veermer. Again, according to Goodman, since in the case of painting we cannot separate status as an instance of a work from its history of production, the misrepresentation of that history in forgery is possible. But what about multiple arts? In music, literature and drama we do have the chance of identifying work instances without recourse to history of production. This is possible because there conventions exist which specify, without making reference to the history of production, the properties something must have to be a correct instance of a work. These properties, Goodman claims, depend on the possibility of a notation. In the case of musical works, the notational role is guaranteed by the

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[44] Goher, L., *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, OUP, Oxford 2007, p.17

[45] See Elgin, C., 1997, *Nelson Goodman's Philosophy of Art* (*The Philosophy of Nelson Goodman: Selected Series*). New York: Garland Publishing, Morizot, Jacques, 1996, *La philosophie de l'art de Nelson Goodman*. Nîmes: Éd. J. Chambon Rudner, R., and Scheffler I. (eds.), 1972, *Logic and Art: Essays in Honor of Nelson Goodman*, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company

musical score which "(…) provides the means for distinguishing the properties constitutive of the work from all contingent properties – that is for fixing the required features and the limits of permissible variation in each."[46]

On this basis, Goodman identifies musical works with the class of performances that comply with the score, i.e., that meet the requirements set in the score. Works are not, so Goodman argues, independent entities with a nature or essence of some kind, but rather coincide with the series of past, present and future performances that comply with the score. The primary function of the musical score is indeed the detection of a work from performance to performance; thus the score must "define a work"[47], telling apart performances which comply with, thus belong to, the work, and performances which do not. This means, according to Goodman, that given the score of a particular work, we should be able to tell whether a particular performance is a performance of this work or not. On the other hand, the score must be "uniquely determined"[48] by its instances (performances): given an adequate performance of a work, there must be one and only one score with which the performance complies. To this extent, Goodman argues, the score can be regarded as a character in a symbol system that satisfies certain logical constraints. It is those constraints which makes the system notational. Goodman lists five requirements of notation that must be satisfied if the score is to define one and the same work, that are either syntactic or semantic constraints (syntactic disjointness, syntactic differentiation, unique determination, etc). If a score respects all the constraints of notationality, then its structural properties are sufficient to determine the identity of the work, thus it provides us, in Lydia Goehr's words, with "a decisive test for determining whether a work's identity is preserved in a set of score-copies and performances"[49] she calls the "retrievability test". Avoiding technical discussion here, we ought rather to underline that difficulties arise when Goodman considers which elements in a normal musical score count as notational, that is, meet the five constraints above defined. While note-marks used to determine the pitch and duration of notes, the standard clef signs and the five-line staff have no problems in fulfilling the notational requirements, tempo, dynamic and timbre markings are notoriously vaguer. Performances which comply with a score that specifies "*allegro*" might be faster than those specified as "*molto vivace*" or slower than those specified as simply "*vivace*" while remaining faithful to the score. In other words, in terms of tempo indications

[46] Goodman, N. *Languages of Art*, Hackett Publishing, 1976, p.116
[47] Ib. p. 128
[48] Ib. p. 130
[49] Goher, L., *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, OUP, Oxford 2007, p.24

there is no single right way to be faithful to the score. But since verbal indications such as "*andante*", "*andante ma non troppo*", "*andante con moto*" and the like do not meet the notational requirements, they are non notational and thus, Goodman concludes, cannot be part of what actually define the work identity, i.e., the constitutional properties of the work. Specifications of tempo and mood, like "*Sehr Langsam, misterioso*", in Mahler Symphony n.2, "*andante religioso*", in Bartok's piano concerto n.3, "*Avec étonnement*" in Satie's *Gnossien* n.2, only influence the quality of the work but cannot be used to describe its identity, since we must distinguish between quality and identity according to Goodman. Consequently the performance of a work in which tempo markings are misinterpreted and freely performed is still correct, for Goodman, whereas a performance that departs, even minimally, from what is notated in the score of the work, is not a performance of that work at all. Performances differing by just one note are not, Goodman argues, performances of the same work, unless we accept the risk of saying that all performances are performances of the same work[50].

Against these counterintuitive conclusions, many criticisms have been raised in the current philosophical investigation; it seems safe to say that contemporary musical ontology has somehow reached a sort of point of departure in opposition to Goodman's approach. Goodman has been primarily accused of being incapable of taking into account the most universally accepted musical practices. It has been stated that, while trying to avoid the risk of vagueness by way of logically rigid conditions of compliance, Goodman ends up completely misrepresenting our common assumptions and our understanding of musical practice. In particular, his "wrong note paradox" has been regarded as proof of too great a discrepancy between the theory he proposes and what we normally think of musical practices. According to Peter Strawson's useful distinction[51], Goodman's approach is that of *revisionary* metaphysics, which "is concerned to produce a better structure" , presumably one that describes more accurately the world as it is in itself, independently of our thought about it. […] as opposed to *descriptive* metaphysics, which "is content to describe the actual structure of our thought about the world". Revisionary ontologists, in this sense, claim that our intuitive judgments about the identity and persistence of things are incorrect. In everyday life we are inclined to think that a particular performance of a musical work, e.g. an interpretation of Chopin's *Prelude* op.28 n.15, can survive as a performance of that work, namely, Chopin's

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[50] Goodman, N. *Languages of Art*, Hackett Publishing, 1976, p.187
[51] Strawson, P., *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics,* Routledge*,* London and New York*, p.9*

Prelude op.28 n.15, despite the few mistakes it may contain. However, a revisionist metaphysician like Nelson Goodman would most probably claim that we are in deep error: in genuine reality what I played wasn't a real instantiation of that very same work by Chopin, but something else. If revisionary philosophers then want to convince their philosophically uninitiated audience, the best they can do is to appeal to an "error theory", which explains why our intuitive judgments are mistaken. For instance, they might argue that the reason why we completely got it wrong is that in everyday life we use our senses, not our intellect to grasp the reality of things. Of course this may not be a convincing strategy, but what is worth stressing here is rather that revisionary philosophers are forced to provide at least some explanation for this systematic error they recognize in our intuitive judgments. Contemporary discussions on the methodology of musical ontology have highlighted the fact that musical ontology should be constrained more by ordinary artistic practice than by metaphysical coherence. Musical ontologists should then be engaged in a more descriptive than revisionary project: descriptivist ontology of music being able to take into account our pre-theoretical thoughts about music and our musical practices. To maintain such a praxis-oriented viewpoint means to subscribe to a methodological principle now commonly known, following David Davies's suggestion, as "the pragmatic constraint"[52], which states that *artistic practices* must be taken as the yardstick according to which ontologies of art should be measured. Pragmatic constraint also implies that the ultimate purpose of the ontology of art (and of music, in particular) is to provide a sort of metaphysical background of common sense, a thing that Goodman, on the other hand, does not even try nor intend to do. But we shall have to face such methodological issues in the next paragraph. For the moment, we will simply note that other features in Goodman's account may be considered unclear or equivocal. Stefano Predelli[53], for instance, makes an easy point in noting that the "one wrong note" argument fails to recognize the role played by the interpreter's intentions with regard to successfully performing a musical work. If the performer's intention is to play a particular piece and to this purpose safeguards the causal chain that joins the score to the original will of its composer, as Davies puts it, then, though he may make mistakes, he will nevertheless produce a valid instance of the work. In other words, if my intention is to play Bach's *Prelude* from the *English Suite* n. 2, and, due to my inexperience as a pianist, I miss some notes in the twentieth and thirtieth bars, I'll nevertheless be producing a veritable instance of Bach's *Prelude*, though hardly an accurate one. Even though written scores may serve to refer to a musical

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[52] Davies, D. *Art as performance*, Blackwell, Malden MA, 2004, p.18
[53] Predelli, *S. Goodman and the Wrong Note Paradox,* BJA, 1999 pp. 364-375

work and are usually an indispensible tool for performing the work and subjecting it to musical analysis and study, they are not, however, a presentation of the work, nor represent a defining characteristic of it in Goodman's sense. On the other hand, note that though the mental activity of the composer and performers may be said to be necessary to the actual realization of the work, it is doubtful whether the intentions of the author or those of the interpreters may be considered crucial characteristics of the work, as an extreme form of intentionalism[54] would seem to imply. Intentionality is not sufficient for a work to be identified, but it is at least necessary. Indeed, one could reply that if at a given performance one particular work is played, the reason must lie neither in the literal conformity to a score nor in the possible intentions of the performance, but arguably, in the musical and aesthetic properties of that performance[55]. Yet, such a conclusion would lead to a form of realism concerning aesthetic properties that Goodman, *qua* Nominalist, could not accept.

Commenting on Goodman's statement that "the innocent-seeming principle that performances differing by just one note are instances of the same works risks the consequence […] that all performances whatever are of the same work. If we allow the least deviation, all assurance of work-preservation and score-preservation is lost; for by a series of one note errors of omission, addition…we can go all the way from Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* to *Three Blind Mice*".[56] Lydia Goher points out how, by adopting the perfect compliance condition, Goodman is attempting to escape recourse to sorites problems[57]. It is indeed problematic how one could decide, referring to the score alone, how many mistakes are admissible in the performance of a work without falling into the old Eubulides'paradoxes.

There seems to be no legitimate point at which it would be possible to assert that a performance fails to comply with the work, any particular percentage of compliance we might choose being arbitrary. Goodman is thus obliged to adopt a rigid perfect-compliance model, *pace* our pre-critical intuitions of music, unless he agrees to accept in his quantitative or extentionalist model some intentional features of the type described above (i.e. accepting that

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[54] Such as Jerrold Levinson's one.

[55] See: David Pearce, *Intentionality and the Nature of a Musical Work*, BJA Vol.28, n.2, 1988 p.115

[56] Goodman, N. *Languages of Art*, Hackett Publishing, 1976, pp. 186-187

[57] "The sorites paradox is the name given to a class of paradoxical arguments, also known as little-by-little arguments, which arise as a result of the indeterminacy surrounding limits of application of the predicates involved. no one grain of wheat can be identified as making the difference between being a heap and not being a heap. Given then that one grain of wheat does not make a heap, it would seem to follow that two do not, thus three do not, and so on. In the end it would appear that no amount of wheat can make a heap. We are faced with paradox since from apparently true premises by seemingly uncontroversial reasoning we arrive at an apparently false conclusion"(Dominic Hyde, *Sorites*, SEP, 2011)

performances may be identified as performances of the same work *also* in virtue of the work they plausibly intend to instantiate). Goodman's extentionalism does little justice either to music theory or to performance practice. Once again we are led to acknowledge that what really sounds puzzling in his theory of art is its excess of coherence and trust in formal reasoning. Thus, what is eventually left for us to understand is why we should prefer theoretically congruent revisionism rather than satisfactory, though vaguer, reliable descriptions of musical phenomena.

Some methodological remarks

Apparently, it seems that we might have reason "to be suspicious of radically revisionary answers"[58] like Goodman's. This viewpoint is maintained, as we have already suggested, by a number of philosophers concerned with the ontology of art and music (Goehr 1992, S. Davies 2003c, D. Davies 2004, Thomasson 2006, Kania 2008c, Predelli 2009, Stecker 2009, Dodd 2010). Davis's pragmatic constraint is thus used not only as a methodological principle to pursue the best possible ontological theory of artwork, but also critically, to reject theories that do not respect the principle. But what does this so often invoked "primacy of practice" actually mean for musical ontology? How can we use it alongside descriptivism to contrast metaphysical revisionarism?

The opposition between descriptivist and revisionary ontology, imported, as we already know, from Strawson's *Individuals*, has its starting point in the domain of musical ontology in Levinson's article *What a musical work is*. Jerrold Levinson's essay from 1980 can indeed be seen, according to Andrew Kania, "(…) as the beginning of a concern with what exactly has priority when we examine the ontology of art: it is implicit in the structure of Levinson's argument that the demands of the art in which one is attempting to understand trump the demands of metaphysics. (…) if the ontology of art is constrained by ordinary artistic practice, then ontologists of art are also (or should be) engaged in a more descriptive than revisionary project"[59]. What this passage suggests is that there is a link between descriptivist and praxis-oriented ontological approaches. A descriptivist ontology of music is able to take into account our pre-theoretical thoughts about music, and consequently our musical practices, while a revisionary approach, such as Goodman's, is incapable of meeting the most

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[58] Thomasson, A. L., *Debates about the Ontology of Art, What are we doing here?*, Philosophy Compass, 2006, pp. 245-255 p.251
[59] Kania, A., *The Methodology of Musical Ontology: Descriptivism and its Implications,* BJA, 2008, 48 (4): 426-444; p.

common demands of musical practices. This connection between descriptivism and pragmatism is common in the literature on the subject, but can be called into question.

For instance, Marcello Ruta explains that it is not true that praxis-oriented musical ontology will or should be by the same criteria, descriptivist[60].

Levinson assumes that one of the methodological constraints of musical ontology is taking into account our pre-theoretical thoughts about musical works, as most of our pre-theoretical thoughts are historically determined in the sense that they depend on cultural and social conventions. Yet, Strawson's characterization of descriptivism "presupposes the existence of a central group of thoughts, a sort of 'perennial spontaneous metaphysics', which never changed, in its fundamental traits"[61]. This "metaphysical common sense", Strawson says, has no history: it is something remaining somehow stable, beyond and before the philosophical revolutions caused by the different revisionary metaphysical paradigms: "It might be held that metaphysics was essentially an instrument of conceptual change, a means of furthering or registering new directions or styles of thought. Certainly concepts do change, and not only, though mainly, on the specialist periphery; and even specialist changes react on ordinary thinking. (…) But it would be a great blunder to think of metaphysics only in this historical style. For there is a massive central core of human thinking which has no history (…) there are categories and concepts which, in their most fundamental character, change not at all (…). It is with these, their interconnections, and the structure that they form, that a descriptive metaphysics will be primarily concerned"[62]. Thus, to adapt Strawson's descriptivism to musical ontology, we should suppose a sort of perennial and unhistorical Kantian-like "musical common sense"[63]. This assumption may be criticized both diachronically, by saying that theories on music evolved in history, and synchronically, by considering that different traditions have different pre-theoretical thoughts on music.

On the other hand, overly pluralistic approaches to musical ontology have trouble fitting into Strawson's descriptivism, but are also affected by the risk of relativism; that is, the claim that there are as many ontologies as "musical common senses". This is the case of Particularists

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[60] Marcello Ruta, *Ontological Descriptivism and Musical Practices*, draft version
[61] Ruta, M., Aisthesis, anno VI, 2013
[62] Strawson, P., *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics,* Routledge, London and New York 1963, p.11, 12
[63] In fact, the idea of a musical *Gemeinsinn,* understood as a matter of facts that "everyone knows" and with respect to which there is a universal agreement of people's opinion, could be accepted in the musical field only as a regulative principle: *eine bloße idealische Norm,* in Kant's terms (insofar as the subjective tend to a "sensus communis", to a "common sense").

like Robert Howell[64] who argue that there is no such thing as the ontological nature of works of art, and that by describing works as they are, we are simply reporting what people think of them.

We could reply that by affirming that a "praxis-oriented ontology", as opposed to Goodman's revisionary approach, should be descriptive in the sense that it should take into account our pre-theoretical beliefs about music, we are assuming that these beliefs tell us something about the corresponding practice. But the supposition that thoughts about music are directly linked to musical practices cannot be taken for granted according to Ruta[65]. Even if we assume that there is a direct link between musical practices and musical beliefs, this does not mean that these beliefs will transparently and honestly reflect correspondent musical practices. Indeed, our way of thinking about musical phenomena may be influenced by external factors, such as personal education, culture, social status, political membership etc. To avoid such an objection, David Davies' formulation of the pragmatic constraint states that: "Artworks must be entities that can bear the sorts of properties rightly ascribed to them…*in our reflective critical and appreciative practice*". Davies focuses on the interpretive and appreciative practices of "experts", music *connoisseurs* and especially critics. This means that, according to Davies, by appealing to the pragmatic constraint, we should regard these practices as the only source of data we have about the concept of music. Thus, it is not on our ordinary discourse nor on the common casual conversations, remarks, and reactions of the listening public that we may ground our ontology, but on relevant critical commentary, music-theoretical analysis, etc. However, just as ordinary beliefs about music may be affected by exogenous nonmusical factors, critical practice may too be diverted by widely divergent theoretical perspectives. As Stecker puts it, "(…) One wonders whether some critical perspectives are so informed by theories of various sorts from various nonmusical domains that they should no more be accorded the status of data than should the writings of the musical ontologists themselves. Should postmodernist music theory, for example, count as a source of data? Should we exclude music theory or academic music criticism for being on the "theory" side of the divide?"[66] We may be skeptical about these remarks as no more worthwhile than data stemming from "everyday practices" and ordinary ways of referring to music. On the other hand, if we are going to make a plea for a form of pragmatism in musical

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[64] See particularly, Howell, R. *Ontology and the Nature of the Literary Work*, JAAC, 2002, pp. 67-79,

[65] Ruta, M., *Is there an Ontological Musical Common Sense?,* Aisthesis. Pratiche, linguaggi e saperi dell'estetico, p. 67-86, Feb. 2014.
[66] Stecker, R., *Methodological Questions about the Ontology of Music* , BJA 2009 p.377

ontology, we still have to decide somehow *which practices* provide us with the most significant data. At this point, it would be something like a cakewalk for revisionarists to claim that there are so many inconsistencies in each of our practices (both *naïf* and culturally informed) that none of them is viable in the end; therefore any reliable view in the ontology of art must be partially revisionary at least in the simple sense of reinterpreting some of our ways of talking about and dealing with works of art. And in fact, if revisionists agreed to recalibrate what they do and stopped claiming they are describing what works *really* are, limiting themselves to proposing possible ways of improving our beliefs to give clearer and more consistent answers to the question of art ontology, then there would be nothing very disappointing about revisionism, though it would still owe us "compelling pragmatic reasons to replace our standard conceptual scheme"[67].

In conclusion, there seems to be no univocal easy answer to the problem of the methodology underlying the ontology of art and music. It may be argued that there is no room to endorse a pragmatic methodology while remaining *within* the boundaries of the ontology. This has brought a number of scholars to the conclusion that a solution should be sought outside the realm of the ontology of art, i.e., in history, in aesthetic phenomenology and in social-anthropology of art. In Part 2 we shall see whether and how such an exit-strategy is really plausible. Consideration of this debate might well be relevant at this point, but we must keep in mind that our goal here is simply to witness how musical ontologies relate to more general ontological theories. For the moment, then, let us suspend judgment and go back to good old Nominalism.

Contemporary forms of Musical Nominalism

It can be argued (not without reasons) that the account we have made of Goodman's philosophical approach is deficient or too simplistic. In fact, it is. However, our primary concern was not so much to take into account every aspect of Goodman's philosophy of art as to underline the relevance such a philosophy may have on contemporary musical ontology and specifically on musical Nominalism[68]; in this sense, a lack of details should not affect our point here. Different theories on musical works fall under the term "nominalism" nowadays, understood in the broadest possible sense. Our aim should therefore be to lay out this gamut

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[67] Thomasson, A. L., *Debates about the Ontology of Art, What are we doing here?*, Philosophy Compass, 2006, pp. 245-255 , p.252
[68] Indeed, contemporary Nominalists seem largely inspired by Goodman's philosophy of art, despite being, in other respects, very distant from its overall purposes.

of ontological options in order to assess them individually. A useful tool for accomplishing this task could be Chris Tillman's recently published "guide" to contemporary forms of Nominalism on musical works.

Tillman uses the word "musical Materialism" to refer to conceptions which identify musical works in their particular concrete manifestations. He defends these viewpoints against much potential criticism on the part of the "orthodox" realist literature, which claims that "multiple artworks, unlike singular artworks, cannot be identified with particular material individuals" and tend to "identify them with abstract objects of some sort: either abstract objects of a traditional kind or some new category of abstracta". Musical materialists' main reason for refuting works as being abstracta is the "venerable tradition"[69] of finding abstracta *weird* or *unacceptable* for us to believe in. Incredulity and skepticism with regards to non-concrete objects is typical of Nominalism in each of its historical variants, from Medieval philosophy to W.O. Quine. Likewise, the strategy of substituting abstracta with the class of their compliant instances is quite traditional[70]; since classes have definite identity criteria represented by the axiom of extensionality (that is: in order for x and y to be the same class, x and y must have all members in common), appeal to classes reduces the amount of ambiguity of the theory. Class Nominalism, which has been held, in different ways, by David Lewis[71] and Goodman himself, identifies properties with certain classes of particulars. Thus the property of being a musical work x is the class of all and only x concrete instantiations. Belonging to the class of x instantiations is considered in this theory as a primitive fact. In general, for an instantiation to *be* the work x means to *be a member* of the class of x instantiations[72]. Thus, class Nominalism explains resemblances between different instantiations in that they belong to the same work-instantiation class.

But contemporary Musical Materialism is connected to another form of Nominalism that we may define, according to David Armstrong[73], as Mereological Nominalism. What is peculiar about it is not only the choice of the possible concrete objects to represent the concrete manifestation of musical works, but also the way in which these objects form the whole of the class/work. Nominalism runs into mereology, as the theory of parthood relation: the relation

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[69] Tillman, C. , *Musical Materialism*, BJA, 2011, p.13.

[70] That is: an object x (i.e. Beethoven's *Fifth*) is reducible to the class of particulars which instantiates x.

[71] See for example*: "Naming the Colours"*, Australasian Journal of Philosophy, pp. 325–342. 1997

[72] See: Rodriguez-Pereyra G., *Resemblance Nominalism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2002, p.56

[73] Armstrong D., *Universals and Scientific Realism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978

of part to whole and the relation of part to part within a whole[74]. According to Mereological Nominalism, works are mereological wholes of concrete instantiations. Thus a musical work *x* is the composition of all and only *x* concrete instantiations. Generally speaking, for an instantiation to be an instantiation of a given work it must be part of some "whole" the work is. Candidates for the role of instantiations include copies of the score, musical performances, recordings of musical performances, playing of recordings of musical performances, mental events etc. For instance, a first type of musical Nominalism states that the concrete manifestations of musical works are only a collection of performances compliant with the score (Goodman), another that they are the class of performances *plus* the copies of the score, a third that they coincide to the copies of the score only, and so on. Nonetheless, whatever Nominalists think the concrete manifestations of musical works are (scores, performances, recordings, etc.) they consider them, as Tillman explains, the work's *atoms.* If the things that are the concrete manifestations of a musical work are its *musical atoms* then what one must figure out is how these atoms can constitute the whole represented by the musical work. According to musical Nominalists, the connection a work has with its musical atoms is that of *manifestation*, understood as a form of relationship coherent with the materialistic commitment of musical works being material objects. But what does this mean exactly?

Ben Caplan and Carl Matheson propose a *Perdurantist* answer to the issue. They claim that musical works are the fusion of their atoms, and these atoms are their temporal parts: "According to the most-discussed version of musical Materialism, manifestation is parthood; musical atoms are parts of musical works and musical works are *fusions* of their parts. Since on the materialist conception musical works (typically) exist at more than one time, they persist. If they persist by having their atoms as temporal parts, then musical works persist by *perduring*"[75]. *Musical Perdurantism,* as the view that musical atoms are temporal parts of musical works,[76] has thus reference to four-dimensionalist ontology. According to this ontological framework, the object's persistence through time is in a sense analogous to its extension through space, since objects have temporal parts in the various sub-regions of the total region of time they occupy. Four-dimensionalism is concerned with the ways an object can be extended in space-time, and these ways can be specified in terms of occupation. To clarify what the *occupation* relation is, suppose there are material objects and regions of

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[74] Varzi, A., *Merology*, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Spring 2014 Edition

[75] Tillman, C., *Musical Materialism*, British Journal of Aesthetics, 2011, p.13.

[76] See: B. Caplan and C. Matheson, '*Defending Musical Perdurantism'*, British Journal of Aesthetics, 2006, pp. 59-69; B. Caplan and C. Matheson, 'Defending 'Defending Musical Perdurantism''', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 2008, pp. 80-85.

space-time, then the former *occupy* the latter. *Occupation* is somehow primitive; a material object occupies any region in which it is located. We can now define Perdurantism as a possible account of the way objects are spatio-temporally extended in terms of *occupation*. According to Perdurantism, objects occupy some extended region of space in the sense that they have "smaller parts that correspond exactly with the smaller regions"[77] they fill. In the temporal sense, on the other hand, objects are said to *perdure*: namely, they are extended through time by having different parts at different times. If objects have different temporal parts, this would explain how they can exist at different times, and it would also explain how they can have different properties at different times, since each temporal part is a *quasi*-object existing in time. According to four-dimensionalism, thus, persisting through time is pretty much like extending through space: it's all a matter of parts. Indeed, an entity *perdures* if it has parts spread out in time the same way an object has parts spread out in space. A tree perdures if it has different temporal parts in time, i.e., a unique temporal part at each instant of time that it exists. The tree is then identified with the entire "space-time worm"[78] constituted by its (space-) temporal parts. Musical Perdurantism applies this ontological framework to musical works. Each performance of a given work is merely a temporal part of a whole that is constituted by the fusion of all the performances of the work. Hence, a musical work like Sibelius' *Finlandia* is that space-time worm whose temporal parts are all the performances of Sibelius' *Finlandia.*

The advantages of Perdurantism are the same as those of general Nominalism; since it understands musical works entirely as concrete objects, i.e. space-temporal objects, Perdurantism does not incur the problem of the perceptibility of musical works: it can appeal to standard causal explanations to justify our concrete relationship with works. However, musical Perdurantism also faces two serious problems. First, it implies that no one could ever listen to a work of music in its entirety because doing so would require listening to all performances of the work, clearly an impossible task to accomplish[79]. Second, musical Perdurantism implies that a composer's work is not complete until long after his death. Furthermore, Tillman stresses that there is a third objection deriving from modal constancy. According to the standard mereological conception of fusions, fusions are identical to their parts; therefore a fusion cannot have more or less parts without being identical to a different

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[77] Tillman C., p.5
[78] Such a terminology derives from the fact that, according to Perdurantism, objects stretch out through time just as earthworms stretch out through space.
[79] Caplan and Matheson, 2006 p. 61

fusion of parts. Nevertheless, it is matter of fact that Sibelius' *Finlandia* could have had more or fewer performances than it has actually had. So, any musical work that is a fusion of parts other than the parts that actually compose Sibelius' *Finlandia* would be a different entity and therefore not Sibelius' *Finlandia.*

Another possible Nominalist alternative is that of musical *Endurantism,* which Tillman himself endorses. The idea is again that a musical work is reducible to its atoms, but only one at a time, so to say. In other words, musical works are wholly present in each of their atoms, rather than being the *fusion* of them: "On the assumption that musical atoms are performances, musical Endurantism is the view that a musical work is multiply located and occupies any region exactly occupied by any of its musical atoms."[80] In this sense, instead of perduring, musical works *endure,* since they are not extended in time but are rather 'wholly present' in each of the space-time regions they occupy[81]. To have a clearer idea of what musical Endurantism is, consider the Endurantist view on humans, for instance. According to this theory people are not spread out over different spatiotemporal regions, but persist through time by being "wholly located" at every moment in which they exist. By being located at different moments, people are "multiply located" throughout time. Similarly, musical Endurantism holds that musical works are multiply located. But what does musical Endurantism say about the relationship between a work and what constitutes it? If musical works were *identical* to the performances, then there wouldn't be really distinct performances of any work, there would be just one performance occurring first at one time and then at another, which is implausible. Musical Endurantism instead argues that works are "wholly located" at any region occupied by one of its performances, but are not *identical* to any performance. Compare again the Endurantist view on people. People persist through time by being "wholly located" first where one collection of molecules was, one that constitutes them when they are children, and later by being "wholly located" where another collection of molecules is, one that constitutes them now. People are not identical to any particular collection of molecules in this view, they are multiply located throughout spacetime. So, musical Endurantism holds that musical works are multiply located through spacetime by being "wholly located" where each concrete manifestation is located. Thus works persist through time as a whole: it's not just a part of Sibelius's *Finlandia* you would be listening to whenever you attended to a performance of this work, it's Sibelius' *Finlandia* as a whole. It was the very same whole work performed in 1900, and the very same whole work to be

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[80] Tillman, C., p.8
[81] Tillman, C. , p.18

performed next year. According to Endurantists, musical works do not have temporal parts unless proper parts that correspond to the proper parts of a performance). Consequently, Endurantism does not face the same perceptibility problem of Perdurantism, namely, that it is unclear how anyone could ever listen to a work in its entirety or how a work could be completed long after its composer's death. However, Endurantists still have to explain how an "atom" of something can be co-extensive with the whole thing in itself. It seems that "atomistic" terminology cannot be consistent with the ontological assumption that musical works have no temporal parts. Moreover, there are reasonable doubts concerning the coherence of Endurantism generally; i.e. it is unclear how musical works can coincide with concrete manifestations but not identical to them[82]. Whereas Perdurantists are four-dimensionalists when it comes to ordinary objects (including musical works), Endurantists are committed to standard three-dimensionalist ontology. According to three-dimensionalism, every material object has three spatial dimensions, and persists by enduring through time; the whole three-dimensional object exists at different times. So a three-dimensional object has spatial parts, but no temporal parts. Remember what we were saying about the Endurantist view of persons: a three-dimensionalist may say, for example, that your adulthood is a temporal part of your life, but in contrast to a four-dimensionalist, a three-dimensionalist does not regard your adulthood as any sort of object in itself, not a part of the entity that is you. Your adulthood may be represented as an ordered pair of you and a temporal interval; there is no unique object that is you-during-that-interval. There is just you and times at which you exist.

While they both agree that there are no abstract objects (or, at least, no abstract objects that are musical works) and that musical works concrete entities in some way, they do disagree on the kind of entity musical works are. Perdurantists and Endurantists have divergent opinions about what really exists in the world. This represents, after all, basic ontological divergence, a quarrel about what exists. Choosing between different versions of musical Materialism means finding some decisive reason for preferring one general metaphysical view to another. Yet, such a quest has no relevance to the arguments we are interested in; what we want to understand is whether musical Materialism is generally viable. Thus, it seems worthwhile considering the fact that according to both theories addressed here, works can be reduced to claims that commit us only to *concreta*. The so-called advantages of Materialism are quite clear: if Materialism is correct, we will no longer be bewildered about how musical works can

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[82] Dodd, *Works of Music: An Essay in Ontology*, pp. 160.

be created, listened to and repeated. Yet, in order to succeed, musical Nominalism must answer a number of compelling objectors who argue that Materialism is philosophically untenable. Keeping in mind the varieties of Materialism, in the remainder of this section we examine three main criticisms to see whether incredulity about contemporary musical Materialism may stand as sufficient reason to abandon Nominalism *tout-court*.

The Asymmetry between Works and Performances Objection

We are used to thinking that the properties of a musical performance may not be shared by the relative musical work and *vice versa*.

For instance, a work of art may be particularly good, but sometimes be performed very badly. We often say that a certain interpretation is tedious, inexpressive or flat without crediting the work with these properties. Consider the following argument. According to musical Materialism, a musical work is identical to its concrete manifestations. If Leibniz' identity law is correct[83], for two things to be identical, they must have all their properties in common; that is, for any x and y, if x is identical to y, then x and y have all the same properties: $x=y \rightarrow \forall F(Fx \leftrightarrow Fy)$. But, as we have already noted, there exist properties which belong to the work though not to its performances. Then, the objectors argue, musical Materialism is incorrect. Moreover, they reason, even if musical works are created only the first time they are executed, it is not equally reasonable to claim they are destroyed when any of their specific performances is destroyed. Works survive their concrete manifestations. Apparently, the argument is correct. Yet, we might want to concede a point to the materialist view when it claims that no musical work survives the material object it is embodied in. If no sheet music of a work exists and no future performances of it will ever occur, then it is implausible to believe that the work will survive. The intuition that works cease to exist if all of the relevant sheet music, recordings, memories, and any other physical records are irrevocably destroyed is founded. Of course, materialists still have to decide which material objects count as relevant for them, that in turn depends on which notion of musical atoms they accept and which version of musical Materialism they support. Not all versions of musical Materialism can plausibly deny that works outlive their instances. For instance, a type of Materialism holding that only performances can properly count as musical atoms is hardly sustainable as long as it implies that even if there still were scores, musical work would be practically destroyed after their last performance. A further concern of materialists is the existence of

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[83] And, for the sake of the argument, we assume it is.

musical works. The survival of pieces of music seems to be different from that of ordinary objects; similarly our interest in the existence of material objects differs relevantly from the interest we take in musical works. Indeed, the fact that no one is performing a musical work at the moment does not diminish our interest in it, nor does it mean that the work is nonexistent. So, if this is considered to be true, then we have to admit that musical works survive their concrete manifestations at least in a very minimal sense. Thus, once again Materialism appears to be wrong. Tillman offers materialists a very sophisticated answer in an attempt to reply to such an objection, but here we prefer to avoid getting into technicalities.

Note instead that the whole issue may be regarded as ill-posed. The claim that (1) a musical work is destroyed when we lose memory of it, because of the destruction of its material support, is not equal to the claim that (2) a work is identical to its concrete manifestations. One can support the former without necessarily supporting the latter. In other words, to assume that works are subject to destruction *via* the destruction of their material manifestations does not involve commitment to Materialism, whereas the reverse (i.e., that musical works are indestructible) involves commitment to Realism. Indeed, an approach is feasible, according to which works cannot be paraphrased in or reduced to their concrete manifestations but are still dependent, for their existence, on their material manifestations.

The Modal Objection

The idea is that musical works cannot be identified with any particular sum or fusion of concrete manifestations, as musical Nominalism maintains, for it is a matter of fact that musical works could have had more or fewer concrete manifestations than they actually have had. Indeed, Nominalism implies that if work x is defined extensionally through the equivalence $x=1+2+3+4+5$, where 1,2,3,4,5 represent x's concrete manifestations (or x's atoms), then if x had had more or fewer manifestations it would have definitely been another work (bigger or smaller, in a sense). But since it is also true that works could have had a different number of performances, Nominalism is untenable.

One possible solution to saving Nominalism would be to stress the idea that fusions *can* have a different number of parts than they actually have, and that to deny this means to fall back into an old mereological myth.[84] *We* can be regarded as "fusions", if we have parts, but we could have more or fewer parts and still remain ourselves. Note, though, that this path is not so easily practicable for the materialists' purposes, as it implies that the identity of musical

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[84] See: B. Caplan and K. McDaniel, *Mereological Myths*

works' is somehow placed outside the concrete particulars they are composed of[85] (in the "works" themselves?).

A better reply for the materialists would be to invalidate the fundamental assumption underlying all criticism, i.e. Leibniz's argument concerning the indiscernibility of the identical.

If one holds, *pace* Leibniz, that two objects may be *identical* even though they *do not have* all properties in common, he shouldn't have a problem accepting that a fusion or a set may contain a different number of members than it actually contains. If Leibniz's Law is invalid, then if *you* are a fusion of parts and *you* lose a part of yourself, e.g. a strand of hair, it is still possible to say that you are still the *very same person* you were when you had it.

Alternatively, one can invert the statement and affirm that two objects may be *different* even though *they do have* all properties in common. This way it would be possible to maintain that if two works *x* and *y* are identical except for the fact that *x* has twenty performances and *y* has only nineteen, the first may have had one less performance while not being identical to the second. But this sounds quite puzzling. The Stoic philosopher Chrysippus (280 B.C.-206 B.C.) is said to have posed a similar dilemma. Once there was a whole-bodied man called Dion who had a part called Theon. Theon was all of Dion except his left foot. But Dion's left foot was amputated. So Dion and Theon were at that point numerically different objects occupying the same place and wholly composed of the same matter. Dion was still the same, for it is sure that a man can preserve his identity despite the loss of a foot. But Theon was also there, since in a sense he had emerged from the accident intact. But if Dion is *identical* to the fusion of his parts, and Theon is identical to the fusion of his parts, then since the accident the parts of Dion are identical to the parts of Theon, how can Dion and Theon be not identical?[86]

A third option for the materialists would be to reject modal logic *per se*, thus refuting that objects can actually have different parts throughout their "lives". To this extent, musical Nominalists would deny the modal fact: that musical works could not have more or fewer concrete manifestations than they actually have, since they have their members *essentially* and *necessarily*, i.e., outside modal logic. The modal objection would therefore be pointless. Although sustainable, such a viewpoint is unworkable. We leave the bravest Nominalists the honor of exploring it alone.

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[85] For a contemporary discussion on the concept of *haecceitas*, confront: R.M. Adams, *Primitive Thisness and Primitive Identity*, Journal of Philosophy, LXXVI 5-26. 1979
[86] Burke, Michael B. *Dion and Theon: An Essentialist Solution to an Ancient Puzzle,* The Journal of Philosophy, 1994, pp. 129-139, p.129

The Class Objection

We started our account on contemporary musical Nominalism by distinguishing between class Nominalism and mereological Nominalism in musical works, the last in the form of musical Perdurantism and Endurantism. In fact, it seems that the mereological account is committed to a form of class Nominalism in any case. Mereological Nominalists assume that musical works are the fusion or set or sum of their concrete manifestations, just as species are often defined as "the set, or sum of their members". Whatever name mereological Nominalists give them, sets or fusions or sums do the same job classes do according to class Nominalists and are therefore subject to the same flaws.

There are at least two serious difficulties in considering musical works as classes of particulars: the first, more technical, inheres the concept of empty classes; the second, more general, concerns some plausible skepticism toward the concept of class (or set) itself.

The first: how can we distinguish between two empty classes? According to standard nominalist extensionalism we cannot. Nevertheless, two classes may have no members and yet be different classes. For instance, suppose there are two different works by Monteverdi which were lost in the course of history so that we currently have no performances of them, i.e. no material manifestations. The example is not that strange since most of Monteverdi's work between *Orfeo* and *Ulisse* was lost after his death until Malipiero recovered it. If, as Nominalists' sustain, musical works are simply the set of their performances, these distinct works by Monteverdi, say, *Arianna* and *Armida* would be wrongly classified as identical, because each would be identical to the null set of their performances. What's more, according to such an approach, a work that has not been performed simply does not exist, since an empty class is devoid of any meaning. Note also that, as the modal objection has helped us understand, classes are ill-suited for replacing musical works; classes have their membership and their cardinality necessarily, whereas the number of performances a work has is only a contingent matter. Moreover, class Nominalism takes on the property of "being a musical work *x*" to be the class of *x* particulars or *x* physical manifestations, say, the property of "being Sibelius' *Finlandia*" to be the class of concrete manifestations of "Sibelius' *Finlandia*", and takes membership in this class as a matter of primitive and ultimate fact. But, as Armostrong[87] has argued regarding properties, that one particular performance is a

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[87] Armstrong D., *Universals and Scientific Realism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978, p.46

performance of Sibelius' *Finlandia* is what makes it a member of the material manifestations class of Sibelius' *Finlandia*, not the other way round.

The second: how can we justify nominalists' commitment to sets or classes if sets and classes are, from any point of view, abstract objects? Goodman's reference to *classes* was already at odds with his official Nominalism. Though his aim was to codify a coherent ontology despite the evidence from our practice, his theory was quite ambiguous at least on this point. And indeed it seems that mereological Nominalists must also accept at least two kind of entities, concrete manifestations and classes. It is impossible to get rid of all classes in purely mereological terms. Though classes are also particulars, since they are neither repeatable nor instantiable, of course they differ from concrete particulars by being abstract. So, classes are abstract particulars. Nominalists argue that there are no general or abstract things, but at the same time they identify musical works as a class or set of their concrete instances. So what they need to explain us is what classes are, if they are not abstract particulars. Apparently, it seems that there can be no satisfactory solution to this question, because classes *are* abstract, and it is hard to see how Nominalism can resist this.

The Ontological Economy Objection

It may be worthwhile noting that, while professing commitment to a form of minimalist ontology, Materialism must eventually describe musical works as very puzzling kinds of entities as well. While accusing Realism of employing *ad hoc* and unconvincing ontological entities, Nominalists fall dramatically into the same trap. "Fusions of temporal parts" do not better fit the aims of Nominalism than abstract objects do, since they are also relevantly "*weird* or *unacceptable*" for us to believe. Similarly, sums or sets, with which Materialists try to replace the concept of "class" are not more parsimonious an ontological tool than an abstractum. Of course, a theory is economical if it postulates relatively few kinds of entities, but also if these entities are relatively simple for us to represent. We would not call a theory "economical" if it postulates only one kind of complex, unbelievable entities like winged spirits, say. If, as the Nominalists contend, ontological economy is the theoretical virtue that constitutes the major reason to choose for one theory, then what about "space-time worms"?

Initially, nominalistic claims that talking about works is useless because it is unnecessary, might be more promising; it is just shorthand for talking about performances. Thus, "Händel's *Alleluia* is radiant" can be easily translated into "every compliant performance of Händel's *Alleluia* is radiant". So to refer to the noun "work", say, we need only refer to all its

performances instead. Further, undermining the reductive approach, is that such paraphrasing quantifications of works is extraordinarily difficult. How can we properly translate a sentence like "At the beginning, Händel's works were only known to the English court, but soon started to be performed elsewhere"?

However sophisticated, the answers by Nominalists' given above are unconvincing. Though, Nominalism's basic principles are still well motivated. There is no special effort to accept the disposition Nominalism professes against *ad hoc* entities. All parties in this debate accept the existence of concrete objects. The debate between Nominalists and Platonists thus comes down to a disagreement about whether concrete objects are *all* that exist.

But why is ontological economy a virtue? As Elliot Sober puts it, "removing an existential claim from a theoretical system has the effect of raising the probability for what remains. This is simply because a conjunction must have a lower probability than either conjunct, provided that the conjuncts are mutually independent"[88]

What is sure is that it is a theoretical virtue to avoid positing entities in order to fill a "specific theoretical role" . That is, we should seek as much as possible to sustain theories that only include objects we already accept, independently of the theory itself.

Yet, it may be the case that we are forced to posit an entity because no other explanation of a certain phenomenon is available. So the question arises: is this the case for music?

Platonism in musical Ontology

Though rooted on principles of ontological economy, musical Nominalism has turned out to be unconvincing. As we saw in the previous paragraphs, many of the claims we make about musical works are not reducible to claims about performances or set of performances, and materialists' talking of musical works as fusions or space-time worms looks quite far-fetched too. It seems that we are compelled to continue our research beyond Nominalism. It may not be a coincidence, thus, that Nominalist accounts represent only a minority attitude in the relevant literature. Most theorists, in fact, prefer to join a form of Realism concerning musical works.

We have formerly characterized Musical Realism as the idea that musical works are abstract objects, typically some kind of abstract sound structures. The urgency of recurring to abstracta is grounded in the fact that the repeatability of musical works seems most easily

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[88] Sober E., *The principle of Parsimony,* British Journal for the Philosophy of Science 32 (2):145-156, 1981,p. 145

explainable by something that is not particular, but that rather involves multiple instantiation. As Dodd puts it, "The feature of works of music that demand explanation – the feature that, as philosophers, we should be puzzled by – is what was introduced […] as their repeatability"[89]. Musical works are intrinsically repeatable entities, in the sense that their multiple performances and interpretations are *instances*, rather than copies, of them: that is, different occurrences that lead the audience to the work itself. But what types of things are repeatable in this way? How is this repeatability ontologically justifiable?

Philosophers have found an elegant answer to these questions by making recourse to Platonist solutions. In order to figure out how musical works are conceived according to this class of realist philosophers, more will have to be said about musical Platonism and specifically about its underlying metaphysics. It is the focus of this section to give a thorough discussion of the relevant portions of Platonistic theory, both in its extreme and softer forms.

Metaphysical Platonism is the view that there exist things as abstract (that is, non-spatial, non-temporal) objects. Discussion on abstract entities has a relatively recent history, and Platonism, as above defined, is a present-day view. It is obviously related to Plato's work in several ways but, again, the reference to the Athenian philosopher has nowadays become a standard, with no pretense of philological accuracy. Plato's Forms have some of the features of "modern" abstract objects, since they exist outside of space and time, but, unlike abstracta, they seem to have at least some kind of causal efficacy. We can even perceive them, though perhaps only in a past life, and recall them (as in the doctrine of *anamnesis* exposed in *Meno* and *Phaedrus*). Soon after Plato, properties and other candidate abstracta became protagonists of a debate which persisted in time through Medieval philosophy until the modern era. But it was really only around the turn of the twentieth century, with work in logic, theory of meaning, and philosophy of mathematics by German and English philosophers as Gottlob Frege (1884, 1892) and Bertrand Russell (1912) that abstract entities began to assume the peculiar features modern scholars credit them with. By the end of the twentieth century, the discussion of abstract objects got a foothold as never before, so that debates about abstract objects play now a central role in contemporary metaphysics, philosophy of languages, and aesthetics also.

Since abstract objects as currently conceived are non-spatiotemporal, they are also non-physical (they do not exist in the physical world) and non-mental (they are not minds or ideas in minds). In addition, they are entirely causally inert entities, which cannot be involved in

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[89] Dodd, J. , *Musical Works: Ontology and Meta-Ontology*, *Philosophy Compass* 3/6 (2008): 1113–1134, P.1118

cause-and-effect relationships with other objects. This last remark might be somewhat confusing: how can we know something if we cannot have any relation with it? How could such a thing ever affect us?

Things get clearer, however, if we look at some examples. Consider numbers first. Numbers are particular objects that, like tables and chairs, exist independently of us and our thinking. But according to Platonism, numbers are different from table and chairs as they are not physical objects; they are non-physical, non-mental, and causally inert, nor they exist in space or time. On the platonist view, numbers exist (independently of us and our thoughts) but do not exist in any place or time: they are, as often said, "somewhere out there".

Similarly, consider properties. According to platonists, properties exist independently of ordinary things. There are white walls, round tables and good friends, all existing in the physical world. But platonists believe that in addition to these things, *whiteness*, *roundness* and *goodness*, as the properties themselves, also exist as abstract objects. Ordinary objects are believed to *exemplify* or *instantiate* properties. Thus, platonists assume, in addition to every predicate in the ordinary language there is a property corresponding to it. Paradoxically, even when there are no instances of a property in the real world, say round-triangularity, platonists may still hold that the property itself exists. Numbers and properties, though, are not the only things to be regarded as abstracta. There are Platonists on fictional characters, relations, propositions, events, possible worlds and, eventually, multiple artworks as musical works.

Some of the important features of abstracta as listed above (atemporality, non-spatiality, acausality) are non essential, though, for a candidate to be an abstractum in the sense that many philosophers would accept. Atemporality, for instance, seems non essential, since many possible abstract objects apparently have a commencement and an ending in time, among them car prototypes, fictional characters, theatre plays and of course musical works. It may seem appealing to say that such things exist in time but not in space, but where exactly, if in the relativistic universe we inhabit space and time are radically interconnected? Some scholars claim that there are abstracta, but concede them a minor grade of existence than the normal; they say that abstracta *subsist*, that they *exist* but are not *actual* etc. Appealing to notions like subsistence seems to be a *petitio principii* allowing philosophers to resort to properties, numbers, multiple artworks and the same, without being forced to grant them authentic existence.

All this suggests that the issues about abstract objects are more bewildering than it seems; Platonism about any type of objects is contentious, and musical Platonism is no exception.

Yet we have seen that there are also good arguments against the opposite view, i.e., musical Nominalism. So, let us suspend disbelief for a moment and see if there are, as Platonists maintain, really good reasons to convince us believing there are also abstract objects as musical works in the world.

In what follows, we will focus on the problems that arise when the issue about the status of abstracta is framed in terms of musical works. We will consider the pros and cons of Platonism later in this section.

Type-token theory

Like numbers, propositions and properties, musical works are somewhat mysterious things. We can't see them, perceive them, point to them. They don't seem to do anything at all. Just as, say computer programmers, it is not possible to kick the software of a computer, no kick can be given to Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*. This gives us reason to doubt that there actually exists something as a musical work. On the other hand, though, we know many musical works, we listen to them and appreciate them. Musical works seem to have a considerable relevance in our life. For instance, one may be very impressed or moved by the fourth movement of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* . Thus, there are also reasons to think that there actually exists something as a musical work. Musical works seem to be characterized by an ontological duplicity. In a certain sense they are abstract; in another sense they are wholly concrete. Problems, problems, problems.

How to solve this enigma? One possible solution would be to abandon the pretense of answering the categorial question in a monistic way. It is no coincidence, then, that one prominent kind of ontological proposal, *the type/token theory,* has gained such a leading position in the Platonist camp[90]. This is because it answers the issue of the dual nature in a very elegant way. The main idea is that musical works are types of sound-structure whose performances (i.e. interpretations, recordings, playings) are tokens of that type. This way, the repeatability of such works is directly explainable by the ontological category to which they fit in (namely, that of types); assigning such works to the category of types appears a much natural way of giving such an explanation. On this extent, the relation between Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* and its occurrences is just one more quotidian case of the relation obtaining between a word and its various inscriptions, or between the *Sacher Torte* and its numerous

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[90] Cf., among the others, Wolterstorff 1975, Levinson, 1980, Kivy 2002 and 2004, Dodd 2007.

tokens: something with which we are pretty accustomed to. Julian Dodd, a major proponent of this view, says for example that if musical works are types, the relation between works and performances "turns out to be just one more example of the familiar relation that holds, for instance, between the word 'table' and its token inscriptions and utterances"[91]. The type-token relation is able to account for musical works' repeatability, since one can hear one and the same work, in its entirety, in several distinct performances, just as one can find one and the same word in several distinct contexts. All nontype ontologies of musical works (as nominalist and materialism) require us to give up, or at least paraphrase away, that intuition.

As we have already noted, works of music cannot indeed be plausibly regarded as classes of their occurrences, since classes have their members essentially, while the same is not true in the case of musical works which may have had more, fewer, or different performances than they have had actually. Conversely, the type-token theory can easily bypass the modal objection, especially because of some decisive differences between classes and types. While the identity of a class is determined by its membership, the identity of a type is determined, not by its actual tokens, but by the conditions that something must meet to be one of its tokens.

So: "What makes the type *K that* type is that it lays down a certain condition for something to be one of its tokens; and it would still lay down this condition, and so would remain that type, even if fewer, more, or different tokens satisfied it"[92]. The type-token theory, thus, can provide justification to the modal nature of works of music.

Consider then the Materialist claim that works are to be identified with physical objects, i.e. scores. But even in the case of scores we must also distinguish between the score and a copy of it, which is another example of the type-token distinction. Differently from Nominalism, the type-token theory seems able to conciliate the two contradictory aspects of musical works: their materiality and their abstract character. Moreover, it offers a solution to the enigma above considered, that one perceives (hears, sees) a work by perceiving an occurrence of the work.

This may establish the type-token theory as the default position in musical ontology[93], to be abandoned only in the face of incoherence. "In looking at a print one sees two things at one, the print and the impression thereof. In listening to a symphony one hears two things at once

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[91] Dodd, J., *Works of Music: An Essay in Ontology*. 2007 Oxford University Press, 2007, p.11

[92] Dodd, J. , *Musical Works: Ontology and Meta-Ontology*, *Philosophy Compass* 3/6 (2008): 1113–1134, p. 1119

[93] Ibid.

the symphony and a performance thereof. It is of immense importance for the critic to distinguish these two sorts of entities. For the very same predicate may be true of a musical performance and false of the work of which it is a performance"[94].

It is Nicholas Wolterstorff in his "*Works and World of Art*"(1980), which these last sentences are taken from, one of the prominent defendant of the type-token theory in aesthetics. Wolterstorff first introduced[95] in the philosophy of art C.S. Peirce's famous type-token relation, so that the model he employs to describe works of music is comparable, as he himself admits, to Peirce's own semiotic account. Starting from Wolterstorff, a huge number of scholars have agreed on the utility of applying the type-token relation with regards to works of art. Scholars disagree on how to spell out a metaphysical account of type suitable to encompass musical works. A most controversial question in the debate is: what type of types are musical works? The request is for a theory that may shed some light on the identity conditions of musical works whilst also illuminating what should be expected from considering musical works as abstracta. Answer to such an issue is not always a bed of roses, since most of this discussion refers to the heart of the analytic metaphysical tradition, say, arguments concerning the nature of properties, causation, embodiment, abstract objects, the relations that holds between a property and a type, and so on. Our aim here will be to examine the most prominent answers on the nature of the type-token relation available on the market, several of which, as we shall see, do have unintuitive consequences. Next paragraphs present the relevant accounts gathered in two major groups, that of Hard Platonists (Kivy, Dodd) and that of Soft Platonists (Thomasson, Levinson, Davies, Howell, Stecker). While the former embark on a project of explaining musical works as *quasi*-universals, eternally existent, placed outside space and time, the latter have constructed theories to show how our thought and talk about works of music commit us to viewing them as historically and contextually individuated entities. Likewise, they disagree as to what are the works' persistence and identity conditions: i.e., whether works depend for their existence on there being at least one performance, playing recording or memory of them; whether, once composed, they exist forever; and whether they are genuinely brought into being by their composers.

Hard Platonism

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[94] Wolterstorff, N., 1980, *Works and Worlds of Art*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.1980, p.53
[95] In fact, the earliest explicit reference to the type-token distinction in the literature on the ontology of art is to be found in Rudner (1950) who used the type-token distinction in the context of a critique of Lewis (1946).

In hard core Platonism musical works are considered abstract entities having no spatiotemporal location. The main advocates of this theory are Peter Kivy (1983, 1987) and Julian Dodd (2000, 2007, 2010). These writers find it reasonable to say that musical works, such as scores or sound-events (performances), like Platonic forms or universals, are instances of abstract, eternal, immutable, causally and perceptually isolated entities. They answer the question "what type of types are musical works?" by referring to the standard paradigm of abstract entities described above: by stating their atemporality, non-spatiality and acausality. But what does this comparison between musical works *qua* types and universals ontologically imply? Is it really plausible to say that musical works are universals? The matter is sticky. Universals, in contrast to particulars, have been characterized as *having instances, being repeatable, being abstract, being acausal, lacking spatio-temporal location* and *being predicable of things*[96]. As we have already noted, musical works can have instances, can be exemplified in their performances: they are repeatable. Also with respect to being abstract and non spatio-temporally located, musical works resemble universals (or from an Aristotelian view of universals, they are *in* their instances and have many spatio-temporal location at once). To Hardcore Platonists this is sufficient for them to count as a species of universals, and should be correctly classified as such.

Types are not properties

It is our contention that not every feature traditionally ascribed to universals is so easily attributable to musical works. For instance musical works seem not to be as predicable as universals, and appear to be more, in Frege's terms[97], as the sort of things referred to in singular terms. That is to say, musical works are more like *objects*, for example numbers, rather than properties. They would not fall into the same class as standard universals like *whiteness*, and thus perhaps should not be considered universals at all. Similar considerations, however, have arisen even in the Hardcore Platonist camp. They are at least willing to recognize the difference between types and the classic examples of properties.

Dodd, for example, notes that it would be incorrect to regard the relation between a work and its performances as being the same as that occurring between a property and its instances.

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[96] Wetzel, Linda, "Types and Tokens", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.)

[97] Frege, Gottlob (1977), "On Concept and Object," in Geach, P. & Black, M.(eds.) *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Properties are entities capable of multiple particular instances, it seems inappropriate to identify a musical work with the property of its performances and playing: "Rather than being a mere respect in which performances or playings can be alike or differ, the work itself is the *blueprint* for such performances and playings: a thing in its own right"[98]. Works of music, he argues, seem more like entities such as "The Red Flag, The Daffodil, and the word 'refrigerator'" than they do to properties. Dodd's insight follows Wollheim's former criticism of the claim that types (as musical works) can be reducible to properties. The relationship that exists between a type and its tokens is, Wollheim maintains, "more intimate" than that that exists between a universal as a property and its instances, since: "for much of the time we think and talk of the type as though it were itself a kind of token, though a peculiarly important or pre-eminent one"[99]. He declines this "intimacy" between musical works as types and their tokens by making reference to the fact that a type shares a larger number of predicates with its tokens than a property with its instances. While the only thing a red thing shares with the relevant property *redness* is the fact of *being red*, Beethoven's *Symphony No. 3*, *Eroica*, has the same number of movements, the same key and the same notes as most of its performances. Moreover, while a property such as redness is not itself red, each property a token has *qua* token of a given type is also necessarily true of that type: "predicates true of tokens in virtue of being tokens of the type are therefore true of the type". Wollheim gives the example of the American flag, *The Union Jack*. For every piece of fabric to be a correctly formed token of The Union Jack, it must be rectangular. Therefore, "being rectangular" is a property of the type "*The Union Jack*". *The Union Jack* is, as a type, rectangular. In this sense, Wollheim seems inclined to accept types as a species of autonomously existing abstract objects, namely somehow concrete, non-general entities. Yet, if appealing to type-token terminology served us as a way to avoid the contradictory implications deriving from the Nominalist reduction of musical works to concreta, does it make sense to postulate the existence of half-concrete abstracta with spatial or temporal features?

Types as Norm-kinds

Though Wolterstorff agrees with Wollheim's stressing the "intimate" character of the connection between types and tokens, since, as he himself notes: "One striking feature of the relationship between an art work and its examples is the pervasive sharing of predicates

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[98] Dodd, J. , *Musical Works: Ontology and Meta-Ontology*, *Philosophy Compass* 3/6 (2008): 1113–1134, p.1118

[99] Wollheim, Richard (1968), Art and Its Objects. New York: Harper and Row, 1968, p.76

between them"[100], he nevertheless criticizes Wollheim's claim about the sharing of properties between types and their tokens as being of "no illumination" with respect to the pattern of such sharing[101]. Wolterstorff 's idea is that this massive sharing of predicates between musical works and performances should allow us to speak of musical works as species or (natural) kind. Musical works, just like trees, humans and cats are, according to him, species. Indeed, differently from sets or logical classes, species do not essentially possess their exemplars, as they vary through time. "Since the days of Aristotle philosophers have observed that between natural kinds and their examples there is also a massive sharing of predicates. Could it be that art works and natural kinds are ontological allies? That is the thought that comes to mind. And that is in fact the thesis I shall articulate. To put it more stringently: art works and natural kinds are just two species of kinds"[102]. By introducing the biological terminology of 'kinds' and 'examples', Wolterstorff can focus on properties that are necessary to "properly formed" examples of a kind. Not every predicate which can be truly predicated of a species is shared between the species and its examples. But just as there are some properties of a natural species which cannot be predicated by their examples, the same is true for musical works. For instance, just as a performance of Rachmaninoff 's challenging *Piano Concerto No. 3*, may contain a relevant number of flaws while remaining nonetheless a performance of that work, likewise individual members of a species can have distinct qualities that differentiate them from the rest of the species while remaining members of that species. To this extent, Wolterstorff argues, musical works and biological species are both particular types of kinds: they are norm-kinds. "One more concept concerning kinds, of a great importance to our subsequent purposes, must be introduced. Many, though not all, kinds are such that it is possible for them to have properly formed and also possible for them to have improperly formed examples. Let us call such kinds, norm-kinds. The Lion is obviously a norm-kind. The kind: Red Thing, however, seems not to be. For there can be no such entity as an improper red thing, a malformedly red thing"[103]. Thus, just as *being an example of* is used to define kind, so for a candidate to be a kind there must be an example of it, *norm-kinds* are defined to have both improperly and properly formed instances and, more significantly, to furnish criteria for distinguishing between correct and incorrect instances. Similarly, the kind which the musical work consists of constitutes a norm for its exemplars: it indicates what an instance should be

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[100] Wolterstorff, N. "Worlds and Works of Art" 1980, p. 53
[101] Wolterstorff, N. 'Toward an Ontology of Art Works', *Noûs*, 9 (2): 115–42 1975, p.239
[102] Wolterstorff, N., 1980, *Works and Worlds of Art*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.1980, p.55
[103] Wolterstorff, N. p.56

in order to count as an exemplar of the type. It is not an evaluative norm, though, as one determining whether one exemplar is worse or better than another. Rather, it functions as a tool for recognizing whether two individuals are exemplars of the same kind or species. Such a proposal can functionally arrange situations in which there are significantly different artistic and aesthetic properties within the performances of one and the same work, thus accounting for that "asymmetry" between works and performances that Nominalists couldn't explain. Yet, if both species and musical works are identified as norm-kinds, this raises the question of what a norm-kind is, ontologically speaking. In his first essay *On Universals*[104], Wolterstorff adopts the idea of kinds being identified as universals. Like non space-temporal entities, norm-kinds are eternal, indestructible, non created but discovered, just as universals are. If species like norm-kinds are eternal, so are musical works. Wolterstorff thus accepts the thesis that works of art neither come into nor go out of existence[105]. He holds that the sequences of sounds and words of which musical and literary works are made up exist everlastingly. What the artist does in creating a work, then, is to make it the case that a "preexistent kind becomes *a work*—specifically, a work *of his*"[106]. Wolterstorff's idea, then, is that a composer can select but not create a sound pattern or a type of sound-occurrence: "What must one do to compose a musical work? The beginning of the answer is clear: one must select a certain set of properties which sound-sequence-occurrences can exemplify -- the property of being a piano sound of a pitch, etc."[107] But what purpose lies behind the composer's selection? The answer is to be found in the claim that a musical work is a norm-kind. "The composer selects properties of sounds for the purpose of their serving as criteria for judging correctness of occurrence. By reference to his selected set, we can judge sound-sequence-occurrences as correct or incorrect. In selecting a set of properties required for correctness, the composer composes a work which has exactly those properties (plus another presupposed by them) as normative within it"[108]. In other words, the composer selects those properties as normative criteria for correct instances. Musical works are brought into existence when someone decides and records the correctness of their conditions *qua* works. Wolterstorff remarks that such a theory concerning composing music may be considered analogous to the inventing of a game. Just like a composer, an inventor of a game "selects certain properties which action-sequence-

[104] Wolterstorff, N., *On Universals: An Essay in Ontology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1970

[105] Wolterstorff, N. "*Worlds and Works of Art*" 1980, p.88-89

[106] Wolterstorff, N. p. 89

[107] Dodd, J., *Works of Music: An Essay in Ontology*. 2007 Oxford University Press, p. 62

[108] Dodd. J., p 63

occurrences can exemplify; and therein he creates a game – that one, namely, which has exactly those properties (and any others presupposed by them) as normative within it". Moreover, Wolterstorff continues, the analogy is also valid for what concerns the composer's opinions concerning what he/she considers a better or a worse performance of his/her work. Unless composers stipulate their views as to how achieve an aesthetically excellent occurrence of their pieces (a certain tempo, a certain dynamic, etc), these requirements are mere opinions. Similarly, an inventor of a game may have ideas about the best way to go about winning it, but such ideas are matters of judgment and do not affect the activity of inventing the game. Such an account may have interesting effects, as opposed to more rigid views about performing musical -- such as historical or philological-based theories on the interpretation of ancient music -- since it gives a relevant margin of freedom to the performer beyond the composer's explicit indications. Nevertheless, it also implies that the identity of a work does not depend on a combination of intentional acts on the part of the author. It is only the abstract structure of an artwork that determines its identity and, consequently, we can only tell different works apart by analyzing the way they relate structurally. Therefore, the question is how to figure out what features of a work can count as essentially pertaining to its structure. If one follows Wolterstorff in considering the identity of a work to be structural, then a formal analysis of the work itself would suffice to identify it, but then there would still be no reason to think that identifying a work according by its structure (as a person by his I.D.) means that the identity of a musical work coincides with that structure.

Moreover, identifying musical works with norm-kinds does not do justice to Wollheim's important intuition mentioned above, i.e. that types are largely referred to by singular terms. Indeed, what seems most worth noting about Wollheim's idea that works would better be regarded as types was exactly the rationale he gave for stating that types are different from other "generic entities," and in particular, universals. We defer criticism to a later section.

Types as abstract objects

Following Wolterstorff's path, whose detailed and precise viewpoint is not explainable in such a brief summary, two other Platonist scholars, Julian Dodd and Peter Kivy argue in favor of a theory of musical works as *norm-types*. For our purposes, we will hark back specifically to Dodd's 2007 essay, *Works of Music: An Essay in Ontology,* which provides a comprehensive account of the Platonist views. Dodd, in speaking of norm-types, as opposed to simple types, draws copiously, though not uncritically, on Wolterstorff's reasons for

speaking of norm-kinds, i.e. to account for improperly formed tokens or exemplars. For Dodd, types are individuated by reference to "the *condition* that something must meet in order to be one of its tokens"[109]. Such a condition can be understood in terms of the properties something needs to have in order to be a token of a given norm-type. While tokens of a simple type must meet *all* of the relevant conditions set by the type, a properly formed token of a norm-type must be an instance only of the relevant properties[110]. As we already noted at the beginning of this section, Dodd argues that type-token ontology is able to explain the most significant features of musical works, namely, their repeatability, since types, like musical works, can have multiple instances. Just as tokens can give us access to the related type, performances relate us to the musical work of which they are a performance (p.12). But norm-types can also account for a work's *audibility* (the fact that "works are things that we can listen to or hear") because, he states, "hearing a performance of a work **just *is*** to hear the work *in* performance" [111]. Norm-type ontology answers also for the modal fact that musical works may have more or fewer performances than they actually have had, since, differently from sets and classes, performances are inessential. Application of the type-token relation to musical works aside, Dodd's plan is to furnish a substantial contribution to "first philosophy": his aim is "to bring the metaphysics of art back into contact with serious analytic metaphysics"[112].

Thus, he provides a detailed account of what norm-types are, according to him. First, as he puts it, types are part of the "fabric of the world"[113]: we are naive realists about types in the ordinary discourse and, if the Quinean criterion of ontological commitment is valid, then we should be committed to the entities our sentences quantify[114]. If norm types actually exist, what are they ontologically? Differently from Wolterstorff, who thought of types as a species of universals, Dodd's idea of types is that they are abstract individual objects. Being abstract, they do not exist in space, and they are also "modally and temporally inflexible"(p.37), i.e. unchanging, eternal entities. But since they are abstract entities, they cannot have any structure, as structural attributes are spatial attributes whilst types are non-spatiotemporal entities. Once types are considered to be abstract objects, they must be entirely unstructured. This contravenes the idea that musical works *qua* norm types are abstract structures. Thus,

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[109] Dodd. J. p P.40
[110] Dodd. J. , p.32.
[111] Ivi, p.12
[112] Ivi, p.4
[113] Ivi, p. 33
[114] Quine, W. v. O., *On What There Is*, Review of Metaphysics 2 (5):21--36. 1948, p.32

Dodd cannot maintain that the relation between types and tokens is isomorphic, namely, that tokens of an abstract entity exhibit isomorphic structure to the type. So, if isomorphism does not apply, how can types be otherwise related to their tokens? Types are, according to him, identified by the conditions a token must meet in order to be a token of that type, that is, the instantiation of a property associated to the type. Relevantly, types can inform tokens in this way without being credited with any structure. Cats are structured entities, he says, but that does not entail that the type The Cat has any structure[115]. What binds tokens to types, instead, is the fact that they share predication. Recall Wollheim's example of the *Union Jack*: the relation between a type and its token is such that whatever can be predicated of a token of type x in virtue of it being a token of type x can also be predicated of type x itself (p. 17). However, this denies the alleged unstructured nature of types, that is, the fact that if they really are abstract, they cannot possess any property that depends on existing in space-time such as "being rectangular" or "being made of fabric". So, contrary to Wollheim, Dodd's idea is that "types and tokens share predication but not *properties*"[116]. While a token of the *Union Jack* can properly exhibit the property of "being rectangular", the *Union Jack*-type possesses a different property, that of "being-such-that-any properly- formed-token-of-type-Union Jack-is-rectangular". This allows Dodd to avoid the attribution of properties to abstract objects, while enabling him to assert that there are properties *associated* to abstract objects.

Such type-associated properties exist eternally, he infers, also types are eternal existents. Dodd offers an extended formalization of the argument in favor of the view that abstract objects are eternally existent. The argument goes as follows[117]:

- The identity of any type T is determined by the condition a token meets, or would have to meet, in order to be a token of that type;

- The condition a token meets, or would have to meet, in order to be a token of *T* is *T*'s property-associate: being a *t*;

So (1) The identity of *T* is determined by the identity of being a *t*;

So (2) *T* exists if and only if being a *t* exists.

But being a *t* is an eternal existent.

So (3) *T* is an eternal existent too.

Beyond formalization, we can summarize it this way. If a type's property-associate exists at a certain time, then it is "fairly straightforward"[118] that the type exists at that same time. But

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[115] Dodd, J., *Works of Music: An Essay in Ontology*. 2007 Oxford University Press, p.50
[116] Dodd , J. p.46
[117] Dodd 2002: 381-2

properties exist eternally, so types, correspondingly, must exist eternally, i.e., they cannot come into or go out of existence.

This brief look at Dodd's theory highlights the two main aspects of his theory of properties. The former is the principle of instantiation, as the idea that there are no properties that do not have instances, that is, properties that are not instantiated at any point in time do not exist; the latter is the principle of the eternality of properties, that is, properties cannot come into or go out of being.

Note that, according to Dodd's proposed principle of instantiation, if properties come into existence when they are first instantiated, then a musical work only comes into existence when it is first performed. And this would make the first performers of a work its creators, rather than the composer. But the feeblest point of the argument is of course the second assumption, i.e. that properties exist eternally. Dodd supports it by stating, in his words, the viability of "an intuitive theory" on the existence of properties: "The theory in question, simply stated, is that the property being a t exists if and only if it is instantiated now, was instantiated in the past, or will be instantiated in the future"[119]. Setting aside the so-called intuitiveness of this proposal, Dodd sees his theory of property existence as preferable to the two alternative options he considers, the first being the view according to which the existence of properties is independent of their instantiation, the second being the view that properties exist only when instantiated. But still there would be no reason to deny the creationist idea that certain properties, for instance, those essentially of time-reliant objects, come into being only when the objects come into being. Further considerations of this account will be discussed in the section on criticisms. Note, for the moment, that as a consequence of their eternal immutable character *qua* abstracta, Dodd's account implies that composers do not create musical works, as we would commonly think, but simply select them.

To this extent, Dodd follows Wolterstorff's view on the activity of composing music to argue that composition should not be viewed as bringing a new entity into the world but just as singling out already existent entities. Composition is an act of "creative discovery" just as scientific research is. We would not accuse Newton of lacking creativity because he has not "created" something new but has merely discovered something about how the world is. This fact does not diminish, in our eyes, his geniality: "Just such an "essential intimacy" exists between, say, Pythagoras and the theorem that bears his name. The theorem is Pythagoras's:

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[118] Dodd , J. p.60

[119] Dodd, J. "*Musical Works as Eternal Types*." *British Journal of Aesthetics* 40(2000) : 424-440, p. 436

he was the creative genius who first discovered it, and it will always be associated with him"[120], even though, clearly, he hasn't *created* it. And so too, according to Dodd, great composers discover their works, but still deserve our appreciation, since those works are *theirs*. To this extent, musical works are special kinds of discoveries that only their composers could reasonably have made (as opposed to the "bare metaphysical possibility" of someone else making them, as postulated by Kivy [121]). But in fact this seems just a restatement of our original idea, i.e., that there is a unique relation of possession between a composer and his work *because* we think that composers create their works, rather than discover them. Moreover, even the analogy between the composer's activity of selection and the discovery of a scientific theory is not wholly convincing. Some details are particularly perplexing: the realist view of sciences as "discoverers of facts" is a bit naïve and naively positivist. And furthermore ordinary practice treats composition as creation, and most of us take it for granted that musical works are created, just as they are repeatable and audible. But according to Dodd this is merely: "a folk *theory* about the nature of composition"[122], we are in fact not forced to consider, neither for linguistic nor for practical reasons. On the other hand, it is (hardcore) Platonist ontology we are to accept if we agree with Dodd's account, that compels us to argue for the non-creatability of musical works. So the question we need to answer is whether this ontology is really tenable.

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[120] Dodd , J. p. 432
[121] Kivy, P. "*Platonism in Music, Another Kind of Defense"*, reprinted in Kivy 1993, pp. 59–74, pp. 69-73
[122] Dodd, J., *Works of Music: An Essay in Ontology*. 2007 Oxford University Press, p.114
[123] Dodd. J. p P.40

needs to have in order to be a token of a given norm-type. While tokens of a simple type must meet *all* of the relevant conditions set by the type, a properly formed token of a norm-type must instantiate only the relevant properties[124]. Has we have already noted at the beginning of this section, Dodd argues that the type-token ontology is able to explain the most significant features of musical works, namely, their repeatability, since types, like musical works can be multiply instantiated. Just as tokens can give us the access to the related type, performances relate us to the musical work of which they are a performance (p.12). But norm-types can also account for the works *audibility* (the fact that "works are things that we can listen to or hear") because, he states, "hearing a performance of a work just *is* to hear the work *in* performance"[125]. The norm-type ontology answers also for the modal fact that musical works may have more or fewer performances than they actually had, since, differently from sets and classes, they have their performances inessentially. Application of the type-token relation to musical works aside, Dodd's plan is to furnish a substantial contribution to "first philosophy": his aim is "to bring the metaphysics of art back into contact with serious analytic metaphysics"[126].

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Types are, according to him, identified by the conditions a token must meet in order to be a token of that type, that is, the instantiation of a property associated to the type. Relevantly,

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[124]Dodd. J. , p.32.
[125] Ivi, p.12
[126] Ivi, p.4
[127] Ivi, p. 33
[128] Quine, W. v. O., *On What There Is*, Review of Metaphysics 2 (5):21--36. 1948, p.32

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Out of formalization, we can summarize this way. If a type's property-associate exists at a time, then it is "fairly straightforward"[132] that the type exists at that same time. But properties exist eternally, so types, correspondingly, must exist eternally, i.e., they cannot come into nor go out of existence.

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[129] Dodd, J., *Works of Music: An Essay in Ontology*. 2007 Oxford University Press, p.50
[130] Dodd , J. p.46
[131] Dodd 2002: 381-2
[132] Dodd , J. p.60

This brief look at Dodd's standpoint brings out the two main aspects of Dodd's theory of properties.

The former is the principle of instantiation, as the idea that there are no uninstantiated properties, that is, properties that are not instantiated at any point in time do not exist; the latter is the principle of the eternality of properties, that is, properties cannot come into nor go out of being.

Note that, according to Dodd's proposed principle of instantiation, if properties come into existence when they are first instantiated, then a musical work only comes into existence when it is first performed. And this would make the first performers of a work its creators, rather than the composer. But the feeblest point of the argument is of course the second assumption, i.e. that properties exist eternally. Dodd supports it by stating, in his words, the viability of "an intuitive theory" concerning the existence of properties: "The theory in question, simply stated, is that the property being a t exists if and only if it is instantiated now, was instantiated in the past, or will be instantiated in the future"[133]. Setting aside the so-called intuitiveness of this proposal, Dodd sees his theory of property existence as preferable to the two alternative options he considers, the first being the view according to which the existence of properties is independent of their instantiation, the second being the view that properties exist only when instantiated. But still there would be no reason to deny the creationist idea that certain properties, for instance, those essentially involving time-reliant objects, come into being only when the objects they involve come into being. Further remarks on such an account shall be discussed later in the critical section. Note, for the moment, that as a consequence of their eternal immutable character *qua* abstracta, Dodd's account implies musical works be not created by their author, as our common intuition would state, but just selected by the composer.

To this extent, Dodd resumes Wolterstorff's view on the activity of composing music to argue that composition should not be viewed as bringing a new entity into the world but just as a singling out already existent entities. Composition is an act of "creative discovery" just as scientific research is. We would not blame Newton of lacking creativity because he has not "created" anything new but merely discovered something of how the world is. This fact does not diminish, in our eyes, his geniality: "Just such an "essential intimacy" exists between, say, Pythagoras and the theorem that bears his name. The theorem is Pythagoras's: he was the

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[133] Dodd, J. "*Musical Works as Eternal Types*." *British Journal of Aesthetics* 40(2000) : 424-440, p. 436

creative genius who first discovered it, and it will always be associated with him"[134], even though, clearly, he hasn't *created* it. And so too, says Dodd, great composers discover their works, but still deserve our appreciation, since those works are *theirs*. To this extent, musical works are special kinds of discoveries that only their composers could reasonably have made (as opposed to the "bare metaphysical possibility" of someone else having made them, as framed by Kivy [135]). But in fact this seems just a restatement of our original intuition, i.e., that a unique possession relation holds between a composer and his work *because* we think that composers create their works, rather than discover them. Moreover, even the analogy between the composer's activity of selection and the discovery of a scientific theory is not a wholly convincing one. Some details are particularly perplexing: the realist view of sciences as "discovery of facts" is a bit naïve and ingenuously positivist. And furthermore much ordinary practice treats composition as creation, and most of us take it for granted that musical works are created just as they are repeatable and audible. But according to Dodd this is merely: "a folk *theory* about the nature of composition"[136], we are in fact not forced to, neither for linguistic nor for practical reasons. On the other hand, it is the (hard) Platonist ontology we are to accept if we agree with Dodd's account that compels us to argue for the non-creatability of musical works. So the issue we need to answer is, is this ontology really tenable?

Critics of Hard Core Platonism

Let's try to summarize what we have just said about hard core Platonism. According to Hardcore Platonists, musical works are ideal types (Kivy, 2004, and Dodd, 2007) or kinds (Wolterstorff, 1975) that do not exist in our spatiotemporal world as their tokens do. As abstract objects, musical works cannot enter directly into causal relationship with us, they are discovered or selected by composers, and, once brought into being, cannot disappear.

Various arguments have been brought forth against this account: that is, against the counter-intuitive implications of hardcore Platonism with respect to many of the assumptions we have concerning musical works. We can summarize the main objections as follows:

(1) the *perceptibility* objection: musical works possess perceptual properties while universals, as standardly conceived, do not;

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[134] Dodd , J. p. 432
[135] Kivy, P. "*Platonism in Music, Another Kind of Defense*", reprinted in Kivy 1993, pp. 59–74, pp. 69-73
[136] Dodd, J., *Works of Music: An Essay in Ontology*. 2007 Oxford University Press, p.114

(2) the *creatability* objection: musical works are created by theircomposers. Thus, they must not exist prior to the composer's compositional activity, but are brought into existence by that activity. Abstract objects, conversely, are generally referred to as eternal and immutable, i.e. entities which cannot be created;

(3) the *destructibility* objection: musical works can be destroyed by destroying (i) their properly formed examples, (ii) their generating "notation", and (iii) all memory of this notation, whilst Platonic entities can in no way be destroyed;

(4) the *identity conditions* objection: according to Platonism, two musical works having the same sound structure, are the same musical work. Alternatively, if two different people compose the same tonal structure, they compose the same musical work[137]. Yet, there can be musical works that share the same sound sequences, but are nonetheless different works, since different properties are to be considered for their appreciation.

Of these claims, (1), (2) and (3) seem to be true, but are not logically incompatible with a hardcord?? Platonic construal of musical works. (4) presupposes that a musical work is fundamentally an abstract sound structure; to this extent, a musical work's instrumentation would not necessarily be a feature of its identity. It is what Kivy calls the criterion of the "fine individuation" [138].

We will briefly address the first three objections to see whether hard Platonists can convincingly defend themselves from the accusation of inconsistency. We will postpone an analysis of the fourth to the section called "Soft Core Platonism".

The Perceptibility Objection

Objection: *works of music cannot be Platonic entities since they are perceptually graspable, while Platonic entities are not.*

The idea is that if we conceive musical works as abstracta, then it becomes very tricky to explain how they can normally be heard, for types are abstract objects, and like all abstract objects (universals, kinds, types, and so on), they can only be conceived or thought of or imagined, yet not sensibly perceived. Only tokens, i.e. performances and playings, can be heard. The objection calls into play two of the main metaphysical problems existing since the age of Plato, the *epistemological* question on the one hand, i.e. the question of how we come

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[137] Davies D., "*The Primacy of Practice in the Ontology of Art*", Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, 67: 159–71. 2009, p.160

[138] See: Kivy, P., "*Orchestrating Platonism*",1988a reprinted in Kivy 1993, pp. 75–94.

to know about abstract objects we believe exist; and the *exemplification* question on the other, i.e. the question of how abstracta are related to their instances. While it is quite clear, in a sense, how we acquire knowledge of concrete objects, it is unclear how we acquire any knowledge of abstract objects. It is hard to believe that it is simply their primitive abstractness that makes the difference: it is much easier to believe that it is their non-spatiality or their causal inefficacy. These last two features make it complicated to maintain that we perceive abstracta just as we perceive physical objects.

We can rephrase the dilemma as follows: since we don't see or hear the type a musical work is, as it isn't located anywhere in space-time, how can we, spatiotemporal creatures, know it, or know what its properties are? How can tokens be an appropriate guide to what the type is like? Answers to such concerns try to bridge the gap between the abstract realm and the concrete phenomena we want to account for and tell us enough to understand its connection to our cognitive faculties.

One possible solution is that our knowledge about abstract entities is given *a priori*, i.e., attainable independently of experience. But whilst such a proposal seems quite viable in the case of numbers, it doesn't seem so applicable in the case of musical works *qua* abstracta. Indeed, unless weadhere to an idealist perspective, it is far-fetched to hold that musical works can be known "a priori".

Another possibility for the hard Platonist, as suggested by Trivedi, would be to deny that such metaphysical dilemmas are of any interest, since, as long as the performances of musical works are (more or less) complete and accurate and sufficiently resemble their respective types: "for all practical and aesthetic purposes it may not matter whether we can directly perceive only the tokens or the types also" [139]. But such a response is unsatisfactory on the part of an ontologist, for this proposed way of addressing the question is highly reminiscent of the kind of philosophical attitude that tends to rule a problem out of existence rather than clarify the confusion it generates.

A more interesting answer to this puzzle comes from Wolterstorff[140]. His proposal is that musical works as kinds are accessed and perceived *in and through* their complete and accurate instances, so that in hearing their performance-instances we perceive the kind as well. Note that a distinction should be made between physical object-kinds, such as the

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[139] Trivedi, S., *Music and Metaphysics*, Metaphilosophy 39, Issue 1, pp. 124–143, 2008, p. 130

[140] Wolterstorff, N. "*Worlds and Works of Art*" 1980, pp.40-41

Union Jack, and musical work-kinds. In the case of the former, we do not literally perceive the kind but rather only intellectually grasp it while perceiving its instances; in the case of the latter, conversely, we actually hear the work itself through hearing its tokens, say, performances or recordings. It is not that we perceive the musical work-kind in a way deprived of conceptual representation: any coherent appreciation of musical works must in fact involve some sort of intellection; rather, the issue is that while we need an extra intellectual operation to grasp a physical object-kind such as the *Union Jack*, we hear the type that is the musical work *through* its tokens.

Thus, Wolterstorff's suggestion is that it ordinary induction from tokens suffices to give us reliable knowledge of types. We may call the principle behind this inference the *Platonic Relationship Principle[141]*. According to the *Platonic Relationship Principle,* types, as quasi-natural kinds have precisely the same properties that all the tokens have. This standard Platonic solution, involving the relevant relation between types and tokens is instantiation and that the transition is inductive generalization, reduces the type/token issue to the general problem of induction. However, it runs into a few difficulties. No such properties are applicable to all tokens of a certain type, at least not in the case of musical works: there aren't two performances with exactly the same dynamics, nor two with the same sound qualities, since the only property shared by all the performances of a work is that of being performances of the same type. Thus, "the cookie cutter model"[142], as a type that gives a perceptible pattern for what all the tokens look like, does not function for musical works.

But Wolterstorff's proposal could also be viewed as shedding light on an Aristotelian solution[143] to the epistemological/exemplification difficulties defined above, such as that endorsed by Wollheim (1968). If we perceive musical work-kinds *in and through* their performance-tokens, then they exist *as inhering* in their instances or tokens. In other words, this implies that musical works are not entities inhabiting some Platonic heaven, out of space and time, necessarily divided from their performances. On the contrary, they must exist *in* their tokens, not separated from them[144]. We can call this view musical Immanentism as

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[141] Bromberger, S, *On What We Know We Don't Know*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1992

[142] Wetzel, Linda, *Types and Tokens*, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2014 Edition)

[143] Cf. Saam Trivedi, *Music and Metaphysics*, Metaphilosophy 39, Issue 1, pp. 124–143, 2008

[144] Cf. Margolis, H.,*Patterns, Thinking and Cognition: A Theory of Judgement*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1987

opposed to Platonic Transcendentism. In this perspective, the fact that musical works are audible through their performances is no longer a concern.

Wollheim's answer to the question of the existence of universals is admittedly simlilar those of Realists like David Armstrong[145]. In an Aristotelian version of exemplification such as Armstrong's, types have no independent existence apart from their tokens. They are "in" each and every of them, and so can be seen or heard just as the tokens can be. Universal "whiteness" for instance, exists as inherent in white objects, not in some completely independent Hyperuranion, or in our minds.

Julian Dodd subscribes as well to a kind of Armstrong-like theory of properties[146]. He combines the principle of instantiation, mentioned above, with Armstrong's naturalism, i.e. the view that universals exist only instantiated, that is *within* the spatio-temporal realm as opposed to the transcendent "platonic" view of universals"[147]. Immanentism as applied to musical works seems to have some virtues: for instance, it implies that musical works as abstracta exist in this world independently of us, thus avoiding the epistemological problem mentioned above, i.e., how we have knowledge of abstract objects.

Nonetheless, it has at least two unfortunate consequences for Platonists like Dodd. First, Immanentism makes it very hard to explain how some types have no tokens, that is, how some musical works have no instances, since in this view there cannot be uninstantiated Universals. And, second, it naturally implies that musical works *qua* immanent types begin to exist when they begin to be instantiated, and cease to exist when they cease to be instantiated. If Dodd wants to resist this conclusion, he must explain how properties can have temporal beginnings while their relevant types are uncreated. Dodd might reply that, even if some abstract objects are brought into being by spatio-temporal events, this 'being brought into being' is not creation. That is, Dodd might say, from the fact that musical works are temporally initiated it does not follow that they are created. But this sounds rather unconvincing. We will deal with the question of the creatability of musical works in the next chapter.

Another objection could be raised against the Immanentist view of musical works *qua* abstracta. Consider the case of the copies of the score of a musical work or its manuscript:

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[145] Armstrong, *Universals: An Opinionated Introduction*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989, p. 75 and followings.

[146] Dodd, J. "*Musical Works as Eternal Types*." *British Journal of Aesthetics* 40(2000): 424-440, p. 436

[147] Armstrong, *Universals: An Opinionated Introduction*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989

they are not audible *per se*. Thus, even though musical works may be said to somehow inhere in (and be retrieved or accessed from) copies of their scores, nevertheless these would no longer be proper tokens or instances of the musical work, as they are not audible. So we would be forced to admit that, though musical works generally inhere in their scores and manuscripts, the latter are not, strictly speaking, instances of the relevant works, since they do not preserve the works' specific character of being audible. One could object that a competent musician can hear a piece in his/her head by looking at the score, but according to Trivedi (2008), this hearing "in one's head": "(…) is not the usual kind of public hearing through one's ears, which is how musical works are meant to be heard, standardly, with all their timbres, harmonies, melodies, dynamics, and so forth. In particular, it is doubtful if one hears all timbres or tone colors as well as crescendos, decrescendos, and the like when one hears in one's head, the way one hears timbres, crescendos, decrescendos, and the like through the normal, public mode of hearing through one's ears" [148]. Thus again, the objection holds: from a musical Immanentist standpoint, scores, unlike performances and playing, cannot be regarded *stricto sensu* as tokens of musical works, which goes against some of our basic assumptions regarding the role of sheet music.

A further possibility for explaining what the type-token relation should be to enable us to move from knowledge of the concrete to knowledge of the abstract comes from philosopher Zoltan Gendler Szabó. It is, as he calls it, the *Representation view*[149]. According to this view, tokens *represent* their types, just as signs and symbols represent, or "stand for" their *representata*. The idea that tokens are to be understood as representations or "depictions" is, in fact, not new, but Szabó declines it in the context of analytical metaphysics. A representation is a symbol, something whose primary function is to stand for its *representatum*: "Besides paintings and photographs, the class of representations includes maps, numerals, hand gestures, traffic signs, horn signals and much else. It does not, however, include smoke, as long as this is not a smoke signal but a natural sign for fire. For smoke is not an artifact made by us in order to represent fire".[150] Just as a city plan gives us some knowledge of a city, tokens give us some of the type. Transposed to the musical field, such an account implies that performances can provide us with consistent knowledge of the musical work as a type, thus avoiding the epistemological problem. Of course, the city plan

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[148] Trivedi, S., *Music and Metaphysics*, Metaphilosophy 39, Issue 1, pp. 124–143, 2008
[149] Szabó, Z., *Expressions and Their Representations*, The Philosophical Quarterly, 49 (2009): 145-163, p.149
[150] Szabó, Z.,, p.150

does not by itself "do all the justification"[151]: we must also have reason to think that it represents the city arrangement correctly. Accordingly, only correct performances can properly represent a musical work.

What is worthier of note is that from the representation point of view the move from tokens to types is not a matter of simple inductive generalization, in Szabó words: "If tokens are in fact representations of types, we have an alternative solution to the type/token problem: in learning about an object, we can use its representations"[152]. However, when applied to musical works, the point of view of representation also gives rise to a serious problem. It turns out that just as *representata* do not coincide with their *representanda* (a plan of a city is not the city itself), performances of a work are not the work itself. This runs contrarily to our ordinary assumption that while listening to a performance of a work we listen to the work, not just a "symbolic representation", "reduction" or "symbol" of it.

Critics of Hard Core Platonism

Let's try to summarize what we have just said about hard core Platonism. According to Hardcore Platonists, musical works are ideal types (Kivy, 2004, and Dodd, 2007) or kinds (Wolterstorff, 1975) that do not exist in our spatiotemporal world as their tokens do. As abstract objects, musical works cannot enter directly into causal relationship with us, they are discovered or selected by composers, and, once brought into being, cannot disappear.

Various arguments have been brought forth against this account: that is, against the counter-intuitive implications of hardcore Platonism with respect to many of the assumptions we have concerning musical works. We can summarize the main objections as follows:

(1) the *perceptibility* objection: musical works possess perceptual properties while universals, as standardly conceived, do not;

(2) the *creatability* objection: musical works are created by theircomposers. Thus, they must not exist prior to the composer's compositional activity, but are brought into existence by that activity. Abstract objects, conversely, are generally referred to as eternal and immutable, i.e. entities which cannot be created;

(3) the *destructibility* objection: musical works can be destroyed by destroying (i) their properly formed examples, (ii) their generating "notation", and (iii) all memory of this notation, whilst Platonic entities can in no way be destroyed;

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[151]Ibid.
[152] Ibid.

(4) the *identity conditions* objection: according to Platonism, two musical works having the same sound structure, are the same musical work. Alternatively, if two different people compose the same tonal structure, they compose the same musical work[153]. Yet, there can be musical works that share the same sound sequences, but are nonetheless different works, since different properties are to be considered for their appreciation.

Of these claims, (1), (2) and (3) seem to be true, but are not logically incompatible with a hardcord?? Platonic construal of musical works. (4) presupposes that a musical work is fundamentally an abstract sound structure; to this extent, a musical work's instrumentation would not necessarily be a feature of its identity. It is what Kivy calls the criterion of the "fine individuation" [154].

We will briefly address the first three objections to see whether hard Platonists can convincingly defend themselves from the accusation of inconsistency. We will postpone an analysis of the fourth to the section called "Soft Platonism".

The Perceptibility Objection

Objection: *works of music cannot be Platonic entities since they are perceptually graspable, while Platonic entities are not.*

The idea is that if we conceive musical works as abstracta, then it becomes very tricky to explain how they can normally be heard, for types are abstract objects, and like all abstract objects (universals, kinds, types, and so on), they can only be conceived or thought of or imagined, yet not sensibly perceived. Only tokens, i.e. performances and playings, can be heard. The objection calls into play two of the main metaphysical problems existing since the age of Plato, the *epistemological* question on the one hand, i.e. the question of how we come to know about abstract objects we believe exist; and the *exemplification* question on the other, i.e. the question of how abstracta are related to their instances. While it is quite clear, in a sense, how we acquire knowledge of concrete objects, it is unclear how we acquire any knowledge of abstract objects. It is hard to believe that it is simply their primitive abstractness that makes the difference: it is much easier to believe that it is their non-spatiality or their causal inefficacy. These last two features make it complicated to maintain that we perceive abstracta just as we perceive physical objects.

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[153] Davies D., "*The Primacy of Practice in the Ontology of Art*", Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, 67: 159–71. 2009, p.160

[154] See: Kivy, P., "*Orchestrating Platonism*",1988a reprinted in Kivy 1993, pp. 75–94.

We can rephrase the dilemma as follows: since we don't see or hear the type a musical work is, as it isn't located anywhere in space-time, how can we, spatiotemporal creatures, know it, or know what its properties are? How can tokens be an appropriate guide to what the type is like? Answers to such concerns try to bridge the gap between the abstract realm and the concrete phenomena we want to account for and tell us enough to understand its connection to our cognitive faculties.

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Another possibility for the hard Platonist, as suggested by Trivedi, would be to deny that such metaphysical dilemmas are of any interest, since, as long as the performances of musical works are (more or less) complete and accurate and sufficiently resemble their respective types: "for all practical and aesthetic purposes it may not matter whether we can directly perceive only the tokens or the types also" [155]. But such a response is unsatisfactory on the part of an ontologist, for this proposed way of addressing the question is highly reminiscent of the kind of philosophical attitude that tends to rule a problem out of existence rather than clarify the confusion it generates.

A more interesting answer to this puzzle comes from Wolterstorff[156]. His proposal is that musical works as kinds are accessed and perceived *in and through* their complete and accurate instances, so that in hearing their performance-instances we perceive the kind as well. Note that a distinction should be made between physical object-kinds, such as the *Union Jack*, and musical work-kinds. In the case of the former, we do not literally perceive the kind but rather only intellectually grasp it while perceiving its instances; in the case of the latter, conversely, we actually hear the work itself through hearing its tokens, say, performances or recordings. It is not that we perceive the musical work-kind in a way deprived of conceptual representation: any coherent appreciation of musical works must in fact involve some sort of intellection; rather, the issue is that while we need an extra

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[156] Wolterstorff, N. "*Worlds and Works of Art*" 1980, pp.40-41

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But Wolterstorff's proposal could also be viewed as shedding light on an Aristotelian solution[159] to the epistemological/exemplification difficulties defined above, such as that endorsed by Wollheim (1968). If we perceive musical work-kinds *in and through* their performance-tokens, then they exist *as inhering* in their instances or tokens. In other words, this implies that musical works are not entities inhabiting some Platonic heaven, out of space and time, necessarily divided from their performances. On the contrary, they must exist *in* their tokens, not separated from them[160]. We can call this view musical Immanentism as opposed to Platonic Transcendentism. In this perspective, the fact that musical works are audible through their performances is no longer a concern.

Wollheim's answer to the question of the existence of universals is admittedly similar those of Realists like David Armstrong[161]. In an Aristotelian version of exemplification such as Armstrong's, types have no independent existence apart from their tokens. They are "in" each and every of them, and so can be seen or heard just as the tokens can be. Universal

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[157] Bromberger, S, *On What We Know We Don't Know*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1992

[158] Wetzel, Linda, *Types and Tokens*, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2014 Edition)

[159] Cf. Saam Trivedi, *Music and Metaphysics*, Metaphilosophy 39, Issue 1, pp. 124–143, 2008

[160] Cf. Margolis, H.,*Patterns, Thinking and Cognition: A Theory of Judgement*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1987

[161] Armstrong, *Universals: An Opinionated Introduction*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989, p. 75 and followings.

"whiteness" for instance, exists as inherent in white objects, not in some completely independent Hyperuranion, or in our minds.

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Another objection could be raised against the Immanentist view of musical works *qua* abstracta. Consider the case of the copies of the score of a musical work or its manuscript: they are not audible *per se*. Thus, even though musical works may be said to somehow inhere in (and be retrieved or accessed from) copies of their scores, nevertheless these would no longer be proper tokens or instances of the musical work, as they are not audible. So we would be forced to admit that, though musical works generally inhere in their scores and manuscripts, the latter are not, strictly speaking, instances of the relevant works, since they do not preserve the works' specific character of being audible. One could object that a competent musician can hear a piece in his/her head by looking at the score, but according to Trivedi (2008), this hearing "in one's head": "(…) is not the usual kind of public hearing through

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[163] Armstrong, *Universals: An Opinionated Introduction*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989

one's ears, which is how musical works are meant to be heard, standardly, with all their timbres, harmonies, melodies, dynamics, and so forth. In particular, it is doubtful if one hears all timbres or tone colors as well as crescendos, decrescendos, and the like when one hears in one's head, the way one hears timbres, crescendos, decrescendos, and the like through the normal, public mode of hearing through one's ears" [164]. Thus again, the objection holds: from a musical Immanentist standpoint, scores, unlike performances and playing, cannot be regarded *stricto sensu* as tokens of musical works, which goes against some of our basic assumptions regarding the role of sheet music.

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[164] Trivedi, S., *Music and Metaphysics*, Metaphilosophy 39, Issue 1, pp. 124–143, 2008
[165] Szabó, Z., *Expressions and Their Representations*, The Philosophical Quarterly, 49 (2009): 145-163, p.149
[166] Szabó, Z.,, p.150
[167]Ibid.

learning about an object, we can use its representations"[168]. However, when applied to musical works, the point of view of representation also gives rise to a serious problem. It turns out that just as *representata* do not coincide with their *representanda* (a plan of a city is not the city itself), performances of a work are not the work itself. This runs contrarily to our ordinary assumption that while listening to a performance of a work we listen to the work, not just a "symbolic representation", "reduction" or "symbol" of it.

The Creatability Objection

Objection: works of music cannot be abstract entities since they are created by artists. Abstracta, conversely, are eternal and immutable and cannot be created but merely discovered.

The first to raise this fortunate objection, which has found such wide resonance in the subsequent literature, was Richard Rudner in his 1950 seminal paper. If a work of music such as Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* is regarded as an abstract entity, Rudner states, then this would have "as a counter-intuitive consequence a denial that Beethoven created the *Fifth Symphony*" [169].

Rudner brought to light a fundamental contradiction inherent in musical Platonism that many after him have addressed. As in the formulation recently given to it by Kania[170] and Cameron[171] the paradox originates from a triad of inconsistent propositions that may be specified as follows:

(1) Works of art are created.

(2) Works of art are abstract objects.

(3) Abstract objects cannot be created.

A solution to this contradiction would be either to deny the first premise, (1), or to deny the second, (2) or to reject the conclusion (3). Platonist philosophers, such as Wolterstorff , Kivy and Dodd, have preferred to deny (1), holding that musical works are not brought into being by an act of creation.

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[168] Ibid.

[169] Rudner, R., *The ontological status of the esthetic object*, Philosophy and Phenomenological Research Vol. 10, No. 3 (Mar., 1950), pp. 380-388, P.385

[170] Kania, A., *"New Waves in Musical Ontology"*, in *New Waves in Aesthetics*, K. Stock and K. Thomson-Jones (eds.), New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, pp. 20–40, p. 22

[171] Cameron, Ross P., *There are No Things That are Musical Works,* Brit J Aesthetics (2008) 48 (3): 295-314, p.295

Others, especially Nominalists such as Cameron, Caplan and Matheson, have preferred to deny (2), stating that musical works should be recognized as concrete spatio-temporal entities. Another possible strategy would be to correct (3) by arguing that not every abstract object is, by definition, eternal and located outside of space-time, since in principle there is the possibility of temporally reliant abstracta. To this extent, some philosophers have claimed that the paradox is generated by inappropriate, basically metaphysical, assumptions about the nature of types[172].

We will turn our attention briefly to solutions (2) and (3), and linger longer on solution (1), which is much more significant to the ontology of music. In any case, note that alternative proposals for resolving the contradiction have been raised in the debate[173], but since they all imply a revision of the "most hard core" Platonist assumptions, we shall address them in the section entitled Soft Platonism.

Solution (2) musical works are not abstract objects

We have already treated the main arguments against musical works as abstract objects in the section dedicated to musical Nominalism. The relevant idea is that if the claim that musical works cannot be regarded as abstract objects turns out to be correct, then, among other things, the fact that they are created ceases to be paradoxical.

We shall sum up, for the sake of our discourse, some the most relevant objections against recourse to abstracta.

The *mind-independency* argument: There are reasons to deny that abstract artifacts, such as Haydn's *Quartets* and Beethoven's *Symphonies* are eternally existing abstract entities that spatiotemporal composers merely "discovered" but did not create. Indeed there is a clear sense in which these objects-items depend for their existence on their composer's mental activity, and perhaps also on the mental activity of subsequent listeners. This feature may not count as mind-dependence *stricto sensu*, since *Hayden's Quartets* can presumably exist at a time when no one happens to be listening: if the world took a brief collective siesta, *Haydn's Quartets* would not pop out of existence. But musical works are obviously mind-dependent in

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[172] Cf. Peter Alward (2004). Thomasson, for instance, has argued that at least some works of art (i.e., musical and literary works) are a kind of "abstract artifact" meriting recognition as genuine creations and similarly Barry Smith (2008) has argued for what he calls 'quasi-abstract patterns', which like numbers are nonphysical and non-psychological, but which are tied, through the actions of agents, to a time and historical context.

[173] See particularly Levinson (1980), Kania (2008a, 2008b)

some other relevant way, that is, in that they depend on intentional human activity in order to be experienced[174].

The *Ockham's razor* argument.

If it is possible to demonstrate that certain concrete objects can do the theoretical job of abstract objects, then postulating further redundant entities should be avoided. If the theoretical function performed by *abstracta* can be performed by *concreta* and vice versa, then the most economic solution must be preferred. Moreover, one should not postulate *ad hoc* entities where the only evidence for the existence of the *abstracta* in question is that they perform the theoretical function in question[175].

To this extent, the Nominalist objector could argue that Dodd committed himself to unnecessary Platonism, thereby violating Ockham's razor. Indeed, the objector argues, Dodd is right to say that being a performance of a musical work is just to instantiate the property *being-an-x*. But *being-an-x* only requires that something sufficiently resembles the paradigmatic cases of *x*, not that it meets the conditions laid down by some abstract entity. What counts as a paradigmatic instance of x is determined by composers. So, the objector infers, the postulation of an abstract entity is superfluous.

The *epistemological and exemplification* argument: Another widely discussed argument against abstract objects is the epistemological argument. The argument is grounded in the idea that given that abstract objects are causally inert, it is difficult to understand how we can have knowledge or reliable beliefs about them and how they can inform their instances. We have already addressed this subject in the chapter on *Perceptibility Objection*. The challenge for the Platonist is to explain how knowledge of and reference to abstract objects is possible.

The important thing to stress here is that none of these arguments conclusively establishes Nominalism to the detriment of Platonism, in terms of musical works, and each gives rise to additional difficulties. Nevertheless, if they were to work, they show a number of **??** *lacuna* in Platonism.

Solution (3)Abstract objects can be created

This solution challenges the hasty definition of abstracta as atemporal, non-spatial, and acausal entities. If one could prove that abstract objects are at least in a certain sense spatio-

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[174] Cf. the debate on musical work destructibility discussed in the next paragraph.

[175] See Rodriguez-Pereyra, *Resemblance Nominalism. A Solution to the Problem of Universals*, Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 210–16

temporally located, then their creatabiliy would no longer be a problem for philosophers committed to musical Platonism.

In a 2004 paper, Ben Caplan and Carl Matheson challenge this conclusion in relation to the Platonistic conception of abstract objects. They argue for instance that the claim that abstract objects are non-spatio-temporal is questionable, since there is no agreement in the relevant debate on this. They state that the Platonist needs "another way of cashing out the distinction between abstract and concrete objects, one that is acceptable to [creationists and Platonists] alike"[176]. The feature of non-spatio-temporality of abstract objects it is A widely held metaphysical view held by many is that it is well motivated, but it is not the only one. Of course, it would make no sense to ask where the Pythagorean theorem was last Friday. Or if it does make sense, the only sensible answer is "nowhere". Theorems, as paradigmatic "pure abstracta" have apparently no location in time and space. However, at least some other abstract objects are in a more interesting relation to space-time.

Consider Napoleon's military strategy, for example. It is an abstract object in a sense, since it is not anywhere in space-time and is potentially multiply located, e.g. in the historical reenactments of the battles fought by Napoleon, say, Waterloo. But this is not the most natural view we have of it. The natural view is that this military strategy was invented at a certain place and period of time by Napoleon based on the "annihilation strategy" systematized by von Clausewitz and Antoine-Henri de Jomini; that before it was invented it did not exist at all; and that it still influences how we wage war today. Similar considerations also apply to musical works, of course. Thus, one might regard the case of military strategy and musical works as counterexamples of the view that abstract objects do not possess spatial and temporal properties.

Should we then abandon the non-spatiotemporality criterion? Not necessarily. The distinction between abstract and concrete objects, Caplan and Matheson suggest, can be defined differently. Many things that seem to be abstract also have a beginning (and ending) in time, languages, forms of urban subculture like Punk and dance styles such as Rockabilly.

All this suggests that the criterion of spatiotemporal-reliance may not be suitable for differentiating between concrete and abstract. Or, even better, that it is too restrictive a principle, since abstractness may come in degrees and there is no sharp line between abstracta and concreta.

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[176] Caplan, B. & Matheson, C. (2004). *Can a Musical Work Be Created?* British Journal of Aesthetics 44 (2):113-134, p.118

Solution (1): musical works are not created

The fact that musical works are created is *prima facie* needs no explanation, for it is one of our most firmly entrenched beliefs about art. There is probably no idea more essential to our thought about art than that it is an activity in which contributors create things, these things being artworks[177]. That musical and other artworks are not created but exist prior to their creation is something that runs counter to current artistic practice, which envisions artists as creating their works. The principle of creation is fundamental in the idea of "*genius*" already apparent in Kant's *Critique of Judgment* and even more pronounced in Schopenhauer. From a Romantic viewpoint, originality can only result from creation, and scientists can never be called "creative", or (therefore) geniuses, if only because of the obvious etymological connection between the term "genius" and the noun "genesis", meaning origin, *creation*. But aside from Romanticism, the whole philosophical tradition around art is based on the idea that art is a creative activity in the strictest sense, like the activity of a god that brings into existence what did not exist before, like a demiurge shaping a world out of inchoate matter[178]. The fact that we consider artists, including composers, creators and not mere discoverers, accounts in part for the special status we grant them, as opposed to ''mere'' discoverers like Columbus and Magellan. The notion that artists truly *add something* to the world, is so deep-rooted an idea that we find it almost impossible to abandon it[179]. But naturally, there are many other assumptions we used to think were essential that modern science has forced us to abandon. Consider the ideas that the earth is flat, that the sun revolves it, or that the present is absolute. For such a long time in human history these thoughts were so embedded in our intuitive image of the world that they seemed almost undeniable. In fact, they weren't. But what goes for science should go for art, say the Platonists. Accordingly, they argue that, just like many other common beliefs, the idea of a work being created can be questioned and even rejected, if our ontological theories on what works are lead us to do so. Platonist metaphysics cannot accommodate the idea of creatability of musical works that our common-sense tells us should be accounted for, since if musical works are types and types are eternal existents,

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[177]Cf. Levinson, J. (1980). *What a musical work is*. Journal of Philosophy 77 (1): 5-28, p. 8

[178] Levinson, J. (1980), p. 8

[179] To tell the truth, contemporary art has taught us that the conviction that art requires literally bringing something into existence, is in fact false. The tradition of ready-made, for instance, sees artists displaying everyday objects that they have picked up somewhere. And what about conceptual art? What is strictly created there? It is not that we (at least *qua* art connoisseurs) disvalue artists such as Marcel Duchamp because their creations consist only in putting already existing readymade objects or found objects in a museum, after giving them a title.

speaking in terms of creation is *nonsense*. Thus, we have to give up the very idea of works being created, according to the Platonists[180].

Dodd's original insight is that this nevertheless should not be of concern for us. What we should be truly interested in preserving, indeed, is not the idea of creatability but the creativity underlying it, i.e. that composers are involved in an extremely creative process (but not in the strict sense of creation), which requires them to be brilliant and ingenious people. The notion that the activity of composing involves a great deal of skill is not to be dismissed. But, he suggests, this does not mean that composition is a process of creation. Equating creative with creation is, according to another champion of hard core Platonism, Peter Kivy, an "obvious mistake"[181] we have to try as far as possible not to make. The solution Dodd offers is that composers in particular, rather than bringing something new into existence, *discover* or *select for attention* already existing entities. This act of discovery is creative in a primary sense, since composers go through a process of imagining various performances until they arrive at one that is satisfactory for their purposes[182]. This process does not result in creating or inventing new entities, it is the discovery of an eternally existing musical type. As we have already remarked, Dodd's reference here is to scientific discovery, albeit to a kind of naïve version of it, to imply that composers and scientists, contrary to the general view, are both engaged in the same endeavor, "discovery", even though: **"**The vulgar might describe the composer's work as "*creation*"[183].

Like Dodd, Wolterstorff is also committed to the idea that musical kinds, *qua* abstract entities, are neither created nor destroyed but, he states, selected by the composer. As we have mentioned before, composing is for Wolterstorff selecting a certain set of properties on the basis of such-and-such purposes which each proper occurrence of the work must exemplify. Wolterstorff thinks that art has the capacity to open up innovative ways of looking at the

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[180] We may have to consider another consequence of Platonist account: allowing that artworks in the other arts, say, painting, literature and so on are created, while musical works alone are discovered, results in an implausible divide in this respect across the arts, unjustifiably isolating music from the other arts in that musical works alone would be discovered, whereas paintings, sculptures, literary works, films, and so forth, are created.

[181] Kivy, P. *Platonism in Music, Another Kind of Defense,* in P.Kivy, *The fine art of Repetition, Essays in the Philosophy of Music,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1993, p.?

[182] Dodd, J., *Works of Music: An Essay in Ontology.* 2007 Oxford University Press, p. 112-113

[183] Kivy, P. *Platonism in Music, Another Kind of Defense,* in P.Kivy, *The fine art of Repetition, Essays in the Philosophy of Music,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1993 p. 70

world, projecting, as he puts it, a new *world* of their own. Yet, this capacity of "world-making", which is intrinsic to art depends nonetheless on a mode of selection, not on a mode of creation. For Wolterstorff too, as for Dodd, the artist is not thereby deprived of his creativeness, for it is he who envisages the non-suggested yet possible states of affairs artworks are believed to represent.

In support of musical Platonism, Peter Kivy defends the "seemingly bizarre conclusion" that musical works are discovered rather than created, against the skepticism of many proponents as well as critics of Platonism in music. In arguing for the plausibility of such a proposal, Kivy chooses three examples of what he calls "creative achievement"[184]. He refers to Pythagoras suddenly discovering the theorem which bears his name, to Mozart suddenly bumping into the theme of Allegro for the *Overture* to *Don Giovanni* and to Thomas Alva Edison having the idea of putting a tungsten filament in an empty container to invent the light bulb. These three brilliant different ideas, Kivy argues, just "popped into the head"[185] of their inventors. Thus, they all prove, he says, the sudden nature of the creative process, as psychologists call it, of which there is often no rational explanation: "Some people get bright ideas, most people don't. And the people who get them tell us they do not know how or why: they just pop into their heads. The ancient called it inspiration. I prefer that to the creative process"[186]. On the other hand, the mental process that gives rise to a creative achievement doesn't give us any evidence for deciding whether this achievement is a creation or a discovery. It is the product, not the process that can tell us whether we are in the presence of a discovery or a creation. Since ordinary language platonizes mathematics, we find it natural to say that Pythagoras discovered the theorem, just as we easily accept the invention of the light bulb as an example of creation, because it didn't exist before Edison invented it. But if we change perspective and take an instrumentalist view of mathematics, might we not say that the Pythagorean Theorem was a creation? Or that Edison discovered a way of getting light from electricity, a way which was there all along in the external world? Accordingly, Kivy maintains, in the case of Mozart we might have to reconsider how much like discovery the character of musical composition frequently is.

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[184] P. 67

[185] p.70

[186] Kivy, P. *Platonism in Music, Another Kind of Defense,* in P.Kivy, *The fine art of Repetition, Essays in the Philosophy of Music,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1993

Note that in addressing the question of music creatability we need to sort out the different meanings of the terms "creation", "discovery" and "invention". This is a task far beyond the scope of this chapter, however. We will limit ourselves to a few considerations.

First, ordinarily we see the word 'discovery' as opposed to the words 'invention' and 'creation' since it affects the epistemological modality and not the ontological modality of the already existing object that is not actualized simply because it is discovered. Rather, what epistemological changes occur between it and those who have discovered it?

As Charles O. Nussbaum has rightly remarked, invention and creation, on the other hand, actualize *possibilia*[187]. It might be assumed that the only objects that can be discovered are empirical objects, such as Edison's light bulb. But once again it seems that mathematical objects provide paradigmatic examples of discoveries. It is reasonable to claim that Pythagoras discovered a geometrical fact concerning right triangles on Euclidean planes. So if a theorem and a musical type are both abstract objects, why can't a hard Platonist justifiably claim that Mozart discovered the theme of the *Don Giovanni Overture* as a musical type? The feature to notice is that all the discoveries of Pythagoras were demonstrated by way of chains of deductive reasoning which are a-temporal. But if deductive relations are timelessly valid, then the Pythagorean theorem has always been true and has always existed[188]. In order to make the case that musical works are discovered, hard Platonists must take a similar approach to musical works. Yet, since there are no timelessly valid deductive rules to justify a specific musical work in the range of musical possibility, as there are in logic or in mathematics, then there is no grounds for regarding these works as actual before they were composed. Thus, musical works are not actual before their composition in the way mathematical entities, *qua* necessarily existing abstract objects, arguably are before their discovery. But if this is correct, then musical works are also not discovered, *pace* hard core Platonism.

On the other hand, consider that if creation in the proper sense is always creation *ex nihilo*, then no human activity can strictly speaking be regarded as creating, art included. Therefore, there would be no reason to argue for the rigid idea of the creation of art as introducing something completely new into world ontology. Objects like armchairs and forks are not strictly speaking "created", because their invention simply resulted in an armchair-like arrangement of stuff that already exists in the world. When we claim that armchairs and forks

[187] Nussbaum, O.C., *The Musical Representation, Meaning, Ontology, and Emotion*, MIT Press, Cambridge 2008, p.174
[188] Nussbaum. O. C., p. 175

were created, we should not suppose that their inventors were doing anything more than re-arranging material that already existed. Likewise, in saying that "Mozart created the *Allegro* theme of *Don Giovanni*'s *Overture*" and "there was something new in the world once the *Allegro* theme of *Don Giovanni*'s *Overture*" was introduced, we are right, because Mozart really contributed by adding something to the world in that sense. But what he really introduced wasn't a completely new creation *ex nihilo*. When composing, musicians make creative decisions about which notes to select, how to combine them, what instrumentation, tempo, dynamics, phrasing to give them, and so on. As a result of such creative decisions, what comes about is something that in this sense did not exist prior to this activity and has now come into existence. But of course this is not creating something out of nothing into the ontology of the world.

To conclude, note that the whole discussion seems in a sense to rest on the ambiguities of ordinary language more than on content. If what hard core Platonists call "discovery" has the very same features of what its adversaries call "creation" then it's all a matter of agreement as to which terminology to use. Philosophers who still think there is a serious question about whether to speak in terms of creation or discovery should make clear why this is not a conceptual distinction but rather a serious ontological one.

The Destructibility Objection

Objection: works of art cannot be Platonic entities since they can be destroyed by destroying all their properly formed instances, say, their generating "notation", and human memory of this notation.

The problem stems from the fact that musical works, regarded as abstract objects, cannot cease to exist, since abstract objects are eternal. It may be argued that, unlike the visual arts, we do not have a sufficiently clear idea about musical works to assess answers to questions about their cessation. As Saam Trivedi has recently noted[189], it is not by chance that issues about the cessation of musical works have only seldom been raised in the vast literature on musical ontology, whereas the debate is lively in the ontology of figurative art. Jerrold Levinson is among the few philosophers (Trivedi included) to have asked such questions, though even he did not explore them at length[190]. It would seem worthwhile to distinguish between cessation and destruction, as destruction implies the intention to destroy, whereas

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[189] Trivedi, S. (2008), *Music And Metaphysics*, Metaphilosophy, 39: 124–143; p. 127
[190] He dedicates to the issue just few pages (261-263) of his 1990 essay "*Music Art and Metaphysics*".

cessation is not-intentional and thus a broader category. However, in his contribution Levinson speaks indifferently of destruction and cessation. He offers a range of seven possible responses to the issue of the cessation of works of music: (1) once created, musical works are indestructible; at most they can be lost or become inaccessible to us; (2) musical works are destroyed together with the destruction of human species; (3) the permanent obliteration of all records and memories of musical works determines their destruction; (4) Disintegration of the musical practice that allows for musical performances (instruments, techniques, knowledge) destroys musical works; (5) Loss of the musical tradition and knowledge required to satisfactorily understand and appreciate musical works is sufficient to destroy them; (6) Absence of the material embodiments of musical works, i.e., scores, manuscripts, recordings, etc. (though not of conceptions and memories) implies their destruction; (7) Irreversible large-scale neglect of or disrespect for musical works destroys them.

Levinson suggests that the most justifiable answer is to be found in (3), though he does not deny that the Platonist idea of the indestructibility of musical works as in (1) still appeals to him, since, he argues, once a work is brought into being: "it *might* just inhabit the abstract realms of the universe, it seems, forever. Why should it lapse into nonexistence, one might ask, just because we do? It is perhaps a comforting thought that the nonmaterial products of culture, once given their start, may be logically destined to outlast us—at least in the rarefied sense here in question"[191]. Nevertheless, he maintains that –at least *prima facie*- it seems that whatever is brought into existence by human agency, can cease to exist over time, at least on grounds of symmetry[192]. Just as we intuitively accept the idea that musical works come into existence in a determinate period of time, similarly we may want to concede the corresponding possibility that they can cease to exist, just as autographic art can be created and destroyed (paintings and sculptures can be destroyed by being burned or torn down, for instance).

It is hard to deny such evidence: indeed, it seems that not only literary works and musical works cease to exist if there are no more manuscripts or printed copies or complete and accurate memories of them, but scientific theories too, such as Newtonian classical mechanics can cease to exist, if there are no humans to understand it, though its law would still remain valid. Thus, the claim that musical works alone, once created, cannot cease to exist has no

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[191] Levinson, J*., Music, Art and Metaphysics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 1990, p. 263
[192] P.262

clear rationale. Levinson's suggestion that musical works might exist forever in ''the abstract realms of the universe'' seems more like a wish on his part ("a comforting thought", as he puts it) than a theoretical conviction.

Hard core Platonism turns out to be unsustainable, since the idea that whenever works are irretrievably lost they still continue to exist in Some Platonic indeterminate realm is implausible. Trivedi remarks that since our main interest, as audience members, is in having the chance to appropriately experience musical works, if this is impossible because they are irretrievable and not "reconstructible", then we should argue that "(for all practical and aesthetic purposes) the artworks in question have ceased to exist as artworks (though they may still exist as physical objects)"[193]. In this sense, musical works are at least partially mind-dependent (as opponents of abstract objects claim), since if they are not conceived by a human mind, or if the human mind, with the demise of the human species, disappears from the planet, then they cease to exist as artworks, even if they may exist as physical objects, i.e., as written pieces of paper. Works of music (and art in general), Trivedi argues, involve the existence of human beings: "if no humans exist to experience artworks as artworks, then artworks do not exist as artworks , even if they may still exist as pieces of canvas or blocks of stone or pieces of paper with marks on them"[194]. This is not to make the case for an Idealist view of musical works such as Collingwood's, since to say that works depend on human experience of art, is not the same as saying that musical works are merely private, mental entities, existing only in the minds of their creators. Of course, human extinction does not necessarily mean that paper ceases to exist *qua* paper, as paper has certain mind-independent chemical and physical properties in virtue of which it can exist even if there is no human to write on it. Yet, musical works *qua* works wouldn't continue to exist if they cannot be experienced as art, since works of art resist reduction to their physical-material bases.

Of course, a distinction should be made between works being destroyed forever or only temporarily lost (e.g., a musical work which is unknown to us and yet exists, for its manuscript lies somewhere undiscovered only to be found in the future). This is the case when musical works are "rediscovered" or "retrieved"; they existed all along, but they were unknown because they were unperformed, unpopular or forgotten. It should be noted that in such cases the musical work itself has not undergone a transformation, even though its mode of existence may have changed. Given the possibility that some musical works will be

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[193] Trivedi, S. (2008), *Music And Metaphysics*, Metaphilosophy, 39: 124–143; p.
[194] Trivedi, S., p.126

forgotten, it might be said that a musical work ceases to exist when the composer's original manuscript and all copies of it cease to exist.

To sum up, it seems plausible to state that there are two necessary and sufficient conditions for musical works to cease to exist: (1) there are no more tokens of them (performances and recordings, manuscripts, copies of the score, full and correct memories), and (2) there are no more intelligent beings capable of experiencing them *as works*. Both (1) and (2), taken separately or in conjunction, cause musical works to cease to exist.

Note that from the discussion as to when and how musical works are destroyed we can learn some useful lessons in musical ontology. First, that musical works cannot exist independently of their tokens or of us, as hard core Transcendentist Platonism suggests. Second, that musical works are not private imaginary entities, but public entities that can collectively be heard and shared, though they need human intelligence to be appreciated and understood as works of art. Third, that even if we cannot identify musical works with the physical objects they materially consist of (it is not so clear what the physical basis of music is compared to painting, for instance),[195] their existence is nevertheless tied to the existence of this physical basis, that is, normally musical works exist when their performances, manuscripts or copies of them exist.

Soft Platonism

Soft Platonism tries to correct the most unconvincing features of Hard Platonism with a more commonsense-friendly approach. Proponents, like Levinson (1980, 1990), Stephen Davies (2001), Howell (2002), Stecker (2003) Thomasson (2004b), are motivated by evidence seen in musical practice: that musical works are creatable, the attribution of various aesthetic and artistic properties to works the historical-stylistic individuation of works and performances (in terms of who composed them, or what instruments are needed to properly perform them.

According to Soft core Platonism, musical works are abstract objects, i.e., they exist apart from their performances and scores, which explains their repeatability, but nevertheless are not eternal or non-spatiotemporal entities; rather, they come to exist in time as the result of human activity. They are, as Levinson puts it: created; directly individuated by the context to which they belong; and characterized by a specific instrumentation as a necessary feature of

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[195] Moreover, even if performed sounds (and possibly manuscripts and scores) could be said to form the physical bases of music, it seems that some musical works may exist not where these physical bases are, as is the case with paintings and carved sculptures, but solely in the minds of their creators, as in the cases of unwritten and unperformed works (though here again it might be said that the neural events of their creators form the physical bases of such works).

their identity. This triad of assumptions represents the three *desiderata* every viable ontological theory on musical works should respect, according to Soft core Platonists. On the basis of the implicit view that the demands of art "trump the demands of metaphysics"[196], soft core Platonists offer a modified Platonist view. Here we will focus mainly on Levinson's position, as spelled out in his 1980 seminal paper "*What a Musical Work Is*".

Levinson argues that a musical work, once created, is a distinct entity, not reducible to the class of performances and copies of the score, but something in its own right, to which we can attribute specific properties. Nevertheless, he rejects Dodd and Kivy's temptation to identify it with an eternal unchangeable entity. His argument is based, as mentioned above, on three basic claims. Works:

(1) do not exist before the compositional activity of their composer, and are brought into existence by that activity;

(2) are such that composers in different musical-historical contexts, though creating the identical sound structure, invariably compose musical works with a distinct style;

(3) are such that specific means of execution (instrumentation) are integral to them.

That musical works are the result of a particular person's compositional activity, as stated in number (1), is fundamental, according to Levinson, not only to our pre-theoretical images of art in general, but also to our appreciation of musical works. Levinson argues that knowing who the composer of a musical work is influences how we judge it, in that the composer is representative of the particular historical and stylistic era in which he/she lived/lives. Thus, musical works are characterized by many non-intrinsic features that depend on the particular traditions of the historical periods in which they are composed (2). Finally, Levinson continues, integral to a particular musical work are the means of performance and nuances obtained through specifications on how to play it (3). From 1750 on, if not before, these specifications have helped establish the character of a work and its particular tonality and tempo: "The idea that composers of the last 300 years were generally engaged in composing pure sound patterns, to which they were usually kind enough to append suggestions as to how they might be realized is highly implausible"[197].

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[196] Kania, A., *The Methodology of Musical Ontology: Descriptivism and its Implications,* Brit J Aesthetics *(2008) 48 (4): 426-444, P.* 429

[197] Levinson, J.(1980),*What a musical work is*, Journal of Philosophy 77 (1):5-28.; note that, as Goehr remarks, 300 years is probably too much. Compositions from 1750 on involved definite means of performance. 1750 to nowadays is nearer 200 years.

With these three *desiderata* in mind, Levinson is able to reject the hard core Platonist depiction of musical works as pure, everlasting types, since it does not take into account the importance of creativity, historical location and instrumental specifications to their identity. Rather than being eternal types, musical works, suggests Levinson, are *initiated-types* which derive, *via* an act of indication, from pure types. While the existence of pure types is prior to any creative activity, *indicated types* come into existence through compositional activity, for, he says, *indicated types* are "construed as arising from an operation, like indication performed upon a pure structure"[198] (the pure type). The ultimate description of a musical work Levinson adopts is that it is: "a sound/performing-means structure as initiated by X at t, where X is a particular person –the composer- and t, the time of composition"[199]. Or, in the 1990 formulation: "ψ as indicated by θ at t"[200], where ψ is the abstract structure, while θ is the composer creating the work at the time t . According to Levinson, pure types ψ, which musical works are (i.e. sequences of notes, rhythmic cells), are eternal existents, just as hard Platonists think. Though, he adds, since the act of indication of ψ takes place at a peculiar time, the resulting *indicated-type* is in all respects *a new entity*, a conclusion that hard core Platonist metaphysics can obviously not accommodate.

Objection: Obscurity of the concept of Indicated Types

Levinson's idea is that musical works are complex entities made up of a sound structure and a performance means structure, *indicated* by someone at a certain time (note that, among the terms figuring alongside "indicate" in Levinson's descriptions of what the artist does with the abstract object, there are also "discover", "choose", and "demonstrate").

It seems that, according to Levinson, for an indicated abstract entity to exist it has to be brought into existence by someone, namely, its composer, since it cannot precede this act of indication. Hard core Platonists' argue, conversely, that types exist only in cases where the conditions for being a token of that type exist; and if the conditions for being an indicated type exist, then these conditions exist eternally. Therefore Levinson's mistake, the Platonists argue, is thinking that because tokens of an indicated type can only exist after the act of indication, then the indicated type itself does not exist eternally[201]. Like it or not, they

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[198] Levinson, J. p.20
[199] ibid.
[200] Levinson, J *What a musical Work is again*, in *Music Art and Metaphisics*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1990 pp. 64-65
[201] Dodd, J., *Works of Music: An Essay in Ontology*. 2007 Oxford University Press, 2007p. 71

continue, if types are abstract objects, then they exist eternally and the idea of musical works being created must be rejected. Aside from the particular relevance of this argument, it throws light on an important element of ambiguity in Levinson's argument. As Currie remarks, Levinson's ontological category: "structure-as-indicated-by-artist at time *t*" is "metaphysically obscure"[202]. Edison discovered the light bulb in 1878, but is it not redundant to say that in so doing he also created the entity "light bulb-as-discovered-by-Edison-in-the-year-1878"?

To be sure, Levinson places musical works in a new ontological class that is neither universal nor particular as tradition would have it. His depiction of musical works, in fact, requires them to have the necessary formal properties to give them universal status, but, because of their cultural affiliation, they are banned from the Platonic Heaven of abstracta and brought back to the (still abstract) historical world. By positing initiated types Platonists object, Levinson is introducing a new ontological category which we might, for reasons of metaphysical coherence, not find acceptable.. Why, they suggest, should we introduce another unfamiliar entity into our ontology to account for musical works? Is this not making an appeal to an illegitimate *ad hoc* argument?

Levinson may reply that this type of category is not that unusual in metaphysical thought. A distinction between two species of abstract objects, the first, free and absolute (in the etymological sense) like geometrical and mathematical entities, the other contingent and brought into being by human agency, was formerly envisaged by Husserl[203]. "*Contingent abstracta*" in this sense are cultural or social objects (artworks included), that is to say, historical entities with a temporal status, like money, shoes, literary works, and so on.

To this extent, the objection that Levinson is making an illegal move in referring to "this extra category of objects unfamiliar in traditional metaphysical frameworks to account for what he sees in pre-ontological terms"[204], may somehow be mistaken.

Objection: Sonicism vs Instrumentalism

Hard Platonists such as Kivy and Dodd argue that Levinson's account is unsustainable for other reasons as well. They maintain that considering the instrumental specifications and the

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[202] Currie. G. *An Ontology of Art*. St. Martin's Press, 1989, p. 58

[203] Husserl, E. *Experience and Judgement*, 1939 trans. J. S. Churchill and K. Ameriks, London: Routledge 1973,

[204] Goehr, L., *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007, p. 52

performance-means structure *integral* to the identity of the musical work, as in Levinson's instrumentalist view, is untenable. Conversely, they hold a view they refers to as "sonicism"[205]. According to sonicism, musical works are identified purely by how they sound. Thus, *any* sound-sequence event that sounds like a work K will be a token of type K and therefore an instance of work K. This is consistent to what is sometimes called a Platonist version of *Structuralism*[206]: a musical work *w* is *identical* to a sound structure: the identification of a certain structured collection of aural properties suffices for the identification of *w*. In the sonicist picture, instrumental specifications are thus unnecessary to the work's conditions of identity. This means, for instance, that the use of the harpsichord is not required to perform Bach's *English Suites,* and using another keyboard instrument or a modern piano would work as well; the only requisite for a correct instantiation of it is the production of the right notes in the right order. As a pure sonicist, Kivy[207] argues this is enough for a correct instantiation; while Dodd corrects this viewpoint by stating that, in order to have a true performance of a work, pitches must at least preserve the timbres of the composer's instrumentation[208].

Nevertheless both Dodd and Kivy contrast Levinson's claim that, in order to generate a correct instance of a work, sounds must be produced on the kinds of instruments specified in the score. They argue that from the instrumentalist view, since the instrumentation is regarded as essential to producing a correct performance of a work, one cannot account for the belief that, even though many works are transcribed and arranged for different instruments, subsequent performances are nevertheless performances of the same work. There are transcriptions, orchestrations and arrangements, all examples of ways of producing versions of the same work that do not change the essence of the work. Consequently, they demonstrate that instrumentation isn't essential to the identity of a work.

A compromise between sonicism and instrumentalism might be to follow Stephen Davies in considering works as ontologically 'thicker' or 'thinner'[209] depending on the number of specifications of a composer and the historical, musical and cultural conventions of his/her historical period. The more properties specified in a particular work, the thicker it is. Consequently, there is no one answer to the question of whether particular instrumentation is

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[205] Cf. Dodd 2007, p. 2
[206] Predelli, S., *Against Musical Platonism,* Brit J Aesthetics (1995) 35 (4): 338-350, p. 338
[207] See: Kivy "Orchestrating Platonism", 1988 are printed in Kivy 1993, pp. 75–94
[208] See: Dodd 2007, pp. 201–39
[209] See Davies, S., "*The Ontology of Musical Works and the Authenticity of their Performances*", 1991 reprinted in S. Davies 2003a, pp. 60–77

required for a fully authentic instantiation of a work. Sonicists may hold that Levinson's account is not valid for works (typically those dating before 1750) where instrumentation is flexible, while for others (for example, Romantic and Contemporary pieces) where quite specific instrumentation is required for fully authentic performances, it could work.

Note that much of this debate can be summed up as a debate about the authenticity of performances, that is, about the aesthetic or artistic properties essential to a correct reproduction of musical works. Such a discussion in musical ontology replicates a broader one in aesthetics between Structuralists or formalists -- those who believe that the essential features of a work are the *intrinsic* ones (formal structure) -- and Contextualists, who believe that a work is necessarily tied to the context in which it was created (identity conditions).

On the other hand, addressing the issue of how to produce a "correct performance" means addressing what Dodd calls the "*the individuation question*", that is, how works are identified and distinguished. This is certainly one of the most discussed ontological issues -- of interest to philosophers, musicologists, musicians, and audiences alike. But our main concern here is mainly to attend to the question of categorizing musical works. Thus, for the sake of synthesis, we refer readers to the vast literature already existent on the problem of authenticity[210] while we focus on another issue raised by the Contextualist viewpoint.

Objection: Works with identical structures

In the Contextualist account, if two composers independently produce two original scores which are notationally identical so that their performances have the same sound qualities, they still create two different works, while in the Structural Platonist account only one work is created.

Contestualists hold that the identity of an artwork is determined by the cultural setting, by the history of production and other contextual properties in which it is created, while structural Platonists reject this idea, stating that only the structural properties of a work are essential for it to be that work. One of the most pertinent arguments on this issue is presented in the famous "*Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote*" by Borges. The relevant part of this short story concerns a French symbolist who starts creating a novel by rewriting, though not simply copying, the text of Cervantes's masterpiece. The narrator of the story makes observations about ways in which Menard's work would be different from Cervantes's even if Menard somehow managed to produce something "verbally identical" to what Cervantes had written.

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[210] For an overview of the authentic performance debate, see particulary S. Davies 2001, 201–53; Kivy 1995, Gracyk 2001, Dodd 2010.

Contextualists like Levinson (1990, 1996) Davies (2004) and Walton (2008) maintain that a text that is word-for-word identical to Cervantes' Don Quixote yet written in the 20th Century would have different contextual and therefore different aesthetic properties from the original. Therefore, the two would have to be considered different, though both would have identical non-contextual properties. This implies that contextual properties of artworks should be included in their identity. Structuralists like Dodd, on the other hand, deny this and hold that if two different people compose the same tonal structure, they compose the same musical work[211]. There can be musical works that share the same sound sequences, but are nonetheless distinct works, since different properties are to be considered for their appreciation.

In abstract, the Menard case establishes that an object *x*, which is structurally and materially identical to another object *y,* is nevertheless diverse from *y* by possessing a set of different contextual properties, in virtue of having been produced in another cultural and historical context by a different artist. Shifting from literature to music, a similar example is used by Levinson, who refers to a sonata created at a certain time by Brahms but that had been formerly composed by Beethoven[212]. Along the same lines Savile imagines a case where Stockhausen independently composes "an ode notationally and semantically identical" to a composition by Stamitz. Savile proposes that "We should certainly not say that they had composed the same work, for the way in which it would be appropriate to hear them would be quite different".[213]

According to our pre-theoretical assumptions concerning the identity of musical works, however, both Contextualist and Structural Platonist answers turn out to be plausible[214]. Indeed, it seems that we would agree with Contextualists that if there are two different composers, their products must be two distinct entities, while at the same time, though conceding a point to the Platonists when they state that if we hear two performances that sound the same, we should regard them as the same work. This *prima facie* shows that a conflict exists concerning this issue in pre-ontological intuitions, but this tension is nevertheless easily overcome in practice, since in ordinary life there is no room for situations like the Brahms/Beethoven or the Stockhausen/Stamitz cases.

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[211] Davies "*The Primacy of Practice in the Ontology of Art*", *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 67 2009: 159–71, p.160

[212] See: Levinson, J., 1980, "*What a Musical Work Is*", reprinted in Levinson 1990a, pp. 63–88.

[213] Savile, A. *Nelson Goodman's 'languages of art': A study.* British Journal of Aesthetics 11 (1):3-27.1971, p. 23

[214] Cf. Goehr, L. *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, p.55

Many have doubted the utility of this kind of 'imaginary' debate. Wollheim, for instance, has criticized the value of thought experiments in a context like art and aesthetics, where the concepts in question, say artworks in general and musical works specifically, have no determinate conditions for their application -- only broad assumptions that can easily be "transgressed" by the apparent results of the thought experiment. Another challenge comes from David Davies[215]. Davies states that we may have reasonably doubt arguments that use hypothetical or conjectural contexts (that is to say, whose rationale is grounded in what we would do *if*) as in Borges' Pierre Menard and Levinson's Brahms-Beethoven's sonata, because they contradict our most common assumptions about reality, and are too wild to yield any clear intuitions. Thought experimentation such as the above has been defined by Daniel Dennett as "intuition pumps", since not all of their resulting insights could possibly pertain to reality,: "Intuition pumps are cunningly designed to focus the reader's attention on 'the important' features, and to deflect the reader from bogging down in hard-to-follow details. There is nothing wrong with this in principle. But intuition pumps are often abused, though seldom deliberately"[216].

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[215] Davies, D., 2004, *Art as Performance*, Malden, MA: Blackwell. P.
[216] See: D.C. Dennett, , *Elbow Room; The Varieties of Free Will Worth Wanting*. Cambridge, Mass: The M.I.T. Press, 1984

CHAPTER 2

DOES MUSICAL ONTOLOGY MAKE SENSE?

Something may be rotten in the Ontology of Music

Chapter One has apparently led us far afield from Rodgers and Hammerstein's masterpiece, *My Favorite Things*. Looking at the complicated path we have followed, we might feel we have somehow betrayed the original interests and intentions with which we began. Is this really the case? Not totally, if you consider the following.

Our philosophical inquiry began in as classical a way as a philosophical inquiry can, at least since Aristotle: with a genuine sense of wonder. We have asked ourselves how songs like *My Favorite Things* and symphonies like *Finlandia* and pieces of music in general can remain the same despite all the different versions, transcriptions, and arrangements they normally undergo; how their identity can be preserved despite changes by the media and revisions; and in what sense they can be considered repeatable abstract objects. Since no easy answer was available, we began investigating.

Puzzlement constituted the starting point of our exploration of the ontology of music. But, of course, if philosophy starts that way, it soon needs to go further. Therefore, what we did in the following sections was to try and figure out how the most discussed theories of musical ontology respond to the challenges represented by things like *My Favorite Things* and what these theories are all about. The outstanding number of different ontological proposals made us soon abandon any pretense to thoroughness, and we limited ourselves to focusing on the main alternatives offered in the multifaceted spectrum of the ontology of music, i.e., Idealism, Nominalism and Platonism, so as to anchor them to their fundamental metaphysical bases, say, Realism, Anti-realism, etc.

Despite the succinctness of the reconstruction provided, the complex landscape of views, arguments and perspectives that have come out from our examination may have given the reader the impression that we are currently living in a sort of "golden age"[217] of musical

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[217] Here a remark is needed: ontology of art -and music- is not something which has come into existence together with past Century analytic aesthetics. On the contrary, it has a long history in philosophy which may be dated back to the 19th century. Nevertheless, the current tendency is to focus on contributions from the last two decades of the 20th century –with few exceptions - while neglecting references to earlier contributions to the ontology of art. We do not have enough room to fill this historical gap here, so for further reading please refer to: Livingston, Paisley, "*History of the Ontology of Art*", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.),

ontology. To a certain extent such an impression is well grounded, partly because of the contemporary renaissance in metaphysics which has had such major impact on analytic philosophy in general and on analytic aesthetics in particular[218], partly because of the growing recognition that musical works present their own independently interesting dilemmas, as we have had the chance to discover directly with *My Favorite Things*.

Nevertheless, perhaps as a sign of this newly matured interest, skepticisms about the whole enterprise of the ontology of music -and art in general- has started to spread in the literature. The greater the number of ontological approaches, the greater the number of detractors, both within and without the world of the philosophy of art. Criticism has forced scholars to shift their focus to issues of meaning and methodology, so that it suddenly seems pertinent to question the meaning, the purpose and the correct methodology of practicing ontology of music. People lost their metaphysical nerve. Whispers that something was wrong with the whole discussion itself increasingly were heard. And this could not fail to have a huge impact on the debate in which we are interested. Evidences for this abound. Never a good sign for a field, the literature now is in good part devoted to whether there are answers to certain types of ontological questions concerning music. So-called "meta-ontology" is all the rage in conferences, books, and journals. There is so much of it that musical ontologists keen to defend their field seem to lack time for any first-order work at all. Meta-ontology tries to diagnose what, if anything, goes wrong in these debates. Are the debates in the ontology of music merely verbal? The meta-ontological community is currently divided on this question. Some think that discussions like those seen in Chapter 2 are genuine (Kania, 2008b, Bartel 2011, Dodd 2008), others that they are not (Goehr 1990; Ridley 2003a, 2004), others that they are genuine but irresolvable *per se,* thus have gone wrong, by being based, at bottom, on attempts to answer unanswerable questions (Thomasson 2004). Others believe they are genuine but not transferable to music from non-Western traditions (S. Davies) to genres such as jazz and popular music (Young and Matheson; Grayck) or to different workless artforms.

Clearly something is up. To understand more of what is going on, let us recall our very first concerns in Chapter 2. We have started our philosophical inquiry asking ourselves not only what musical ontology is but also what is the *sense*, *utility*, and the *value* there is in

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[218] In the second half of the 20th century metaphysics has experienced a progressive resurgence. Strawson's Individuals (1950) is regarded as a milestone in this process of revival. Starting from that moment, metaphysics gradually gained popularity, even among the analytic philosophers, so-called descendants of the neo-positivist anti-metaphysics tradition.

addressing it, if any. We made an attempt to answer the first part of the question. Now it's time to address the second.

Why should anyone committed to music worry about ontology? Why do we need an ontology of musical works, whether Nominalist or Platonist or whatever else? Many feel that the issue is not trivial[219] and that ontology can tell us nothing of import about music. The view that the ontology of music is to some extent a comparatively weak, infertile, and peripheral area of aesthetics, at best a second-rate philosophical investigation, has been put forth more than once. Of course, it is not feasible to think that all philosophers are going to find ontological investigations of music as theoretically intriguing as musical ontologists do, but one should, nevertheless, be able to expect at least philosophers of music to take it seriously. This is not always the case, however, since a significant number of the challenges against the ontology of music come from the domain of the philosophy of music itself. Others, on the contrary, come heteronomously from other branches of philosophy.

As a hybrid field of studies overlapping abstract metaphysics and art theory, ontology of music has to cope on the one hand with the relationship between these two different areas, a relationship which is not always a bed of roses, while on the other it is subjected to criticisms coming from both domains.

In the remainder of this text, we will address such different challenges. We will try to draft some of the contour of the major criticisms, along the way introducing the reader to some of the relevant questions at issues. Philosophers of music face nowadays a choice about what kind of ontology, if any, they should take on. Making this choice in an informed way means that they think through some rather deep questions: Are there specifically metaphysical questions related to music? How should music- and art generally- relate to metaphysical investigation?

Therefore, what we wish to stress is the fact that ontology of music must first deal with the autonomy of aesthetics from metaphysics and with the fundamental question of "the limits of metaphysics" if it wants to gain relevance in the Humanities. The sections to follow will not attempt to provide a general justification of the import of metaphysics from an aesthetic point of view. Militant readers will have to forgive us for not offering any crucial defense to save musical ontology from its opponents once and for all – likewise, we do not give it any final

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[219] Similar questions may of course be formulated also with regard to the ontology of mathematics, social objects, ordinary objects etc. but in the case of the ontology of art, they are apparently unavoidable. At least it would seem so, if it is true that most ontologists of art, before starting to deal with the issue, feel as they had to justify their work.

coup de grace. This is not to say that we shall remain neutral; on the contrary, we shall look at some open issues in the ontology of music and at some ongoing debates in ontology with the primary aim to show -for each topic at issue- what persuades us and what doesn't and *why* it is so. To speak frankly, we are convinced that many debates in analytic ontology of music are sterile or even empty while also thinking that ontology may be deeply infused within and important to music- and art. Thus, not all of musical ontology has to be put on the same level -this will be our slogan here-; it is possible that some issues that metaphysicians talk about are well formed and substantive, and others are not.

Though, we believe that the best way to convince someone of the value of something is to give her the chance to try it, and this is exactly what this chapter is meant to do. We hope that by the end of it, at the latest, readers will have found by themselves reasons to raise or lower his thumb on the destiny of musical ontology. This will not even depend on whether our conclusions are true, or our arguments particularly good. If someone is interested enough to engage in this text, then the value of the field is surely granted. If not…well, that's a whole other story.

The Dangerous Liaisons between Metaphysics and Art
An underlying tension between art theoretic commitments and standard metaphysical commitments shapes many ontological proposals and their related criticism.

Sometimes musical ontology use art-ontological categories which are incongruous with those regularly employed in contemporary metaphysics. Consider for instance the case of Levinson's *indicated types*: the introduction of an unfamiliar metaphysical entity to account for musical works has been challenged as an illicitly appeal to an *ad hoc* argument. Since it can be claimed that indicated types are *sui generis* ontological kinds, then they should be rejected.

More often, however, musical ontology adopts categories in which general metaphysics already has some kind of grip -independently of musical practice- as possible candidates to match musical objects' fundamental identity. This brings up a series of difficulties, for none of these usual candidates have seemed particularly suitable for describing musical works. When abstracta are used to account for works' repeatability, it inevitably raises the question of explaining their creatability. As we have already seen, a lot of breath has been wasted trying to reconcile the apparently irreconcilable relation between creatability and repeatability

- with abstractness as the problematic middle term- as well as between perceptibility and abstractness, or spatio-temporal location and abstractness.

The crux of the matter can probably be explained by the gap between the demands of the problem at issue in musical ontology and the material available for solving it.

In the conflict between the need to provide an adequate ontology of works and the need to preserve long-established ontological kinds, philosophers who have preferred placing musical works in categories laid out by standard metaphysical systems have had to face the fact that none of them fits exactly with common sense beliefs and practices with regard to works of art. Those who have tried to rethink some of the most standard categories in an effort to develop finer-tuned systems of ontological classes suitable to musical works have had to cope with accusations of fanciness and unreliability. This explains why a completely satisfactory solution has proven to be so elusive.

In a recent contribution, Mag Uidhir (2013) attributes both the origin of this conflict and the diversity of solutions offered by scholars to a fundamental methodological difference between two alternative theoretical approaches to the relationship between metaphysics and aesthetics.

On the one hand, there is what he calls the *deference* view, according to which: "In all cases of relevant overlapping areas, aesthetics ought to defer to contemporary metaphysics"[220], or it runs the risk of spawning an array of metaphysical monstrosity (e.g. causally efficacious abstracta, indestructible created things, temporally-determined, dependent abstract objects etc).

On the other hand, the *independence* view which states that: "Art-ontological categories cannot be (or at least we shouldn't expect them to be) adequately carved out using only the tools provided by contemporary metaphysics"[221]; indeed: "[…]capturing the operative constraints, interests, practices unique to art-relevant domains requires carving out (perhaps from whole cloth) befittingly unique *(sui generis)* ontological categories"[222].

Between the alternative to provide an ontology of works that is adequate to ordinary beliefs and practices regarding the arts, and the need to choose from the ready-made categories of familiar ontologies, advocates of the *independence* hold that the former must prevail if we are to offer any theory of familiar forms of art at all; to resolve the problems of art ontology, we cannot simply select an available ontological category to serve the relevant needs in aesthetics.

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[220] p.3
[221] Ibid.
[222] Ibid.

Advocates of the *deference* maintain instead that we must not turn away from fundamental metaphysics, or we risk incurring in a proliferation of barely plausible entities.

Choosing between *deference* and *independence*, according to Mag Uidhir, means expressing a preference for either revisionary or descriptivist art ontology respectively. The extent to which one endorses the *deference* view is the extent to which one endorses a *revisionary* art ontology. So, conversely, favoring strong descriptivism means understandably being inclined toward the *independence view*[223]. Given the above, Mag Uidhir concludes that any alleged tension between contemporary metaphysics and aesthetics depends on the fact that most metaphysicians, at least implicitly, support *deference* while most aestheticians favor *independence*.

The effect is that by supporting *independence,* philosophical aesthetics departs from contemporary metaphysics and thereby from the core of analytic philosophy.

Conversely, by sustaining *deference* philosophical aesthetics holds its development and productivity hostage to a domain unconcerned with aesthetic considerations and thus secure its status as a second-class philosophical discipline.

Supporters and Detractors

Despite the effect of this problematic liaison, some philosophers believe that a balance between aesthetics and metaphysics may nonetheless be possible and fruitful, *i.e.* required. They assume that mutual exclusion of metaphysics and aesthetics is detrimental to both. Aesthetics is forced to divorce itself from "fundamental philosophy" thus inhabiting a domain of fancy metaphysics, *rococo* ontologies or, at best, "toy models". By the same token, metaphysics is rendered positivistic, i.e., unable to accommodate a broader concept of "natural world" within its boundaries, and therefore unsuitable for furnishing an adequate account of social and cultural objects, generally.

Other philosophers –given all the failures to find a completely satisfactory solution to the relationship between metaphysics and aesthetics- think that the two domains should be kept apart for their own sake.

We may call partisans of the first group *Supporters* and partisans of the second *Detractors*.

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[223] Note, however, that endorsing the *independence* view might imply *both* being descriptivist with respect to art ontology *and* being revisionary with respect to *ontology*. If fitting artworks into the world consistently with art practices and conventions requires revising the world, in terms of its fundamental categories, then, the independence partisan argues, we ought to expect any art-ontological account to be to that extent revisionary.

Supporters are scholars who directly engage in the field of the ontology of music, and strive for the best formulation of the ontological status of musical objects, as described in Chapter 2. Supporters invest in the project of musical ontology because they believe that despite all possible setbacks, defeats and unresolved problems, relevant information and accurate knowledge of what musical objects are can be gleaned by applying a metaphysical methodology to musical objects. Therefore, they support neither *deference* nor *independence a priori.* In fact, they assume that in trying to determine categories completely suitable to works of art, the result may not just be better from the point of view of ontology of art but from a metaphysical point of view as well[224]. According to supporters, there is a possibly fruitful interplay between *a priori* philosophical analysis and the *a posteriori* considerations coming from aesthetics.

Detractors, on the other hand, argue that the unsuccessful history of contemporary ontology of art should teach us to abandon such an endeavor altogether . Moreover, they maintain, we have reasons to affirm that musical ontology is not only pointless, i.e. it adds nothing to our knowledge of the world, but it is even damaging.

We can divide Detractors into three major groups.

The first -scholars from outside the realm of philosophy of music- defend the alleged purity of abstract metaphysics with respect to all possible external contamination; they are methodologically committed to *deference.* They maintain that since ontology is devoted to serving as the toolbox[225] of the natural sciences by explicating their fundamental concepts, e.g., causality, substance, etc, it has no room left for undertaking a metaphysics of artifacts, artworks or other objects of the social and the human. Everything that truly exists is what our scientific theories quantify over, *ergo* ordinary objects must be excluded from metaphysics, because they are not "irreducibly" real. In other words, they must be *eliminated* from our catalog of existent things. An underlying worry for these eliminativist scholars is that if we open the doors of metaphysics to ordinary things like musical works, then we are unconsciously paving the way to future ontologies of jewelry, coffee spots, marriage cakes and so forth. Of course, one may argue that there is no special need to think that broadening metaphysical categories is necessarily threatening to the discipline. If metaphysics is a toolbox, then it should be as rich as possible, the only proper criterion being that the tools be

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[224] See: Amie Thomasson, The Ontology of Art, in though Thomasson position is quite unclear on several points.

[225] For a critique of this idea see: Steven French & Kerry McKenzie, *Thinking outside the Toolbox*, *European Journal of Analytic Philosophy* 8 (1):42-59 (2012)
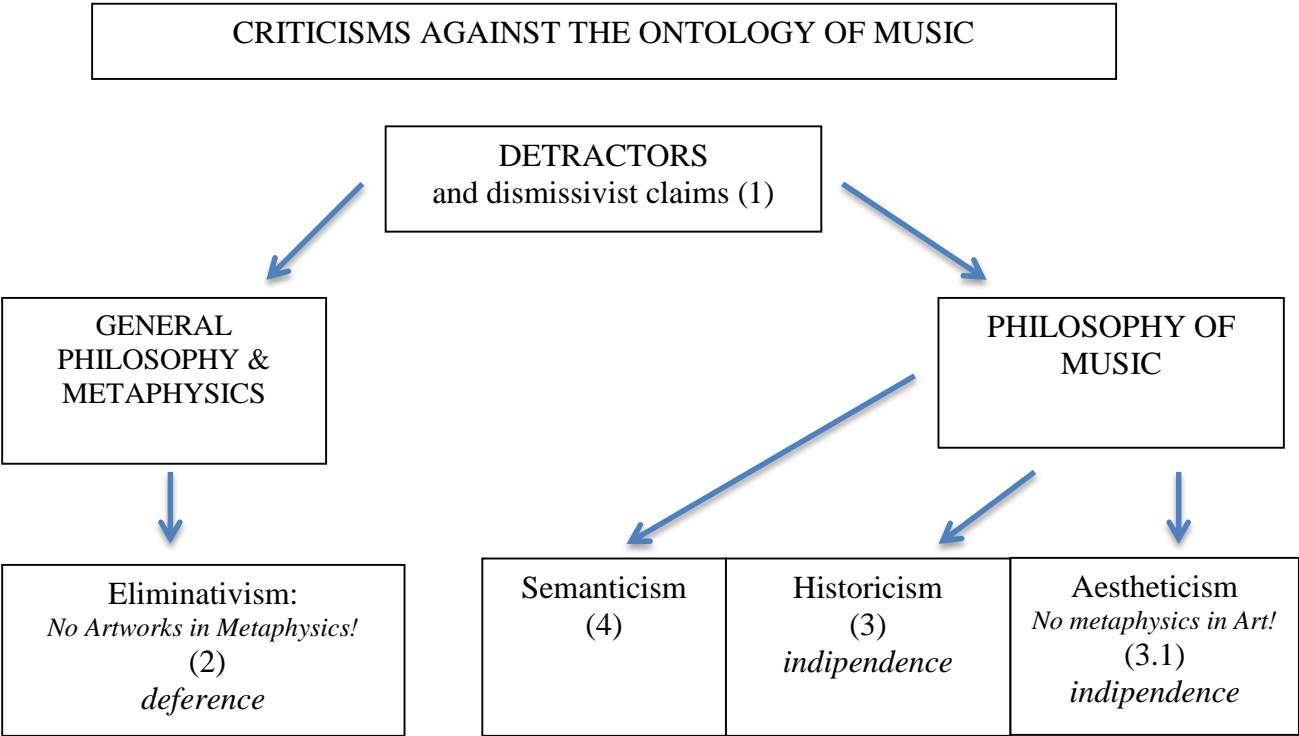
well defined and intrinsically consistent, even if useless in the realm of science. This would be justified if metaphysics were thought as a self-standing discipline, but since it is just a sort of handmaid of natural sciences, or so Eliminativists believe, then it only needs what natural sciences need, full stop.

The second group –made up of philosophers of music and music scholars- claims that applying ontological analysis to music gives us no insight into what is generally considered worth knowing in aesthetics, say, how objects can function as aesthetical devices, what is to have an aesthetic experience etc. In fact, they state, in focusing on metaphysical puzzles, one loses sight of what is really important addressing in aesthetic theorizing, namely, cultural-historical and evaluative considerations. Members of the second group can be divided in other subgroups according to the specific philosophical background from which their criticisms originates: accordingly, we can individuate an *aestheticist* and a *historicist* dismissivism. In Mag Uidhir's distinction, they are both staunch supporter of *independence,* at least to the extent in which aesthetics must be autonomous from metaphysics. Special reference also needs to be made to a third type of critics who discharge ontological disputes concerning music as purely verbal. Musical metaphysical disputes are merely semantic, they claim; disputants assign different meanings to art terms, thus they just talk past each other. We may call this position *Semanticism.* Semanticists believe that the parties to the dispute are just wrong about the use of language. Facts about the correct use of the English expressions in the sentence, conjoined with facts about what sorts of entities works of music allegedly are, dictate whether our expressions including art terms are determinately true or not. Semanticists, like Amie L. Thomasson think that at least some of the relevant metaphysical disputes about music are like this, and that therefore they can be settled by appeal to ordinary language.

So far, the debate between Supporters and Detractors of musical ontology has not seen the emergence of any uncontested winner. No consensus has been reached as to what (if any) the relationship between metaphysics and aesthetics should be. Over the past few years, there have been attempts at reconciliation and compromise and, alternatively, attempts to show, once and for all, that metaphysics is not worth taking into account if one is concerned with aesthetical issues. But it is also a fact that a well-defined shared basis of explicit assumptions and definitions is lacking, and therefore it is not surprising that the contenders have been unable to truly solve the problematic tension.

We will begin to analyze the issue by addressing the second group of Detractors we referred to as the *Eliminativists*. Sound arguments against musical ontology derive from the work of these scholars, who refuse the idea of an applied ontology in the name of a "methodological purism", supposedly needed in any ontological investigation *a priori*. By accepting this position, indeed, one is forced to assume that musical ontology *qua* ontology of ordinary things is completely meaningless.

Here below, you find a schema of the critical positions above mentioned.

CRITICISMS AGAINST THE ONTOLOGY OF MUSIC

DETRACTORS
and dismissivist claims (1)

GENERAL PHILOSOPHY & METAPHYSICS

PHILOSOPHY OF MUSIC

Eliminativism:
No Artworks in Metaphysics!
(2)
deference

Semanticism
(4)

Historicism
(3)
indipendence

Aestheticism
No metaphysics in Art!
(3.1)
indipendence

(1) The idea that music theory and metaphysics should remain distinct. Ontology of music is thus -on various grounds- a meaningless endeavor.

(2) The idea that that to deny that artifacts- works of music included- exist at all.

(3) The idea that musical works are primarily cultural-sociological-historical entities, thus their identity cannot be detected ontologically as they were meta-historical objects.

(3.1) The idea that ontology is useless with regards to music for aesthetic is concerned with evaluative issues. Philosophy of music should deal with the aesthetic value of performances.

(4) The idea that that most metaphysical disputes are just semantic discourses.

Deference: the position according to which aesthetics ought to defer to contemporary metaphysics.

Indipendence: the position according to which aesthetics must find its own categories and methodology above and beyond metaphysics.

The first group of Detractors: the Eliminativists

Common people, if they ever think of what philosophers do, may wonder why such (allegedly) intelligent community spends its time in formulating and answering to thorny metaphysical issues. As we have already had occasion to note, the answer is far from straightforward. A possible non-psychological response is that they want to understand more of the reality outside them, and metaphysics is thought as providing insight to what exists, which includes other people, chairs, trees, light-bulbs and even works of music as part of its furniture. Such medium-sized things populate the world we all care about and it is this world –the everyday world– that philosophers are interested in understanding. But such a response would not convince many of the philosophers concerned with metaphysics. Not every metaphysicians is, in fact, interested in understanding reality, *as it is*. Most of them, conversely, believe that the purpose of their work -if there is any- is to find out how the world really is beyond its surface, and to discover what is concealed beneath exterior appearances. They are not seriously interested in giving account to the manifest aspects of everyday life. There is a number of reasons for this lack of interest but first and foremost the point is that metaphysicians are generally not willing to recognize any ontological weight to most of the commonsense objects that compose what we normally call "reality". In other words, they refuse to grant these objects the status of "true" things, as these are meant to be not "irreducibly real"[226]. The basic ontology of the world only includes physical entities[227] and their sums, not pens, pass-ports, piano sonatas and all the other frippery we normally have to live with in this life. Artifacts especially depend on practices and cultural uses, they are too relative and sloppy –they gain and lose parts; they have no fixed boundaries – to be real in a full sense. They are not part of the world furniture, but of the idea we have of it. Hence, the very idea of an ontology of ordinary things is misleading. Ordinary things like desks and flowers, or works of art, do not possess any ontological reliability; at least one can say that they have a semantic or classificatory status[228], for they do not correspond to realities but to ontological ectoplasms, appearances or, at best, to concepts in our everyday language. As a consequence, metaphysicians are safe to exclude them from their ontology.

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[226]This definition is taken from: Lynne Baker, The Metaphysics of Everyday Life. An essay in Practical Realism, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007

[227] On what they are , and which characteristics they have, scholars disagree.

[228] See: Pouivet, R., *L'Oeuvre de l'Art est vraiment un objet intentionnel comme le pensait Roman Ingarden ?,*

In their perspective, metaphysics is regarded as having to deal with fundamental concepts like that of space, time, property, necessity, causality, substance, not with the analysis of common artifacts and objects (including musical works). In the wake of Quine, they promote the idea that the only proper method of determining an ontology implies determining what our best scientific theories quantifies over. Since the relevant "best scientific theories" are those of the natural sciences, metaphysicians' attention must focus on understanding the basic metaphysical concepts at work in those sciences, with the disregard of artifacts and other ordinary objects in their ontology.

As philosopher Amie Thomasson has underlined, the scarcity of the debate devoted to everyday things in the majority of work in current metaphysical studies is truly striking[229]. Beyond a few notable exception[230]: "artifacts and other common sense objects have been relatively neglected by metaphysicians. Where artifacts have been discussed, they are often mentioned only in the contexts of arguments that we should deny that there are any such things". Artifacts, she concludes, have simply been discarded from metaphysical studies. In fact, such a discard of common manifest things may be traced back in a venerable tradition originating from Plato[231]. But unlike Plato, contemporary metaphysicians do not use their counterintuitive metaphysics to explain how the everyday world appear as it appears: the underlying physical objects they consider are not intended to clarify the status of manifest objects nor to explain why they look like as they do[232]. However, more than merely neglecting common objects, a number of contemporary metaphysicians argue, on various grounds, that there are reasons to deny that they exist at all. According to them, ordinary objects, namely, macroscopic objects that are part of our everyday lives, do not exist the way our commonsensical intuitions would make us believe. Note that they are not emergentist, they are reductionist: nothing but simple basic entities exist, if emergentism is defined as the theory according to which superior emergent properties depend on more basic properties, thus

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[229] Amie L. Thomasson, In *Handbook of Philosophy of the Technological Sciences,* ed. Anthonie Meijers. Elsevier Science, 2009: 191-212, p.191

[230] See, in particular the recent works of Lynne Baker (2007), Crawford Elder (2004), as well as Amie Thomasson (2003, 2007a, 2007b

[231] See: Lynne Baker, *The Metaphysics of Everyday Life. An essay in Practical Realism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007, p. 6-7

[232] At least to the extent in which contemporary metaphysics is concerned with: "The most explanatorily basic necessities and possibilities. Metaphysics is about what could be and what must be. Except incidentally, metaphysics is not about explanatorily ultimate aspects of reality that are actual."(Conee and Sider 2005, p. 203) Prior metaphysical investigations were directed at providing reasons for explaining the actual world. Today so "limited" a concern is passed-by. What metaphysics investigates can tell us about the actual world, but only –"incidentally" –because the actual world is one possible world of many. See: Callender,

having no separate existence, but simply a degree of existential independence[233]. A basic assumption must be taken into account here if we want to justify this additional step. It is one thing to say that an object is not *fundamental*, i.e. ontologically primitive, not further reducible, another to say that it is not *real*. Only if one believes in the equivalence between the predicates "fundamental" and "real", can one say that everything that is not fundamental is consequently unreal. However, it is not obvious, nor is it written anywhere, that such an equivalence is true, or philosophically legitimated[234]. It is, of course, if one adheres to reductionism, i.e., the idea that only what is not further reducible -- therefore fundamental or primitive -- is real.

In any case, similar sorts of claims denying the existence of external objects are not altogether new in the history of philosophy. Since ancient times, several philosophers have denied the existence of things surrounding them. However, until a few decades ago, such denial was usually a minor consequence of wider philosophical skepticism concerning the existence of the external world. In other words, when skeptics claimed that there was no external world, or that the world was not as it appeared, they denied accordingly the existence of any physical things, including ordinary objects. But in denying that anything existed, they were not specifically interested in denying that familiar objects, like desks and tables, existed: this was just a necessary implication of the main argument.

Nevertheless, in the past thirty-five years a number of analytic philosophers, among them Peter Unger, Trenton Merricks and Peter van Inwagen, have engaged in the specific enterprise of showing that there are no real ordinary objects in our world. These scholars are not skeptical about the existence of external reality made up of physical things, nor do they attempt to undermine the reliability of our senses as untrustworthy sources of information. What they reject instead is that such an existent external world does or even possibly could contain ordinary objects such as desks. Their arguments are metaphysical rather than epistemic: they reject that certain objects are possible; accordingly, if such objects are accepted, they tend to create a number of irresoluble problems to the ontology that has included them.

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[233] Since emergent properties are not identical to, or reducible to, or predictable from, or deducible from their bases.

[234] Concrete objects may not be *stricto sensu* "fundamental", because they are composed of atoms, subatomic particles, etc. but they can nonetheless be considered real in a full sense, if fundamental and real are not considered synonymous.

A nihilistic *conception* of the status of ordinary objects was first put forth by Unger in 1979 in his appropriately titled paper "*There are no ordinary things*"[235], in which he introduced his rigid version of *eliminativism*, i.e., that there are no ordinary objects at all. Unger's eliminativism stems from his nihilistic approach to the problem of the material constitution of things. Synthetically, he assumes that there are no composite objects (i.e., objects with proper parts): every object is mereologically simple. Since it is reasonable to believe that all ordinary objects are composite objects, Unger argues, then there can be no ordinary objects[236]. The conclusion follows as a negative answer to the question of the composition of ordinary objects. When and how do material objects compose a further object? The problem arises since it seems that there are cases in which two objects actually compose to form something else and cases in which they don't. "When a hammer head is firmly affixed to a handle, they compose something, namely, a hammer. When they're on opposite ends of the room, they don't compose anything"[237]. But if it is true that composition sometimes occurs and sometimes doesn't, then the indeterminacy of its application generates a sorites series, that is, a gradual series of cases uninterruptedly extending from a case in which there is no composition to a case in which there is composition. In order to reject the sorites paradox, eliminativists have cut the problem short by denying that there is composition -– and composed objects -- at all. The same strategy is used to solve other dilemmas about identity such as the famous old puzzle of *the Ship of Theseus* narrated by Plutarch (*Vita Thesei*, 22-23): "The ship wherein Theseus and the youth of Athens returned had thirty oars, and was preserved by the Athenians down even to the time of Demetrius Phalereus, for they took away the old planks as they decayed, putting in new and stronger timber in their place, insomuch that this ship became a standing example among the philosophers, for the logical question of things that grow; one side holding that the ship remained the same, and the other contending that it was not the same."

The old planks had been replaced little by little, but eventually no part of the original ship remained, so was it still the same ship on which Theseus embarked for the first time? Of course it had *changed*. But was it *it*? Answering this question requires us to understand how planks compose a ship in the first place, i.e., under what circumstances do planks compose

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[235]Unger, P. *There are no Ordinary Things*, *Synthese,* 41, 1979, pp. 117–154

[236] For similar arguments see also, Peter Unger, "Skepticism and Nihilism," Nous 14 (1980): 517-45; and Horgan, "On What There Isn't," Philosophy and Phenomenological Research 53 (1993): 693---700

[237] The example is taken from: Korman, Daniel Z., *Ordinary Objects*, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.)

something; in van Inwagen's words: "suppose one had certain (nonoverlapping) objects, the *x*s, at one's disposal; what would one have to do, what could one do, to get the *x*s to compose something"?[238] To avoid the paradox of admitting that there are two things in the same place, the eliminativist solution is simply to deny that *there are* ships. If there are no ships, both the original and the renewed ship fail to refer to anything at all. Therefore, the puzzle itself is meaningless for it contains non-referential terms: there is nothing indeterminate because there is nothing at all.

Eliminativists like Unger thus refute the existence of statues, chairs, desks and eventually works of music along with all other macroscopic material objects; they accept that there are countless microscopic objects, but they say that *stricto sensu* there are no statues and no chairs, but only *"some simples arranged statuewise" or "*simples *arranged chairwise"*. van Inwagen is on the same plain as Unger: he asserts that "there are no tables or chairs or any other visible objects except living organisms". [239] According to him, the only composite objects are living organisms and aside from them there are only material simples.[240] "I want to do what I can to disown a certain apparently almost irresistible characterization of my view, or of that part of my view that pertains to inanimate objects. Many philosophers, in conversation and correspondence, have insisted, despite repeated protests on my part, on describing my position in words like these: «Van Inwagen says that tables are not real"; "…not true objects"; "…not actually things"; "…not sub-stances"; "not unified wholes"; "…nothing more than collections of particles. These are words that darken counsel. They are, in fact, perfectly meaningless. My position vis-à-vis tables and other inanimate objects is simply that there are none.»[241] What these alleged material simples are, we are not told.[242]

Common reactions to eliminativist claims such as Unger's and van Inwagen's include incredulity and disbelief. "Being confronted with the *Denial*", says philosopher Jay F. Rosenberg, in commenting van Inwagen's work, "inevitably tempts one to impersonate G. E.

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[238] van Inwagen, P., *Material Beings*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1990
[239] van Inwagen, P.,, p.1
[240] van Inwagen's o*rganicism,* formerly formulated in chapter 12 of his *Material Beings*, is the claim that objects compose something only if they constitute a life may have some counterintuitive consequences such as admitting the existence of a somewhat less severe restriction on composition than nihilism, one which permits apple trees and mountain lions, but not apples or mountains.
[241] van Inwagen, P., *Material Beings*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1990, p. 99
[242] For an interpretations of van Inwagen's notion of "simples", see: Theodore Sider, *Van Inwagen and the Possibility of Gunk*, Analysis 53 (1993): 285–9, Ned Markosian, *Simples*, Australasian Journal of Philosophy 76 (1998), pp. 213-226;

Moore: "Here is one chair; and here is another."[243] The existence of composite objects is for many simply a matter of fact of which they are more certain than the premises of any argument to the contrary. Thus, eliminativism needs to provide a plausible justification of why we believe there are ordinary objects when there are not.

Their proposal makes recourse to the so-called paraphrasing strategy: "When people say things in the ordinary business of life by uttering sentences that start 'There are chairs…' or 'There are stars…', they very often say things that are literally true"[244] but just to show that the statements in question can be paraphrased or reformulated so as to clarify that they have no 'ontological commitments'". Consequently, one can assert that there is a desk without being committed to the existence of desks, since such discourse is compatible with the nonexistence of desks. But how can eliminativists maintain this? They may claim that when someone says "There is a desk", what is meant is that there are simples arranged deskwise. Unfortunately, this hardly seems the case, since it is reasonable to believe that when someone says "There is a desk" he means just that. A paraphrase is not totally faithful to the original so it cannot be called "the same" as the original; the original and the paraphrase are two different propositions. Moreover, not all of what can be said in ordinary language can be paraphrased[245].

Though aware of similar objections, van Inwagen appeals to what he calls a "*Copernican analogy*" to defend the paraphrasing strategy: an ordinary speaker who asserts that "The sun has moved behind the elms" is still speaking the truth, even though we accept the Copernican claim that this is not, strictly speaking, true: "I reply that the proposition I expressed by saying 'It was cooler in the garden after the sun had moved behind the elms' is consistent with the Copernican Hypothesis"[246] He argues that this is analogous to our talking about chairs: most propositions expressed with "There is a chair" do not entail the actual existence of chairs. The argument leaves us perplexed: van Inwagen's paraphrasing strategy seems unpersuasive. So we may wonder why, if it is so difficult to combine the denial of ordinary things with our most entrenched beliefs about the external world, one should be eliminativist at all.

Eliminativists reply that the benefits of denying the existence of ordinary objects (or medium-sized composite objects) compensates for the costs. These alleged benefits vary according to

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[243] Rosenberg, Jay F., *Comments on Peter van Inwagen's Material Beings,* Philosophy and Phenomenological Research**:** 53, 3, 1993, p.701
[244] van Inwagen, 1990, p. 102
[245] Think of complex propositions involving reference to ordinary objects like: "This table seemed so big to me when I was a child, but now it is as if it had shrunk".
[246] van Inwagen, 1990 p. 101

different philosophers: some cite consistency with our notion of composition, theoretical simplicity, or greater coherence with other background beliefs. Accepting the existence of ordinary objects would challenge certain general metaphysical principles concerning the notion of identity, say, the prohibition against collocation (no two objects can occupy the very same space at the very same time), or would generate paradoxes like sorites.

A further worry for the eliminativists, on the other hand, concerns the specific ontological status of artifacts among other ordinary objects. Artifacts include things that are produced with an explicit intention by human beings and apply to a number of very different kinds of things – clothes, machines, documents, furniture, and so on. Therefore, artifacts – and especially works of art – are, unlike things in nature that are not made by human beings, existentially mind-dependent. This mind-dependency is possibly responsible for the difficulty that many metaphysicians have in accepting artifacts as real parts of the world.

Their underlying concern is that this possibly means that our mental powers "create" new things. Referring to "creation" with regard to artifacts, it is said, would eventually lead to admitting that thought or intentions alone could bring objects into existence. A similar worry lies behind many of the arguments against artifacts, and is immediately apparent in van Inwagen's own words: "Artisans do not create; at least not in the sense of causing things to exist. They rearrange objects in space and case bonding relations to begin to hold or to cease to hold (as in the case of the sculptor who chips away at a block of marble) between objects. But, in the last analysis, the labors of Michelangelo and the most skilled watchmaker are as devoid of true metaphysical issue […]. All these people are simply shoving the stuff of the world about."[247] It also has a role in Dean Zimmerman' argument against Lynne's Baker ontology of artifact: "Baker thinks we sometimes bring things into existence by thinking about them – at least, this follows from her view if objects can become artifacts (tools and works of art and monuments, for instance) simply by our thinking of them as such. A piece of conveniently shaped driftwood becomes a coffee table by being brushed off and brought into the house, a urinal becomes a sculpture when hung on a wall in a museum and given a title […]. But do we really believe that anything new comes into existence when we do such things?"[248]

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[247]van Inwagen, 1990, p.127

[248]Dean W. Zimmerman, *The Constitution of Persons by Bodies: A Critique of Lynne Rudder Baker's Theory of Material Constitution,* Philosophical Topics Vol. 30, No. 1 (Spring 2002), pp. 295-338, p.334. Relevantly, Zimmerman uses a reference to Duchamp's Fountain as an example of how non-eliminativist view would allow objects to become artworks ''simply by our thinking of them as such.''

In addition to the issue of creation *ex novo,* eliminativists are struck by the fact that not only are artifacts products of intentional human work, i.e., their existence depend on it, but they are necessarily related, in a strong metaphysical sense, to intentional human activities. Indeed, the proper nature of artifacts is their intended function. Therefore, unlike natural objects, artifacts are both existentially and metaphysically mind-dependent[249].

This twofold intentional dependency is philosophically challenging, of course, but does it represent a sufficient *rationale* for denying their existence? Eliminativists suggest that the best way to solve these problems is simply not to get involved with them. On the other hand, though, this sounds a bit like misplaying: denying the existence of something because it causes trouble is equivalent to bypassing the problem rather than solving it.

A similar move is defended in the form of "regional" eliminativism in regard to musical ontology on the part of Ross Cameron[250], who denies the existence of musical works. Though ordinary practice and discourse give us reason to believe that something like works of music actually exists in the world, he asserts that this evidence alone does not constitute an ontological fact: "I rely on a meta-ontological view whereby '*a* exists' can be true without committing us to an entity that is *a*"[251]. Common sense may only tell us which sentences are true but not what exists in the world: "We go wrong when we take the truth of these sentences to transparently reveal ontological facts." Cameron holds that the best explanation of ordinary sentences involves no commitment to the objects they are about. But common sense tells us that existential claims commit us to the existence of the things we declare to exist, and if these claims are true, the thing does exist. As with eliminativist paraphrases, it seems that when one says "There is a desk", one is actually committing to the existence of something which is "a desk"; he exactly means just that. In Cameron's view, however, this is isn't so. "The trouble arises... when we take common sense claims concerning [musical works] to be ontologically committing to a thing that is the [musical work]"[252]. To strengthen his argument, Cameron refers to something similar to van Inwagen's above-mentioned *Copernican Analogy* argument. An ordinary speaker, he asserts, who declares that he likes Schumann's first string quartet, speaks the truth, even though there is nothing in the world corresponding to "Schumann's first string quartet". Cameron believes that all that is required by common sense is that the following sentence be true: "I like Schumann's first string quartet". To be true, this

[249] See Baker 2007
[250] Cameron, R., *There Are No Things That Are Musical Works*, *British Journal of Aesthetics,* 48: 295–314; for discussion, see Predelli 2009 and Stecker 2009.
[251] Cameron, R., p. 295
[252] Cameron, R.

has to be interpreted in the light of a different interpretation of truth than that we usually think of. For example, the source of truth for "Schumann's first string quartet" is not, say, "that musical work composed by Robert Schumann in 1841 for 2 violins, viola and cello and generally identified as Op. 41, No. 1", but "some arrangement of simples and abstract structures". According to Cameron, a number of entities need to be included in order to explain why this is true: an abstracting sound structure, an indication of this, and an instantiation of the sound structure in a performance, but none of it them is actually the work[253]. Instead of getting into technicalities here, note that like other eliminativists, Cameron appeals to a more basic ontology, insisting that any proper ontology can only be understood as concerned with what exists "fundamentally" and that what does not exist fundamentally does not exist, full stop. In Cameron's perspective, a correct account of musical practices should sidestep the project of explaining the truth and content of these judgments, perceptions, and actions in terms of works, and appeal directly to the simples and abstract structures which compose Cameron's fundamentalist picture of the world. Nevertheless, this does not seem to preserve common sense, since common sense commits us to the existence of the entity we commonly refer to in ordinary language.

Note that Eliminativists like Cameron may at this point unleash the reductionist-friendly weapon of ontological parsimony. Eliminativist views have the virtue of being simpler[254], at least in the sense that they are ontologically less demanding[255]. If accepting ordinary objects and artifacts, including artworks, in our ontology, as required by our commonsensical intuitions and ordinary language, doesn't explain anything and only creates serious problems, then we can do just as well with an ontology that contains only basic physical entities, no matter what they are: atoms, subatomic particles, algebraic structures or whatever. That is, we may do as well with a *simpler* ontology. We have already noted, when speaking about the claims of Nominalism, that parsimony is not always the best virtue to appeal to. Parsimony

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[253] This of course generates a series of problems in regard to appreciation of a work. Since if there is no work that manifests the properties upon which appreciation is grounded, what is it grounded in?

[254] Ockham's razor's central aspect is necessity. If it is not absolutely necessary to introduce certain hypothetical constructs into a given explanation, then one shouldn't do it. So it is necessity and not simplicity that the principle depends on. However, these two factors are not mutually exclusive and they certainly enjoy some degree of interdependence. Any theory or argument which has applied the razor correctly (based on including only those premises and reasons which are necessary) is also likely to be simpler than rival explanations where the principle has not been applied. To put it another way, simplicity can be a consequence of necessity. Despite this close relationship it is still more correct to view the principle in terms of necessity and not directly as simplicity *per se*.

[255] Simplicity is a complex notion that can be declined in several ways a part from ontological parsimony: elegance, cognitive simplicity, straightforward argumentation, etc.

says that, *ceteris paribus*, if a theory A is more ontologically parsimonious than a theory B then it is rational to prefer A to B. In other words, the principle of parsimony states that, all things being equal, we should always choose the ontologically simpler theory. A paradigmatic case of application of parsimony is when a theory postulates entities which are explanatorily redundant. If we come back now to the case we are interested in, would we be able to say that artifacts are explanatorily redundant? It seems that to affirm this we would need clear defining criteria for the notion of ontological redundancy, criteria that we unfortunately do not have. Should any newly postulated category of entities made up of a novel reorganization of already well-known entities be considered "redundant"? Eliminativists would probably say yes. But think for a moment about an hypothetical discovery of a new botanic species, a novel member of one already familiar plant family, say, that of *Asteraceae*. Intuitively, it wouldn't contain any new basic constituent in comparison with other *Asteraceae*. So, again, could the postulation of this new kind really be considered redundant?

It seems that recourse to the principle of parsimony always needs to be justified according to context. This is the position shared by both Quine (1966), and more recently, Sober (1994), who has long worked on the problem of simplicity in science and philosophy: though scientific theories are often evaluated by how parsimonious they are, the same cannot so easily be said of philosophical theories[256]. Not only is the justification for the principle of using parsimony in philosophy not really the same as that of science: "[…] it is worth pondering the possibility that the justification for using a principle of parsimony may vary from problem to problem. Perhaps parsimony needs to be understood locally, not globally"[257], but, furthermore, there may well be "no such thing as the justification of [a criterion of simplicity]"[258], only different justifications for each instance in which it is employed. Sober criticizes the tendency of considering ontological parsimony as such a fundamental and self-evident proposition that it need not be further defended, being *a priori* justified[259]. In fact it seems that even if we had an innate predisposition towards simplicity, that would merely

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[256] See, in particular: Sober, E. "*Parsimony Arguments in Science and Philosophy -a Test Case for Naturalism.*" Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association, 2009, 83(2): 117-155;

[257] Sober, E. "Let's Razor Ockham's Razor." In D. Knowles (ed.), Explanation and Its Limits, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 73-94. Reprinted in E. Sober, From a Biological Point of View. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

[258] Sober E., *What is the Problem of Simplicity?*, in H. Keuzenkamp, M. McAleer, and A. Zellner (eds.), *Simplicity, Inference, and Econometric Modelling*, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 13-32

[259] See: Swinburne, R., *Simplicity as Evidence for Truth*, Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Marquette University Press 1977.

witness to the fact that our cognitive apparatus exhibits a preference for simplicity, not that parsimonious theories are more likely to describe the world accurately. In other words, even if we have a primitive preference for simplicity, it doesn't mean the world is simple.

It is unclear whether eliminativists use this kind of *a priori* arguments to explain ontological parsimony, but in any case their use of Ockham's Razor with regard to artifacts is questionable. If we follow Baker's line of reasoning, we may be willing to acknowledge that ontological parsimony cannot be considered the sole principle, or the major one, worthy of respect in metaphysics: "So let me leave it at this: Parsimony is not the only intellectual virtue."[260] We postulated that recourse to parsimony only applies to situations where other relevant factors are considered more or less equally satisfactory. In disputes where two theories contend for approval, as in the case of ordinary objects, appeal to the criterion of parsimony is likely to fall on deaf ears. If simplicity misrepresents the world, it is not a virtue. Moreover, it could also be that a richer ontology of the world is virtuous in itself. If a richer ontology is able to better account for some of the features of the world, then it is virtuous. On the other hand, if a theory is simpler than another but has a less informative power or complicates things so that it becomes difficult to explain phenomena or formulate hypotheses, then simplicity isn't enough, especially in the case of philosophers like Cameron who are looking for a descriptive theory rather than a revisionarist one in the sense of Strawson.[261] As Stecker puts it: "Since Cameron is looking for an ontology that conforms to common sense, he too should prefer a richer ontology over the one he actually endorses"[262]. So metaphysicians should not necessarily consider simplicity as worthwhile *per se*, at least not more than other purely general theoretical values.

This brings us, however unwillingly, to an extremely crucial question: if ontological parsimony is not, in itself, the best principle to apply, why should we prefer one metaphysical theory to another? On what grounds should we favor either non-reductionist or non-eliminativist approaches to reductionist or eliminativist ones and *viceversa*? How should we choose between different ontologies of the world?

To choose between models, scientists adopt empirical conformity together with other theoretical criteria like simplicity, power to unify, internal and external consistency,

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[260] Lynne Baker, Lynne Baker, The Metaphysics of Everyday Life. An essay in Practical Realism, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007, p. 10-11
[261] We have already discussed such a distinction in Chapter 2, *Methodological issues.*
[262] Stecker, R., *Methodological Questions about the Ontology of Music,* The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, Vol. 67, No. 4, 2009, p. 380

coherence with assumptions. But is the very same methodology viable when looking at rival metaphysical theories and trying to assess them? The debate is open.[263]

It would seem that the motives for preferring one metaphysical theory to another, after clarity and logical coherence are, after all, *pragmatic*[264]. Is the theory consistent with other things we assume to be true? Is it able to clarify what it seeks to explain? What are its practical consequences? And, above all, how fruitful is it, i.e., what is its ability to generate further hypotheses? The latter point seems crucial. It enables us to support or reject eliminativist metaphysics. The basic reason is that an appeal to ordinary objects is needed for a coherent and comprehensive account that assures and explains the rationality of our practices and attitudes toward the things we encounter. A metaphysical theory should help us in establish reality and our experience of it on more rational grounds: "… Reality as experienced is strange enough; metaphysics should not make it even more so"[265]. Eliminativist ontology does not help us to do this. On the contrary, it becomes very difficult from an ontology of simples, no matter what we are defining, to give any account of our ordinary image of the world.

Note, on the other hand, that the importance of referring to such pragmatist considerations in assessing metaphysical theories has also been put under the spotlight in recent debate concerning the methodology underlying the ontology of music. Whatever artworks are metaphysically, first and foremost they are objects of our thought, discourse, appreciation and evaluation; to put it simply, artworks, like all other artifacts, manifest themselves in the world primarily through our practice. Consequently, theories that compete to provide the best explanation of art objects need at least to be consistent with and responsive to practice, the basic role of a pragmatic methodology being to assure the basic subject matter that makes a theory a theory.

But such a pragmatist methodology – to which almost all ontologists seemingly adhere – should be approached with caution nonetheless.

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[263] On the relationship between metaphysics and science, see the July 2012 issue of *Philosophical Studies entirely devoted to the issue* ; and Steven French & Kerry McKenzie, *Thinking outside the Toolbox*, *European Journal of Analytic Philosophy* 8 (1):42-59 (2012)
[264] See Lynne Baker, The Metaphysics of Everyday Life. An essay in Practical Realism, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007, p. 10-11
[265] Lynne Baker, 2007, p.11

Indeed, if we follow Guy Rohrbaugh's recent line of reasoning[266], there are two possible ways of interpreting pragmatism in ontology, the first with positive consequences, the second with deflationist consequences for the ontology of music.

The first is to believe that it is the role of our practices to provide relevant knowledge about the objects of our interest[267]; the second is to think that practices are "the very fabric of the objects of their concern"[268], i.e., that they are literally *productive* of their ontology. Concerning this second perspective "…our practices are thought to play some kind of constitutive role, furnishing the world with their objects through our very inhabiting of them"[269].

Even if both accounts originate from the same pragmatic concern, the two forms of pragmatism vary considerably, and eventually produce very different outcomes. A bad effect of the latter, Rohrbaugh argues, may, quite unexpectedly, be a deflationist[270] or eliminativist ontology: "In particular, it is the result of moving from the first to the second picture, allowing the demands of practice to do all the work while shrugging off the demands of straight, respectable metaphysics. But instead of ending up with a picture in which our practices give rise to the very objects of their own concern, we instead end up with, quite literally, nothing."[271] Similar considerations may be worthwhile addressing in wider debate on the ontological status of ordinary objects as well. A pragmatist methodology should probably be taken as the guiding principle to be used against non-eliminativist metaphysics, but practice alone does not suffice. If one thinks that what really matters is only the way we talk and think about objects, then there is no point in trying to understand objects *per se*, or carry out the mends such understanding demands. If description of ordinary practices is all that is taken into consideration the outcome may be deflationist. Rohrbaugh is right: deflationism offers itself as the natural result of pragmatic thought on ontology.

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[266] Rohrbaugh, G., Must Pragmatism be self-defeating?, in Christy Mag Uidhir, *Art and Abstract Objects*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 35-

[267] This has been the foundation of many of the proposals we have outlined in Chapter 2: the search for possible already-known ontological candidates to fulfill the object which come out of our practice. Typically, these have been taken to be categories supplied by our more general philosophical reflections: physical objects; events; sums; and various abstracta including sets, types, properties, and the like. It is fair to say that this approach has faced some difficulties, for none of these usual suspects has seemed a particularly good match to the description of the suspect.

[268] Rohrbaugh, G., Must Pragmatism be self-defeating?, in Christy Mag Uidhir, *Art and Abstract Objects*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p.31

[269] An attempt of this sort is found in Amie Thomasson.

[270] Deflationism is a sort of eliminativism or anti-realism, roughly characterized by the fact that it denies that there is any reality at all.

[271] Rohrbaugh, G., Must Pragmatism be self-defeating?, in Christy Mag Uidhir, *Art and Abstract Objects*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p

On the other hand, if we want to rationally debate aesthetics or moral, political and social issues, it would be useful to have reasons grounded in irreducible reality and not just in concepts that support our positions. Unless we content ourselves with familiar ways of putting things that turn out to be true when paraphrased in unfamiliar ways or are subjected to truth-makers, we need to postulate ordinary phenomena as somehow an authentic part of reality. If we do not want to give up to any claim to ontological import and relegate what matters to us to mere concepts or semantics, then we probably have to accept ordinary objects in our ontology. We cannot expect ontology to provide very many concrete answers to our pressing questions, but it would seem that if we relinquish an obligation to metaphysical respectability in our philosophical inquiries into ordinary –- aesthetical, moral and political – practices, we are probably relinquishing the possibility of finding a rational basis for our judgments.

The Second Group of Detractors: the Aestheticists and the Historicists

Discussing the Eliminativist objection was somehow a preparatory work for us to be done in order to address some more relevant objections against musical ontology which come from the second group of detractors, namely, that of philosophers of music and aestheticians.

Eliminativists say that there is no room in contemporary metaphysics for a serious discussion concerning ordinary objects, artifacts, and consequently for that special kind of things we call *works of art* (and works of music as well). But their position is not grounded in a recognition of the special nature of art objects *qua* art objects: art objects are dismissed alongside any other ordinary object populating the external reality. What we have tried to show, *contra* Eliminativists, is that such a dismissal is no cakewalk. It is not enough to have familiar sentences that turn out to be true when paraphrased in unfamiliar ways, nor Eliminativists have solid grounds for a plea to metaphysical simplicity, since simplicity is just one among the other evaluative criteria that must be considered in assessing ontological theories. Ordinary objects must be welcomed in our metaphysics if we do not want to consign all that really matters in this world to us either to physical reductionist or to semantic.

This is a serious issue of course and would require separate debate, but for our scopes here what we have already said is probably sufficient. In fact, we need to save our energy now for other challenges that more forcefully threaten the status of the ontology of music.

The second species of Detractors have stronger objections for us to address, for they question the very significance and sense of doing musical ontology. In a nut, they claim that ontology

is apparently useless with regards to music (and art in general). The reasons why they think so vary according to the philosophical perspective adopted, either an aestheticist, a historicist or a semanticist one. Nevertheless, they all agree on the fact that nothing of what is really worth understanding about musical works may come out from our ontological investigation: metaphysics, they assume, is no good source of knowledge with respect to art. Since it is manifestly pointless to look for convincing answers to questions related to the ontology of art, the latter should be set aside as a waste of time.

Before addressing these specific positions in detail, let us begin with some general considerations that may help us to take a look of the bigger picture. Our aim, for the moment, will be to introduce the three perspectives within a more general survey of contemporary challenges to metaphysics of music.

Some General Concerns about the Metaphysics of Art

When first introduced to a dispute that lies within the boundaries of the ontology of art -or perhaps even after years of studying and reflecting about it, one may experience an unpleasant sensation of disease. On the one hand, one may sense that nothing is really at issue between the contenders, that this is only disagreements about how to *depict* certain things, rather than about how things really *are*. Alternatively, even when one understands that something might really be at stake when it comes to a question of musical ontology, one may still get the impression that the answer is more or less *insignificant*, either because it doesn't add anything to the conceptual commonsensical framework that we all share or because it is too a revisionary a conclusion to be taken into serious account. Issues that may inspire a particular sense of disease include discussions concerning the one-note wrong paradigm, disputes between Perdurantists and Endurantists in the Nominalist camp, questions about the perceptibility of musical works qua *abstracta* and -*manifesto* of the alleged frivolity of musical ontology—quarrels about whether musical works are created or discovered. These disputes, one may think, are of scarce interest. They may attract abstract metaphysicians, but they have nothing to say to musicians and music theorists. It is no accident, then, that such issues are taken as paradigmatic examples by opponents of musical ontology. Like analogous ones, these questions have neither clear answers nor a way of being properly undertaken. And even if they had, what could they possibly tell us, after all, about musical works? Does an indication as to whether a musical work correspond to the sum or rather to the class of its

performances provide us with relevant information about it? How can anything revealing be added to our knowledge of music by answering to this question purely metaphysical questions?

Defeatist reactions of this sort might be triggered, for instance, by noticing that whatever connotation may be given to the word "creation", works of music are made by their composers just as this text is being created by me now, even if in writing I'm not inventing an alphabet or a grammar *ex novo*, but I'm just using linguistic materials and laws which exist already. This is a brute fact, one may say, and the rest is just a terminological *querelle* on the meaning to be given to the relevant words "discovery" and "creation". Insofar as this evidence appears trivial, one starts to feel doubtful as to whether there is any real disagreement about the non-semantic world in the whole discussion[272].

Similar concerns represent a menace for the realist approach that is dominant today among philosophers who specialize in the ontology of music. Indeed most contemporary ontologists of art think of themselves as engaging not primarily with concepts coming from artistic and musical language, but with the reality that is behind and represented by that language and those concepts. Of course, match with ordinary usage and belief sometimes plays a role in this assessment, but typically not a primitive one. The methodology is prevalently (yet not solely) a pragmatic one for most of contemporary ontologists: they start from the way in which our commonsensical intuitions, manifesting themselves in ordinary language, give account to the musical practices we are interested in; then they mend them, whenever the need arises. But in the end they are sure to be saying something true of the *real* works, not something true of our *usage* of musical concepts.

But pay attention to something. Up to now, what we have been showing is that *sometimes* there are reasons to be suspicious of disputes in musical ontology. Nevertheless, this defeatism may not be, by definition, justified by something in the ontology of music *per se*. On the contrary, it may concern only some particular discussions, that between eternalists and creationists, or that between tridimensionalists and quadrimensionalists, for instance. There is no obvious reason to think that all ontological debates about musical works must be on a par, unless we risk throwing out the baby with the bathwater.

This seems to be a central point: it is perfectly possible to dismiss *some* ontological disputes about musical works as irrelevant and *not* others. At least on the face of it, it is one thing to say that what makes nonsense in the ontology of music is some specific feature of some

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[272] This is exactly the type of criticism Semanticists use to address to ontological investigation concerning music.

specific debates, it is another to say that what it is some general feature that make disputes on musical works count as ontological issues in the first place.

Detractors of musical ontology favor the second solution. Prone to generalizing, they conclude that since something specially wrong characterize ontological debates about music *as such*, musical ontology should not be pursued at all.

Consider similar defeatist attitudes in the field of general metaphysics. Here the Detractors' camp can boast in its ranks a number of excellent philosophers, say, Kant, Carnap, Wittgenstein, Austin, Putnam among the others. All those people dismiss metaphysics as entirely erroneous, on the grounds that nothing really significant is at issue there. They criticize metaphysics and found it often superficial, its questions silly, ill formed and mistaken. Carnap particularly rejected metaphysical existence claims as *meaningless*. He was the father of the anti-metaphysical positivist movement of his day, as described by Schlick: ''The empiricist does not say to the metaphysician 'what you say is false,' but, 'what you say asserts nothing at all!' He does not contradict him, but says 'I don't understand you'''[273].

On the wake of such illustrious predecessors, contemporary Detractors say something similar against musical ontology to what the positivists once said against general metaphysics: that there is something wrong with ontological questions on music themselves[274]. At least, there are no questions regarding music that are fit to debate in the manner of the ontologists: they are only pseudo-problems in Carnap's sense*,* which only involve different *façons de parler[275]*. To return to the case at hand: when an a work is "made" by its author, there is no "substantive" question of whether it has been invented, discovered or created, they say. At best, there are simply different – and equally good – ways to talk.

But nevertheless, they make a move beyond the simple fact that these disputes are pointless. Indeed, it is not a matter of fact -nor a foregone conclusion- that "bad" metaphysics results from asking the wrong questions. One may dismiss a question as stupid because he is taking it to be erroneously obvious what the right answer is, or because one is not even interested in it. For instance, even though one may not be very involved in knowing exactly how many dotted notes there are in Schumann's Fourth symphony, this does not involve by itself that the

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[273] Schlick, M., *Positivism and Realism*, in *Logical Positivism*, ed. A. J. Ayer: 82–107. Macmillan Publishing, p. 107

[274]In fact, one may ask how ontology could flourishes precisely in *analytic* philosophy—a kind of philosophy that, for many years, was *hostile* to the very subject? Of course, ontology became respectable in 1948, when Quine published a famous paper titled "*On What There Is.*" It was Quine – against the Carnapian tradition- who made Ontology a respectable subject.

[275] See: Young, *The Ontology of Musical Works: A Philosophical Pseudo-Problem*, Front. Philos. China 2011, 6(2): 284-297; 2011

question is malformed, or inane. So again, Detractors have to be explicit as to what exactly is wrong with ontology of music and with its questions. The way they do that, depend on their underlying theoretical background, whether it is adherence to historicism, to aestheticism or to semanticism.

Here we are now to the central point of distinguishing between the three different versions in which ontological dismissivism might come in. In the remainder of this section, we shall analyze each of them by focusing on their underlying philosophical roots, in order to see whether such positions are tenable or not, and why. Another issue we will be to see whether we should *believe* to any of those particular positions, and *how* we should decide whether they are true or not.

We begin with the one we have called "aestheticist dismissivism". The major proponent of this view is a well-known philosopher of art, Aaron Ridley[276] (2003, 2004). He claims that ontology is useless with regards to music (and art in general), essentially because what is really worth investigating is the aesthetic experience we live in our encounters with works. In doing so, he seems to support what we will call the *aestheticist* paradigm, as thought in opposition to the *ontological* paradigm most music ontologists adhere to.

But before getting into specificity, here is a summary of what we have just said about musical ontology's Detractors. According to Detractors:

1) musical ontology is pointless, for it tells us nothing relevant with regard to music; thus, it needs to be completely discharged.

2) all of musical ontology has to stand or fall together. Making broad generalizations about the "status of the art", we need not look at the details of particular disputes in order to decide whether or not they are one of the problematic ones, because they all are *by definition*.

3) The core of the problem they individuate in musical ontology depend on particular Detractors' philosophical engagement.

Aestheticist Dismissivism

What, then, is this first version of dismissivism and in what sense is it linked to a form of "aestheticism"?

For the sake of the argument, we shall begin by Ridley, who has recently become renowned for his repeated attacks against musical ontology. His argument as in 2003a and in 2004 (105-

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[276] Though he is not the only one: See for example Young, J., *The Ontology of Musical Works: A Philosophical Pseudo-Problem*, Front. Philos. China 2011, 6(2): 284–297

131) goes as follows. According to Ridley, from the publication of Nelson Goodman's *Languages of Art*, a renewed interest for musical ontology has spread out in the philosophical literature. Analytic philosophers have thought it self-evident to raise questions about musical ontology; they have thought answers to ontological questions useful and valuable (203). On the contrary, Ridley argues that musical ontology has no consequences for musical aesthetics or practice: "It is my contention here that all such thoughts are mistaken, and that a serious philosophical engagement with music is orthogonal to, and ay well in fact be impeded by, the pursuit of ontological issues, and, in particular, that any attempt to specify the conditions of a work's identity must, from the perspective of musical aesthetics, be absolutely worthless"[277].

The post-Goodman philosophy of art, he says, has used up all its energy in trying to address the ontological questions Goodman had set up, while attempting at the meanwhile to avoid some of the counterintuitive consequences of his position. Note that here Ridley is referring only to the debate concerning the identity conditions of musical works, namely the debate over (1) what are to be considered the conditions that a performance must satisfy if it is has to count as a performance of the work and (2) to what degree to which a particular performance may violate these identity conditions while still counting as a legitimate performance of the work. A number of different positions have been advanced against Goodman, like that of Kivy, who identifies a musical work with the (abstract) "sound structure", and Jerrold Levinson who has proposed a different kind of Platonism according to which a work is to be regarded as a compound of a sound structure and a performing-means structure. Nevertheless, according to Ridley, the fact that despite the efforts no consensus has been reached in all these decennial attempts shows that musical ontology is not only too elusive an issue but rather that: "[…] the whole move to ontology in thinking about music is a mistake". A mistake that lies on the fact that none is –nor should- in fact be bewildered by questions of musical ontology: "When was the last time you came away from a performance of a piece of music-live or recorded-seriously wondering whether the performance had been of it? My guess is, never"[278]. He is thus able to say that first, in our encounters with renderings of pieces of music, our interest is concerned as to whether a performance is good or not, that is, we are concerned with the *value* of what we are hearing (207). Second, that since we are mainly interested in the aesthetic experience of music, questions concerning work identity are

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[277] Ridely, A., *Against Musical Ontology*, The Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 100, No. 4 (Apr., 2003), p. 203
[278] Ivi, p. 207

pointless, or, at best "deserve a place in the back row"[279]. A sensible philosophical engagement with music is an understanding of how we can evaluate musical performances; in this regard, the debate over the identity conditions is irrelevant. Thus, the fact that philosophers are concerned with metaphysical questions and with the search for identity conditions rather than with addressing the correct evaluative issues is, according to Ridley, both shocking and upsetting (208). One may say that this is due to a distinction between the *philosophy of music* on the one hand and *music critic* or *musicology* on the other. But even admitting that such a distinction is possible, Ridley denies its relevance. Indeed, he argues, anyone interested in aesthetics should be concerned with the evaluative experience stemming from our encounters with music (208). Though possible a discipline, musical metaphysics is to be pursued only secondly. In fact, Ridley maintains, answering to ontological questions primarily requires an evaluative assessment: the ontological facts about music depend on facts about musical value. Detaching its inquiry from questions of value, ontologists of music guess wrong twice. First, because they aim at a completely futile purpose, i.e., answering to questions which none is really interested in; second because they mistakenly believe that ontology should ground evaluative issues, while the opposite is true. Ridley uses two arguments to show that musical ontology cannot be pursued independently of, or prior to, musical value theory. On the one hand, (1) he shows that if the value of a performance is thought as reliant on how well that performance complies with the identity conditions of the work, then we would need to specify *a priori* what exactly the performance was meant to comply with, i.e., the content of the work constituting its identity: "It would be necessary, that is, to be able to give an exhaustive prescription for the production of a performance that was, not merely legitimate, but excellent, first-rate, admirable. And that is, of course, quite impossible, unjust the same way and forjust the same reasons that it is impossible to give an exhaustive prescription for the production of a great work of art". The identity conditions for a particular work of music cannot be given unless one has already rendered explicit what would suffice as an aesthetically successful performance of that work. Any effort to identify the content of a work "in advance of a good interpretation" of it is vain and fruitless.

This is because the work content is only graspable in faithful performances, and in no other way. In fact, he argues, it is quite evident that the "identity" of a work only comes out in the degree of understanding that a faithful performance of the work demonstrates. Therefore: "[…]that means that any attempt to specify that content – the content to which a good

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[279] Ibid.

performance is faithful – *in advance* of evaluative judgments about particular performances of it, or independently of such judgments, must be futile and self-defeating[280]. We cannot say what the criterion of faithfulness is before any faithful performance.

On the other hand, (2) Ridley shows that there are cases of legitimate performances of some works which do not match with the alleged identity conditions for that work. Even if some performances fails to satisfy the identity conditions for some work they may yet count as instances of that work. It is the case of non-standard performances that we nonetheless may consider insightful and revealing performances of that very work. The identity conditions for any work are therefore just expressions of "some more or less reasonable set of expectations": we can figure out what a work is, its nature and properties, only by listening to performances of it, in an never ending process of understanding (214).

Following from (1) and (2), is Ridley's claim that since identity conditions pay no role in the evaluation of musical performances, philosophers should abandon the identity debate once and for all. In order to defend their position, ontologists of music have made appeal to "hard cases" or borderline cases in which it might not always be clear whether a particular performance is a performance of a given work. But once again, Ridley argues, if we are to decide in favor of a positive answer to such dilemmatic situation, then we have to look at the content which is crucially revealed by the understandings evinced in faithful performances of the work, thus "by evaluatively driven critical inquiry" (215)[281]. By way of an end, Ridley wonders rhetorically whether he has implicitly and unwittingly made any ontological commitment in identifying works with their faithful performances or in assuming the realist view, as he calls it, that faithful performances reveal the essential properties of the work. Of course, he denies this possibility: "I have nowhere, in effect or otherwise, claimed or assumed that works are identical to (some? all?) faithful performances of them" he says, and just up ahead he adds: "At most, I have helped myself to some perfectly neutral, pre-theoretical thoughts […]My position, it seems to me, is steadfastly devoid of ontological commitments"[282]. Free from these possible charges, Ridley is thus able to draws his conclusions: "Musical ontology may, at first blush, appear to be an entirely harmless and even

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[280] Ivi, p. 213

[281] Same goes for first performance of a work. First because the question as to whether it is a performance of the relevant work does not arise unless we have "dark suspicions playing in the background" (217). Second, because, even when such a question was asked, no answer to it would depend upon the specification of identity conditions –nor upon any particular set of ontological commitments- but upon context-reliant observations.

[282] P.219

a proper philosophical pursuit. But if it is the philosophy of music that one is interested in doing, then ontology really is an idle distraction, or worse, and I propose that we should have nothing further to do with it."[283]

Discussing Detractors' Arguments

Ridley's reasoning can be summed up in a triad of claims[284]: (a) the idea that metaphysical questions are of no real interest for those concerned with musical investigation; (b) the idea that musical ontology is reliant on evaluative assessments while the reverse -as often assumed by ontologists of music- is false; (c) the idea that musical ontology says nothing interesting with regards to music. From a theoretical point of view the strongest point is naturally (b), since (a) is easily questionable *qua* based on a non-argumentative intuition, and (c) follows from (b) being accepted.

For what concerns (a) Ridley says that when one listens to a piece of music, one does never wonder whether the piece complies with the identity condition of the work, so that ontological puzzles "have next to no tendency to arise"[285]. It is possible to show (yet not to *demonstrate*) that there actually *is* an authentic ontological puzzlement concerning music. This was exactly what we wanted to elicit with "the game" with *My Favorite Things* at the beginning of our inquiry in Chapter 2. It seems that we are often ontologically confused about the music we listen to, and the implicit ontological assumptions we make about the relationship between performances and works may need to be further investigated. But even if one denies the fact that simple listeners have such ontological perplexities, he should recognize that at least *philosophers* have. Kania (2008) is thus surely right in underlining that Ridley's dismissive assumption is contradicted by the fact that as a minimum someone, namely, musical ontologists, *is puzzled* by ontological issues concerning music. Nevertheless, is really the fact that there is someone in the world who is interested in a particular topic enough to guarantee the value of the topic? We doubt it is. In the case of philosophical questions in general, the issue is even more complicated. For instance, it is often assumed that most people are not at all concerned with philosophical inquiries, and that this shows only the elitist character of philosophy -i.e., the fact that philosophy is not for everybody- *not* that philosophical questions are worthless *per se*. But on the other hand, this does not necessarily have redemptive

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[283] P.220
[284] Cfr Kania, A. *Philosophy of Music*, Kania, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/music/>.
[285] P.207

consequences for philosophy *in toto*; for it may be argued–given the same disinterest on the part of ordinary people- that there are both fruitful and fruitless branches within the very realm of philosophy. Of course, unless one demonstrates that musical ontology is among the latter, one should not be forced to refuse it. But for the same reason one should not even be compelled to address it. So, in the absence of any theoretical demonstration, we ought better be agnostic[286] as regard to the status of ontology of music as a whole–neither *a priori* say that it has no epistemic value, as Ridley does, nor assume it definitely has, as Kania does[287].

A stronger argument in favor of musical ontology might be to show that no discourse concerning the value of musical performances is really –whether we know it or not- ontologically neuter; Ridley's pretended detachment from ontological question is all an act. On this basis, Kania seeks to show that much of what Ridley says does imply some substantive ontological presuppositions, though Ridley rejects this. But we will not follow Kania here in the search for particular examples able to show up Ridley' s unwittingly ontologically-loaded way of talking[288]. What we prefer to notice instead is that –whether evident or not in Ridley's paper- there may be no "perfectly neutral, pre-theoretical thoughts"[289]. Beliefs about how the world is made –both in a weaker and a stronger ontological sense- are concealed beneath our most commonsensical assumptions, so that every attempts to show that we can well do without ontology means to assume a naïve, *qua* non argued, ontological point of view. Though rarely explicit, this unaware ontology is at stake every time we identify and classify things around us. Of course, such ontological attitude is not explicit. None of us would say –after having attended to a performance of Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*- that what he has listened was an allographic work whose identity criteria are notationally defined. But this ontological sense is at work every time we judge things around us,

This leads us directly to Ridley's second claim (b) which is concerned with a most central topic we may call "the priority of ontology"[290].

Unlike Ridley's former idea, this latter one has a stronger philosophical impact. It implies that one can correctly say the kind of things something is only after having judged the value of it.

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[286] Of course, the problem is that any demonstration of the value of something depends on the criteria one is committed to, which are –by definition- arbitrary and disputable.

[287] In fact, our aim here shall be exactly to show that something in it makes sense, and something do not.

[288] Though for the most part we agree with him. For this, see Kania, 2008

[289] Ridley, p. 219

[290] See: Bartel, C., *Music without Metaphysics?*, British Journal of Aesthetics, 51, p.384

Therefore, we need rely on value judgments about a particular performance to determine whether or not it is a performance of a particular work. Kania has argued that this relationship between ontology and value is to be contrasted, since it equivocates on the notion of the 'content' of a musical work. The argument is more or less the following: Ridley's claiming that the content of a work can only be recovered from aesthetically valued performances of that works is based on an undue notion of what the content of a work is. His notion of work content indeed refers to something which is not graspable in advance of "faithful" or good interpretations of the work. In the ordinary speaking, in fact, the work's "content" is something we can know before of any performance, because it concerns the specifications provided by the musical score in terms of notes, dynamics, instrumentation, tempo, and so on. In other words, the work content basically coincides with what the score specifies[291]. Ridley's notion of content is too restrictive, since it denies that access to the score alone can make knowledgeable people able to determine whether a performance is a performance of the relevant score, and what the basic identity of the work should be- as prescript by the author's indications. Moreover, "content', in Ridley' sense is not what musical ontologists refer to, since they seem to be committed to the ordinary notion of content. Therefore, Kania argues, Ridley's claim that only aesthetically valued performances can give us knowledge of the work content is unsustainable. Following Matheson and Caplan (2011) a more charitable interpretation of Ridley's second claim would imply assuming that Ridley questions the usefulness of the ontology of music because he believes that to be useful an ontological theory of a particular work would have to tell us *ahead of time* what would count as a performance of that musical work. But since there is no way of knowing what would count as a performance of a particular work before hearing all possible performances of it, then ontology is useless. Nevertheless, this concern can be side-stepped, because the usefulness of the ontology of music does not rely on its telling us *ahead of time* what would count as a performance of what.

On the other hand, Ridley explicitly refuses the idea that ontology must have a priority in our processes of music understanding. He denies, in Bartel's words, that "[…] we must first understand what kind of thing a musical work is before we can know how to evaluate it correctly […]"[292]**.** It is worth noting that similar sorts of claims has constituted the dominant

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[291] Note, though, that this sense of "content" inevitably leads us to accept a form of more or less stronger structuralism concerning the identity of musical works, which is exactly what Ridley tries to avoid.
[292] Bartel, C., (2011) p. 384

view in the ontology of music -where the priority of ontology has been taken as the standard model of analysis- at least since Kandall Walton's *Categories of Art* (1970)[293]. Walton famously argued that to judge the value of something we need to know the kind of thing it really is, so he insisted on the relevance of ontological considerations to judgments of musical value. Judgments that works of art have certain aesthetic values, Walton stresses, implicitly involve reference to some particular set of categories, since the fact that a work has a determinate characteristic is often relative to its belonging to a particular category: "Thus it seems that, at least in some cases, it is *correct* to perceive a work in certain categories and *incorrect* to perceive it in certain others; that is, our judgments of it when we perceive it in the former are likely to be true, and those we make when perceiving it in the latter false"[294]. Our task *qua* art appreciators is to learn to perceive the work in the correct categories, and judge it by what we then perceive in it. This is a skill that must be acquired by training, and by being exposed to a great many other works of the category or categories in question. Much of Walton's argument in his 1970 paper was meant directly against the seemingly common-sense notion that aesthetic judgments about works of art are to be based solely on what can be perceived in them, as Ridley seems to imply. That notion is deceptive, Walton argues, since examining a work with the senses alone, by itself reveal neither how it is correct to perceive it, nor how to perceive it that way. More than merely grounding the field of art contextualism as opposed to art isolationism[295], though, Walton's account provides grounds for the assumption of the centrality of ontology for aesthetic appreciation, as orthogonal to Ridley's one, Kania is right to note. But then he fails to grasp all the implications at stake there; so this is exactly what we shall try to do in what follows.

Thus far we have basically shown that Ridley's main arguments to defend a complete dismissal of musical ontology are weak, if not unsound. It seems that questions of musical ontology arise for philosophically-minded persons (even though this is not enough to grant their relevance) and that there are some genuinely ontological pre-theoretical assumptions about musical ontology which all of us are committed with. Moreover Ridley's arguments to support the idea that we need to rely on value judgments about a particular performance to determine whether or not it is a performance of a particular work are unviable. This may let us conclude that Ridley's third claim (c), i.e., that musical ontology considers music in terms

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[293] See Kania (2008) and Pouivet (2011)

[294] Walton, K., 1970, *Categories of Art*, Philosophical Review, 79, p.219

[295] Art *isolationism* is the theory according to which the circumstances connected with a work's origin have no essential bearing on an assessment of its aesthetic nature.

which are ineffective for giving a proper account to our concrete encounters with works, since its objectifying view is not able– nor even remotely enough- to explain our concrete musical experience as listeners, is questionable[296]. Though, Ridley's arguments can be reinforced, and much stronger argument to support the aestheticist dismissivism may actually be found in a 1986 paper by philosopher Eddie Zemach, whose title could work as a poster of aestheticist dismissivism: "*No identification without evaluation*"[297].

On a first glance, Zemach notes, it seems reasonable to believe –as most analytic philosophers do- that to evaluate an object, one must first identify it. Remember what Walton said: identification precede and presuppose evaluation; the identity conditions of candidates for evaluation must be established prior to and independently of evaluation; the capacity to correctly identify an object is learnable, and it is part of our training *qua* art connoisseur. Zemach squares off against this idea. *Contra* Walton, he states that decisions about a work of art identity -what it does and does not consist in- are always aesthetically motivated. Zemach explains that processes of identification always imply reference to values; it is impossible to define any kind of thing without *ipso facto* defining what is a good instance of that kind, i.e., what a "good"[298] exemplar would be. To define apples, he argues, we point at good apples; to define "car" one must explain what a good car is. Zemach assumes that in order to decide whether or not something is an instance of a kind it is not enough –nor even completely possible-, to give necessary and sufficient conditions for the kind-hood. To understand a sortal term like "shoe", one must have an idea of what a good instance of a shoe is; therefore, he can indicate some good-making features *qua* shoes and say that it, and things similar to it in these respects, are shoes. So, for what concerns music, to identify a performance as a performance of a musical work, one has to make reference to a good performance of the work, as Ridley himself tried to show: "[…]But if this is right, evidently enough, much of the 'content' of a given work is only revealed in the understandings that faithful performances of it evince. And that means that any attempt to specify that content – the content to which a good performance is faithful – in advance of evaluative judgments about particular performances of it, or independently of such judgments, must be futile and self-defeating"[299].

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[296] Cfr. Bertinetto, A., *Musical Ontology: A View Through Improvisation,* Cosmo. Comparative Studies in Modernism, 2 2013, pp. 81-101

[297] Zemach, Eddy M., No *identification without evaluation*, British Journal of Aesthetics 26 (3) 1986 239-251.

[298] We are not exactly told what exactly a "good" exemplar is, but we may presume it is something correctly formatted

[299] Ridley, 2003, p.213

The suggestion is already addressed by Collingwood: "the definition of any given kind of thing is also the definition of a good thing of that kind: for a thing that is good in its kind is only a thing which possesses the attributes of that kind"[300].

But why it is so? Zemach makes here recourse to a sort of utilitarianistic explanation: basically he argues that the way in which we distinguish and classify objects in the world is always subjected to our needs and interests *qua* rational agents. We operate distinctions between different world-states when it is *valuable* for us; accordingly, different identity criteria among objects are introduced into our language because the objectives they accommodate are quite different. It is worth noting, we are told, that this is no special feature of aesthetics: "If I'm right", Zemach glosses, "there are no identity conditions for objects in general: whether *x* is the same as *y* depends on the sortal under which they are subsumed and whether there are enough good-making features for that sortal present". And later he adds: "[…]The identity criteria of things are determined by interests which things of that kind serve well. Now there is a Kantian-Romantic myth that works of art serve no interest. Surely this is absolutely false. Works of art are enjoyed by people who have aesthetics needs because works of art can satisfy those needs."[301] In other words, according to Zemach, the identity conditions artworks of art derive from the function works serve, i.e., conventionally, being appreciated for their beauty or for their pleasantness[302]: "[…]which is the reason they were singled out as a special kind of thing in the first place"[303]. Thus, he concludes, the question whether one is *that* work or another is fundamentally a question of critical evaluation.

In a nut, Zemach's argument is based on two main claims.

On the one hand, he states that since it is not feasible to define anything by giving its necessary and sufficient conditions – note that we are not exactly told why, Zemach just say *en passant* that this was shown to be impossible by Wittgenstein and Weismann- definition of the thing-kind is always subsumed to the identification of good instances of that kind of thing. A possible criticism against this first claim would be to show that one cannot establish whether an exemplar is a *good* exemplar of a kind *prior* to and *without* a criterion of identity that tells us how exemplars should be formed to count as proper exemplars of that kind. Where may this criterion of goodness be grounded, if not in the correct definition of the identity of the relevant object? Nevertheless –whether or not we agree with Zemach on this

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[300] Collingwood, R.G., *The Principles of Art*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938, p.280
[301] Zemach, E., p.119
[302] Here again, as with the notion of aesthetic experience, one could ask: "What then with ugly or unpleasant works of art?"
[303] Ibid.

point- his second claim is fraught with far more serious consequences than his first. His suggestion is that our relationship with objects in the world –the way we compartmentalize and subdivide them- always depend on our interests, values, purposes. This way–either consciously or unconsciously- Zemach makes a plea to a way of reasoning which is typical of philosophical Pragmatism. More than just addressing a discussion on the identity of paints, his argument grounds the refusal –usual in the pragmatist tradition- of the dualism between fact and value in the sense of the idea that all our theoretical observations –and therefore our ontological assumptions- are always value-laden. Pragmatistically (and anti-realistically) he says that the way in which "we punctuate" the world into distinct objects is not *in nature*, since nature is continuous, but depends on our values and interests as human beings[304].

Philosopher Richard Shusterman's challenges against analytic aesthetics served in a sense the same pragmatist purposes[305]. Though an initial *apprentissage* as an analytic philosopher, Shusterman has indeed soon moved to embrace a form of philosophical pragmatism in art. Especially after the publication of his 1992 book, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, he has begun to develop a theory of aesthetics preeminently based on John Dewey's *Art as Experience*, in the conscious dismissal of that Anglo-American tradition he was firstly educated to[306]. In a former book he edited in 1987, *Analytic Aesthetics: Retrospect and Prospect*, Shusterman points out what he considers to be the major limit of analytic aesthetics (together with, say, lack of historical attention, lack of sociological background etc), i.e., its pretense of cultivating a purely classificatory analysis of works of art. Since analytic aesthetics is mostly based on scientific-styled arguments -science being thought as apparently value-neutral- it rejects the question of art evaluation as meaningless, fruitless and even misleading. "[…] perhaps the most striking sign of analytic aesthetics' discomfort and shrinking disengagement from the issue of evaluating art is its very distinctive attempt to distinguish a non-evaluative, merely classificatory, sense of "art" from the characteristic evaluative or honorific sense of "art" as something at least prima facie valuable"[307]. According to Shusterman, the possibility of doing aesthetics without evaluation it is no more than a wishful thinking. The very notion of *work of art* presupposes a background where art is evaluatively esteemed; thus, art value

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[304] His critique of the apparent uselessness of the artwork goes in the same pragmatist direction. Dewey famously argued that enjoyment of aesthetic quality requires not an attitude of disinterested contemplation, but participation, engagement, and sympathy. See: Dewey, *Art as Experience*, New York, NY: Minton, Balch pp. 250-258

[305] Note that Shusterman, though, does not explicitly address his criticism against the metaphysics of art and music, but instead against analytic aesthetics *tout-court*.

[306] Though he situates his own aesthetic work inside this tradition. Cfr: Shusterman 1997, p.29

[307] Shusterman, R., *Analytic Aesthetics*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1989, p.10

cannot, he says, be separated in a holistic sense from art definition and art identification. Both Shusterman and Zemach reject an absolutist fact-value distinction by contending that our senses are impregnated with prior conceptualizations, making it impossible to have any observation that is totally value-free. As a widely known fact, it is to David Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* that we formally owe the tendency of the of the segregation of facts from values. In the twentieth century, logical positivism heightened the strength of this tendency and it was opined that facts were the only object of rational and therefore scientific endeavor, values being merely the stuff of opinion, a nonsense better left to moralists. In spite of the ease with which positivist philosophers reject "value judgments" and insist on "facts," the fact/value dichotomy has been repeatedly criticized, especially by philosophers somehow engaged with pragmatism[308]. Far from being value-free, the pragmatists' conception of truth directly relates to an end that human beings regard as *normatively* desirable[309]. In philosophy of art, this results in the impossibility to separate evaluative judgments from identity judgments, as Shusterman and Zemach seems to believe. Nevertheless, the fact-value distinction still plays a role in analytic philosophy of art, and especially in musical ontology, where ontology is believed to concern purely descriptive ontological facts about works.

The Aestheticist Paradigm

We have put a lot of irons in the fire now, so this seems to be a good point to take stock of the situation. If our reconstruction makes sense, Ridley, Zemach[310] and Shusterman (and all other Aestheticist Detractors) can be put all together on the same line -albeit with some substantial differences- since they all rely on what we might call "the *aestheticist* paradigm" as apparently opposed to the so-called the "*analytic or ontological*" paradigm, to which most contemporary philosophers of art adhere. Both paradigms are concerned with the role of aesthetics as a philosophical discipline, yet, their approaches are very diverse to one another.
The former paradigm - the *ontological* paradigm- pursued in the whole tradition of analytic aesthetics by philosophers we have learned about in Chapter 2, say, Nelson Goodman, Kandall Walton, Richard Wollheim, Nicholas Wolterstorff, Jerrold Levinson, Andrew Kania, and many others, claims that the right method to attend to art questions is to make appeal to

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[308] See, in particular , Putnam, H., Putnam, H., *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy and Other Essays*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002.
[309] It must be said, on the other hand, that Dewey's target was not the idea that the distinction between "facts" and "values" should be cancelled; rather his target was what he called the fact-value "*dualism*."
[310] For what concerns Zemach, the discourse is more complicated, since he actually is an analytic philosopher.

metaphysics, epistemology, logic, for they can help us to avoid making category mistakes -as defined by Ryle (1949)- and thus enable us to have a correct appreciation of art. According to this perspective, knowing what works are contribute to secure their proper understanding and appreciation. Aesthetics, says Pouivet, a strong proponent of this view, begins with individuating what is the kind of things we are dealing with: "une expérience esthétique peut être ratée à défaut d'une comprehension appropriée de la nature d'une oeuvre"[311]. Philosophers committed to this perspective, accordingly, insist on non-evaluative criteria to define works of art. Moreover, they steady maintain the distinction between facts and value and state that philosophy of art is or should be mostly concerned with the former than with the latter. The aesthetic evaluation of a given musical work concerns art criticism more than philosophy.

The second paradigm – the *aestheticist* paradigm – is instead committed to the view that aesthetics is to be considered as a completely independent discipline, with its own self standing purposes and *agenda*. This idea originated in the Eighteenth Century "aesthetic turn", when aesthetic came to be used to designate a specific kind of judgment, a particular attitude, peculiar types of values and – above all – a special kind of experience. The notion of aesthetic experience came out alongside with the new centrality of subjectivity, for the realm of the aesthetic was to be identified not only *through*, but also *with* subjective experience[312]. Aesthetic questions then started to be though in a completely independent way from that of metaphysics and epistemology. Aesthetics became an autonomous discipline with its own methodology and specificity, and with the main purpose of understanding what constitutes art appreciation.

Being committed to the aestheticist paradigm means primarily to reflect on the aesthetic experience we undergo in our encounters with artworks, which is mostly an *evaluative* experience. As Ridley argues, aesthetics should deal with the search for reasons that can explain why, and to which degree, a certain performance is good, bad, exciting, innovative, moving, insipid and so on, and to be preferred to other performances of the same work, in order to provide ground to our concrete musical experiences. Therefore, according to this perspective, no radical distinction between facts and values can be envisaged in aesthetics, since ontology is always surreptitiously based on evaluation. A favorite stalking horse of the aestheticist paradigm –and a favorite source of scandal for the ontological paradigm- is

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[311] Pouivet, R. *Philosophie du rock*, PUF, Paris 2010 p. 28

[312] See, Shusterman, *The End of the Aesthetic Experience*, Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 55 (1) 1997:29-41.

notoriously the notion of aesthetic experience. Besides Ridley, another contemporary defendant of the importance of this notion is –not surprisingly- Richard Shusterman. In a 1998 paper, *The end of the Aesthetic Experience*, Shusterman complains that, though once considered one the most crucial of aesthetic concepts, aesthetic experience has in the last century come under increasing critique. Not only its importance but its very existence has been questioned. But how has this concept progressively fallen in disregard? Significantly, Shusterman does not only give account to criticisms from the analytic tradition but extends his investigation to embrace also continental philosophy. In the analytical field the decline of the notion of aesthetic experience –Shusterman shows- is more extreme, but disrepute of aesthetic experience can also be found in the work of Heidegger, Adorno, Benjamin, and Gadamer. According to Shusterman, at least four distinctive features of the notion of the aesthetic experience have been put on trial. First, the face that aesthetic experience has an *evaluative* dimension, i.e., it is perceived as an enjoyable and valuable experience (30); second, that it has what he calls a *phenomenological* dimension, i.e., it is intensely perceived and felt; third, it is has a *semantic* dimension, i.e., it is not simply reducible to mere sensation; fourth, it has a *demarcational* dimension, i.e., it is a distinctive experience closely identified with the distinction of fine art and representing art's essential claim.[313]

Contra this phenomenological/evaluative notion of aesthetic experience supporters of the ontological paradigm have offered several criticisms[314]. At least the last feature -which Shusterman refers to as the *demarcational* dimension- is questionable, they have claimed, since the concept of aesthetic experience is –from its very beginning- used both to define art and non-art. According to the Dewey-inspired theory of art Shusterman refers to, the prime use of the notion of aesthetic experience is indeed not aimed at distinguishing art from the rest of things, but rather at reestablishing the continuity between aesthetic experience and life. Dewey indeed denied what he called "the museum conception of art" that –while sacralizing and objectifying art objects- excludes "the aesthetic" from real life. Following Dewey, Shusterman believes that the essence and value of art are not in artifacts *per se* but in the dynamic and developing experiential activity we have *through* them. We cannot make sense of art as a whole, Shusterman claims, without admitting the centrality "of vivid, meaningful, phenomenological experience that is directly felt as valuable"[315], though the presence of such experience does not entail the presence of art.

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[313] Nevertheless, the concept of aesthetic experience is used both to define art and non-art.
[314] See in particular: Dickie, G., 1964, 1974.
[315] Shusterman, 1997, p.38

Analytic aestheticians, conversely, have remarked that since the capacity to produce aesthetic experience alone cannot serve to identify and individuate works of art, then it is ultimately ineffective[316]. Moreover, since aesthetic experience is by definition (because of its *evaluative* dimension) enjoyable or positive, it can in no way account for strongly negative aesthetic judgments, which cannot be explained by the mere absence of a positive aesthetic experience. Yet negative verdicts are central to the field of aesthetics, and any concept which claims to define this field must be able to account for bad as well as good art. There is also the problem that aesthetic experience in itself is too vague and subjectively variable to provide sufficient grounds for justifying particular evaluative verdicts. Thus, when it came to actual critical practice, one had to demonstrate the unity, complexity, and intensity of the actual work, not of its experience.

On the other hand, analytic aestheticians have noted that talking about aesthetic experience means incurring in the category mistake of treating "experience" as if it designated a real thing instead of merely denoting an empty term which refers to nothing real. The notion of "aesthetic experience" is no more than a way of talking about objects as perceived or experienced as art. As Danto remarks[317], in order to aesthetically appreciate the qualities of an object as art we must already *know* that it is a work of art, and such a knowledge is not graspable by experiencing the object itself, but from the theory and history of art[318]. This is witnessed by the fact that relevant aesthetic features are not necessarily perceptive differences. Aesthetic properties are not reducible to perceptive properties, or to empirical properties[319]. For instance, two images may be identical and yet convey very different meanings. Therefore, having an aesthetic experience alone does not enable us to decide whether or not something is a work of art: an *interpretative* act based on art history and tradition is rather required.

We will not go into the details of this discussion though, since properly settling the matter would require addressing debates that go far beyond our purposes here. Moreover, there would be no hope of doing justice to the complex discussion over the problem of the aesthetic

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[316] At least it is useless in the search for a definition of the aesthetic which could clearly mark off the domain of art from other experiences.

[317] See Arthur C. Danto, *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* (Columbia University Press, 1986), and Arthur C. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* Harvard University Press, 1981

[318] This is the so-called paradox of the indiscernible. Recall what Danto says about Andy Warhol's *Brillo Boxes*: we cannot decide whether an object is an art object or an ordinary object just looking at its exterior appearance, but making recourse to the history and theory of art.

[319] Following Pouivet, R. (2010) p.82, we may call the theory according to which all relevant aesthetic properties are perceptual properties, *Aesthetic Empiricism.*

experience in such a hasty overlook -this would require another complete work. Nonetheless, our aim here was just to provide a general description of the two paradigms –the *aestheticist* and the *ontological* one- to put them in comparison, and the notion of aesthetic experience served as the bone of contention. Defendant of the ontological paradigm insist on the fact that musical metaphysics is not in the service of aesthetic criticism or aesthetic practice. Defendant of the aestheticist paradigm believe that it is unclear how a convincing ontological backdrop may be able to tell us something relevant about music. The two approaches are based on opposite methods and perspective that do not necessarily require a conciliation. And it apparently goes without saying that acceptance of the former paradigm implies rejection of ontology with regard to art and music. So, the argument continues, one has no other choice, either accepting the ontological picture -and therefore renouncing to all aesthetic concerns- or accepting the aestheticist paradigm, and renounce to all pretenses of ontological commitment with artworks.

But are the differences between the two approaches sufficient to discard them as mutually incompatible? Are their respective purposes really too different to ask for a comparison?

We do not think so. Conversely it seems that a false dichotomy is at stake here, one which we must battle against if we want to affirm that a third path is possible between metaphysics and aesthetics. To return to the case at issue with the fact-value distinction, it is one solution to say that musical ontology needs to concern only purely descriptive ontological facts, not values –as some strict adherents of the ontological paradigm believe; it is another solution to maintain, quite pragmatistically, that since no ontological fact is value-free, musical ontology needs to be discarded, since its alleged objectivity is a deceptive illusion. Both chances are possible, but it would be wrong to believe that they represent the only available options on the table. For instance, we could argue that though the rigid dualism between fact-value is to be rejected, the distinction may nevertheless be worth keeping. Therefore, we might want to concede that even though evaluative judgments may be stuff for art critics[320], as ontologists think, the question of what grounds and constitute those judgments –if they are not to be thought just as matter of individual taste- is purely philosophical. To this extent, rationally securing evaluative objectivity could constitute the primary aim of musical ontology.

Similar attempts of mediation between the two paradigms may be traced back to a sort of *mild* ontological position[321], one which tries to conciliate aesthetic purposes and ontological methodology. As in the case of most *nuanced* positions, the reasons to support this view are

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[320] See: Pouivet, 2010, p.31

[321] In Bartel's term (2011, p.385), a "weak interpretation of the priority of ontology".

not so easily graspable; but in any case this will be our task in the remainder of this section. We shall understand what the available options are if one is not interested in a total rejection nor in a total acceptance of musical ontology.

Assessing the debate(s)

Let us lay our cards on the table. *Contra* aestheticist Detractionists, we are not willing to consider musical ontology an "idle distraction" or a "pseudo-problem" *per se*. We do think that *all* ontological debates are value-neutral and deprived of aesthetic consequences, nor we believe that they *should*. Nevertheless, we must admit some sort of sympathy for Ridley arguments, yet not because we think that all ontology of music is by itself poor or uninteresting. In fact, we feel that a part of the debate that falls under the label "musical ontology", while possibly being of insight to general metaphysics, is actually of scarce relevance to improve our acquaintance with musical works and performances. This happens from time to time when ontological discussion is detached from the concrete musical practice in which works are created and appreciated, namely, when divorced from the reality it aims to explain. Ridley's worries are justified as long as there continue to be *milieus* in ontological debates which regard works in terms which are in conflict with actual musical performance and practice.

Conversely, we think that to make sense, musical ontology should be in constant touch with real musical activities. This is because it seems that its primarily aim is to give us relevant information on what music appreciation is, and to make sense of our relationship with oeuvres, *qua* music listeners.

To avoid all possible misunderstanding, it may be worth focusing again on something we consider to be fundamental. We have repeatedly been saying "in some cases" and the like; conversely, we have characterized the three forms of dismissivism in terms of a complete rejection of the whole domain of ontology. But, again, not every problem that afflicts certain particular debates in musical metaphysics should afflict all of the field. Thus –to repeat our slogan here- not all of musical ontology can be put on the same level. This point is not usually recognized between neither Detractors nor Supporters, but it is remarkably obvious and important. Awareness of this gives rise to a methodological prescription: rather than making oversimplifications about the status of musical ontology as a whole, we need to look at the details of particular disputes. In other words, we have to be open to the possibility that some ontological debates concerning music are pointless and some are not, and thus, we need to

give substantive consideration to specific disputes in order to decide whether or not they are one of the problematic ones. To this extent, we will see that at least a part of musical ontology is really too formalistic and abstract to be of some import to aesthetics.

If we get ontological disputes on the table, a very important distinction between different domains of discussion may *prima facie* catch our attention. It is what Dodd's calls the distinction between *the categorial question* and *the individuation question*[322]. Answering to the categorical question means attempting to place works of music within an ontological category in order to gain their ontological nature by revealing what *kind* of things they are, kind which it is hoped–at least if we accept *deference*- we are familiar with. Answering to the individuation question, on the other hand, means understanding how musical works are *individuated and distinguished*: i.e., what their identity conditions are. The two questions have given rise to separate issues, which should be distinguished in analysis if we want to have a complete overlook on what musical ontology is concerned with. As we have noted already, in his dismissal of musical ontology Ridley only addresses the individuation question; he does not offer any account of the categorial debate[323]. Ridely's attack on the identity conditions for musical works has been proved to be hardly plausible, if not completely untenable. But what if we redirect Ridley's dismissivism to the categorial debate? There seem to be reasons for such a move. If it could be shown that the debate concerning the ontological category plays no role in the aesthetic evaluation of musical performances, then philosophers should better discard it, to the overall benefit of the whole discipline. Differently from the individuation question –as we have remarked already- the categorial question does not ask what conditions anything must satisfy if it has to count as a particular musical work, but rather, of entities accepted as musical works it asks what sort of entity are them. Even the best answers to this question are unlikely to provide anything like a "definition" that will make us identifying and distinguish different musical works. This is especially because the relevant ontological status of musical works may be shared with a great many other things in the world.

As Chapter 2 should have taught us, though our common sense understanding of works of art may appear to be quite obvious, determining the ontological status of works of art is extremely difficult, as witnessed by the extraordinary variety of answers among the major contenders. Musical works have been placed in almost all of major ontological categories common and even uncommon in traditional metaphysics. But despite philosophers' effort,

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[322] Dodd, J. , *Musical Works, Ontology and Meta-Ontology*, Philosophy Compass 3/6 (2008): 1113–1134, p.1113
[323] See, Bartel, C., 2011

none of these metaphysical classes have provided a completely satisfactory solution to account for musical works. We are not interested here in understanding the reasons for such a failure *per se*; rather, what we want to focus on is whether the effort was worth it. Is the whole categorial issue really has an urgency for music theorists?

Apparently, we believe, not much –and this is what we shall argue here.

In all honesty, we must say that we are not the first to engage in the battle against the categorial question. Christopher Bartel, for instance, has recently admitted a partial skepticism concerning the aesthetic import of musical ontology; he states –as we shall do- that the categorial debate have no aesthetic relevance. Nevertheless, his arguments are not always compelling. As a matter of fact, Bartel states that musicologists and music critic are able to successfully make aesthetic judgments even in complete ignorance of the categorial class to which the work belongs to, therefore the categorial debate is deprived of aesthetic meaning. Though plausible, this conclusion does not necessarily follow. The fact that people can properly express aesthetic judgments in complete ignorance of ontology does not entail that they would not change their ideas if they were to learn something on musical ontology.

So, it seems that we have to look for something else to support the thesis we are committed to.

First, it would seem that the categorial question is not the most immediately pressing if one is concerned with music. Recall, for a moment, some theories of musical works' ontological status we have had the chance to talk about.

Consider the discussion concerning Mereological Nominalism in music. If the "tridimensionalism *versus* quadrimensionalism" quarrel has a sense in general metaphysics –and this cannot be too hastily taken for granted[324]- it is just not as easy to show that this has a relevance for philosophy of music. In fact, the true question at issue in the debate seems to be the value of perdurantism and endurantism *tout court*, not the specific nature of musical works. Indeed, if perdurantism is to be considered true, it follows that works of music –just like any other individual object in the world- are to be considered quadridimensional objects. But is this consideration of any aesthetic import? Does it tell us something specific about musical works' nature?

Alternatively, take the hard Platonists' claim that musical works are eternal, unstructured, unchanging, modally inflexible, abstract entities, that have all existed forever. The point here is not only that such a view conflicts strongly with our pre-theoretical intuitions, since it could

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[324] At least, if one consider the number of skeptic reactions to such a debate; see: D. Chalmers, D. Manley, and R. Wasserman, *Metametaphysics,* Oxford University Press, New York, 2009.

be argued[325] that our intuitions are both too vague and flexible to get a decent purchase on the matter and so they need to be revised. Rather, the worry is that similar answers to the categorial question do not seem to respond to any genuine epistemological demand from our part, *qua* philosophers of music. Does the knowledge that musical works are platonic entities improve our relationship with works? Once we know that works are eternal, does this change our behavior towards them? Does this give us permission to stop caring for the protection of the heritage of musical works, to close archives and musical libraries?

Again, imagine the situation in which -while holding any of these ontological beliefs- we listen to a performance of Schumann's quartet n.14, *Death of the Maiden*. Whether we are perdurantists, endurantists or rather eternalists does not compel us to modify our aesthetic judgment, say, that the quartet is moving and expressive. If we accept Platonism about works of music, our experience of the performance would be identical as to how the experience of the performance would be whether we believed that symphonies are space-time worms. We would still maintain all of the art historical facts about the quartet, that it is in D minor, that it was composed in 1824, and so on. We would still hear the same notes when listening to the recording of the work.

It seems that after one has placed works in an ontological category –for example, that of particulars, platonic universals, or mental objects- one still knows very little about them specifically, though one may learn something about ontology. Moreover, a change of categorial perspective has apparently no implications for our aesthetic judgments (to think it has would more or less be like Dr. Johnson thinking that he could refute Berkeley by kicking a stone).

Dodd's claim (2008) that the fundamental ontological category to which works belong affects the aesthetic appraisal of the works is thus questionable. Suppose that musical works are discovered and not created. How this can possibly have an impact on the relative aesthetic values of musical works? One has no reason to modify his own aesthetic judgment about the aesthetic value of a piece if one accepts the view that all musical works are discovered and not made. The compositional process can be depicted as creating or as discovering, but the facts about what composers do when creating do not change according to the different depictions. Aesthetic judgments are independent of the categorial ontology one adheres to, because the last have no empirical consequences.

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[325] See: Dodd, J. 2008

So the doubt arises, again: are the questions as to whether musical works are abstract or material entities able to tell us something relevant for the evaluation of musical performances?

It follows from the examples above that the categorial debate is quite redundant, if not completely needless, with regard to the aesthetics of music.

Dodd rejects this conclusion and argues that placing musical works within an ontological category of a given type is able to tell us something about the works' identity conditions. Indeed, he believes that before one can identify and distinguish works, one must first know what kind of *metaphysical entity* works of music are. However, note that this way he is just causing the distinction he had initially made between the categorial and the identity question to collapse. This may strike us as contradictory. At first, he says: "[…] merely assigning works of music to some ontological category or other does not exhaust the ontologist of music's responsibilities. We would also like to know, given this assignment, how musical works are *individuated*: what the identity conditions of such works are". But then, in explaining why he will mostly focus on the categorial question he states: "[…] placing entities of a given type within an ontological category goes some way (although by no means all the way) to determining answers to the question of such entities' identity and persistence conditions". Perhaps he think that the identification problem is somehow reducible to the categorial issue[326]. But unlike Dodd, we want to hold fast the distinction between these two debates.

In fact, we believe that categorial debates in musical ontology are distantly connected –and sometimes wholly disconnected- to questions of any aesthetic relevance. The reason is that all positions in the categorial debate are equally able to acknowledge for the empirical evidence about musical works.[327] Positions in the categorial debate are somehow *a priori*, while aesthetic judgments are empirical judgments based on the concrete experience of an artwork and on the knowledge of the empirically learnt art historical facts about the work.[328] We started by arguing that we wouldn't draw here any explanation for the lack of a consensus in the categorial debate. But a case can be made to show that the reasons for this failure are due to the fact that there is no "compelling" basis for choosing between rival ontologies, since

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[326] But then there would have been no more need to distinguish between them, as completely interrelated and interdependent discussion.

[327] See: Young 2011

[328] One can of course maintain that *a priori* judgments have sometimes empirical consequences. But even if this may be proved to be true, then one should has to demonstrate that this is the case for the categorial arguments.

there is no empirical evidence for the existence of any of these types of entities that is not equally good evidence for the existence of any of the alternatives.

Nevertheless, if this is true for the categorial debate, the same cannot be said with regard to the identity debates. To this extent compare the categorial debate with debates over authenticity in musical performances. The last have been primarily focusing on what authenticity is with respect to the instantiation of musical works, and how can different performances may count as authentic to the work. Much of the issue is over what kinds of aesthetic or artistic properties are essential to respect the work's identity. In this regard, many have agreed that authenticity demands only respect of the notation, others that the timbric feature of the instrumentation specified in the score is also required for an authentic performance. Accordingly, some philosophers have accepted a sort of structuralism with regard to the identity of the work, while others are contextualists and insist on the important of the context of creation. In all such cases, though, authenticity has been seen as an ontological requirement, not just an interpretative option, since any recognizable performance as of a given work must be at least partially authentic[329]. Moreover, authenticity has not been intended as an evaluative concept, in the sense that "authentic" implies "good": -that this is not the case, Stephen Davies explains, is clear from the fact that an authentic murderer is not a good thing.[330] Whether a performance must comply with the composer's instrumentation, tempo, dynamics, intentions depends indeed on whether these features are determinative for the identity of the work and its essential content.

It is not hard to see how the debate over authenticity –though still properly counting as an ontological one[331]- is intrinsically related to aesthetic and evaluative questions of different performances. Indeed, our value judgments of works seems to be complex functions of the extent to which we judge performances authentic in various regards, and the values we assign to those various kinds of authenticity. Though the notion of authenticity has been challenged sometimes as an unattainable goal[332], the related criticisms and challenges have their own interest for the philosophy of music.

The problem of the musical works' identity influences the way we evaluate works: when confronted with paraphrases, adaptations, and transcriptions we usually make reference to

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[329] See, Davies, S., *Musical Works & Performances, A Philosophical Exploration,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p.201

[330] Davies, S., 2001, p.204

[331] To this regard, we do not agree with Young (2014, p. 15) that "little of the philosophical literature on authentic performance has anything to do with ontology".

[332] See: Young, 1988, pp. 229–31

criteria of faithfulness to the work; thus, we are faced with questions about when something is or is not a performance of something else. Similar inquiries on works' identity *are* of aesthetic import. Of course, this simple fact does not give us information as to how this debate should methodologically be based upon, whether in accordance to our intuitions concerning musical practice or in revising our beliefs. These are methodological concerns which constitute a whole other issues that should be addressed separately[333].

To sum up, a *mild ontological* commitment implies dismissal of the categorial debate but acceptance of the identity debate *qua* relevant for the evaluation of musical performances.

It should be noted, however, that what we have been defending up until now makes sense only for those willing to accept that the ultimate purpose of any philosophical investigation of music is to give a *rationale* for our aesthetic appreciation and evaluation of music.

Against our position, supporters of the ontological paradigm would likely say that some ontological assumptions of the categorial sort may be implied in assessing the identity debate; but whether or not these assumptions are relevant to the evaluation of musical performances should nonetheless need to be argued. Though, the burden of proof remains with those who believe that ontological judgments have aesthetic consequences to provide an example.

On the other hand, aestheticist Detractors' would hardly accept to leave doors open to any kind –however mild- of ontological investigations. They would maintain that all ontological views about musical works (whether they have categorial or identity concerns) have no implications for judgments about the meaning, interpretation, or aesthetic value of musical works or performances. since even the question of whether authentic "music productions" are original has to be determined empirically and not stipulated.

Such worries, though, can be viewed as a stimulus for us to a further examination of the scope of musical ontology. Aestheticists may indeed suggest us to shift the focus of the discussion from categorial issues to issues concerning the relation between claims about musical works and claims about their performances. This is what Matheson and Caplan (2011) –following Schaffer (2009)- call the problem of "grounding". Is a work of music melancholic because of the melancholic nature of its performances or are the performances melancholic in virtue of the melancholic nature of the work? Put otherwise, are the aesthetic properties of a musical work *grounded* in the properties of its performances, or it is rather the contrary[334]? Similar

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[333] Though it can be argued that the meta-ontological questions we are dealing with have some sort of hold over methodological questions. But nonetheless the last requires specific attention.

[334] Such a question is eminently metaphysical, so it should not be confused with other pragmatic or epistemological questions regarding *how* it is possible for us to detect what properties a work has (*via*

questions are often addressed by critics and musicians when they have to distinguish between the properties of performances and the proprieties of musical works.

Though an interest in *grounding relations* is currently spreading among metaphysicians, philosophers of music have until now been reluctant to deal with this issue. Schaffer recommends the notion of "grounding" as an Aristotelian[335] alternative to ordinary metaphysics that may be worthwhile following for ontology of music also. In his proposal, metaphysics should be primarily a study of grounding relations, that is, of what is more fundamental than what and how the structure of the world is determined by such priority and dependence relations. According to Schaffer, when we start asking questions about what is more fundamental than what, and what is reducible to or dependent on what, truly interesting metaphysical questions emerge[336]. In musical ontology, to reflect on grounding relations might mean to investigate upon what constitute the basis for the artistic or aesthetic properties of a work and its instantiations. Of course, the concept of grounding still has to be clarified, and there are many aspects of it that call for further philosophical work[337], especially in its usage in the field of the ontology of music. But nevertheless, if ontologists of music were to consider grounding more than categorial debates, they would address issues of greater interest to musical practice: "than that of pigeon-holding musical works in some ontological category level"[338]. The notion of ground could give us insight of the nature of musical appreciation wherein musical value lies. Since we appreciate the value of a piece when we understand it, clarifying what our understanding of music is means primarily to *ground* the criteria according to which we evaluate or judge pieces- which is the ultimate purpose of a *mild* musical ontology. In light of this, a *mild* interpretation of the ontology of music would eventually make it possible for music metaphysicians to resist over dismissivism's flattery, while at the same time not to let them lose sight of their ultimate aesthetic purposes, i.e.,

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the score? By analyzing the performances?). Cfr. Matheson, C. and Caplan, B., *Ontology*, in *The Routledge Companion of Philosophy and Music,* ed. By T. Grayck and A. Kania, Routledge, London and New York, 2011, p.45

[335] "For Aristotle, metaphysics is about what grounds what", says Schaffer and cites: "[I]t is the work of one science to examine being qua being, and the attributes which belong to it qua being, and the same science will examine not only substances but also their attributes, both those above named and what is prior and posterior, genus and species, whole and part, and the others of this sort. (1984: 1587, Meta.1005a14–17)

[336] See: Morganti, M., *Combining Science and Metaphysics*, Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills, Basingstoke, 2013

[337] This is not surprising though, as the notion of ground has entered the metaphysical discussion only recently. For further discussion see: Hofweber (2009), Fine (2010)

[338] Morganti, 2013 p.46

provide knowledge of the actual musical practices in order to warrant music evaluation on a more solid rational ground.

The Third Group of Detractors: Historicist Dismissivism

In the previous section we offered a general account of the positions held by the group of Detractors committed to the so-called "*aestheticist paradigm*" of art and music. According to them, philosophers of music should be mainly concerned with the experience of listening, which is primarily an evaluative experience. *Contra* supporters of the '*ontological* paradigm', Aestheticists assume that the alleged neutrality of musical ontology, regarding issues of evaluation, is both deceptive and misleading. Indeed, they argue, either the ontology of music is effectively based on evaluative issues, rendering its 'ontological purity' an illusion (what it apparently regards as judgments of *facts* are actually *value* judgments); or it is "*pure*", which means it is an *a priori* discipline, and as such incapable of describing the empirical reality it is supposed to account for. In either case, however, musical ontology as a whole should be rejected. In opposition to the aestheticist and the ontological paradigm as well, we defended a sort of *nuanced* ontological position according to which *some* but not *all* the debates in musical ontology deserve to be discarded. To this extent, while dismissing the 'category debate' we have argued for a justification of 'the identity debate', which has apparently more relevant consequences for our aesthetic appreciation of musical works. Such a position needs of course to be further developed and supported in order to resist the objections of both the Ontologists and the Aestheticist Detractors.

But to do so, we need to address some of the sound criticism coming from the group of Detractors we call "Historicists"[339].

Historicists are philosophers and music theorists who question the *unhistorical approach* which allegedly characterizes the whole field of musical ontology. This ahistorical attitude, we are told, is not specific to art ontology but is typical of analytic aesthetics and analytic philosophy *tout-court*. Nevertheless, ontological debate has played a major role in strengthening and legitimizing this general tendency. Historicists, by contrast, believe that since musical works are primarily cultural and historical entities, a suitable methodology for detecting their status should be different from that of general metaphysics -- in this sense, historicists are staunch supporters of the *independence view* held by Uidhir. Like the Aestheticist Detractors, they argue that metaphysics is useless for giving us relevant

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[339] This account is called historicism for convenience, it might also have been called sociology, or cultural studies.

knowledge of musical works; ontology, they state, is indeed responsible for a mistaken objectification or a *reification*, of something -- notably a musical work -- which is not even a 'thing' in the commonsensical meaning of the term[340].

The reasons for avoiding musical ontology are not only theoretical but political and moral as well. Musical ontology leads to a false naturalization of what is in itself historical and should be regarded as such. By attributing the status of 'objects' to phenomena which are, in fact, simply historical concretions of social practices[341], ontology contributes to hiding the power dynamics and cultural hegemonies that lie behind them.

The ultimate reasons for rejecting ontology, according to historicists, can be summed up as follows.

First (1), the concept of *musical work*, as a notion 'out of time', valid in all historical periods and suitable to any kind of music, no matter when, why and how composed, needs to be cast off. Any correct historical approach to music should consist in a description of "the way the concept of work emerged in classical music practice and how it functioned therein"[342].

Artworks are physically embodied and culturally emergent entities[343] which possess histories, but do not possess a real nature, at least in the naturalistic sense of the term. To this extent, there is no such thing as an "essence" of works in the sense of a fixed fundamental nature: musical works–as all other products of human society- are, so to say, *made of history*. Therefore, ontologists actually guess wrong in their essentialist attempt to treat musical works –and artworks in general- as natural species, because as well as all other cultural entities they lack, in Joseph Margolis' words: "[…]fixed natures and have (or 'are') only histories".[344]

Second (2), the ontological approach to art is based on nescience of the class dynamics and sociological conflicts that lurk behind artistic practices. When ontologists speak of musical practices in terms of works, for instance, what they are actually doing is expressing their support for a sort of conceptual 'imperialism' [345] of the *bourgeois Western classical* musical tradition, extended to include any other sort of musical practice: jazz, non-Western music, popular music etc.[346] Likewise, , when ontologists interpret musical works as autonomous

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[340] See, for example, Lydia Goehr's position (1990)

[341] For this account, see Pierre Bourdieu (1984, 1986)

[342] Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works,* (1990) ed. Oxford University Press, Oxford 2007, p. 4

[343] Cfr. Joseph Margolis (1980, 1984)

[344] Margolis, J., *The Flux of History and the Flux of Science*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1993, p. 140

[345] See Goehr, P.245

[346] See Goehr (ed. 2007) p.245

objects, isolated from socio-economic historical dynamics, their perspective is but the product of the social fragmentation, isolation and mystification engendered by late capitalism[347].

For these reasons, historicists conclude, musical ontology is responsible for both a philosophical and an ideological failing. In trying to define music in purely categorial terms, without questioning the context of its emergence, it not only assumes that music can be properly understood in a scientific way, which is obviously false and results in a distorted theory of music, but it skates over the fundamental historical and social aspects that constitute the deeper *rationale* of musical practice.

In essence, according to Historicists musical ontology should be basically dismissed for (1) its lack of historical attention and (2) its ignorance of sociological and political issues, which in turn depend on its structural and methodological adherence to a scientific/essentialist perspective.

Keeping in mind the diverse perspectives of the various Detractors, we will now try to formulate the major arguments offered by historicists. Accordingly, this chapter will be structured around the main themes of (1) history, (2) sociology, and (3) scientism/essentialism. Although a given historicist philosopher may emphasize one or other of these themes, typically more than one theme runs through his or her work; nevertheless, for the sake of clarity, we will separate the issues.

In conclusion, we will wonder whether Historicism and Ontologism are really irreconcilable positions. Contrary to the most pessimistic solution, we will make an attempt to get a third option on the table — again, a *weaker* ontological position. Despite Ontologists' objections, there is a part of historicists' criticism that is valid and calls for a re-examination of the ontological debate. So, we need not side with Detractors over Ontologists, or vice versa, as their disagreement can be resolved, at least to some extent, by accepting a weaker interpretation of the priority of ontology over history.

We begin our inquiry by addressing the position of one of the staunchest supporters of historicism, notably the well-known philosopher of music, Lydia Goehr.

The Need for History

In the introduction to her 1992 work, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, Goehr states for the first time what is meant to become the *leitmotif* of the whole book: the reasons for

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[347] For such an account, see in particular: Bourdieu, P., *The Historical Genesis of a Pure Aesthetics, in* Shusterman, R., ed., *Analytic Aesthetics,* Blackwell, New York, 1989, pp.147-160

thinking of music in terms of works are far less straightforward than musical ontologists used to believe[348]. The attempt to describe the mode of being of musical objects in terms of works has given rise to an outstanding number of proposals, all aimed at determining their metaphysical mode of existence. Ontologists, as we know from Chapter 2, have wondered what kind of existence musical works can enjoy if they are at the same time created, repeatable entities, not entirely graspable through reference to the score alone; such investigation has eventually resulted in what Goehr calls *the analytic approach*. But the analytic approach is not the *only* philosophical tradition of the Twentieth century, she suggests. Another tradition has developed, especially through German theorists like Adorno, who promote the investigation of musical issues on the basis of the genealogical history of the relevant concepts. Goehr refers to this as the "*historical approach*" or the "historically based ontology" but grants that "genealogy" is also an appropriate description[349].

According to Goehr, the historical approach is grounded on the fundamental philosophical claim that our concepts, values, and institutions are not eternal. If what it means to be beautiful, for example, is different from one historical period to the next, then to figure out what is beautiful at a given time we have to consider the relations of the concept of beauty to various aspects of that historical context. What's more, a concept may become multi-layered over time, and be more or less deceiving. In such a case, disambiguating the concept will require examining its historical development according to a technique which questions the emergence of various philosophical and social beliefs in order to account for the scope, breadth or totality of ideology within the time period in question. For this task, both Nietzsche's genealogical and Foucault's archeological methods are suitable. An illuminating reference for understanding Goehr's historical method can indeed be found in Nietzsche's discussion of the 'meaning' or purpose of punishment in his *On the Genealogy of Morality*: "Today it is impossible to say for sure why we actually punish: all concepts in which an entire process is semiotically summarized elude definition; only that which has no history is definable", Nietzsche states: "…In an earlier stage, by contrast, the synthesis of 'meanings' still appears more soluble"[350].

He suggests that concepts influenced by history are like ropes held together by the intertwining of strands, rather than by a single strand running through the whole thing. To

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[348] Goehr, L., *(2007, p. XI)*

[349] Goehr, L. (ed. 2007) p.7

[350] Nietzsche, F., *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. M.Clark and J. Swensem, Hackett, Indianapolis, 1998 (1887), p. 53

analyze such concepts is not to find necessary and sufficient conditions for their use but to disentangle the various strands that may have become so tightly woven by the process of historical development that they seem inseparable. Foucault's methodology also appears to be particularly suitable to Goehr's ends. Foucault describes his philosophical strategy as a particular investigation into those elements which "we tend to feel [are] without history"[351], not to search for their origins, nor to provide a linear reconstruction of them, but to show "the plural and sometimes contradictory past that reveals traces of the influence that power has had on the concept". He defines his method as an analysis that: "…goes by way of the knowledge-power nexus, supporting it, recouping it at the point where it is accepted, moving toward what makes it acceptable, of course, not in general, but only where it is accepted […]Let us say that this is, approximately, the archaeological level"[352].

In line with this philosophical tradition, Goehr's intent is to offer a genealogical account of the notion of musical works. Her key methodological move is to shift the project of musical ontology away from the analytic approach of finding "the best description of the kind of *object* a work is"[353] to giving an account of the emergence and function of the *concept* of the musical work in musical practice.

With this in mind, Goehr proceeds to an examination of analytic ontologies of musical works, criticisms of which bring out contrasts between the analytic and genealogical methods. To this extent, she chooses Nelson Goodman's and Jerrold Levinson's proposals as mainly paradigmatic of the analytic approach -- in its alternative Nominalistic and Platonistic sense -- and attempts to show their intrinsic limits. According to Goehr, the failings of these two theories are the failings of the analytic approach *tout-court* and depend both on the analytic attitude (APPROACH) to ahistoricality that manifests itself in several different ways in the work of musical ontologists, and to the priority given to pure ontological concerns over aspects of musical practice. Ontologists, indeed, have looked at musical works without concentrating on "the way the concept of work emerged in classical music practice and how it functioned therein"[354]; they have expected their theories to be characterized by a "feigned isolation and purity" and "'enlightened', i.e., uninfluenced by external sociological, political, and historical considerations. They have treated musical works as if they were abstract or meta-historical objects, therefore not recognizing them as a product of the dynamic

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[351] Foucault, Michel (1980). *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. p. 139.
[352] Ivi
[353] Goehr, L. (ed. 2007) p.4
[354] Ivi

interactions between different extra-musical dimension such as history, sociology, politics, ideology.

This, Goehr states, has wound up "being a major part of the problem of analysis"[355]. Note that a somewhat similar concern is also present in Shusterman's afore- mentioned 1989 work, where he tackles the issue this way: "There is nothing in mainstream aesthetics to match the grand historisophical or genealogical approach which has been central in continental philosophy of art since Hegel" Shusterman claimed: "Analytic aesthetic", he continued, fails "to justify both this isolationist historical perspective and its own general enchant for the ahistorical piecemeal treatment of particular problems narrowly defined and logically purified as being necessary means for adequate clarify and focus"[356].

Goehr formulates her musical-historical thesis based on the ontological/analytical account and from an examination of the changes in actions and attitudes of composers, audiences and conductors that have occurred over the last centuries. Far from being eternal or ahistorical, the notion of work – the work-concept, as she puts it -- only emerged in the late eighteenth century, and from then on began pervasively to influence the way we think of musical practice. To this extent, she argues, it makes sense to state that seventeenth century composers did not *intend to,* nor in fact *did write* any musical works, since the appearance of the very notion of work –- now dominant in all classical musical practice – appears at a later date, about 1800. This assumption represents the milestone of the entire book. Goehr proves in her philosophical and historical discourse that, at about Beethoven's age, music became a whole other practice and a whole different cultural activity than what had existed hitherto. This change – an ontological change -- happened both in musical composition and performance, as well as in the way music was perceived by audiences. Towards the end of the eighteenth century instrumental music obtained therefore the status of a brand new art-form, now conceived of as a completely self-standing and autonomous practice and theoretically supported by a newborn romantic aesthetics. This turning point in the world of music, according to Goehr, had very important consequences, the most important being the emergence of the work-concept. Musical works started at that point to be things that could continue to exist beyond and outside of their performances, that could be maintained over time in their textual form, and finally, that had a degree of objectivity. To this extent, musical works became -- because of their special transcendental nature -- finally *repeatable* over and

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[355] Goehr (1992) p.6; To this extent recall Shusterman critique of analytic aesthetics for its being allegedly neutral and pure etc.
[356] Shusterman, R., *Analytic Aesthetics*, Blackwell Publishing, 1989

over without becoming out-dated. This was the birth of modern music. As a consequence, only from this period on could musical works begin to be thought of as 'classical', the paradigmatic examples of this being Beethoven's immortal symphonies. Furthermore, the audience, as we currently understand the word -- an assembly of silent and immobile listeners -- only came into existence in that specific *époque*.

Before 1800, conversely, there were neither public concerts as such nor the notion of pieces of music in the sense of works that exist before and beyond any performance. This is why, according to Goehr, Bach was no more than a craftsman, and in his day music production could have been compared to the production of pieces of furniture. "*Bach didn't create musical works*" is how the outcome of this point of view may provocatively sound according to Goehr. Nevertheless, soon after its 'invention', the notion of work began to spread in the cultural world, giving rise to a pervasive conceptual 'imperialism': all music products, all different pieces of different musical genre were now to be conceived of as 'works'. No one questioned the scope of the notion any longer, and no one could even remember its origins: it was as if it had always been there, an eternal category to which we could always appeal.

Gladly, Goehr's theory is formulated precisely to wake us up from this lapse of memory, from this oblivion. Experiencing music *qua* works, she recalls, is only one *possible way* of experiencing it, not *the only possible way*, nor even necessarily the best one for understanding and interacting with it.

Whether or not we assume that Goehr's historical reconstruction is correct, it must be said that the publication of her book aroused criticism on the part of a number of musicologists[357]. They questioned Goehr's strong commitment to the 1800 date, and argued that she was paying too much attention to the changed role of music in society, thus confusing the social function of music with its meaning. The work concept, some argued[358], was already present at an earlier stage. It is not because late Baroque music was much more bound to performance that the work concept could not have already been in existence before 1800: the work concept was already present in models of composition. Though we do not wish to go into a discussion of this here, it is worth nothing that the sharp line of distinction Goehr draws between the concept of music composition as a craft or *métier* before 1800, and that of musical practice as an independent fine art after 1800, could be challenged.

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[357]For criticisms to Goehr's position see: Talbot, M. (2000); White, H., (1997), W. Erauw (1998) L. Treitler (1993), and many others.

[358]See, White, H., *If It's Baroque, Don't Fix It': Reflections on Lydia Goehr's 'Work-Concept' and the Historical Integrity of Musical Composition,* Acta Musicologica, 69: 1, 1997, pp. 94-104

Dividing history into razor-sharp blocks always generates suspicion, and the whole approach it gives rise to risks being anachronistic or even implausible in the long run. Does Goehr overvalue this global shift in music at the turn of the eighteenth century? Doesn't her disappointment with the imperialism of work she wants to see abolished imply a misinterpretation of it? One may feel that, because she is so preoccupied with the changes in music around 1800, Goehr forces all the data into her own framework, built around the notion of conceptual imperialism. Of course, each historical account is an arbitrary collection of historical examples made to fit into a consistent narrative; but one may nonetheless wonder whether this search for coherence at all costs is not far-fetched.

We do not have room to properly address Goehr's historical discourse here, nor is our prime objective to offer an alternative account of the emergence of contemporary musical concepts. But more than the historical content of Goehr's thesis, what strikes us as particularly relevant here is her challenge to musical ontology as a meaningful discipline. Ontologists, she states, have built an ambitious and elaborate castle in the air; that is, they have mistakenly assumed that identity conditions for works of all types of music derive from the paradigm exemplified by Beethoven's Fifth symphony. While intending to be completely neutral and all inclusive, they have done nothing but generalize that what is true for a *single* work is true for *all* works. Speaking purely ontologically, they have tendentiously claimed that there can be no essential difference in what makes a work *a work;* to this extent, Beethoven's symphonies may well serve as the paradigm for all other musical pieces, including songs like my *Favorite Things* and lullabies such as *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*. But Goehr on the contrary contends that this is just an oversimplification; and moreover not one of the least damaging in terms of overall theoretical costs, for it has massive effects on the social, aesthetic and historical image of music. This explains why her primary objective is "to liberate practice from the overwhelming authority of the [work] concept"[359]. Only few philosophers, she complains, have worried about the implications of thinking of music in terms of works, simply because the work-concept has been adopted without any consideration. But whereas ontologists have described the musical work as *a given*, Goehr believes it would be far more productive to release musicians, musicologists and philosophers from the burden and constraints of the work-concept. "When philosophy takes its task to be a mirror of how things are without

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[359] Goehr, L., *(ed.* 2007) p. XXXII

reference to how things could be, so that it never considers how concepts, conventions, and schemes could be different, it tends to fly straight into ideology's iron cage"[360].

The Need for a Sociological Setting

The relationship between music, sociology, ideology, and politics is also prominent in the work of the French sociologist and philosopher Pierre Bourdieu, defendant of a sociological view of art and music. As opposed to the analytical approach as defined by Goehr, Bourdieu declares: "What is striking about the diversity of responses which philosophers have given to the question of the specificity of the work of art is…that they all share the ambition of capturing a trans-historic or ahistoric essence"[361]. Aestheticians, he argues, instead of focusing on the historicity of both *reflection* and the *object* to which it is applied, have established their singular relationship with art as a *trans-historical norm* for all aesthetic perceptions, and consider the object of this experience –the art work -- a fixed entity. In doing so, they have based their allegedly universal, ahistorical claims about art on an historically contingent approach.

In opposition to this approach, Bourdieu maintains that art appreciation is always in itself a sociological product that may properly count as an historical invention whose *raison d'être* can be reassessed only through an *historical analysis*. But what is this *historical analysis* of works of art aimed at capturing? If for Goehr its primary aim is to focus on the historical emergence of the work-concept to weaken its indiscriminate use for all musical genres, according to Bourdieu its purpose is basically to discover the nature of the field of art as a social institution that has been created, as an independent reality with specific technical categories and concepts, through a progressive process of autonomisation and legitimation within a determinate social class. Indeed, not only the field of art, Bourdieu maintains, but even "the eye of the twentieth-century art lover", though apparently "a gift from nature", comes out in fact as a product of history and society[362].

But since history, in Bourdieu's perspective, is no more than the result of social dynamics between individuals and classes of individuals, then *historical analysis* is always *sociological analysis*.

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[360] Goehr, L. (ed. 2007) p.

[361] Bourdieu, P., *The Historical Genesis of a Pure Aesthetics, in* Shusterman, R., ed., *Analytic Aesthetics,* Blackwell, New York, 1989, pp.147

[362] Ivi, p.149

Bourdieu's claims for a sociology of art and music are mostly contained in his famous work "*Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (in French, *La Distinction*). In this work he takes the predominant view of art to be that artworks are autonomous objects which can only be recognized as such through disinterested perception, emphasizing their form over their extra-artistic function and content. The aptitude for understanding and perceiving art in these terms is what he

he calls "the aesthetic disposition": a person with such competency has "taste," i.e., the ability to exercise an aesthetic "pure gaze"[363]. Nevertheless, the alleged purity and neutrality of judgments of taste, which in the modern Kantian tradition justifies aesthetic claims to universality, is deceptive in that it supposes judgments of taste to be impartial. The idea of the naturalization of the concept of taste, its being regarded as neutral and necessary, implies ignorance of the fact that aesthetic choices and dispositions are largely determined by social origin, accumulated capital and social status.

In his criticism of this tradition, Bourdieu argues that philosophers have not realized that the *data* for their apparently trans-historical claims come from their own particular experience, rather than "pure" experience: "Kant's analysis of the judgment of taste finds its real basis in a set of aesthetic principles which are the universalization of the dispositions associated with a particular social and economic condition"[364].

Aesthetic taste comes in fact from "total, early, imperceptible learning, performed within the family from the earliest days of life"[365]. When an individual has the benefit of a slow cultivation within the family and social circles, he can internalize the aesthetic disposition *prior to* and *independent from* formal education, thus being enabled to develop aesthetic taste. This slow cultivation is the acquisition of what Bourdieu calls "cultural capital", i.e., the social relation within a system of exchange that includes: "all the goods, material and symbolic, without distinction, that present themselves as rare and worthy of being sought after in a particular social formation"[366]; examples of which are education, intellect, style of speech, dress, and so on. When Bourdieu refers to cultural capital rather than to cultural values and resources, this is clearly more than mere terminological preference. Cultural

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[363] See: Bourdieu, P., *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste,* trans. Richard Nice, Harvard University Press, Harvard, 1984See: Bourdieu 1987
[364] Bourdieu, P. (1984), p. 493
[365] Bourdieu, P. (1984) p. 18
[366] Cited in Harker, R., *Education and Cultural Capital,* in Harker, R., Mahar, C., & Wilkes, C., (eds) (1990) *An Introduction to the Work of Pierre Bourdieu: the practice of theory*, Macmillan Press, London 1990, p. 13

capital is capital "embodied" in individual dispositions and competencies that gives privileged access to its "objectified" form, say, cultural artifacts and educational or artistic institutions, and this in turn becomes institutionalized in terms of cultural, academic, and educational qualifications. Access to cultural capital relies, in turn, on possession of social and economic capital, i.e., capital in the form of material wealth – "accumulated labor" that yields monetary returns, or profits, to its owners, allowing for further accumulation.

To this extent, according to Bourdieu, in order to understand aesthetic tastes: "one has to take account of all the characteristics of social condition which are (statistically) associated from earliest childhood with possession of high or low income and which tend to shape tastes adjusted to these conditions"[367]. Social status is responsible for our artistic, political, aesthetic, and individual choices: aesthetic disposition is a product of social origin, more than formal education. Artworks, in turn, are cultural objects constituted within the artistic field by individuals possessing an aesthetic disposition; the artistic field in itself is sustained by that very disposition. Since class origin is responsible for development of aesthetic taste, it is not particularly surprising, Bourdieu argues, that an aesthetic disposition is much more prevalent in individuals with bourgeois origins, and much less prevalent in working-class individuals[368]. Though the bourgeoisie considers aesthetic disposition and taste to be natural gifts possessed by superior individuals, Bourdieu asserts that both are simply historical inventions results.

A preference for instrumental music, according to Bourdieu, is what most clearly distinguishes a person as bourgeois: "nothing more clearly affirms ones "class", nothing more infallibly classifies, than tastes in music"[369]. There is no more "classifactory" practice, he adds, than attending classical musical performances or playing a "noble" instrument such as the piano or the violin. This is not only because music is the most "spiritual" of the arts, and a love for music is a guarantee of ones own "spirituality", but also because instrumental music is the "pure" art *par excellence*. Unlike drama, which always bears a plot and a social message and thus may in some way count as popular art, instrumental music has no representative function, is pure abstraction, and therefore can only be appreciated by an aesthetic élite. Music indeed, Bourdieu adds, "represents the most radical and most absolute

[367] Bourdieu, P., (1984) p.177

[368]Many of Bourdieu's claims are informed by surveys conducted in France in the 1960s and 1970s; while Bourdieu acknowledges the potential problem of relying upon such surveys in making the same claims about other cultures, he believes that cultural similarities provide grip for doing so (see Bourdieu (1984) pp. xi–xiv)

[369] Bourdieu, P. (1984) p.18

form of the negation of the world, and especially the social world, which the bourgeois ethos tends to demand of all forms of art"[370].

Furthermore, opportunities for acquiring the requisite aesthetic disposition for appreciating instrumental music are more difficult to come by for working-class individuals: attending concerts, Bourdieu contends, is less widespread than theatre-going, museum-going or even visits to modern-art galleries. Music *expresses* and *epitomizes* social distinctions.

When one grows up in a context in which instrumental music is not only listened to but is also performed, and *a fortiori* when one is introduced as a child to the study of a musical instrument, the effect is not only a more familiar relationship to music, but also the development of a musical-aesthetic disposition unattainable by those who have come to music only through concerts or even less, through recordings. This may explain why, in Bourdieu's terms, a preference for popular music clearly shows that one has not had access to fine art and thus belongs to a lower class. Popular aesthetics of the working classes are not true aesthetics, according to Bourdieu, but are definable only in contrast to bourgeois aesthetics[371].

It is possible to determine what class people belong to by determining which kinds of art, and notably music, they prefer; taste is a symptom and a sign of class. Moreover, preferences in taste *justify* class status. It is in this sense, Bourdieu concludes, that taste may function as an instrument for dominion and power; it is, in fact, not only a sign of social status, it also *legitimizes* that status[372]. Unpleasant as it is, this fact should not be ignored.

Once again, we cannot go further here in capturing all the nuances of Bourdieu's account. We refer to the vast discussion on the theme already existent in the literature[373]. But even through this sketchy overview we believe readers will be able to appreciate how Bourdieu's way of reasoning is far from the theoretical speculation of ontologists, and how apparently irreconcilable it is to them. It might be worth insisting, nonetheless, on the fact that Bourdieu's historicist-sociological position might not be a rejection of musical and art ontology, as Goehr's would seem to be. Rather, it would seem to lead to the complete dissolution of the philosophy of art and music into the sociology of art and music, where the

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[370] Bourdieu, P. (1984) p.19
For criticism to such a position see: Shusterman, R. (2000)
[371] For criticism to this position see: Shusterman 2000.
[372] See, for instance: Steinmetz, G. (2011); Grenfell, M. and Hardy, C.(2007); Shusterman, R., ed. (1999); Calhoun, C. et al. (1992)
[373] See, for instance: Steinmetz, G. (2011); Grenfell, M. and Hardy, C.(2007); Shusterman, R., ed. (1999); Calhoun, C. et al. (1992)

latter is meant to precede, encompass and give sense to the former. This, as we shall later see, may raise some eyebrows. For the moment, however, we shall leave it be.

The Need for an Anti-Scientist methodology

So far we have been talking about the historical (1) and sociological (2) concerns of some of the most important representatives of the historicist camp, so it is now time to move on to our third point. But before doing so, let's take stock of the situation.

According to Goehr's historicist argument, we cannot understand musical works without understanding how the concept of work – the work-concept – formed and ineluctably changed throughout history. In the spirit of Nietzsche and Foucault, Goehr argues that philosophers would have done better to develop a genealogical inquiry on the concept of musical works instead of focusing on the purposeless endeavor of musical ontology. Bourdieu adds sociological nuance to Goehr's perspective: in order to comprehend the field of music, in his view, we need to stop thinking of it as having an ahistorical, pure, objective essence. Art and music are the products of class and status conditions, that is, of economical and cultural capital.

If our reconstruction makes sense, albeit with specific differences in theory Goehr and Bourdieu agree that the way in which ontologists deal with music is ineffective, if not completely wrong; therefore, they both hope for a complete dismissal of musical and art ontology.

We might need to ask ourselves, though, why musical ontologists are so prone to think about music in terms of works? What drives them to take such a perspective? According to Historicist detractors the reasons are to be found in the ontologists' commitment to a form of cultural *scientism* (3), where "scientism" is intended as the view according to which the model of the natural sciences – its methods, categories and tools, should be the model for all types of philosophy, or, more generally, for all knowledge acquisition, aesthetics included. In accordance with this faith in science and the related idea that no phenomena exist that cannot be elucidated through scientific investigation, ontologists have deliberately applied the paradigm of natural sciences to art and music: artistic notions have therefore been treated exactly like concepts found in the natural sciences, with a search for essential definitions established as the correct methodology. To this extent, the employment of a conception of musical work *qua* object with timeless identity conditions -- a definite nature and stable properties -- has better served such scientific scholars. On the other hand, this naturalistic

approach has been viewed as having redeeming consequences for the philosophy of art, less because it seems to be particularly useful for the understanding of the cultural concepts themselves, but because it appears to be a way of legitimating the discipline of aesthetics itself by providing it with a higher degree of objectivity and autonomy. In a nutshell, the scientist approach, detractors argue, is based on ignorance of the fact that the world, notably the cultural world, is continuously changing, and that therefore a parallel modification in the cultural discourse is needed.

But first things first. According to historicists, scientism may be seen as resulting in a series of distinctive methodological features. In the following, we try to see what these are.

First, commitment to dualistic reasoning. In other words, scientism appears to rely mainly on either/or distinctions, rather than variable distinctions in degree; it posits polar opposites, instead of gradations and empirical continua. In the case of art, this has led ontologists to stress distinctions such as that between work and object, art and ordinary things, works and practice, physical and aesthetic properties and so on. This dualistic way of reasoning has created more problems than it has solved throughout the history of contemporary aesthetics, without helping philosophers to figure out the complexity of the cultural world -- on the contrary, it has led them to lapse towards reductionism. Therefore, historicists contend -- at least from this point of view -- the sooner we discard scientism from art theory, the better.

Second, indifference to changes. Because of its black and white way of dealing with problems, scientism fails to tolerate variation. Allowing for variation, indeed, means dissolving the fixed stability of classifications and properties into relationships and forces. Variation is hardly combined with substances and rigid taxonomies, needless to say. Nevertheless, where nothing is allowed to vary, nothing can truly be explained, historicists argue. Since variables, and only variables, can tell us something interesting about the patchy nature of the world, and the cultural world especially, only theories which are sensitive to variation should be supported. Theoretical unchanging entities, such as natural kinds, classes, types, may be invoked to economize on explanation costs, but they are pragmatic devices to account for observations, not actual realities. In the anti-scientist perspective favored by detractors, things are what they are because of their location and movement in a network or system of forces, a field of relationships; they do not assume a fixed and constant character in

virtue of their intrinsic properties[374]. Similarly, an object becomes a work of art because it is inserted in a complex system of social practices, historical circumstances, cultural traditions and behaviors and not because of some alleged "essential properties", that constitute its nature. To this extent, it is not possible to understand what artworks are without reconstructing their social role and how their function and purposes have changed over time. In the case of musical works, this means that –- as Goehr's affirms -- musical works have acquired the status they currently enjoy in virtue of a complex system of social, artistic and political relationships in effect during a determinate historical period, regardless of their ontological nature, if there is any.

Third, related agreement to what we may call *explanatory isolationism. Explanatory isolationism* is the idea that we may find the norm that governs what things are –- their meaning and value -- in things themselves, in virtue of their possessing a certain internal quality independently from external context and background circumstances. In the field of art, this implies that what an artwork is depends only on what the internal properties of the work *qua* art object are. According to explanatory isolationism, art objects have certain aesthetic features because they possess some inherent qualities independently of any historical, cultural, sociological, or moral condition. If we follow Bourdieu here, roots to this approach date back to Kant's idea of aesthetic judgment being characterized by that kind of disinterested interest achievable only *via* focusing on the perceptible, non-relational features of the aesthetic object itself. Consequently, works of art are to be considered by their inner attributes and content alone, rather than by the external context of their provenance and emergence. In the wake of Kant's *Critique of Judgment[375]*, scientists state that works of art should be regarded *per se* and not because they *happen* to be related to external factors. Since the work's properties are to be considered only by abstracting it from any relationship it may bear to the external world, the criteria for detecting the work's identity also cannot come from anything external from the work. Works of art are, therefore, independent from ordinary life and its norms. *Contra* such isolationist methodology, historicists oppose what we may call an

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[374] A cell becomes part of the brain, not of the stomach, because a complex interaction between the selective activation of its DNA, and the network of other cells to which it becomes linked, makes it so, not because its intrinsic nature is to become a part of the brain. Note that, as witnessed by this very example, scientism is even mostly incompatible with science itself (the example is borrowed from Fuchs, S., *Against Essentialism: A Theory of Culture and Society*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge)

[375] Notice that, though not adhering to the Kant-inspired aestheticist paradigm we have talked about in the previous section, and even strongly contesting it, ontologists have at least inherited something of it, namely, its isolationist character, or so detractors believe.

externalist or a *constructivist epistemology* according to which we can explain works of art *only via* recourse to something that is *external* to art in itself, say, sociological, historical and cultural factors. This is because works of art are no more than *expressions* and *products* of a specific period, culture, social class in which they originate[376]; therefore, in pursuing their isolationist account of art, ontologists have been pushed far afield from the real practices they intended to explain.

Forth and accordingly, the myth concerning *objective observation.* Related to the viability of removing the object under investigation from its context of emergence, according to detractors, is the belief of scientists' in *a neutral examination* of the relevant objects as a detached, impartial "view from nowhere", in Thomas Nagel's definition[377]. Against this approach, historicists claim there is no "view from nowhere", and recourse to abstraction is not the correct way, nor the most theoretically justified, to examine every kind of domain, especially such value-laden domains as art and music. In addition, the alleged scientific way of looking at things *sub specie aeternitatis* also implies an ingenuously positivist view of science, as being an "observer-free" discipline, one that modern physicists, at least since Heisenberg, have already had to rethink, if not abandon altogether.

A similar criticism is implicit in the historical and social positions taken by Goehr and Bourdieu as discussed above: an investigation of music in purely abstract terms, they argue, has led ontologists to consider themselves purely objective observers. Thus, they have failed to consider the way in which they themselves are *situated* in a an historical, sociological and economical context that has inevitably shaped their perspective. This, historicists conclude, is just as serious an issue, especially since their self-assigned mission is to tell the truth about the things they examine.

Last but not least, one of the main consequences of the scientific approach to art and music -- according to the Historicists -- is the idea that musical works are *real objects* with a definite unalterable nature. Scientism postulates that terms like 'works of art' , 'symphonies' and 'quartets' refer to something real in the fullest sense. Artworks are part of the furniture of the world; they are *in* our world just like other natural things; they have the same reality as physical things in the domain of natural science. In the historicist perspective, conversely, to consider works as naturally given entities such as trees and rocks – things about which we can

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[376] Following Pouivet (2010) this theory can also be called "epiphenomenalism", as the idea that artworks are but the epiphenomena of underlying more fundamental structural dynamics, both in an economical, and historical and a sociological sense.

[377] Nagel, T., *The View from Nowhere*, Oxford University Press, Oxford and Now York, 1989

supposedly have objective knowledge -- results at best in a naïf view of art and music. The equation between musical works and natural objects is to be rejected, since musical works are not 'objects' and have no given nature. We can speak of the *nature* of musical works, if we unadvisedly choose to use that term. only for the sake of convenience or as a concession to philosophically inexact everyday ways of speaking, but we should not overestimate the scope of this notion. Musical practice – to which works belong -- has no *essence* apart from its being 'essentially' historicized; this is because music is not independent from our thought and intentions any more than it is from our language. To assume that it is might imply a contradiction of the principle of ontological parsimony, that is, arguing *sine necessitate* for the existence of redundant entities[378].

Once again, this is why the methodology for investigating them cannot be scientific. In the next section we shall see how similar concerns –-though differently articulated formulated-- are shared by Semanticist detractors such as Amie Thomasson, who contest the very idea of musical notions functioning as natural kind-terms[379]. Both Historicists and Semanticists assume that scientism comes to musical ontology through its adherence to an *essentialist* metaphysical background; and in this sense their ontological dismissal goes hand in hand with adherence to an *anti-essentialist* perspective. This is no coincidence, of course, and leads us to wonder at the outset what *essentialism* is with respect to music and art, and in what sense musical ontology may show an essentialist commitment. Although this may distract us for a moment from our main subject, reflection on the issue seems to be needed, for the confusion surrounding this topic could lead us into trouble in our further inquiry. We might be distracted from focusing on the very concept of what ontologists mean by 'musical works', the concept against which all Detractors are fighting.

Three forms of Essentialism about Art

Let us start with a general definition of essentialism. In philosophy, essentialism is the view that, for any specific kind of entity, there is a set of properties that all entities of that kind must possess and by virtue of which it can be precisely defined or described. In simple terms, essentialism states that certain properties possessed by a kind of thing are universal, and do not depend on context; it follows that terms and words have precise definitions and meanings.

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[378] Though it is not clear whether historicists may consistently refer to the argument for simplicity to strength their position, their refutation of what they consider to be "a superfluous ontological apparatus" in art may in a sense involve commitment to a *deflationary* ontology of some sort.

[379] We shall soon see what is meant by "natural kind-term".

Essentialism searches for the intrinsic 'nature' of things as they are, in and of themselves. The preferred *logical mode in* essentialism is *necessity*, worked out in formal syllogisms, deductions, definitions, tautologies and the like. The preferred *mode of operation* is static typologies and rigid classifications, whose grids separate things so that they are considered, no matter what the circumstances, as being truly separate.

In the domain of the philosophy of art, this general characterization implies certain specific nuances that give rise to at least three different forms of the concept of essentialism. For the sake of argument, we may respectively call them: 'aesthetic essentialism', 'definitional essentialism' and 'ontological essentialism'. These three forms of essentialism are interconnected, yet not necessarily mutually dependent. It seems for instance that one can support aesthetic essentialism without necessarily assuming definitional essentialism to be correct, or, alternatively, that one can adhere to a form of ontological essentialism without being committed to aesthetic essentialism. By the same token it is possible to be anti-essentialist in each of the above ways, or Essentialists about everything. We may nonetheless need to stress that ontological essentialism is more primitive than the other, in the sense that, assuming the former to be true, then one is or should by necessity be engaged with the latter. But before getting too technical *ante tempus*, we had better see what these versions of essentialism are all about.

Aesthetic essentialism is the thesis, in the words of Peter Lamarque, that at least some aesthetic properties exist that "are possessed essentially by some works of art"[380]. To this extent, artworks necessarily and essentially possess a certain aesthetic nature so that some correct aesthetic descriptions about their aesthetic character will turn out to be true. Such a claim may be interpreted either in the sense that all works of art have at least some essential properties in common, or in the sense that there is at least one aesthetic property that all works of art necessarily possess; but whether we choose the first or the second reading, there are still a number of problems and objections to be addressed. If aesthetic properties are mainly two-place properties that involve relations between objects and human responses, it has been said, how could such properties essentially apply to those objects? Moreover, if aesthetic properties rely on observers, context and certain intrinsic physical properties of the object, then how can these properties (the essential ones) remain *necessarily* invariant, that is, invariant in all possible settings, as the essentialists imply? Finally, how can aesthetic properties, *qua* mostly

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[380] Lamarque, P., *Work and Object*, *Explorations in the Metaphysics of Art*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2010, p.95

evaluative properties, be essential? These problems – not the simplest to address – come out of the debate over the nature of aesthetic properties as notably initiated in the Twentieth century by Franck Sibley[381], and are just as serious an issue in contemporary philosophy of art today as they were then. Since we cannot go into an in depth study on this point, for further elucidation we refer the reader to the vast literature already existent[382].

Let's switch to the second form of essentialism, "definitional essentialism".

Essentialism in this sense is the idea that art as a whole possesses a specific character, a quality, or an essence that can be only properly detected through a correct definition of it in terms of sufficient and necessary properties. Indeed, art, beauty and aesthetic taste have a common nature or a common denominator that exists objectively -- a somewhat Platonic idea in an ontologically absolute sphere. The search for a definition of art in essentialist terms has been repeatedly challenged in contemporary philosophy, and skepticism about the very possibility of finding a general characterization of art has constituted an important part of the discussion in analytic aesthetics, at least since the publication of Morris Weitz's seminal paper "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics" in 1956. Since the late Fifties, aesthetic discussion among the anti-essentials has been moving away from essentialist definitions of art. According to anti-essentialists there is no property or set of properties common to all art, therefore a unified theory of art is logically precluded, not merely difficult to build. Instead of searching for a set of conditions that must be met in order to qualify as art, a number of conventionalist, institutionalist, historical and functionalist proposals have been put forth in the literature, all denying that art has an essential connection to aesthetic, formal, and expressive properties or to any of the properties described by definitional essentialists as necessary to art. Note that this does not necessarily mean that anti-essentialism is correct. Indeed, essentialists may argue that the fact that to this day no one has managed to build an impartial definition of art, or come up with a theory showing the ultimate reasons for the existence of art, does not imply that such a definition or theory is impossible. Nevertheless, the influence of the essentialist search for a general definition of art has progressively lessened, and aestheticians remain highly suspicious of it[383].

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[381] See: Sibley, F., *Aesthetic Concepts,* Philosophical Review, 68, 1959, and *Aesthetic and Nonaesthetic*, *Philosophical* Review, 74, 1965.

[382] For a useful companion on the subject, see: Alan N. Goldman (2009)

[383] See, for instance, Kivy, P., *Philosophies of Arts*: an Essay in Differences, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1997, and Walton, K., *"Aesthetics—What?, Why?, and Wherefore?"* Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, 65: 147–162.

The third form of essentialism we need to address is 'ontological essentialism'. *Ontological essentialism* is the doctrine according to which there exist some mind-independent facts about the *identities* of art objects. 'Identity' in this sense is taken to mean *essence,* which may be described --following Locke's famous definition -- as "the very being of any thing, whereby it is, what it is"[384]. Art ontological essentialism is strongly committed to metaphysical realism, i.e., to the idea that the objects that populate the world exist independently of our thought and have their natures independently of how, and if, we conceive of them[385]. One way to describe ontological

essentialism in art would be that it concerns trust in the true *essence* of art objects, that is, the invariable and fixed properties which define the "whatness" of an entity. Of course, ontological essentialism leads us to investigate what *should* be meant by the term 'essence' of a thing, where 'thing', in this context, relates to a product of art.

Once again, it may be worthwhile recalling what Locke has to say on the subject: essence is the "proper original signification" of the word; in short, the essence of *x* is *what x is,* or *what it is to be x*[386]. In analytical philosophy, essences have been called 'natural kinds' and refers to terms and classifications that are true and constant in all possible worlds, they are *things-in-themselves*, and have always existed, or seemed to exist, independently of relationships, context, time, or observer. The properties of natural kinds are, in Locke's terms, what make a thing what it essentially is; the rest is "merely accidental," or contingent and historical. One unresolved problem for natural kinds is their own status[387]: are natural kinds themselves natural kinds? Is it an essential property to have an essential property? Another problem is that, if they do exist, there should not be so much conflict and controversy over which candidate entities are true natural kinds and which are not. According to ontological essentialists, natural kinds exist, or seem to exist, in various areas of culture, and this justifies their use in the field of art. To borrow a term from computer science, they are the "black

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[384] Locke, J., *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, P. H. Nidditch (ed.), Clarendon Press, Oxford: 1975 (1689), p. 15

[385] As we shall see, this does not necessarily mean that they are completely unrelated from the human mind and from the human intentions.
As we shall see, this does not necessarily mean that they are completely unrelated from the human mind and from human intentions.

[386] See, Lowe, J.E., *Essentialism, Metaphysical Realism, and the Errors of Conceptualism*, *Philosophia scientiae,2008* p. 9-33

[387] van Brakel, J., *The Complete Description of the Frame Problem*, Psycoloquy 3(60) 1992, p., 250 (van Brakel 1992:250)

boxes" of cultures, i.e. systems or objects that represent the central institutions and core foundations on which a cultural practice rests, and without which it could not work as it does –- this, without any exact knowledge of their internal workings and of their nature. From the point of view of ontological essentialism, works of art, and works of music, are the *black boxes* of art practice.

For a number of reasons, it would also seem important in the context of art ontology to maintain Locke's distinction between *general and individual essence*.

The notion of *general essence* refers to the fact that any individual thing is a thing *of some general kind* — because every individual thing must belong, *in extremis*, to some *ontological category.* For example, for *a to be an artwork,* it could be understood as a material object, or an abstract thing, or a property, or a set, or a number, and the list goes on in a manner that depends on what one considers a complete catalogue of ontological categories to be considered. If *a* is something of kind *k*, then we may say that *a*'s *general* essence is "*what it is to be a k*". As we have seen in the last section, in the in the field of art philosophy, to define the general essence of an artwork is to answer what Dodd calls the "*categorial* question". Conversely, to search for the *individual essence* of *a* is to understand *what it is to be the singular individual that a* is, as opposed to any other individual of the very same kind. In Dodd's terms, it is to answer to the "*identity* question" about works[388].

As far as we can see, historical Detractors are critical of all of the three types of essentialism mentioned above. Their greatest criticism, however, is leveled against ontological essentialism, seen as much more responsible for the scientist methodology in art theorizing and for the essentialist ontologist approach[389] to artworks –- and musical works -- as ahistorical unchanging objects, part of the 'natural' equipment of the world. This, historicists maintain, turns out to be the main reason for dismissing the ontology of art. But what is the origin of the essentialist fallacy? According to both Historicists the essentialist fallacy originates in an *a priori* 'deduction' of fixed ontological facts from cultural-historical phenomena, and from the parallel uncritical application of an ethnic and historically

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[388] We must note, *en passant*, that our criticism against the relevance of the ontological question for musical aesthetics could be reformulated in the terms of the search for general and individual essences of musical works.

[389] To speak frankly, we must admit that not *all* ontologists are essentialists in the sense implied by Historicists. The idea that *all* ontological approaches are incapable of taking historical and contextual considerations into account is false, and depends partially on a stereotyped vision of ontology promoted by Detractors themselves.

influenced use of language to the whole of the human population throughout the whole of human history.

Why Neither Historicism nor Essentialism are Convincing Solutions

At this point we apparently have all the information we need to appraise the discussion. But before doing so, just for clarity's sake, let us go over the relevant positions in the debate.

On the one hand essentialist ontologists (essentialists, from now on[390]) claim that works are independent entities that have self-contained properties, detectable through an objective metaphysical analysis. On the other side, Historcists affirm that we can comprehend musical works only by looking at how they relate to their context of emergence: works are externally determined in the sense that they are *imbued with*, and *constituted by*, contextual features. The former construe works as self-contained and self-determining, insisting that to know works means to analyze their intrinsic individual identity. The latter, conversely, consider them part of the system of relations that composes them, and maintains that to know them they have to be understood as complex, multifaceted entities dialectically related to the social/historical features they embody. Essentialists defend the position that everything in the world – including works of music -- has an essence or nature that fixes its identity: this results in a theory of essence that applies to questions like the nature of species, as well as to artifacts and works of art.

Historicists, on the other hand, consider artworks as essentially historically embedded objects that have neither status, nor determinate identity, nor clear aesthetic properties, nor definite aesthetic meanings outside or apart from the generative circumstances in which they have been engendered.

As we have tried to show, these two approaches respectively reflect different methodological models. *Isolationism,* on the one hand, imagines works as simple, stable, separate entities, whose internal qualities are considered to be unchangeable. To this extent, metaphysics plays a key role inasmuch as it is a discipline that enables us to grasp things from God's perspective: understanding concepts –- it is assumed -- always entails learning to *classify objects*. *Externalism* or *constructivism,* on the other hand, maintains that the significance, meaning and value of artworks can only be discerned in reference to context and, therefore, to know whether something is a work of art we must set it in the historical and sociological *milieu* in which it was created: this is because the properties of artworks are considered to be

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[390] In order to stress, once and for all, that not all the ontologists are essentialist.

'inherently' relational. In this perspective, interpretation depends upon knowing the history of an artwork: understanding always means understanding *historically* .

If our reconstruction makes sense, historicism and essentialism approach the problem of artworks differently, almost antithetically, so to speak. As much as essentialism presupposes ontological fixity –– expressed in the triadic relation between essence, identity and invariability -- and adherence to epistemological apriorism or isolationism -- anti-essentialism, presupposes constructivism[391], variablism and adherence to epistemological externalism.

Nevertheless, by our lights, the two of them offer solutions that are somehow similar -- though opposite in content. They both think artworks can be explained *via* exclusive reference either to purely internal or to purely external factors. By making the identity and individuality of works *extrinsic*, historicist detractors incur in the same mistake as isolationist essentialists: reductionism. So neither option, the way it is currently formulated, seems particularly appealing or compelling. We shall try to show why.

Against Historicism, we may use the following argument. Take the claim that: (1) musical works are culturally/historically/sociologically embedded entities. From this detractors imply (H1) that ontology is not suited to accounting for the specific character of works of music, if they have any; and that expecting it to means incurring in interpretative mistakes. The proper methodology for addressing musical issues is historical and sociological, not metaphysical.

Still, we may ask, does the fact that works of art are deeply influenced by social and contextual factors necessarily entail that they are *completely determined* by them? Even if it were true, as it seems to be, that socio-historical factors play a key role in the emergence and creation of artworks, does this mean that simple reference to social factors is enough to grasp what the works are, to the extent that ontology is completely useless in dealing with artworks? It seems not. Indeed, (1) does not imply what Historicists take it to imply (H1). One can think that musical works are particular entities that deserve special attention to historical background and still reject the claim that they do not possess any intrinsic identity. The irreducible historical background or sociological character of artworks does not prevent them from having a specific inner 'identity', however reliant on history and human intentions. To say that identity factors of artworks are determined by context does not mean that works of art *cannot* have intrinsic identity factors. Similarly, from the assumption of the *relationality* of all

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[391] *Constructivism* in this sense is the thesis according to which works of art result, as cultural phenomena, from social and historical conditions: they do not belong to the number of things existing independently and possessing an autonomous ontological status.

the identity properties of a work it does not follow that that work cannot possess *intrinsic* properties. The fact that something is relationally linked to human intentions, social dynamics and historical context does not prevent it from having its own nature, albeit a mostly *relational* one. (H1) is a *non sequitur*.

Recall for a moment the eliminativists' reluctance to attribute artifacts -- *qua* mind dependent entities -- the status of *real* things. In the eliminativist perspective, artifacts are to be distinguished from common-sense natural objects in that they would not exist if it were not for the beliefs, practices, and/or intentions of the human beings who make and use them. From the mind-dependency of artifacts, eliminativists imply that there cannot be real mind-dependent objects, on the grounds that any object that is a genuine part of our world must be fully independent from human thought and intentions. *Contra* eliminativists, we have argued that there is no reason to state that, provided that artifacts are intrinsically related to human intentions, they have no nature; and, moreover, we believe that acknowledging a degree of metaphysical reliability in artifacts, precisely *qua* mind-dependent entities, may significantly enhance our appreciation of the special epistemic relationship we have with objects of the cultural domain, as opposed to those of the natural sciences.

If we accept this, then it would be an error to believe that since works of art are in a constant and necessary relationship with the human mind as intentional objects, and since their status changes accordingly, they cannot have a particular *consistent* ontological nature. Therefore, essentialists could be correct in stating that history may well concern entities that exist independently from their historical setting. If you agree with this, you will easily see how the fact that the *concept* of musical work emerged in a particular historical moment does not prove, as Goehr maintains, that musical works exist only as *projections* of our conceptual and linguistic practices –that they have no particular nature, no spatiotemporal or aesthetic properties.

Another reason for being suspicious of historicism may come to mind. Note, indeed, that although describing the particular socio\historical conditions of artworks has some theoretical merit, it is not enough to meet the requirements of a *philosophy* of art. If we wish to hold fast to the distinction between philosophy and sociology, then we have to agree that a satisfactory explication of the nature of musical and art works cannot be based solely on a description of the historical context and social dynamics behind their creation. Sociology and philosophy of art are kindred disciplines, but to be effective they have to maintain their own specificity, not overlap one another. In her 1970 book *Meaning and Expression: Toward a Sociology of Art*,

Hanna Deinhard defines the sociology of art as follows: "The point of departure of the sociology of art is the question: how is it possible that works of art, which always originate as products of human activity *within* a particular time and society and *for* a particular time, society, or function -even though they are not necessarily produced as 'works of art' -- can live beyond their time and seem expressive and meaningful in completely different epochs and societies? On the other hand, how can the age and society that produced them be recognized in the works?"[392] On the other hand, philosophy of art can be defined in its prime attempt to understand art and produce theoretical judgments which refer to the recognition, appreciation and criticism of the specificity of art. The relevant questions for philosophy of art, such as: What is art? Do some works of art fall into one ontological category and some into another? What is the artistic value of a work? Which aspects of a work are relevant to or determine this value? etc. may receive different answers, but they are all based on the idea that art is an *autonomous* subject of inquiry for philosophy, to be considered in its specificity. Sociological approaches to art, conversely, are by definition apt to account for *art as well as* almost all other cultural phenomena. Thus they consider art to be only *one* of many possible cultural expressions to be examined from a sociological point of view. Sociological explanations, therefore, tend to ignore what it is special about works of art in the name of some general principle that can be applied to almost all cultural phenomena (it is no coincidence, then, that in considering aesthetic attitudes Bourdieu includes food as well as clothing choices, taste in furnishings and decorations etc..)

In general terms, moreover, historicists' advocating for a complete discharge of metaphysics from all philosophy and from philosophy of music in particular may be contested as follows. Historicists entail commitment to a form of cultural or historical relativism: that is to say, to the denial that truth is single and indivisible, since what is true for one culture or at one epoch of history may not be true at another, and that different cultures and epochs have different and incommensurable conceptions of reason and rationality. But, of course, such a doctrine is itself a metaphysical thesis, for it is nothing less than a claim about the *fundamental* nature of reality, which could not be substantiated solely by the methods of any special science of intellectual discipline, such as history or sociology or anthropology. To the extent that the defendants of any such discipline are tempted to espouse such a doctrine, they must acknowledge that what they are advocating is precisely a metaphysical thesis, because it is one which transcends the boundaries of any more limited form of rational inquiry. So, we see

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[392] Deinhard, H., *Meaning and Expression: Toward a Sociology of Art*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1970, p. 3.

that the attempt to undermine or eliminate the metaphysical dimension of our thinking is self-defeating, because the very attempt necessarily constitutes a piece of metaphysical thinking itself.

So far we have argued that recourse to externalism and adherence to sociological setting on the part of historicists is unjustified and has a negative impact on the philosophy of art. But if we turn now to the ontology, we may notice that some similar concerns apply also with regard to essentialism. In our view, the way sociologists describe art phenomena is so general that it fails to satisfy the specific demands of philosophical enquiry. And the same seems to be true of essentialism, and that's not our only objection.

As we already know, essentialism asserts that it is possible to have true knowledge of what works *really are* in themselves. It states that philosophical reflection on the kinds of 'things' cultural objects are, on what constitutes them, on what their identity conditions are leads us to formulate true judgments on them. In short, its pretension is to consider *things in themselves*, not *statements* about things -- to speak about *objects*, not about *concepts*.

If our view is correct, essentialism appears to be grounded in two main claims: first, an ontological assumption (O1), according to which cultural, as well as natural, objects have essences; and second, an epistemological assumption (E1) implying that we can come to know what they are. Doubts arise about both of these claims.

Regarding the first, we may venture to say that it is difficult to see how the ontological approach can preserve the specificity of artworks and musical works when it considers them equivalent to natural objects, as stated in (O1). In fact, after one places works of art in the same ontological category as natural-kinds or other natural objects, one still knows very little about them, although one may have acquired relevant information about the ontological structure of the world. In more general terms, it seems that few real problems, and definitely no aesthetical ones, can be solved by treating them as mere instances of a universal generalization Think of the problems we had with the categorial debate: its positions were too *aprioristic* to tell us anything relevant about the *empirical* and *concrete* domain of musical works. Apparently, what is true of the categorial debate is true of essentialism, since the former is a product of the latter. That being the case, essentialism, as well as sociology, fails to recognize the specific cultural\historical character of works of art.

If we now consider (E1), we may feel that, if artworks are to be regarded as essences or natural kinds, still nothing could guarantee us trustworthy epistemological access to them. Committed as they are to metaphysical realism, essentialists believe that the content of our

cultural *concepts* is directly reliant on the pure ontological structure of cultural *objects*, because all our concepts *rely* on how things are ontologically. In their realist beliefs, they are prone to acknowledge the cognitive role of concepts in mediating our grasp of the nature of mind-independent reality. But provided such an epistemological assumption is viable, essentialists still need to explain whether and how such conceptual mediation is *trustable*, i.e., able to give us *true knowledge* of objects; in the absence of a theoretical demonstration[393], we would do better to remain agnostic concerning the status of essentialism.

Some interesting insights in this regard come once again from a rereading of Locke. In this particular case, we are thinking specifically of Locke's distinction between 'nominal' and 'real' essences. Where a real essence, an essence *de re*, is for Locke what makes something *what it is*, the underlying submicroscopic, physical basis responsible for the object's observable features, the nominal essence –- an essence *de dicto* -- is the abstract idea we form when we identify similar qualities shared by objects. Nominal essences are then the concepts we use to name and distinguish the species or genera of things and constitute the meaning of our words. How are nominal essences formed? According to Locke, they derive from a collection of particular qualities perceived by the observer and that define them as pertaining to a particular *species* or *genus* -- where these terms refer generally to any possible classification scheme we use to organize the world through names. So, to take Locke's example, *gold* is as much a species of the genus *metal* as *human* is a species of the genus *animal*. According to Locke, nominal essence is an *essence* inasmuch as it contains the necessary and sufficient properties that give meaning to the name 'gold' and enables us to ascertain whether or not something belongs to the species or genus of gold. Nevertheless, nominal essences, *qua* definitions and taxonomical categories, are created by human choice: *we* decide what to include in them, nature only shows us the *similitude* of things. To this extent, according to Locke, species are "the workmanship of the understanding"[394], not of nature.

On the other hand, *real essence* counts as *essence* because it makes an object be what it is. It is *real* in the sense that it does not depend on human choice –- it is mind-independent -- it is

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[393]The topic is "metaphysical knowledge", in the sense of knowledge of metaphysical truths. The question, not the easiest to deal with, is whether, and if so how, such knowledge is attainable by creatures like ourselves. Of course, this claim depends in turn on what one takes to be distinctive of metaphysical truths. But nevertheless, the idea that we can and do possess metaphysical knowledge of any kind is a controversial one *per se,* and –consequently- one whose defense may prove not only interesting but fundamental. Assuming, of course, that there can be one.

[394] Locke, J. (ed. 1975) p.574

precisely as nature made it. In the case of a piece of gold, the real essence is that collection of particles that make up that particular piece of gold and give it its qualities of color, weight, electrical conductivity, malleability, etc. Though, according to Locke, we *have no idea* what real essences are, they are *unknown* to us: our kind-term refers only to nominal essences. Traditionally, the term 'real essences' has been applied to natural objects, whereas 'nominal essences' has been attributed to human artifacts, say, objects like tables, chairs and eventually works of art. Now we are slowly getting closer to the point.

In opposition to the last assumption, essentialists think that there are *de re* essences pertaining to cultural as well as to natural objects. For something to be a work of art, a piece of music for instance, does not depend on our concepts -- its *nature* is not a matter of human decision. The definitional concepts we have of works are indeed *reducible to*, and *dependent on* their real essence, their true nature that makes them *what they are,* to use Locke's definition. As a result, they cause the distinction between real and nominal essences to collapse, while at the same time contravening the key epistemological *rationale* of Locke's thesis. The difference between nominal and real essences, indeed, is introduced in the *Essay* to distinguish between what we can know (nominal essence) and what we cannot know (real essence). Only God, according to Locke, can have knowledge of real essence, i.e., of the substance of things: he knows *a priori* because he created them. Humans, on the contrary, can only have *a posteriori* knowledge of nominal essence, since they invented it; to this extent, according to Locke, one can only know what one has built. *Contra* Locke, essentialist ontologists assume (1) that cultural objects are real essences, and (2) that *real essences* can be known to us[395].

Before going any further, let us make a remark by way of orientation. So far we do not agree with the essentialists so far as the notion of commitment to real essences is concerned, for it seems that there are no sufficient grounds, nor compelling reasons to that, especially in the case of cultural artifacts and works of art. Therefore, we prefer —- at least temporarily -- to prefer Locke's empiricist distinction. That said, we can react to essentialism in two different ways, first by agreeing with detractors that it is totally mistaken. A second more charitable reaction is to say that although essentialists are used to considering their inquiry a search for the real essential properties of works of art, what they are actually finding are only *nominal essences* in Lockean terms, as Goehr suggests[396]. We shall address this option further when we examine the Semanticist approach, that offers a solution *à la* Locke to the status of

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[395] This, nonetheless, leave untouched for the Essentialists the possibility to assume that truths concerning the essences of natural things are revealed by their "real definitions".
[396]

ontology. It should be noted however, that even though it might be appealing, at least to some ontologists, to disclaim the 'traditional' essentialist point of view, most would probably feel it as too great a concession to a Carnapian-like dismissivism and his deflationist view that debates on works of art are simply meta-debates on ways of speaking, *façons de parler*. Unfortunately, space does not allow for direct discussion of this issue here, but it will be taken up in the next section. For the moment, what we want the reader to notice is that apparently there are sound reasons to object to both historicism and essentialist ontology. Of course they may still represent a possible solution to partisan philosophers, but from our point of view their shortcomings cannot be so easily overcome. So it seems we are stuck on the horns of a dilemma. But, once again, it would be mistaken to think that historicism and essentialism are the only options available.

A possible synthesis? A Plea for An Ontological History

A third path seems possible. Of course it cannot be a free, unprincipled, combining together, for this would merge weaknesses as well as strengths. Nor can a synthesis take the form of a golden mean between extremes, since this would negate strengths by watering them down with their opposites. A workable alternative requires a reformulation that makes historical purposes and ontological methodology logically consistent. This type of mediation might be pursued by adopting what was referred to as a *weak ontological* approach, an approach that critically takes into account features of both historicism and ontologism, stressing the importance of contextual considerations while at the same time acknowledging the relevance of identity factors. This position should enable us to avoid the dissolution of philosophy into sociology, on the one hand, and to resist isolationist temptations, on the other.

Obviously we are running the risk of being accusing by both parties, historicists and essentialist ontologists, of running with the hare and hunting with the hounds. The risk is worth taking, though. If it could be shown that there is at least some part of non-essentialist ontology that meets the necessary social historical requirements, then philosophers would do well to abandon essentialism and hold on to ontology. And the undertaking could be even more appealing since it could result in a form of "*objectivity* without *essences*", to paraphrase Putnam's famous definition.[397]

We begin by simply offering some suggestions on how to define this less rigid ontology and in the hope the way forward will become clear.

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[397] Putnam, H., *Ethics Without Ontology*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004, p.52

First, rejection of historicist dismissivism does not necessarily imply refusal to understand the importance of the social historical context. To this extent, we have to strike a blow for ontologists. There seems to be no reason to believe that all ontology is by definition context-indifferent, unless we adhere to the Eliminativists' claim that metaphysics should only be concerned with physical entities and fundamental concepts like necessity, causality, etc. Although a more or less weakened (watered-down) form of essentialism is perhaps a common trend in art and musical ontology[398], many ontologists nonetheless ascribe to contextualism, as the claim that -- works of art being a kind of historically embedded artifact -- they can only be understood when contextual factors are taken into consideration. Levinson's philosophical account can be taken as representative of this tradition. Levinson builds the foundation for a definition of contextualism which may be summed up in the slogan: 'No work is an island'[399]. He explains the contextualist view quite effectively as follows: "Contextualism in aesthetics is the thesis that a work of art is an artifact of a particular sort, an object or structure that is the product of human invention at a particular time and place, by a particular individual or individuals, and that *that* fact has consequences for how one properly experiences, understands, and evaluates works of art. For contextualism, artworks are essentially historically embedded objects, ones that have neither art status, nor determinate identity, nor clear aesthetic properties, nor definite aesthetic meanings, outside or apart from the generative contexts in which they arise and in which they are proffered"[400]. In the contextualist account, works of art enjoy that status because they are found in some particular context. A contextualist believes that works of art are bound to their context of creation, and, as such, any attempt to understand and evaluate them must take *relative context* into consideration. *Relevant context* here, is the framework that enabled the art object to gain its status, namely, the time period during which it is created, the aim of its creator, the socio\historical background and so forth. To get an understanding of what artworks are according from a contextualist point of view, Levinson draws an analogy between works of art and the notions of utterance. Utterances, just like actions, have their meaning in the proper context. So the very same enunciation "He's an old dog!" takes on very different meaning if it is aimed at a man rather than a dog. A contextually-situated artwork is akin in different ways to an utterance made in a generative context.

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[398] Perhaps not openly but at least coverly so.

[399] J. Levinson, *Artworks as Artifacts,* in J. Levinson, *Contemplating Art*: *Essays in Aesthetics*, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2006, p.29.

[400] Ivi

That is to say, something is an artwork –- a particular artwork -- only in connection with a particular context[401]. Thus defined, contextualism emphasizes the central fact that, whatever the nature of a work, context is not *external* to it. The work intrinsically possesses some contextual relational properties; far from being exterior, socio\historical features are instead constitutive of the artwork. To this extent contextualism differs both from ontological essentialism and historicist externalism and seems compatible with our attempt at a moderate approach.

In the spirit of synthesis, we may also want to refute the apparent irreconcilability between history and ontology. To this extent, we shall make a plea for an approach that –- as far as we can see -- might be able to encompass both. We may call it *ontological history*[402]. More than a wholly separated domain of studies, *ontological history* should be better understood as a particular way of looking at cultural issues to support, flank and assist 'standard' ontology. As such, it can also be fruitfully intended as a complementary support to our weak account of musical ontology[403].

Yet, one may ask, given that such an approach is plausible, it is not easy to see how it would it be like. Indeed, is it not better and more reasonable to think, in accordance with both historicists and essentialists, that the terms 'history' and 'ontology are in direct conflict with each other? Apparently, we have to admit, they really are; at least to the extent that recourse to this contradiction has been the *leitmotif* throughout the last section. "The object of ontology is to be thought as timeless, while the material of history necessarily rises and falls with the passing of time" –- the objector continues -- "Moreover, as a study, metaphysics is characterized by a high level of generality and abstraction, whereas history examines its objects in all their concrete and localized specificity. So how can the two fields be bound into the same account?".

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[401] Note, here, that the claim "something is a work of art only in a particular context" is not logically equivalent to "nothing can be considered a work of art outside a particular context".

[402] To be honest, the inspiration for the ontological history approach comes from Jan Hacking's *Historical Ontology*; nevertheless, the discipline Hacking has in mind differs completely from ours, conceived as it is explicitly in Foucaultian terms, as a history of the "coming into being of *objects*", not of *objects of knowledge*, as we shall soon see. This is also why we have chosen to invert the terms. Something closely related to a historical metaphysics in our sense –but applied to the domain of social and natural science- is on the other hand the "applied metaphysics" which constitutes the subject of a publication edited by Lorraine Daston, *Biography of Scientific Objects*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 2000. The book includes a series of essays dedicated to the "coming into being and passing away" of notions in Economics, Medicine, Mathematics and many other fields, but it does not contemplate aesthetics nor art in its scope.

Against this defeatist position, our option is to stress that the objects investigated by ontology come into being *over time* at least *qua* subjects of our knowledge. Think of what happened at about 1800, if Goehr's historical thesis is correct: they started to occupy the center stage of critical, musicological, historical attention. But how is it, we may wonder, that certain objects become the subject of proper investigation at some point? And why those and not others? Moreover, why do some of them remain intriguing over time while others slowly lose their theoretical relevance?

By addressing these questions, we begin to figure out what an ontological historical approach is all about. Essentially, it is concerned with how phenomena come under and sometimes leave the spotlight of our philosophical consideration. But is there really what we need? -- the objector may query -- to call it *ontological* history? Is it not just *history*, after all? A plausible answer is that while the coming, in coming into being, is historical, the being that becomes –-- the thing, classification, idea or institution -- is not, or, at least, not necessarily: so why can't they be lumped together under the generic heading of *ontology*? The term ontology, indeed, is reputed to have a dual meaning, referring to both *what there is* and to *the study of what there is*. Ontological history adds a further connotation to this twofold definition, as *the study of how what there is comes to be what there is*.

To return to the case we are interested in, a ontological historical approach to music addresses musical phenomena –that is, notions such as musical works, music appreciation, musical values -- to explore their appearing and leaving *as objects* of theoretical and critical inquiry. Note that emphasis is put on 'as objects of theoretical inquiry', but we could also have said, 'as commonsensical *notions* in our ordinary musical practices and language'.

Most objects come to be examined, defined and labeled only at a particular time in human history, but have been part of the world long before we could study them. Take atoms, for instance. Atoms have been here longer than the solar system, even though we only began to study them at the beginning of the twentieth century. Or consider a sadly up-to-date example from biology. The genus virus known as *Ebola* was first described after epidemics broke out in southern Sudan and Zaire in the summer of 1976; introduced only in 1998 as an 'Ebola-like virus', in 2002 its name was changed to *Ebolavirus.* Of course, long before the Seventies Ebola viruses, ancestors of those which unfortunately still infect us, had been populating the planet. Only the most provocative writers[404], to this respect, would assert that they came into

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[404] See : Latour, B., *Ramsès II est-il mort de la tuberculose?,* La Recherche n.319, 1998

existence in 1976. Nevertheless, the point is that -- at least in the perspective of ontological history-- since 1976 has the *Ebolavirus* become *more real* than it used to be.

Do not get us wrong, here: we are not arguing for a comparison between musical works and atoms or viruses, or we would fall again into the essentialist fallacy, at best. Nevertheless, what is worth noting is the fact that just as ontological history, concerning viruses, would not be writing about their coming into being, *the objects*, likewise ontological history concerning music would not be considering the coming into being of works, *the objects*. Ontological history, in our sense, is concerned with *objects of study*, not with objects *tout-court*[405]. Thus, its aim is not to decide whether things such as atoms, viruses and musical works are discovered or created, existent or inexistent. From the ontological historical point of view, objects, as *objects of inquiry*, are both *real* and *historical*. Our idea is indeed that the reality for scientific and theoretical objects expands and increases into a continuum, the more attention they are given. This is the key point. Objects broaden and deepen in meaning, growing more real and concrete, as long as they become woven into the webs of cultural significance, scientific practice and theoretical examination.

Concerned as it is with *objects of inquiry*, ontological history – especially as applied to musical works -- differs from both constructivism and essentialism. As we have already seen, pure metaphysics intents to treat the unearthly world "of what is always and everywhere" from the viewpoint of God. It pictures cultural objects such as musical works as *discoveries*, uncharted territory waiting to be mapped that – just like unknown planets -- may take centuries of theoretical effort to be explored, but in their essence are as enduring as ordinary objects. In the essentialist view, theories about the objects in the universe may come and go, but the objects remain. To use again a musical example, despite the fact that different societies and époques may have disagreed on the status of musical works over time, musical works, *per se*, have always been there. On the other hand, historicists' assert that cultural objects are just *inventions*, forged in specific historical contexts and molded by local circumstances -. no matter whether intellectual or institutional, cultural or philosophical -- but nonetheless firmly attached to a particular time and place. In this sense, from an historicist viewpoint objects are an *historical construction*, and thus they are *unreal*.

In opposition to both these approaches, ontological history has a more sophisticated story to tell. It posits reality as a matter of degree, and affirms, once again, that phenomena that are indisputably real, in the colloquial sense that they *exist*, may become more or less intensely

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[405] This is basically what would distinguish it from Goehr's genealogical method, which is instead committed to the emergence of *objects*.

real, depending on how solidly they are embedded in theoretical thought and practice. To use an effective expression, ontological history stands *orthogonally* to the plane of this debate: it postulates that scientific objects can be simultaneously the one thing *and the* other; and, to this extent, that much of the contrast between nature and culture, the real and the constructed, the eternal and the variable, is misleading. By shifting the critical focus to a meta-ontological/epistemological level, it eventually blurs the distinction between essentialism and historicism. Whatever their metaphysical status, ontological history claims, new theoretical objects emerge, and old ones disappear from philosophy: this should deserve our attention, as well as how a so far unknown or ignored set of phenomena is transformed into an object of philosophical investigation that can be observed and examined and that eventually takes, at least for a time, the form of an ontological entity.

Note that in the meanwhile, ontological history softens the line between natural and artifactual objects. Below the line are all those objects that have come to be known as 'pre-constituted' and that are part of what Daniel Dennett calls "the basic furniture" of the universe, i.e, objects like trees and planets and natural categories such as mammals, carnivores and so on. Above the line are objects that are not part of this natural scenery, and hence must have been created by us in our technical evolution as a species, i.e., artifacts, social and cultural objects, works of art, musical pieces, objects that come out from our practices, while the former do not. Relevantly, ontological history in our sense applies to both. It regards the engrained opposition between the natural and the artifactual as more flexible than it is actually thought, and tackles it with potential counterexamples: if nature furnishes us with the best candidates for the real, then if we want to be realistic we must take the historicity of natural objects seriously.

The objector may insist at this point that he/she is still not convinced. Why is this ontological history not simply an historical epistemology? The issue is far from straightforward, we agree. A possible answer is, however, that ontological history entails, among several other things, a reformulation of the relationship between metaphysics and epistemology, i.e., between what is actually real and what is known, between *noumena* and *phenomena*, to use standard philosophical terminology. The history of philosophy has been dominated by the attempt to fully distinguish conceptual theories and *weltanschauungen* from the presumably ontological reality of fact. Philosophy documents either what is known, or what is; it concerns either intellectual categories or things in themselves. But an ontological historical approach would question even this often rigidly assumed distinction. Indeed, it is *ontological* for it is

concerned with *kinds* of objects and not particular instances; it is *epistemological*, because it searches for the identity conditions of objects of knowledge, and of course it is *historical*, because it is related to the various specific ways in which these kinds come into and drift out of our knowledge.

On the other hand, to grant our approach the prestige of authority, it must be said that making history the departure point for metaphysics means following the Aristotelian project of investigations *On Generation and Corruption*: sublunary metaphysics is always a metaphysics of change, if it has to capture the distinctively generative, processual sense of the reality of theoretical objects, of their perpetual "coming-to-be", to borrow a term from Aristotle himself. In this sense, it is *eminently* historical.

We have been hinting about a possible way of combining history and ontology into a single approach. We have only outlined it in general terms for reasons that we hope are obvious. This is not to say that the project of an ontological historical approach should dismiss or replace ontology as ordinarily practiced by most theorists, nor that it represents in itself an alternative to abstract metaphysics, as detractors would imply. On the other hand, we do not mean to say that such an account is entirely new or original as a field of research. A rather similar discipline is indeed what it is generally referred to as the *history of ideas*, as a domain that deals with the expression, preservation, and change of human concepts over time. And something apparently related to our ontological history – though divergent in content -- is, as we have already seen, promoted by philosopher Jan Hacking, in the explicit heritage of Foucault[406].

In our modest view, however, historical metaphysics is thought of as an attempt to revive history for metaphysicians. To the best of our knowledge, emphasis on history may help moderate the most essentialist tendencies of contemporary musical metaphysicians, who seem to suffer from loss of memory, and sometimes even fail to remember the history of their own discipline. To use Santayana's effective definition, we are convinced that: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it"[407]. Santayana was talking about the general possibility of development of humankind, but his admonition applies to philosophy as well: philosophical progress, we may paraphrase: "far from consisting in change, depends on retentiveness". Retentiveness is in this sense the condition of evolution. To understand and

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[406] In the wake of Foucault, Hacking stands on the constructivist and historicist side of the debate.
[407] Santayana, G., *The Life of Reason: Or, The Phases of Human Progress*. Scribner's; London, New York: Chapter XII—*Flux and Constancy in Human Nature*

evaluate our beliefs and commitments – even to understand the significance of the questions and problems that beset us, we need to trace their sources and their history. But history, as is well known, transforms all that it touches, so a metaphysics that is true to objects of knowledge should abandon all its pretensions to eternity.

Work(ing) and non-work(ing) ontology

In the last paragraph, we have supported the idea that a strong interpretation of essentialism in ontology—as committed to a fixed and transhistorical notion of artworks —is implausible. *Contra* historicists, we have attempted to show that ontology can not only be context-sensitive, but that only context-sensitive theories can genuinely count as ontological. Eventually, we have discussed the apparent contradiction between history and ontology, to affirm the relevance of an ontological history as one possible approach to music[408].

In conclusion, let us spend some more words to support a part of the Historicists' criticism that seems to holds and asks for a positive re-examination of the whole ontological debate. We are referring here to the too large importance given by ontologists to the concept of *work*. To be true, our point is not based on any feeling that the concept of work must be discarded, abandoned or completely relativized, nor that we have to replace discourses on works with discourses on practices, as detractors say. Rather, our agreement with Historicists like Goehr is that much of the past debate that falls under the label of musical ontology has been exceedingly concerned on developing a *work-focused* account of musical aesthetics -an ontology that treats the work of the composer as the main centre of interest and as the *true aesthetic object*. Generally speaking, musical ontology has focused on music as a certain kind of object/work-oriented practice; more specifically, it has seen music as an aesthetic activity aimed to the creation of objects, i.e., musical works of art, whose specifically musical features are thought to consist in their disposition to present aesthetic qualities appropriate to modes of attention involving disinterested aesthetic experience.

As implicit in Goehr's position, this view reflects the status of modern classical music, where composers, performers, and audiences are seen as engaging in the collective activity of the presentation and appreciation of repeatable works thought as autonomous objects to be appreciated for their own musical, artistic, and intrinsically aesthetic properties. Composers

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[408] Of course, still much needs to be said about this possible approach, especially with regard to other similar philosophical approaches and methods (for instance, what methodology does it imply? What relationship does it have with Kantist or neo-Kantist accounts? Etc. Hopefully, we shall address this questions elsewhere.)

create the works –whether a structure, an entity, or a type-that is the product of the authors' creative conception. The repeatability and communication of musical works are made possible by the development of musical notation, which enable players to present interpretations of the works in public concerts. Performance's fidelity to the score, that is, to the work itself, is one of the main quality audiences are virtually supposed to appreciate: they listen *the work* through the performance. All this features, typical of classical music, have been interpreted by ontologists as an universal paradigm -"the classical paradigm"- applicable to all music in general. Grounded as it is in the emphasis on the production of musical objects, this paradigm has remained up to now at the center of the debate, providing discussants with a majority of examples and references.

Do not misinterpret us here: in opposition to detractors, we do not think that the classical paradigm is completely deprived of any force and merit. At least for what concerns the identity debate, focus on musical works as aesthetic objects –as in the classical paradigm- has instead given rise to a number of relevant reflections on the formal, emotive, and representational dimensions of musical which have helped us equip our aesthetic appreciation of classical music with a toolbox of issues, theoretical categories, and technical terms. As we have argued already, it seems interesting for our understanding of Schubert's quintet D 956 in C major to establish what its identity and persistence conditions are, in order to grasp exactly what Schumann composed and created in 1828, just two months before his death; what musicians are meant to perform to be authentic to the work; the role of style in a trustful performance; and eventually the range of evaluative criteria that listeners might properly bring to the audition and critical assessment of this magnificent work.

To this extent, the classical paradigm's methodology has undeniably offered several insights to the appreciation of practices exemplified by the Western "classical" music tradition. That's the good news.

The bad news is that, on the other hand, this object-focused account has lead ontologists either to neglect issues that might be relevant for non classical music genres, or to stretch them so to make them fall within the explanatory model of the classical paradigm, while reducing all difficult examples to *borderline* cases. A paradigmatic example of this is jazz[409] , which brings about the thorny status of *improvisation* as a particular sort of musical activity; but of course the same goes for popular, non-western, ancient music as well.

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[409] And one of the most studied, also, perhaps because jazz has now become part of the "classical" Western musical tradition. For discussion, see: Brown, L.B. (1998, 2008), Young, J.O. (2008) Young, J.O. and Matheson, C. (2000)

So, what is exactly the problem with jazz being encompassed within the classical paradigm? The fact is that, within the jazz tradition, more attention is generally attributed to the evaluation of performances rather than to the evaluation of works, and the skills of performance are much more emphasized rather than the skills of composition. Moreover, at least in the case of improvised jazz performance, there seems to be no "preexistent work" being interpreted by the musician.

Ontologists[410] have nevertheless insisted in applying the classical paradigm to jazz to show that it could be fruitfully placed in the same category as any number of familiar works for live performance – quintets by Schumann and songs by Frank Sinatra, for instance. This has engendered a great number of difficulties that we can only hastily mention here.

First, much jazz music fails to conform to the canonic model composition/ performance. Consider "free" jazz, for instance. We might treat free-jazz performances as being of a work-type that can only have *one* instance, as proposed by someone[411], but this solution would incur in some uncomfortable metaphysical implications –notably, how can there exist a type with a singular token? Moreover, part of the point –and aesthetic relevance- of a free jazz concert is after all the very fact that it is *not* an interpretation of a pre-existent work. This indeed gives it a special *charm* and quite a mysterious fascination different to that of composed music.

Finally, jazz seems to escape the standard criteria of performance-identification. Indeed, as Lee B. Brown puts it[412], many jazz performances of different works turn out to be of the *same* work, while many other performances of the same work turn out to be of different works. Think at the nearly 45 versions of *My Favorite Things* recorded by Coltrane. All these versions differs significantly both from one another and from the song as originally conceived, and may nonetheless count as *different works* of *the same work.*

Ontologists have variously tried to reply to such challenges, but despite all the attempts made[413], much of the original puzzle still remains. So what are we to make of this fact? *Prima facie,* we could assume that the concept of *workhood*[414] simply does not apply to jazz, and

[410] Young, J.O. and Matheson, C. "*The Metaphysics of Jazz,*" Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 58: 2000, pp. 130-132; Alperson, P., (1984), Kivy, P., (2004)

[411] See Alperson, P., (1984)

[412] Brown, Lee B. "*Jazz.*" The Oxford Encyclopedia of Aesthetics, edited by Michael Kelly. Oxford Art Online. Oxford University Press (2008), pp. 168–184

[413] The literature is vast, but for a recent treatment of these issues see, especially, Lee Brown, (2011, 2008)

[414] Much of course may depend here on an agreement about the criteria governing the concept of what is a *work*, of course. So philosophers have been disputing as to whether, for instance, an ephemeral

that therefore to force jazz music within the boundaries of the classical paradigm, as ontologists have tried to do, is misleading. If we accept this, we may arrive to the conclusion that the territory of jazz is not to thought as being inhabited by any *works, pace* classical paradigm, and that an opposite non-*work* view would instead be suitable.

But –we may wonder- is this non-work view really able to account for all jazz pieces? Unfortunately, it seems not, at least for the enormous multitude of cases where it is *relevant* what jazz song is played, for instance when an improvisation is based on a previously composed work, like for example in Coltrane's improvisations on "My Favorite Things". To be sure, the work-model is fit for many jazz pieces; it *is*, for instance, with regard to evaluate records of Jarrett's *Koln concert*, which –though completely improvised at the begin- has been later transcribed and published, and it *is* also for a part of improvisational activities that are work-like, and exhibit a continuity with composed music. In all these situations, it seems possible to regard the performance in terms of many of the same evaluative criteria that would apply to conventional interpretations of works. But nonetheless, the classical paradigm cannot deal just as easily with *all* jazz performances, and would fail to account for certain cases like free jazz, for instance, which entail no antecedent work and thus cannot be appreciated as performances of conventional, composed works. To this extent, free jazz performances cannot be comprised under the category of creating *abstract object* but rather as *specific musical acts* which represent in themselves the centre of the aesthetic focus, so to say.

How can we get out of this clutter? A possible solution is to underline that the field of jazz is just too complex and multifaceted to be described by a single unifying ontology, whether a work or a non-work focused one, and that ignorance of this evidence represents the major source of confusion among theorists. Consider, in this regard, the range of musical practices and styles that are generally included under the definition "jazz music": live and recorded improvisations, reinterpretations of existing works, free jazz, arrangements, afro-Cuban jazz, jazz funk, acid jazz, and the list goes on. How can we even expect to grasp all of them in a sole ontological covering model? At a more fundamental level thus, it would be both a mistake to limit one's attention to jazz as if it resulted simply in composed works *and* as if doesn't. In other words, there is no chance to fix it with a monotonic ontology.

The lesson we may learn is that jazz requires a different ontological treatment and a rather more complex attention than that of a simple application or rejection of the classical paradigm

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event cannot be an artwork, but nevertheless, also with different criteria of *workhood* we get various problematic results.

of the work-focused *apparatus*. Note that what goes for jazz, goes for non-classical music as a whole.

An ontology of unconventional music, therefore, should be able to account for the fact that much musical practice, though sometimes resulting in the creation of musical pieces that can be understood along the lines of classical composed music, is primarily committed to a different sort of endeavor. On the part of musicians, that means to be engaged in producing an artistic *activity,* rather than an artistic *object*; and to master in a productive, not merely reproductive, exercise.

An ontological account of non-classical music remains currently unachieved business, but we do not have room nor time to remedy for this lack here; nor this, on the other hand, was our primary scope. Our aim was to show, instead, that no monolithic ontology –no matter its actual content- can be effective in satisfying to the require of any kind of music. Historicists are therefore right to worry that the debate so far has overemphasize the classical paradigm to the detriment of all other possible musical traditions from musical ontology. Of course, ontologists may reply[415] that it is just the lack of stable identity conditions that makes us falsely believe that unconventional musical pieces entails no works. As a consequence, by rejecting the rigidity of identity conditions, we would finally be able to understand such musical performances as conventional ones and appreciate the role that the *work* concept plays there.

Despite the possible effectiveness of such a proposal – which remains for now a suggestion waiting to be realized- we recommend nevertheless that ontologists consider developing other approaches to address musical phenomena, say, event-focused or performance-focused accounts, for instance. This does not mean to do away with all musical ontology -to return once more on the slogan of this chapter- as historicist detractors use to claim: we do not need to reject ontology to save music. The point is, again, that though the classical paradigm is rather quite effective to deal with classical pieces, all alone is not sufficient to explain *every kind* of music[416].

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[415] See, for instance, Bartel, C., (2011)

[416] We do not presuppose that philosophical progress proceeds by subsequent revolutions and paradigm shifts, as Kuhn (1962) implied for the natural sciences, in the sense that only new paradigms, by asking new questions of old data, can be effective in "puzzle-solving" of the previous paradigm.

To focus on alternative ontologies, conversely, might help us deepen our understanding of musical aesthetics while avoiding recourse to formalistic or monistic theories. We need to work out a more flexible *framework* that manages to explain the processual character of music –classical music included- as an activity which entails a nonstop dialogue between *composing* and *performing*. Note that by speaking of "framework", we refer here to what Carnap (1950/1956) called "a linguistic framework", understood not so much as a theory but as "schema" for inquiry, a way of thinking about the subject matter which include theoretical and methodological assumptions treated as constitutive of the investigative approach at the issue. To this extent, the classical *framework* of composition and performance is not to be discarded, since it does not always works to describe what real musicians do but its scope must be limited and narrowed.

But this implies of course that the object of philosophical understanding should be, above all, descriptive, centered in the first instance on musical practices themselves and on the structure of our thought about them; and, as we know already, not all ontologists would be willing to accept such an implication. Nevertheless, as far as we are concerned, we suggest that ontologist follow here the much loved popular wisdom: practice and only practice makes one perfect.

Semanticism

The previous sections were aimed at introducing the reader to a more general (and mildly opinionated) survey of contemporary criticisms of the ontology of music and art. All the deflationist positions we addressed -- eliminativism, aestheticism, and historicism -- challenge the robustly realistic approach dominant today among analytic philosophers who specialize in music and art metaphysics. As repeatedly noted, most musical ontologists think of themselves as not primarily concerned with the representations of language and thoughts, but with the reality that is represented. They treat their theories as if faithful descriptions of the world of artworks were theoretical insights, considerations of simplicity and ontological parsimony, integration with domains like logic and philosophy of language play a key role. Accordingly, the preferred methodology is quasi-scientific, of the type recommended by W. V. O. Quine. We may call this approach *mainstream metaphysics of art and music[417]*, with the *caveat* that it

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[417] To paraphrase what David Manley calls "mainstream metaphysics" (2009, p.3); i.e., the current post-Quinean quasi-scientific approach to metaphysics.

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starts nowadays to be contested even by the same ontologists. As we have seen, in opposition to the *mainstream metaphysics of art and music*, a broad range of views offers an alternative account.

On the one hand, there are the Eliminativists, who dismiss the ontological dispute on art and music as entirely pointless on the grounds that nothing fundamentally substantive is at issue when talking about works of art or any other kind of object. Motivated by adherence to nihilism or reductionism in fundamental ontology, they argue that the disputants in art ontological discussion are not making claims at all, since the objects they are speaking of do not even exist in a primary sense; all that there actually is in the world are subatomic particles and their sums. Though not explicitly focused on musical and art works, this approach -- which is a form of ontological deflationism -- poses a serious challenge to the metaphysics of art.

On a middle ground are Aestheticist detractors, who admit that the dispute around works of art is genuine, but believe that it cannot be resolved by means of ontological analysis. Nothing of substance is left for the metaphysician to investigate about musical works, since the job must be done by aesthetics alone -- as a discipline concerned with the value of the aesthetic experience. Musical ontology is therefore misguided and should be dismissed as a whole. Along the same lines, Historicist detractors combine the aestheticist intuition with a focus on the historical, claiming that we can only have a clue about what art and musical works are by way of a socio\historical analysis that highlights their context dependent nature. All that can be known about artworks, they argue, is extrinsic to artworks themselves. As one would expect, both Aestheticists and Historicists tend to be driven more by intuitions of the triviality of ontology when applied to music than by the intuition that nothing is really at issue in the dispute, i.e. that there are no musical works, as Eliminativists claim.

In response to the concerns of these two groups of deflationists, we have proposed a reformative weak ontological position. We have tried to affirm both that there is a genuine dispute at issue with musical works, and that the answer is far from trivial. Indeed, pursuing the answer may be an appropriate task for ontology, though various details of the mainstream metaphysics of art and music are to be rejected, whether about how to understand questions related to music, or how to go about answering them. First, we have assumed that any philosophical investigation of music should be primarily concerned with the question of aesthetic value and our concrete experience as listeners. Secondly, we have rejected the essentialist approach of most contemporary art ontology in favor of a form of contextualism

that takes historical and sociological aspects into account. Finally, we have argued against an unlimited application of the classical paradigm to all types of music.

But these are not the only available options in the debate. Another account is offered by those philosophers who believe that metaphysical disputes regarding art can only be resolved by reflecting on conceptual or semantic issues; this is why we choose to call this position Semanticism. Semanticists claim that many of the metaphysical disputes on music and art are merely verbal, in the sense that, though contenders think they are truly disagreeing on significant matters, in fact they are not, for they are simply attributing different meanings to the same key terms. Semanticist philosophers maintain that questions about art ontology are, ultimately, questions about the concepts we deploy or the meanings of the words we use to indicate works. Therefore, the best way to approach them is by paying attention to semantics, and more specifically, by paying attention to the reference of the artistic terms which might be at issue in ordinary or philosophical discourse about art and music.

Philosopher Amie Thomasson can likely be taken as representative of semanticism with regard to art ontological debates. In 2004a, 2005, and 2006[418], she points out that in grounding an artistic kind-term, such as 'symphony', there is a problem of identifying the kind of thing one intends by the term. This, she states, is a particular instance of the more general "*qua*-problem". Thomasson's deflationist methodology arises from her view that ontological questions -- such as how many notes one can leave out before failing to perform a certain work -- are destined to have more than one solution, since our artistic practices may themselves be vague or incomplete and imply terms which fail to have a direct reference. As we shall see, at the heart of Thomasson's conception seems to be a view in which the only meaningful existence and identity questions are settled by asking whether the conditions laid down by our own linguistic usage are met. Answers to ontological questions are therefore unequivocally revealed in practice, according to Thomasson, since it is here that musical works are created. Only practice, indeed, can disambiguate reference, and where it cannot, there is nothing left to ontological disambiguation. David Davies adopts a similar position when he writes that "Artworks must be entities that bear the sorts of properties rightly ascribed to what our reflective, critical and appreciative practice calls 'works' "[419]. In other words, they are individuated and described in the way such "works" are individuated and described in that practice. In short, according to Semanticists, the facts to which ontologies of

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[418] And in other recent publications on the methodology of general metaphysics such as Thomasson 2011, 2012, 2014.
[419] See Davies 2004, p.18

music must conform are facts concerning how people ordinarily think and speak about musical works.

In what follows, we will extensively focus on Thomasson's semanticist ontology and meta-ontology[420]. One crucial question will be to determine whether her position is to be taken as a viable methodological strategy at all and, if not, why. To this extent, we will address Thomasson's work with respect to the issue of the reliability of ordinary believes, intuitions and practices as evidences in musical (and art) ontology. We will eventually see that, while appeal to a descriptivist methodology is unavoidable for anyone concerned with art and music theorizing, it must be carefully deployed to elude danger of relativism. In conclusion, we will provide arguments to reject reduction of our position either to realism or to anti-realism about works of music, to offer a methodological account that somehow blurs the boundaries of this usual opposition.

The Roots of Semanticism: Explaining Ontological Disagreement

Thomasson's point of departure is represented by some general considerations concerning the *status artis* of the art ontological debate as it has developed over the last few decades.

The ontology of art, she remarks, has been one of the most prolific areas of discussion in recent analytic aesthetics, giving rise to an unbelievable number of positions on what is to be considered the ontological status of works of art and music. Nevertheless, despite the assortment of views available, none of these has found unanimous consensus among scholars. As we know from Chapter 2, philosophers have held that musical works are ideas in composers' minds, sets of compliant performances, space-time continuants that last, abstract eternal sound-types, initiated types and so on. Faced with all of these options, Thomasson notes, we may ask ourselves how to choose the right ontology. Indeed, none of the afore-mentioned proposals fits completely with our common-sense ideas and basic beliefs about music: no work of music can be identified with an imaginary entity, with a mere physical object, or with an abstract type or kind unless we abandon or alter our ordinary understanding of music.

But since it is not clear how we have to go about choosing between these different and sometimes irreconcilable positions, Thomasson calls the variety of ontological position "an

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[420] The method of approaching ontological issues by way of conceptual analysis, though unpopular in neo-Quinean metaphysics, has recently seen attempts at reviving and defending (Jackson 1998, Chalmers and Jackson 2001, Thomasson 2007, McGinn 2011).

embarrassment of riches"[421]. On the other hand, she contends, the ontology of art seems to be "embarrassingly impoverished"[422], for the proper criteria for assessing its various aspects (for instance, to what degree a painting can be restored and still remain authentic) are all arbitrary and disputable.

But why do controversies in the field of the metaphysics of art show so little hope of being resolved, and answers seem to keep multiplying and spreading rather than converging toward any form of consensus? Why is there such great disagreement between philosophers? The problem for any art phenomena is not lack of data, Thomasson argues. The problem is, instead, the lack of an *appropriate* methodology and "agreed-upon standards"[423] of assessment. This, according to Thomasson, explains both the increasing diversity of solutions and the failure to find a completely satisfactory solution despite all the effort being invested.

The need for a methodological focusing

Deciding among different methodological and procedural options is crucial, since without clarity about what art ontology is supposed to do and how it has to do that, which considerations are and are not legitimate for resolving its controversies, what types of theoretical virtues (simplicity, consistency, fruitfulness, etc.) may best explain, we can make little progress in adjudicating the relevant debates. Indeed, Thomasson maintains, the methodology we adopt depends on how we evaluate the merits of various ontological proposals. So, in order to choose between the competing theories, we have to *step back* from the "first-order"[424] debate about the status of artworks and tackle issues concerning the *meta-ontology* of art. In other words, if we hope to resolve at least some of the ontological questions about art, we must rethink the procedurals that lie at the basis of contemporary art metaphysics. This means understanding what, as she says, "we are doing in the ontology of art"[425], what is implied in disputes on the ontological status of works of art; what methods and criteria to adopt in order to arrive at possible solutions to these questions; how we can comparatively evaluate the different ontologies of art; and, more relevantly, whether or not

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[421] Thomasson, A.L., *Debates about the Ontology of Art: What are We Doing Here?*, 1/3, 2006 p. 221
[422] Ivi
[423] See Wilson, J., *Three dogmas of metaphysical methodology*, in Matthew C. Haug, *Philosophical Methodology: The Armchair or the Laboratory?*, Routledge, London and New York, 2014
[424] See: Kania, A., *The Methodology of Musical Ontology: Descriptivism and Its Implications*, British Journal of Aesthetics, 48: 426–44, 2008
[425] See Thomasson 2006

violations of our pre-theoretical beliefs about art are to be considered a problem for these views, or "only for common sense itself"[426].

By stressing the relevance of methodology regarding ontology, Thomasson has come to be considered the spokesperson on the aesthetics of the meta-metaphysical movement currently spreading in the field of general metaphysics, as can be easily observed by the number of collections and publications on the topic that have recently come forth[427]. Tim Williamsons describes it as: "a current tendency towards increasing methodological self-consciousness in philosophy"[428]. Much of Thomasson's philosophical work, thus, counts as an exercise in meta-metaphysics of art, designed to examine how we can adjudicate among competing theories, and what the limits of knowledge are in this area. According to Thomasson, as long as we do not fully possess a clear methodology, it's no mystery why ontologists persistently disagree. Indeed, the scarcity of shared procedural standards also accounts for the fact that an adequate art ontology has proven so hard to come by: there has been confusion concerning methodology between the demands of the problem and what materials to use in the search for a solution. But, Thomasson argues, if we finally start reflecting on methodological standards and procedurals the situation will improve, and her philosophy is aimed exactly in this direction. Her contention is that a careful study of these issues in the field of aesthetics may then be applied to everything under the heading of "ontology" even outside of the domain of the philosophy of art (1999, 2004). The ontology of art, she holds, provides a particularly useful case study: grounding a fruitful methodology in aesthetics with regard to questions about creation, identity, and survival may have significant bearing on solving general ontological disputes as well. In short, if we can clarify a viable methodology to account for artworks as ordinarily conceived, "the payoff", Thomasson argues, "may lie not just in a better ontology of art, but in a better metaphysics"[429].

Pars Destruens: rejecting the Discovery View Paradigm

To sum up, Thomasson's meta-ontological proposal focuses on three main objectives: putting an end to ontological disagreement and irresoluble art-ontological debate, fighting against revisionary counterintuitive theories on the status of artworks and determining proper standards for evaluating and constructing claims about the ontology of art and music.

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[426]Thomasson, A, *The Ontology of Art*, in Peter Kivy, ed. *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics,* Oxford: Blackwell, 2004: 78-92.

[427] See for instance: Williamson 2007; Sider 2007; Chalmers et al 2009,; McGinn 2011; Haug 2013.

[428] Williamson, T, *The Philosophy of Philosophy*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford 2007, p.8

[429]Thomasson, A.L. 2004, p.92

How does she carry out such a far-reaching project?

The first step she takes can count as the pars destruens, for it involves brushing off a paradigm that, either patently or covertly, has guided most of contemporary investigation on the ontology of art. Thomasson calls it "the discovery view" , but we can think of it as the "scientist model" we addressed in the last section; in short, the idea that the world contains a broad range of determinate, mind-independent facts which metaphysicians, just as scientists, seek to discover through ontological investigation. The renewed relevance of the scientist paradigm coincides, in Thomasson's reconstruction, with a resurgence of metaphysics nearly thirty years ago. From an historical point of view and taking due account of the relevant exceptions, for the first half of the twentieth century the refusal of classical metaphysics, understood as a metaphysical discipline aimed at providing knowledge of reality, was widespread among philosophers. The turning point, which allowed classical metaphysics to rise from the ashes of logical empiricism, is indeed to be traced roughly to the Fifties when Quine's was judged the winner of the dispute against Carnap. Quine is generally credited not only with having rescued metaphysics but with having granted it new respectability as a discipline on a par with natural science. As Scott Soames puts it, for Quine: "philosophy is in continuous with science. It has no matter of its own, and it is not concerned with the meanings of words in any special sense"[430]. According to Thomasson, many of the most important contemporary metaphysicians either explicitly or implicitly embrace Quine's methodology, so that, as a consequence, metaphysics is now largely intended as a quasi-scientific discipline[431].

The idea underlying this long dominant Quinean approach, is, in Thomasson's viewpoint, that the world outside is fully determinate : "so that for any proposition P, either P or Not-P is the case, with one being made determinately true and the other determinately false by independent facts of the world so that there is, at least in principle, the possibility of discovering the truth or falsehood of any scientific claim"[432] . Applied to the ontology of art, the acceptance of such a paradigm involves considering ontological theories capable of providing precise answers to questions, e.g., on the creation, survival, and identity of works of art. Claims about the status of the artworks are seen as 'discoveries' of mind-independent

[430]Soames, S., *Philosophical, Analysis in the Twentieth Century*, Princeton University Press, 2003, p.224

[431] In fact, as she states, one can interprets Quine's ontological commitment either as the idea that ontologists need to defer to scientists –with metaphysics interpreted as the "tool box" of natural sciences- or as the idea that they have to "act like scientists", and search for a "total theory" (See: Thomasson, 2012**,** pp. 14-45)

[432] Thomasson, A.L., 2005, p. 227

facts about the nature of works, and, as such, can happen to be counterintuitive, if this is how the world is made. It is easy to see that it is in this perspective that most revisionary art ontologies find fertile ground and theoretical justification.

But how do we acquire knowledge about the facts of the world, according to the scientific paradigm? On this viewpoint, Thomasson explains, epistemic knowledge is gained through the adoption of a causal theory of reference, as defined by Kripke (1972) and Putnam (1975). According to this theory, the reference of names and natural kind terms is determined not by concepts used by the speakers, but: "by the causal contact between those establishing ('grounding') the reference of a name, and the individual or kind referred to"[433] . A natural kind term, say, "Ebolavirus" to use our former example, gets its reference not because of specific entities that satisfy the descriptions given by speakers to the term "Ebolavirus", but because of the fact that it is being applied directly to a certain sample of entities by the original "grounders"[434] of the reference – say, the first biologists who identified it -- after which the term starts to refer to "the kind" this type of virus belongs to. Reference to the kind, then, passes on from the first discoverers to other speakers of the language – even if they have never seen a virus under a microscope in their lives -- so that everyone can refer to it. In other words, once the reference of the term is established by the original grounders, all others may acquire the name by borrowing it and thus by making reference back to the "grounders" even if their intuitive beliefs about the biological nature of viruses may be radically wrong. Philosophically, the most important contribution of the causal theory of reference is the idea that a natural kind can be identified just by indicating a sample of it, and that we can go on to investigate its 'true nature', which may even conflict with our initial presuppositions.

The causal theory of reference -- whose theoretical merits we cannot discuss at this time -- was originally devised with natural kind terms in mind. Nevertheless, ontologists of art, Thomasson argues, have been applying it indiscriminately to artifactual kind terms and art terms. Thus they have thought it possible to regard the metaphysical nature of a symphony or a painting as a matter for substantial discovery, about which all our pre-theoretical ideas on art could turn out to be wrong: just as we may empirically discover that our commonsensical intuitions about a particular type of virus are completely false, we have to accept the ontological possibility of radical mistakes in our ideas about artworks. To this extent, the causal theory of reference justifies the scientific paradigm and allows for unexpected findings

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[433] Such as Kripke, Lewis, van Inwagen, Armostrong, Fine and so on.
[434] Where "the grounders" or the meaning of the term are those first having had causal contact with the relevant entity.

about the ontological status of works of art, such as, for instance, that musical works are discovered and not created, that each arrangement of a work counts as a new work on its own and so on.

Note that Thomasson's purpose is not to defend or attack the scientific paradigm "of discovery" per se (just like the Historicist and Cultural Relativists); her aim is to show that -- whatever its degree of reliability in describing the empirical world -- its application to the ontology of art as promoted by many theorists leads investigations off track. Though it may be true that the world is composed of a determinate array of mind-independent facts, this does not appear to be true for issues concerned with the ontology of art: "[…] it is certainly not the case that human beliefs and conceptual systems are complete. As a result, wherever criteria for applying a predicate are determined by human beliefs and practices, the risk of indetermination and vagueness inevitably arises as a result of the intentionality of human beliefs"[435]. But on what does Thomasson base her refusal of the discovery view as applied to the domain of art ontology?

First, in opposition to the identification of 'art-kind' terms with natural kind terms, Thomasson argues that notions such as 'symphony', 'quartet' and 'sonata' do not depend on causal contact with independent reality, but arise from stipulating their application to works of existing traditions that satisfy certain arbitrary criteria. To this extent, the reference of such terms is determined by the beliefs of speakers about the "conditions relevant to something's being a symphony"[436], and consequently there can be no possible radical revision of common sense beliefs.

Besides, even if it could be demonstrated that art-kind terms function just like natural kind terms, as some have contended[437], there would still be reasons, according to Thomasson, for not accepting the causal theory of reference as applied to art ontology. Indeed, causal theories of reference face a crucial problem that threatens their internal consistency: this is what she refers to as the "qua" problem. In general, the qua problem has it that, for any referring term, the question of how its referent is fixed is ambiguous. In short, the issue is that, even given causal and contextual connections, which kind of thing our noun terms refer to remains radically indefinite, because there are always many things with which the "grounders" are in causal contact. Without some other way of disambiguating, the exact reference remains

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[435] Thomasson, A.L., 2005, p.227
[436] Thomasson, A.L., 2004, p. 82
[437] See, among the others, Hilary Kornblith (1980), who thinks that artifactual kind terms function in ways parallel to natural kind terms.

uncertain. To be clearer, the same time we ostensibly indicate something and name it, we have entered into causal contact with many other 'things'; for instance, when we face a computer, we enter into contact with a desktop, mouse, screen, keyboard, etc. The causal theory leaves it indeterminate which of these particular objects the name refers to. Anything one points to includes other kind of entities, so without some other concepts specifying the sort of kind to be selected, reference cannot be unambiguously grounded.

According to Thomasson, "the full virulence of the *qua* problem"[438] becomes evident with regard to works of art and social and cultural kinds. Indeed, in addition to ambiguities concerning properties, parts, and whole, in the case of works of art there are what she calls ambiguities of "level". Causal contact with a work of music, for instance, is contact with a series of sound waves that may not differ very much, in terms of their physical nature, from other natural or unintentional sounds; to successfully call it "musical work" grounders must apparently already have at least a rough idea of the sort of thing they are trying to refer to. In other words, they must possess a tacit concept of the ontological status of the musical work even before entering into causal concept with it, say, how it is related to performances, in what way its identity, individuation and survival conditions differ from those performances, and so. This requires at least a sketchy ontological conception of what musical works are and what distinguishes them from other similar entities like noises or natural sounds.

Since these pre-existing ontological conceptions establish the sort of entity selected by the term: "they are not themselves open to revision through further 'discoveries'"[439]. In other words, we cannot grasp the ontological status of artworks by first referring directly to these kind of things and then by investigating their true ontological nature. Again, the grounders' ontological background decides the ontological status of items of the art-kind to which the term refers. Thus, Thomasson concludes, since at least some "frame-level disambiguating" concepts must be involved to specify the kind being named, then appeal to causal theories in art ontology is implausible[440]. If the above is correct, then study of the ontology of art cannot proceed along the discovery model by investigations into the mind-independent world[441].

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[438] Thomasson, A.L., 2005, p.222
[439] Thomasson, A.L., 2004, p.87
[440] Note that Thomasson's solution to the qua problem implies that reference is fixed by the intentions of the speaker to refer to an entity of an intended sort: "reference to individuals (whether via singular or sortal terms) is determinate only to the extent that the term is associated with determinate application conditions and coapplication conditions, via association—at a minimum—with a certain sort or category of entity to be referred to. See, Thomasson, A.L., 2010, p.42
[441] Nevertheless, Thomasson believes (2005) that the discovery theory can be held for cases of empirical knowledge about natural kinds, since grounders have there much to discover about the

Pars Construens: the principle of the Primacy of Practice

So far, so good; but this of course is not yet enough, for a compelling strategy to guide art-ontological inquiries has yet to be found. This is what Thomasson's *pars construens* is intended to do. Her first move is to articulate what we may call the principle of "the primacy of practice" (PP), i.e., the idea that the determination of facts about the ontology of art *must rely* on human concepts, beliefs and practices. The primacy of practice involves recognition that the ontological status of artworks depends on our beliefs, or at least on the beliefs of those committed to the art world. In investigating the ontology of artworks we must therefore analyze the conception of art as: "embodied in the practices of those competent speakers who ground and reground reference" of our art terms, such as "work of music"[442]. This does not imply that artists and critics must have a fully developed ontology of the artworks they are engaged with; their basic views about the status of works of art are sufficient. To ground the reference of a symphony, for example, only a rather general concept of what sort of thing a symphony seems to suffice (e.g. that it is distinct from its score or any copy of it, that it is the sort of thing that may be performed many times, more or less perfectly, and so on); and all those working in the art *need* to have these kinds of beliefs, since they constitute the supporting structure for all related concrete art practices such as selling, displaying, performing, and restoring works of various kinds. So, Thomasson argues, it is *such beliefs and practices* and nothing else that must be taken into account in investigating the ontological status of works; the *only* appropriate methodology being to uncover: "the assumptions about ontological status built into the relevant practices and beliefs of those dealing with works of art, to systematize these, and put them into philosophical terms so that we may assess their place in an overall ontological scheme"[443]. Accordingly, coherence with these background practices and beliefs should be the only valid criterion in assessing different ontological positions and constitutes the only appropriate methodology for a successful theory of the ontology of artworks. What is left to ontologists is then to examine our practices more closely, to see if they might provide a non-arbitrary way of resolving a particular issue. To this extent, revisionary views can at best be seen as *suggestions*[444] about how we should

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precise biological nature of such kind. For instance, in the case of Ebolavirus, that a certain DNA structure is essential to it, that it has evolved in certain ways, and so on.

[442] Thomasson 2005, p. 226
[443] Thomasson, A.L., 2004, p. 85
[444] Of course, some mistakes in evaluating the ontological status of an artwork are still possible: the relevant "epistemic privilege" Thomasson argues (2005, p.223) is only *collective*, not individual.

change our practices so that they are clearer, less vague, etc., not as trustful descriptions or discoveries of the sorts of things our familiar works of art "really are", or as *discoveries*.

Consequences of the Primacy of Practice

The principle of the primacy of practice, thus described, has a bearing both on the relevant methodology to be used in art ontology (1) and on the *limits* of the possible knowledge acquirable through ontological investigations on works of art (2).

Concerning (1), if the discovery view is to be rejected, then the only suitable methodology in art ontology is *conceptual analysis*[445], as something: "that teases out from our practices and things we say the tacit underlying ontological conception of those who ground the reference of the term, perhaps making it more explicit, smoothing out any apparent inconsistencies, and showing its place in an overall ontological picture"[446].

Conceptual analysis, according to Thomasson, is the methodology most suited to addressing questions in the ontology of art, such as working out the existence, identity, and persistence conditions of artworks. To this extent, the point is that metaphysical knowledge about objects derives from linguistic competence, since it is ultimately an expression of semantic rules. This implies that we may grasp the "ontological status" of any object (statements on its existence, identity, and persistence conditions) only if we know the semantic rules that govern the use of the term and its conditions of application[447].

This approach to conceptual analysis may recall the methods employed by ordinary language theorists, but the comparison to the work of linguists only works *prima facie*. The expression "conceptual analysis" should indeed not be misunderstood, according to Thomasson, since: "the term 'conceptual' in 'conceptual analysis' functions more like the word 'laser' in 'laser surgery' than 'heart' in 'heart surgery'"[448], in the sense that it is analysis *with* –through-

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Therefore, there is no warranted protection from error about, e.g., the causal role of the works of art in the relevant culture. Nevertheless: "All grounders are assured of (collectively) is that, if there is any art-kind referred to by the terms they attempt to ground the reference of, it has the *ontological* standing they commonly (if tacitly) understand it and treat it as having" (iv).

[445] Conceptual analysis, as a viable method for doing metaphysics, has recently experienced a resurgence into philosophical discussion: compare the discussion in the following section (*Is conceptual analysis a viable methodology?*).

[446] Thomasson, A.L., 2005, p. 227

[447] In the sense of the conditions that allow competent speakers to assess "various actual and hypothetical situations as ones in which the term should be applied or refused" (compare: Thomasson, A.L., *Answerable and Unanswerable Questions*, in eds. D. Chalmers, R. Wasserman, and D. Manley, *MetaMetaphysic*s, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 461.

[448] Thomasson, A. L., *Research Problems and Methods in Metaphysics*, *The Monist* 95/2 (April 2012), p.181

concepts (done by reference to our conceptual competence), not analysis *of* concepts. Possession of the concept is fundamental in undertaking such an investigation, but in the end, any analysis of this sort is focused on the *object*, and should result in knowledge about *features of objects*, not of concepts. Thus conceived, Thomasson's conceptual analysis implies that -- in coming to know metaphysical facts from semantic rules -- we move from concepts to objects; to use her own expression, we end up speaking "the object-language"[449]. Evidence of this is the fact that while apparently dismissing most ontological questions as purely semantic, she argues nonetheless that conceptual analysis can in fact provide ontological answers "in the object-language", to use her own expression, to these very questions. Moreover, even if her theory is quite skeptical about many ontological issues, it is quite the opposite about others, declaring certain theories, such as extreme Platonism, completely ill-advised.

But for our purposes what is most relevant is the effect the Primacy of Practice has in delimiting the boundaries of the possible knowledge acquirable through art-ontological investigation (2). In cases where the criteria for applying a predicate -- say, whether or not an event-sound can count as a musical work *x* -- are determined only by ordinarily beliefs and practices, then the predicate itself may be vague, for it is possible that practices may leave certain issues indeterminate. This in turn implies that there may be no *definite solution* to questions like, for instance, how many mistakes, and of what sort, can be made in a performance if it is to count as a performance of the relevant musical work, and that we will get it wrong if we try to seek a single answer. So, if our background ontological conception cannot resolve this issue, then no further investigation into the case can possibly reveal any real 'truth' about the matter. In other words, where ordinary intuitions and beliefs provide no precise answer to our ontological questions about artworks, then these questions are to be considered "unanswerable" and relevant debate pointless.

The fact that ontologists have nonetheless continued to insist on searching for an answer to such puzzles explains both the persistency of philosophical disagreement and the proliferation of so many radically different responses. Indeed, according to Thomasson, disputes about the ontological conditions of works of art must be answerable on purely conceptual analytic grounds just as we have seen with (1), or they should be dismissed either as trivial verbal quarrels concerning what conditions of use are to be associated with the relevant art-terms, or

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[449] Thomasson, A.L., 2009, p. 462

as pseudo-disputes *tout-court*. To sum up, since ontological knowledge about works of art is determined by human conceptions, it is, as we might say, "ontologically shallow", in the sense that, as Rohrbaugh puts it: "there is nothing more to discover about them than what our practices themselves determine"[450].

This last claim explains why we have included Thomasson's work among the deflationists, though, her position is far more nuanced than those of the other detractors we have addressed. So, we may ask, what kind of dismissivism is implied in Thomasson's meta-ontology? Is Thomasson committed to a form of anti-realism? Does her semanticism have conceptualist or relativist overtones? With these questions in mind, let us now turn to some possible answers.

Semanticism in Question

Thomasson's primary aim is to diagnose why there is such persistent disagreement in debates on the ontology of art, and so little hope of finding a solution. Her take is that many of the metaphysical disputes on musical works have come to grief because they are based, at bottom, on an attempt to answer *unanswerable* questions. Apparently, this does not imply global skepticism toward musical metaphysics -- nor is Thomasson ever invoking the demise of this domain as a proper philosophical discipline. Her point is rather to shed some light on what ontologists "are doing", what types of questions are substantive for their inquiry, and how they can hope to go about answering them. If this implies getting rid of some sterile and idle debates with seemingly no hope of solution, then there is no reason for concern.

As readers might suspect, such a project may sound appealing with respect to our "weak" ontological proposal. Like Thomasson, what we have been trying to show is that there may indeed be reason to be suspicious of some ontological disputes, but such defeatism need not regard musical ontology as a whole. Contra Detractors, we have contended that it is reasonable to discard some ontological debates as pointless while preserving others as relevant. It has been our contention that if we accept this strategy, doubts about the status of musical metaphysics are resolved, with benefits for the entire domain.

Similar considerations beg the question of whether Thomasson's Semanticist meta-ontology represents a workable solution for our purposes. As we have seen, Semanticism assumes that either ontological disputes about the identity and persistence conditions of musical works are answerable through a *conceptual analysis* that explicates the conditions for application of our

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[450] Rohrbaugh, G., *Must Ontological Pragmatism be Self-Defeating?*, in Christy Mag Uidhir, *Art and Abstract Objects*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 38

musical terms, or otherwise they must simply be jettisoned as unanswerable. Problems whose answer cannot be determined by this method of investigation are indeed false problems.

But is "conceptual analysis" really a viable methodology for addressing questions of art ontology? And if not, what is the proper methodology of musical (and art) ontology? Only after having addressed these questions will we be able to figure out how to go about answering ontological questions.

Conceptual Analysis, a viable methodology?

As we have seen, Thomasson's idea is that the best way to approach methodological issues in art ontology is by giving attention to semantics, and more specifically to the conditions of application of art-terms in ordinary discourses of *art connoisseurs.* The ontological status of artworks depends on the beliefs and practices of those who ground the reference of the relevant terms like "musical work" and can only be grasped by laying out the relevant conditions in which such terms are successfully applied. In this view, the most basic facts about the ontology of works --their existence, identity and persistence conditions -- are determined by investigating the semantic rules associated with the relevant art terms. But since such rules rest on, and are subject to, widespread social practices relating to the arts, the way to discover them is to first examine these practices.

Thus, according to Thomasson, figuring out the ontological status of works implies analyzing the practices involved in talking about and dealing with works[451]. These concrete practices, having to do with intentions and beliefs, play the key role in disambiguating the ontological status of the works to which we commonly refer.

One main implication of this account is that debates on the ontological status of art can only be answered by appealing to ordinary discourses insofar as they express underlying semantic structures. Certainly Thomasson is not alone in holding such a position in contemporary meta-metaphysical debate; more and more philosophers take Semanticism as an operating

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[451] To this extent, it seems worth repeating --if it wasn't clear already-- that the sense of "conceptual analysis" which is at issue in Thomasson's view does not concern the determination of reference of art terms in the beliefs of individual competent speakers, but rather in the collective and public discourses and practices of those who deal directly with the art objects (say, artists, gallery owners, art collectors, curators). In other words, appeal is not made to private mental states, but to publicly collective intentions embedded in concrete practices such as observing, selling, buying, moving, restoring works of art.

assumption[452]. Though the Semanticist movement is currently spreading in general metaphysics, there is nonetheless room for some concerns. Why, it seems reasonable to ask, are we to suppose that ordinary discourses are the proper route to be followed in the ontology of art? Why look to language to assess prospects for answering ontological questions, if ontology is by definition not a semantic matter? Why should we believe that the meanings of our terminology provide any reliable indication as to how things *really* are? And, finally, why should people's intuitive conceptual judgments and common opinions be thought to tell us anything about the existence, identity, or persistence conditions of musical works or artworks in general?

Questions of this sort raise deep philosophical concerns that go far beyond the scope of musical ontology *per se*. However, in so far as we are potentially interested in Semanticism as a viable methodology for our weak ontology of art, we cannot avoid addressing them. We turn to these difficult issues below.

Intuitions as a source of knowledge

The first and most frequent objection raised[453] against Semanticism concerns the chaotic and even contradictory nature of practices and beliefs related to the arts.

It seems to many that Thomasson's view in some way oversimplifies the data it wants to account. Artistic practices, it can be said, are more like a jungle of diverse muddled actions and opinions than the well-ordered landscape of shared judgments and attitudes that Thomasson seems to have in mind. Accordingly, "competent speakers", say artists and critics, are far from possessing a common set of ideas when it comes to the employment of terms referring to works of art. No easy consensus can be found in their "ordinary discourses"; at least none which may result in ultimately clear and consistent answers. If we look at "artistic practices" to find answers to our ontological questions, say questions like how to go about restoring a painting or a building, when two musical works are identical, and so on, what we will get is just a number of different and even mutually contradictory answers. But if this is true, then it's hard to see how practices could ever provide us with the needed ontological disambiguation.

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[452] So, for example, almost all the seventeen papers in the 2009 *MetaMetaphysics* anthology (Ed. David Chalmers) take this as an operating assumption. Among variations on the theme, Hirsch (2009) Chalmers (2009) Hofweber (2009) Yablo (2009), Hawthorne (2009), and Sider (2009)

[453] See: Kania, A., *The Philosophy of Music*, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.)

But that's not all. Another source of concern is the fact that our beliefs and practices are not immutable and constant, but rather change according to time, culture, social contingencies, and to the intrinsic development of art itself. Throughout human history, different groups of people have constructed different semantics -- with specific rules of application -- to talk about art, according to their personal interests and practices; that is, they have referred to works as entities with different identity and persistence conditions, even if they have plausibly been using the very same words to describe them. To this extent -- and it's hardly worth bringing Goehr into it -- consider the fact that Johan Sebastian Bach had beliefs about what music composition is that were presumably different from those held by Beethoven. In same way, it is quite likely that after Cage came up with his 4':33'', nowadays composers use the locution "musical works" in a way that cannot be compared with Brahms talking about "musikalischen Werken".

Philosophically, the issue is that our beliefs, intentions and practices regarding the arts vary across time and space, and so the answers they give us with respect to ontological questions vary accordingly. But if the status of art and musical works changes with our beliefs, then this also implies that the ontological structure of the world ultimately changes together with how we think and act. Therefore, not only the presence of such variations undermines the claim that conceptual analysis *qua* analysis of our ways of talking and thinking provides us with reliable knowledge of ontological facts, since the way we talk and think varies across time and space, but it exposes Semanticists to the risk of cultural relativism.

Replying on this specific objection is tricky, since evidence of cultural and historical variation cannot be consistently denied. It seems thus that either we have to forego conceptual analysis, or we have to assume that the *ontological truth* about the thing referred to by a specific art term varies when the rules of use for such a term vary. But if we choose this last hypothesis, then we also have to accept the following: that people in different epochs or cultures are really speaking about "different things" when they refer to works of art; thus, even the very possibility of communication among them needs to be explained. A propos, in this case we would be committed to a more sophisticated version of the approach we have called *Historicist dismissivism*.

If the argument for variation were the only challenge to conceptual analysis as a proper methodology in musical ontology (and more generally, in any sort of philosophical inquiry),

however, Semanticists need not be too concerned[454]. Indeed, if it is true that differences in beliefs about whether entities of specified sorts are identical or not, persist or not, are upsetting, they do not undermine Semanticism at the root. Nevertheless, a much stronger concern still needs to be addressed, one that strikes Semanticism at its very heart. Recall, once again, that Thomasson's view implies that ontology of art must be compatible with our intuitions about the status of works of art. That is, our intuitions are what ultimately give us a criteria for judging whether or not an ontology of music is plausible and workable. This is because people's intuitive judgments are thought to reflect their competency in exercising the relevant concept, just as intuitions are taken to mirror the semantic rules of the proper application of art terms. So conceptual analysis is seen as an attempt to make explicit – in what Thomasson calls the object language -- the semantics behind certain of our relevant intuitions, where *intuitions* are supposed to *warrant* our beliefs about things.

In blunt philosophical terms, advocates of conceptual analysis assume in the first place that intuitions provide relevant evidence about the ontological issues we are concerned with, just as perception, in empirical science, provides evidence of how things stand in the extra-mental or in the extra-linguistic world. But are intuitions capable of clueing us in as to what is real? Or, more generally, do intuitions constitute a reliable basis on which to ground metaphysics (both fundamental and applied)?

For the sake of discussion, let us say that this is the case, and that intuitions can really do the job Semanticists want them to do. Still, they would have to define exactly what they mean by the term *intuition* -- for the term has conveyed, throughout the history of philosophy, an enormous number of different epistemological and metaphysical connotations. For instance, Semanticists do not seem to have in mind the specific nuance the notion acquires in Kantian philosophy, as a singular, immediate representation of an external object or event, as opposed to concepts *qua* general and mediate. Nor do they apparently refer to a somewhat mysterious faculty or inner sense or magic aura of any kind. Do they consider the intuitions philosophers are supposed to work with to be beliefs? Or rather, are they spontaneous unreflective judgments? But then, should they be taken to be "self-evidently" true or something that is simply "appealing"? Can they commonly be held by anyone, or just by certain competent subjects? In short, what is the nature of intuitions?

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[454] Since there may be ways to respond. There can be reasons in fact to think that our conceptual schemes vary bringing with them variation in what—if anything—we are talking about. Our ontological categories themselves may be arbitrary, unsystematic, and so on in ways that reflect these features of the rules. This grounds in part the approach we have referred to as "ontological history".

The issue, even at first glance, is of huge concern. However, it seems that whatever definition Semanticists might choose to adopt there would still be reason to doubt the premise, i.e., that intuitions can be considered reliable guides to the existence of certain ontological facts. Whether intuitions are beliefs, opinions, immediate judgments or sensations, we all know that more often than not they are imprecise and unreliable; just think of intuitions about, say, which party is going to win an election, or what the chances are that next winter will be warm, and the like. What makes us think that they could be any more reliable in the area of philosophical issues such as precise ontological questions on the nature of artworks? Moreover, people normally have conflicting intuitions, intuitions that are mutually inconsistent and contradictory. The case of musical ontologists is paradigmatic here. As we know from Chapter 2, different philosophers, based on their individual intuitions, have varying ideas about what the ontological status of a musical work is, ideas which are mutually incompatible and sometimes irreconcilable. But if the intuitions of philosophers provide different answers at different times, then the reliability of intuitions appears to be questionable. In other words, the fact that intuitions are frequently *controversial* puts into question the very idea that they represent something comparable to perception for giving us insight into what reality is in itself, outside of our mental and linguistic structures. Indeed, if intuitions were a kind of *perception* of ontological facts, or if they were *bona fide* reflections, objective mental representations of ontological fact -- judgments fully governed by norms of truths and validity -- how is it that we so often disagree about which ones are true?

Semanticists might reply[455] that, from their viewpoint, the idea is not really that intuitions provide *data* concerning the ontological structure of the world, since conceptual analysis is more an attempt: "to make explicit the rules of use for the concepts and terms we employ, enabling us to express our results (under semantic descent) in the object-language to make claims about the conditions under which entities of various types would exist, persist, or be identical"[456]. These rules of use can give us insight into the ontological conditions of existence for a work of art not because they are able to give us evidence of ontological facts *via* a special power of intuition, but rather because they describe the ontological sort of thing we are talking about by using a specific art term. In other words: "the semantic rules guiding

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[455] See: Thomasson, A.L., *Experimental Philosophy and the Methods of Ontology*, *The Monist* 95/2 (April 2012): 175 199.)

[456] Ivi, p. 185

the conditions of application of the terms we use determine what ontological sort of thing, if any, we refer to with the relevant terms"[457].

This line of reasoning, however, often turns out to be self-defeating for the Semanticist. Note indeed, that to underline the fact that the conditions of application of the art-terms *determine* the ontological status of the relevant objects terms refer to, may sound to the objector like an awkward plea for an *idealistic* framework, where *idealism* is to be understood as the theory according to which the way we think and talk *determines* what is real. This is, for instance, what philosopher O' Young believes, when reading most of Thomasson's assumptions as relativist and idealist: "[…] We are forced to conclude that either ways of speaking do not provide us with answers to our ontological questions about works of music or that they provide us with more than one answer. If we opt for the first of these hypotheses, then we are rejecting the linguistic proposal [semanticism]. If we adopt the second, we are left with some sort of relativism or […] idealism."[458]

In fact, there is room to conclude with O' Young that if: "[…] the rules governing when a concept is to be applied, refused, and reapplied (to one and the same thing) are *constitutive* of what ontological sort of thing we are talking about or thinking about" [459] then the ontological status of musical works is as it is *because* we talk and act in a certain way. If this reconstruction is correct, what art objects are, according to Thomasson, would depend on how we construe them to be, that is, on our classificatory rational activity conducted via thought and language. Metaphysically, this implies that the way we assemble properties through interacting with our surroundings, cognitively and socially, *determines* what kinds of objects exist, and what their conditions of identity and persistence are. Therefore, in the Semanticists' perspective, the world around us would have been entirely different, had there never been thinking beings: none of the objects and kinds one ordinarily encounters would exist.

While there is an infinite number of concerns that could be associated with a philosophical scenario of this sort, we should indicate the most central one, namely the fact that no space is left for the conceivability of massive error on our part[460]. Where practices are literally productive of their ontology there can be no question of error in evaluation: it would be

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[457] Ivi, p.199

[458] O' Young, J., *The Ontology of Music, a Philosophical Pseudo-Problem*, *The Ontology of Musical Works: A Philosophical Pseudo-Problem*, Front. Philos. China 2011, 6(2), p.285

[459]Thomasson, A.L., 2012, p. 185 (emphasis added)

[460] See Rohrbaugh, G., *The Ontology of Art*, The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics, 2nd ed., 2005, p. 235-245

impossible, for instance, for certain of our beliefs about artworks to be false, or incorrect, or inappropriate, at least in cases where we are sufficiently familiar with the art world, or have sufficient knowledge of the arts. Indeed, if the way things are depends on how we believe them to be, then our judgments of them cannot be wrong. The existence of practices as they are guarantees the existence of works as we conceive them to be: for the only standard of correctness to which they can appeal is that provided by the actual conceptual repertoire.

Questions of (de)ontology

So far, we have been offering arguments that point to the conclusion that conceptual analysis, as it stands, cannot be directly adopted in the ontology of art, for it generates more problems than it solves. Skepticism concerning intuition as reliable evidence of ontological views, together with concerns about the controversiality and variability of our beliefs may have suggested that there is reason to think that no truth or justification can be found in a pragmatic approach to ontology, as vehemently proposed by Thomasson. If the arguments presented are plausible, they should indeed lead us to doubt Semanticism as a viable methodology for ontology *tout-court*.

This conclusion, however, rather than helping, leaves us with a tough nut to crack. As mentioned at the outset, our inquiry here was primarily motivated by a genuine methodological concern. Once we rule conceptual analysis out, our initial problem resurfaces more forcefully than ever: what is the proper method to be followed in art ontology? What could possibly count as evidence in the metaphysics of art -- understood in broadly Aristotelian terms -- as the study of "the conditions required for something" to exist as an artwork of a certain type?

While easy to state, these are extraordinarily difficult questions to address. It is no accident that few philosophers, at least in the history of analytic aesthetics, have treated them directly; and, to be honest, we too would be tempted to follow suit, and refrain from opening Pandora's "methodological" box. But (as with everything in philosophy, there is always a "but") it just so happens that Thomasson is right on this point. As she states, until we can find a generally accepted method in art ontology, the assessment of different theories will remain highly controversial, for without a comprehensive methodology it is difficult to know how to approach all the different claims in the literature. Attention to methodology is thus inescapable for anyone concerned with art ontology, even more so because of the nature of artistic practice in itself.

On the other hand, in the following brief methodological account, we will not provide a wide-ranging, definitive methodology for art ontology (nor do we believe there could ever be such a thing). Our aim here is rather to elucidate some of the more important issues of method that arise when reflecting upon questions of ontology, and to make some admittedly sketchy suggestions about how these questions could be addressed, if not resolved. This will lead us to two fundamental questions: first, what are the criteria for an acceptable methodology in art ontology, and, secondly, what is the *job* of ontologists of art. Since these questions are so intimately bound together by what we may call their *deontological* character, we will focus on a number of questions that concern both.

By way of introduction, let us consider the fact that all scientific disciplines seem to be grounded on some undisputed assumptions accepted as definitive starting points. Economics, for instance, relies on the assumption that economic subjects are rational agents; physics is based on the central supposition of the consistency of certain areas of mathematics for depicting the world, and so on. These assumptions can be regarded as *the subject matter* of the discipline, the basis from which it can proceed.

But what basis can metaphysics be founded upon, insofar as it cannot, at least apparently, make any definitive assumptions, precisely because its job, unlike that of any other discipline, is to give an account of how things are in a fundamental sense? What can its definitive *subject matter* be? The problem, in its entirety, brings into question the very possibility of metaphysics as a reliable discipline, that is, how it is possible to have knowledge of specifically metaphysical claims about the nature of objects *qua* objects of a kind. Luckily, we do not need to go any further into this general issue, since it would involve massive philosophical inquiry, far beyond the scope of our current investigation, and one that in fact is not directly related to our subject *per se*.

However, this question involves the status of musical and art ontology, so it is our task to approach the issue at least from this specific point of view.

First, let us note that the case of musical ontology *qua* applied discipline is more nuanced than that of fundamental metaphysics. While general metaphysics investigates concepts such as object, event, properties, relation, identity, persistence, possibility --concepts which constitute its own distinctive toolbox and are completely *a priori*, i.e., non-empirical, formal -- art ontology is concerned with the particular status and "ways of being" of things, works of art, that concretely exist in the world. Moreover, works of art are more than just "concretely existing things". Artworks come to exist as a result of human activity, and are understood

within the context of social practices that govern appreciation and interpretation. They are something we take a concrete interest in, by which we are attracted and fascinated, and that often become objects of concern and discussion. This *practical* character gives art ontology its special connotation and meaning *qua* distinct from the abstractness of fundamental metaphysics.

On the face of it, it is not clear whether we can even make sense of the idea of grasping artworks "as they are" independently of human activities and concerns. Different theorists involved with this branch of ontology[461] have expressed this as the idea that if there is anything like a specific methodology for the ontology of art, it must be within the constraints of concrete artistic practices and beliefs. David Davies, for instance, defines this claim as what he calls "the pragmatic constraint" on ontological theorizing. Whatever artworks are, they are manifested primarily through our practices, as objects of our thought, actions and perception, elements that together give rise to what has been called the "art world". Practices and beliefs related to art represent the phenomena ontological theories try to explain in the first place, thus, any account of the ontological status of artworks that is completely in conflict with the beliefs held in the world of art about the nature of art should be rejected. It is on this basis that, we can state that practices constitute the very *subject matter* of art ontology; *core* to the discipline is preserving what is implicit in artistic practice, namely, in the case of music, what musicians and audiences do, what playing and listening to musical works is, and so on.

This seems quite clear. However, a number of problems are hidden just below the surface of the simple-seeming assumptions we have just introduced. We have seen above in our discussion on Semanticism that there is reason to be wary if not skeptical of the claim that appeal to practices, beliefs and ordinary intuition can provide evidence for the discipline we are concerned with. Intuition and common claims are not consistent, and if practices are thought to be productive of the objects of their concern, then there is no room for the possibility of error, and idealistic ghosts begin to appear. On the other hand, we have also seen that if one leaves the pragmatic constraint aside (with its appeal to intuitions, beliefs and pratices), then one seriously runs the risk of contravening the *spirit* itself of the ontological enterprise, since practical commitment really represents the *subject matter* of art metaphysics. What are we to do, then? What approach should we take in order to extricate these contradictions? Note that at this point we might be tempted to conclude, with Detractors, that

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[461] Or shall we say, this branch of aesthetics? This is quite *the* problem…

simply no possible methodology can do justice to the ways in which our artistic practices represent the object of ontology. Indeed, if the ontology of art demands focusing on practices, but practices themselves are unreliable source of metaphysical knowledge, one may contend that art ontology is simply a non-sense task. Yet, to remain true to our goals, we have to resist the dismissivist claim that it is impossible to pursue musical metaphysics in an epistemically respectable fashion. We are forced to take a position, however. Either we choose to preserve the centrality of practice, and face all the negative "side-effects" of such an option, or we insist that there is some source of evidence for art ontological claims other than ordinary beliefs and intuitions. Needless to say, both solutions are highly unsatisfactory.

It would be an error, however, to assume that we are caught on the horns of a dilemma here. Once again, another way is possible. Note that emphasizing the centrality of artistic practice does not necessarily imply commitment to the constructivist picture painted by Semanticists. In the Semanticist account, the central role of practice was not the only thing stressed, nor were ordinary beliefs taken simply to confirm or disconfirm our commitment to certain theories on the identity of art objects. Rather, practices and beliefs were thought to play some kind of *constitutive* role, supplying the world with the objects of our concern. Davies' "pragmatic constraint", was thus taken to the extreme, supporting a view in which pragmatic considerations turned out to be the very *fabric* of artworks themselves and not just the only way of understanding what works are. It is to this extent that Semanticism can be seen as showing hidden commitment to idealism and anti-realism. Nevertheless, this doesn't necessary mean that we can't distance ourselves from this constructivist viewpoint which still maintain the centrality of artistic practice.

Reflective Equilibrium

So what is this "other way"? Since there are many mutually incompatible claims concerning the nature of artworks and art appreciation, and no less disagreement among our pre-philosophical beliefs and intuitions, what we need in the first place is a procedure for determining which beliefs to give up and which to hole on to. To put it briefly, we need a strategy for selecting intuitions and claims to be treated as central and those to be considered marginal, and a method to justify our choices. Arguably, thus, what we have to do is *adjust* or

calibrate pragmatic constraint in order to make it more resistant to the controversiality and flexibility of our intuitions, while anchoring it to solider rational ground[462].

The natural starting point remains, in accordance with Semanticists, the idea that what should guide us in describing something as a musical work is our beliefs about whether some properties are or not fundamental to our idea of a "work of art". This is explicit, for instance, in Levinson's famous appeal to the commonly held belief that musical works are created to reject hard Platonism as a plausible hypothesis. We should hold onto creationism, he says, because: "it is one of the most firmly entrenched of our beliefs about art", and one which is really ubiquitous in how we think and speak about music, since: "Musicians 'make' music, they don't 'find' it; pieces are 'written' or 'composed,' not 'described' or 'registered;' we have biographical titles such as 'Beethoven the Creator' but not 'Beethoven the Discoverer'[…]"[463].

In this case, our non-ontological intuitions are properly used to adjudicate between rival ontologies of musical works.

But (*pace* Semanticists) this is not to say that all our current intuitions regarding artistic practice are to be taken as *indispensable* or *sacrosanct* or *unrevisable* nor that they *all deserve* to be saved in our ontology of art. By contrast, while recourse to intuition is to be maintained, we should learn to use it cautiously, and subject it to rational scrutiny and examination. To this extent, for instance, where our conflicting intuitions can be preserved only by an extremely awkward theory, it might be best to sacrifice a few of them for the sake of the theoretical consistency of the whole theory. Consider in this respect the debate on what kinds of aesthetic or artistic properties are essential to musical works. The Sonicist intuition that only notational aspects are essential, so changes in instrumentation do not affect its identity, conflicts with this idea. Instrumentalists, on the other hand, assume that since works are strongly tied to their context of creation they have to be performed using the original instruments dictated by the composer. The former argue that the individuation of performable musical works must only take into account what is prescribed for correct performances by the score, since all the relevant properties that must be grasped in aesthetic appreciation depend upon the manifest properties of the artistic product, say, the perceptive properties of the sound sequence that complies with the composer's specification. The latter, on the other hand, reply

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[462] The necessary premise is that, while there will be a few tenacious essentialists who may resist the idea, our proposal is addressed toward those who agree that the boundaries of art are an evolving social construct. Had European cultural history been a bit different, we would today have rather different intuitions about central examples and genres of fine art.

[463] Levinson, J., *Music, Art, and Metaphysics*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990a, p. 216

that any proper assessment of the work depends on these properties being accurately complemented by consideration of the medium employed in their production, i.e., the kind of instrument used to produce the sound sequence, the concert hall etc. Both accounts respectively rely on consistent assumptions and have sound arguments to support their intuitions.

If the task of our ontology were to save these opposing intuitions supporting both as indispensable, each in its own specific demands, this would generate a very strange account of the identity of musical works. Here, thus, it seems reasonable to adopt a final theory that might conflict with some of the views we started with in important ways, regarding underlying ontology and our understanding of artistic practice. Whenever this should prove to be the case, we should simply give up the search for a single theory to account for all our intuitions. Conflicting intuitions may indeed refer to different generative contexts within which singular works are created, and may reflect the character of one work belonging to a particular tradition and not another. Therefore, as formerly noted by S. Davies[464], while the sonicist intuition works well for baroque oeuvres, whose instrumentation is flexible *by definition* (consider for instance Bach's writing *The Art of Fugue* in open score, so as to make it performable on whatever instrument and ensemble, string and wind quartets, solo keyboardists, orchestras, etc.), the Instrumentalist idea is best exemplified by Romantic symphonies where specific instrumentation is explicitly specified by the composer.

But let's get back to the matter at hand, methodology. To illustrate the idea behind the procedure of "calibrating" or "adjusting" pragmatic constraint briefly sketched above, a good idea may be to refer to a method that in the last few years has been experiencing a revival outside the confines of the discipline in which it was originally born. We are talking about what moral philosophers generally refer to as *reflective equilibrium*. Since John Rawls, in his 1971 *A Theory of Justice,* invented and defended the notion, reflective equilibrium has been largely discussed in ethics as a central component of the philosophical method. Surprisingly, however, only recently has it started attracting critical scrutiny among philosophers of art[465], though it is presumably as central to aesthetics as to any other philosophical field. In general terms, "reflective equilibrium" represents both the final goal and the process by which we reflect on and revise our beliefs about an area of inquiry. In short, it consists in: "working back and forth among our considered judgments (some say our "intuitions") about particular instances or cases, the principles or rules that we believe govern them, and the theoretical

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[464] See: Davies, S., 2001
[465] See, for instance, Gracyk T., 2008, and Cooke, B., 2012.

considerations that we believe bear on accepting these considered judgments, principles, or rules, revising any of these elements wherever necessary in order to achieve an acceptable coherence among them"[466]. The method succeeds when we arrive at an acceptable level of coherence among these beliefs, where acceptable coherence is defined as implying not only that our beliefs be consistent with each other, but that these beliefs provide support or justification for others.

The procedure of reflective equilibrium is therefore explicitly intended to filter out beliefs based on prejudice and inferential error. To carry out this task, we bring various theoretical beliefs and pre-theoretical intuitions under inspection, say, about how artworks are individuated and how they persist in time, and go back and forth in the process of revision and adjustment, until we arrive at a set of judgments that have survived rational examination, or, in Rawls words, that have been: "duly pruned and adjusted"[467]. It is at this point that we may decide whether or not to save these beliefs or to privilege the consistency of the general theoretical account they refer to, on the basis of value judgments such as coherence, simplicity, plausibility and the like.

The central claim, however, is that no proposition within the method is immune from revision, and no intuition is independently justified but only in virtue of its relation to the rest of our beliefs. *Contra* Semanticists thus, reflective equilibrium has it that not all our pre-theoretical intuitions and beliefs about art appreciation and evaluation nor all our beliefs about the nature of art are to be regarded as *unrevisable*, or sacrosanct; only after having been carefully selected, duly adjusted and mutually calibrated can they assume theoretical relevance. To this extent, we agree with Theodore Gracyk that in general terms, reflective equilibrium: "may indicate the standards of argumentation and justification for contemporary aesthetics", and, in particular, may help us mend some of the major concerns related to the unreliability of our beliefs and intuitions about art.

The central claim, however, is that no proposition within the method is immune from revision, and no intuitions is independently justified but only so in virtue of its relation to the rest of our beliefs.

Getting out of the Armchair?

[466] Daniels, N., *Reflective Equilibrium*, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.),
[467] Rawls, J., *A Theory of Justice*, Harvard University Press, Harward, 1971, p.20

Still, the objector may contend[468], even provided that reflective equilibrium is a proper methodology for the ontology and the philosophy of art (which, by the way, would require much more work than has been done so far in order to be confirmed), this in no way would contribute to justifying the epistemic reliability of intuitions, whose metaphysical and epistemological reputation remain highly questionable, if not infamous. In other words, what can guarantee that the outcome of such a process of steady calibration and adjustment would not just be an internally consistent set of totally false prejudices? Up to now, the objector may continue, no valid reason has yet been given to justify the status of intuition in providing evidence for philosophical and ontological claims. However, in order to argue that our intuitions are able to report (consistently) truths about our ontological claims, it seems that a reasonably well-justified theory of how intuition works, that is, how it is related to its objects, is needed. Without this, the assumption that our intuitions – however calibrated and adjusted -- can be trusted as evidence for our ontology is at best an item of faith.

In reply, we begin by agreeing with the premise that clarifying the function of intuition in art metaphysics -- and philosophy in general -- is crucial task to be pursued. As we have already had the chance to remark in our discussion on Semanticism, until light is shed on the epistemic status of the class of propositions that are part of the method of reflective equilibrium – that is, until one has specified what kind of evidence intuitions provide -- there would be no *definitive basis* for assessing the reliability of the method at stake. *Nevertheless*, though such concern is both plausible and legitimate, we refuse to conclude, with the objector, that in the absence of such a theory appeal reflective equilibrium should be discarded as completely arbitrary. Indeed, if we choose to cast it off, then we are pushed back to the initial point: to avoid dismissivism, we have to find an alternative methodology for the discipline we are interested in. But, once again, what could this alternative methodology be?

A possible answer that is currently experiencing growing consensus in certain intellectual milieus, is that we can reduce appeal to intuitions by adopting, in philosophy, the experimental method of the sciences. The proposal, as held especially by a number of naturalist theoreticians in the field of ethics and philosophy of mind, is that philosophers should "get out of the armchair" to embrace a totally empirical method in which the epistemic role of intuitions and reflective equilibrium is replaced by the quantitative findings of experiments conducted in laboratories.

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[468] See, for instance: Williamson, T., p. 244-246

By itself, the idea that there should be a close connection between philosophy and the sciences is nothing new, and while, like most on-going relationships, the liaison between philosophy and science is not without its difficulties and occasional differences, it has always been considered fruitful. A long philosophical tradition, from Aristotle on, has devoted itself to operating within the frame of a broadly scientific image of the world and the mind, and to reconciling that image with the way the world appears to us in common-sense experience. Most modern philosophers, moreover, have taken scientific investigation as a model of rationality, to make sense of the metaphysical implications of scientific approaches. More recently, philosophers of the mind have started using the empirical findings of the cognitive sciences –neuroscience and evolutionary psychology in particular – to formulate and revise claims about the function of perception and the organization of mental structure.

Progress in this area of inquiry, however, often goes hand in hand today with a growing faith (at least in some philosophical entourages) in the fact that the cognitive sciences are slowly taking the place of philosophy, rendering its contribution superfluous -- not simply because the cognitive sciences deal with issues, like the concept of free will, beauty and moral good, for instance, that are traditionally considered philosophical business, but rather because they are increasingly being employed to sustain a campaign against philosophy's traditional method. On this basis, supporters of this approach, so-called 'experimental philosophers', use the empirical methods of the cognitive sciences to reject recourse to intuitions in philosophy. Indeed, we are told, intuitions have no theoretical relevance, nor objective reliability: as experiments have shown, they are but the contingent product of social and educational contexts, and the direct result of evolutionistic and neurophysiologic factors.

With regards to questions of art and aesthetics, the empirical approach has given rise to what is usually referred to as "neuro-aesthetics": the study of the neural bases responsible for our aesthetic responses. Introduced in 2001 by the neurophysiologist Semir Zeki as a discipline whose primary aim is "to investigate the biological mechanisms of the aesthetic appreciation"[469] at the neurological level, neuroaesthetics examines what happens in our brain when we are confronted with a work of art, in order to identify the origins of some of our elementary aesthetic perceptions, feelings, memories as related to genetic and cultural components.

Most of the experiments are aimed at figuring out what the common attitudes among ordinary people are with regard to certain aesthetic experiences; explaining the ways in which we react

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[469] Ticini, F.L., *La creatività artistica e il cervello. Scienza ed arte alleate in un'indagine a tutto campo sull'uomo*. Arte & Cultura, pp. 61-11

while perceiving and interpreting artworks; understanding what cerebral areas and what mechanisms allow us to appreciate art; or clarifying what biological reasons there are behind the fact that some works are more famous and better evaluated than others. Given that recent studies[470] have shown that the part of the brain that functions when we make critical judgments is that of the frontal lobes, a good deal of research is now trying to assess whether socio-cultural factors can have an influence on the frontal lobes, thereby contributing to the way we reach aesthetic judgments. Partisans of neuro-aesthetics believe[471] that if this were proved to be true –that contextual features really have a bearing on activating and deactivating the frontal lobes -- we will finally have a scientific explanation of the function of aesthetic appreciation.

Let us make this very clear: we are not interested in showing that there can be no real interest in the outcomes of similar experiments, as some scholars in the humanities have held (particularly in Italy, where there is a sort of *conventio ad excludendum* for everything related to neuroaesthetics[472]). Similarly, our concern is not to launch a philosophical crusade for or against the objectives of the empirical sciences. This, we believe, would be both unhelpful and unwise, as we shall argue later on. What we wish to do is to offer a number of considerations that go against the most drastic claim that empirical methodology should replace philosophy.

First, and to the best of our knowledge, it is not clear in what sense evidence that, say, certain beliefs are more common in some ethnical or sociological milieus than others, or that the brain is biologically inclined to react in a certain way to determinate aesthetic stimuli, or that we tend to reserve better treatment for works whose authors we already know, would count as *genuinely philosophical* at all, and much less as the object of *metaphysical* knowledge.

Most experimental aesthetics, indeed, seems useless to the purposes of art metaphysics, since much of the job of metaphysicians consists in looking for a kind of *modal* understanding of what is metaphysically necessary or possible in our aesthetic judgments and trying to provide a *normative account* of what our judgments should be, if they are to be rationally justified. In addition, it seems that ontological arguments cannot appeal to empirical evidence only, for they are committed by definition at least to a certain number of *a priori* assumptions. This is to say that ontologists (and philosophers) are not only concerned with collecting facts about

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[470] See Zeki and Bartels, 2000, 2004.

[471] See, for instance, Ticini, F.L., *Connessioni inattese. Crossing tra arte e scienza*, a cura di I. Licata, edito da Giancarlo Politi Editore, 2009.

[472] See, among the others: *Contro la neuroestetica*, «Studi di estetica», 41, 1, 2010

what people commonly regard as aesthetically relevant in their relation with artworks --which is empirical matter, and can be discovered experimentally -- but also with figuring out (or contributing to) what people *should* regard as relevant in this sense, i.e., what is aesthetically worthwhile *per se*.

Although experimental investigations may have their own merits, we do not see how they can *replace* the enterprise of the philosophy of art as a whole, and especially that of metaphysics. Once again, though, our claim is not that philosophers and ontologists of art are entitled to ignore the challenges proposed by cognitive aesthetics, and carry on as usual with the traditional armchair business. Such a reactionary response would not only be intellectually lazy, it would fail to take into account what is especially worth understanding: that experimental aesthetics is neither a sign of the beginning of the end, nor a disturbance to be discarded, but rather a *solicitation* to do more and more in the field of philosophy. Indeed, to make sense of the data produced by neuro-aestheticians and elicit the underlying philosophical implications, we *must return* to central philosophical questions about the relationship of the mind to the world, the nature of value, aesthetic judgments and justification. In other words, we *need* the conceptual refinements and subtle distinctions that constitute the very heart of 'armchair' philosophy of art. So, while it is wrong to assume that the philosophy of art can simply ignore the 'laboratory', it is just as wrong to think that the cognitive sciences can go on without the reflective work done while sitting in the 'armchair'.

If this picture is correct, then we are brought back to the beginning. Indeed, experimental aesthetics does not dispense but rather invokes an appeal to reflective equilibrium, as the process of reflection on our beliefs and intuitive judgments and their logical interconnections aimed at constructing 'theories' that are both appealing and consistent. These enable us to make sense of results in neuroaesthetics, and give us a better understanding of the functioning of the 'aesthetic' mind. Moreover, reflective equilibrium still maintains its merits in capturing the specific quality of philosophical and metaphysical inquiries, particularly in the field of art. Rational 'armchair' reflection of this sort is especially necessary when we have to judge whether certain properties ascribed to works of art are correct, to provide rational justification for our aesthetic judgments and reach ontological conclusions about the identity of artworks, all of which entails the specific business of the ontology of art. Therefore, until further arguments are offered (but, again, these would be *philosophical* arguments) art metaphysicians can presumably continue to follow the good old-fashioned method.

But here we were supposed to discuss a further matter, i.e. what the job of art ontologists should be. Not that we actually regret not having done this before, since the question constitutes, more or less overtly, the *leitmotiv* of the whole discussion, and, to be honest, we have already addressed it, albeit sketchily -- see for instance the section called "Assessing the Debate". Yet, *repetita iuvant* sometimes; so before leaving this topic we wish to spend a few more words on it. Contra *essentialists*, we do not think that the primarily interest of ontologists should be the search for what artworks are in themselves -- in the sense of what type of entities they are, *sub specie aeterni* -- because artworks are not natural objects in the first place. Ontological investigation on natural objects might well be aimed at sorting, singling out and describing classes of entities that share features and causal relations. Indeed, our theorizing in this regard is only partially influenced by the way in which these objects serve our interests, since the objects themselves (at least apparently) exist independently of us, and grasping their natures is, mostly, a matter of determining features that may no longer have any practical relevance for us. Similar enquiry, however, lacks plausibility with regards to works of art. Works of art exist primarily as objects of great practical and symbolical interest on our part *qua* philosophers, critics, artists, and audiences, so it is difficult to understand how there nature could be grasped independently of human activities and concepts. To this extent, we have suggested that metaphysicians stop quarrelling once and for all about which class of metaphysical objects can best do the job we need them to do, say, *abstracta* of various kinds, sets, and so on, thereby exposing themselves to probable defeat and (sometimes opportune) criticism from Detractors. By contrast, if the aim of art ontology is understood as the exploration and clarification of the rationality behind our understanding of art, then the job of metaphysicians should be focused on searching for criteria that justify our beliefs and judgments, and on giving a rational account of how and why people think about works in a certain way. To use Guy Rohrbaugh's effective words, their mission is thus primarily: "to provide a theoretical background against which properly aesthetic questions can be addressed, one permitting the formulation of a wide variety of views and arguments, precisely that dizzy variety of claims that constitute our artistic practices"[473]. This may imply attempting to find rational ground for our aesthetic judgments by means of that continual process of examination of concepts and intentions that goes by the name of reflective equilibrium.

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[473] Rohrbaugh, G., *Ontology*, in B. Gaut ad D. Lopes (eds) *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, Third Edition, p.239

As previously suggested, the business of examining in what way or "in virtue of what" aesthetic properties are partially or fully ascertained within the properties of a work, can be fruitfully addressed in terms of *grounding,* to use again Schaffer's 2010 notion. To the best of our knowledge, talking in terms of grounding could give further insight into many metaphysical debates, which appear to be ultimately based on grounding claims, that is, claims about what grounds what. We do not have enough room here to investigate the issue thoroughly, but the idea is, in short, that when using a proposition like "a performance *p* is melancholic in virtue of the work *x* being melancholic", we are not simply proffering an identity claim, nor a claim which implies causality in nature, nor one that can be considered purely modal in nature. What we are saying, instead, is that the fact that a work is melancholic *explains*, in some metaphysically significant sense, why its performances are melancholic as well. In this respect, we believe that further reflection is needed to clarify the underlying forms that ground and provide a basis for our judgments and beliefs, for it is within them that we may possibly find our way to their ontology.

Two last observations before concluding. Given the success that the notion of grounding is having in recent debates in the field of general metaphysics[474], investigation on the issue could also help art ontology overcome its narrowness, namely, in Mag Uidhir's words, that "long cultivated insular character"[475] (or reputation at least) that has made it appear, from the outside, as a comparatively "dim and unproductive" field of philosophical inquiry, which compromises any serious relationship it might try to establish with outside areas[476].

Finally, while keeping the descriptive nature of the enterprise intact, the issue of grounding might make it possible for ontologists to play an active part in guiding practice, which would be of great benefit to those who think that the task of philosophers (and philosophers of art in particular) is more than merely attesting and ratifying what 'real' people do or think.

A misplaced question?

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[474] For an useful introduction to the debate on the notion of "grounding", see: Bliss, R. and Trogdon, K., *Metaphysical Grounding*, in The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta

[475] Mag Uidhir, M.C., Introduction, Art, Metaphysics and the Paradox of Standards, in M.C. Uidhir, Art and Abstract Objects, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York 2013, p.2

[476] Namely, by taking part of the broader debate that involves nowadays the interests of the majority of scholars concerned with metaphysics, ontologists could finally go further the antinomy between deference and independence, by which we started our inquiry, and discover an alternative to the usual self-understanding.

In the preceding paragraph we sketched a picture of how we may go about addressing methodological issues in art ontology, and we suggested that such a picture does not fit with the ambitions of theorists of all the varieties we listed. In opposition to experimental philosophers, we maintained that art ontology must make reference to our beliefs and intuitions as its starting point, since empirical methods cannot apparently replace philosophical analysis. Beliefs and intuitions, in fact, constitute the *subject-matter* of the discipline we are concerned with. However, unlike Semanticists, we did not *sanctify* pragmatic constraint, in refusal of a broader picture in which our practices are understood in some way or other as *productive* of the objects of their concern. By contrast, we argued that reflection on our practice requires what Rawls called *reflective equilibrium* -- a process by which appeal to intuitions and beliefs is calibrated by theoretical consistency. Accordingly, we promoted a view in which the ontology of art is not seen as the business of defining what artworks are as particular metaphysical entities, but of providing a rational account of our aesthetic judgments, thus giving metaphysical grounding to what is implicit in artistic practices.

There is, however, a further issue to be discussed at this point, one that is inescapable in any discussion of the topic as to whether we should or shouldn't seek in our practices and concepts a metaphysical foundation for theorizing on art objects. The account that was offered, it might be retorted, is supposed to focus mainly on practice, which is the meat and potatoes of pragmatist methodology. Yet, it also claims to be an alternative to constructivism, in the sense that practices are what give privileged identity and existence conditions that secure our reference to artworks (as Thomasson recalls). But how can one maintain a descriptivist attitude while at the same time claiming to hold on to an *ontological account* of art? How can one manage to have it both ways: descriptivist methodology and ontological objectivity?

There is a way, it seems, in which 'the cards' are regularly arranged when similar objections are made. It is maintained, namely, that if our ontologies are driven by the description of practices and beliefs, then they are unable to provide us with any genuine explanation or justification: what they can do at best is to codify regularities, or, at worse, merely express common attitudes and opinions. It might be possible, of course, to generalize these attitudes and opinions, but then we would be doing sociological business, rather than philosophical. To this extent, it is thought, we have two possible options. Either we accept that our ontologies are able to report features of the external world that are independent of our minds (say, what

works *really* are), and there are *objective answers* to our questions of ontology, and room for serious metaphysical investigations, or, if we reject the premise and adopt a descriptivist account, we are forced to accept that our theories are just *ways of talking,* with no reliability or objectivity.

Translated into general philosophical terms, this may be read as the contrast between two main meta-ontological options, i.e. realism and anti-realism. In answer to the basic problem implied in the argument above -- Are there objective answers to ontological questions? -- the doctrine known as realism replies affirmatively while anti-realism replies negatively. As already mentioned, in dealing with ontological realism people often refer back to Quine's "On What there Is" (1948), with his famous criterion of "ontological commitment", the exact interpretation of which has given generations of commentators a great deal of trouble. Ontological anti-realism, conversely, is often traced back to Carnap's discussion on frameworks (1950), as different ontological systems, all equally possible and none of which is definitively correct. However, between these two extremes there are a number of less rigid stances that are regarded as possible, those that tackle the issue from the position that we do not have the necessary epistemic basis for assessing whether answers to ontological problems reflect conceptual truths or objective facts about the world.

As is generally assumed, anyone who is concerned with issues of ontology is supposed to take sides – either by choosing one of these positions, or by adopting some version of one or the other. While this probably makes sense in the case of fundamental ontology (for questions like "are there numbers? Are there sums of simples? Do composite objects really exist?), in the case of investigation on the nature of works of art, we believe this is inapplicable. Aside from the plausibility of all these different solutions, our idea is rather that this way of approaching the issue is misplaced in the first place. Notice, indeed, that this approach is based on two precise metaphysical assumptions that can be summarized as follows:

(a) there is an intrinsic contrast between the structure of our thought and the structure of the world itself:

(b) only if our claims are grounded upon "facts of the matter", i.e., features of the external world that are independent of our thought, can they aspire to objectivity[477];

If we reject these two assumptions, we forfeit the basis on which the objection relies. As a consequence, we also forfeit the idea that adopting a descriptivist account necessarily comes

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[477] This can also be read as the following: only if there are objects that act like truth-makers for our claims, can such claims be considered correct or incorrect, true or false.

at the cost of surrendering any claim to ontological import, thus foregoing an obligation to metaphysical respectability. This would be therefore our strategy.

In the following section, our aim will be to flesh out the three ontological views that compose the scenarios described above, to emphasize the details that, in our view, make them practically implausible. We will try to show that while these positions may hold some *prima facie* attraction, there are serious concerns as to whether they are ultimately coherent and defensible when applied to the ontology of art. We will not argue extensively against any of these positions in particular , however, since a full-scale debate would require a separate, extensive, work. We will address the matter in general terms so as to explain why we reject these positions. Our purpose, however, is not to add yet another option to the discussion, but to introduce a new concept altogether that somehow undermines the assumptions on which the three scenarios are based. In this way, we will be making the case that the objection to descriptivism is misplaced in the first place -- that it is internally coherent and that there is no real reason to reject it.

Three scenarios

To introduce the topic, it may be worth dwelling briefly on the three meta-ontological scenarios we have just mentioned, especially on how in all these scenarios the ontological challenge impacts on the epistemological one.

Realism (or heavyweight realism)

At the ontological level, realism implies maintaining that there is a way in which works of art are in themselves, which relies in the first place on something we can call 'their specific nature' qua *entities* of a certain kind. Whether such 'nature' is to be understood more as 'essence' (as in the case of natural objects), or as 'function' (as in the case of artifacts), realists think that it must nonetheless be regarded as the fundamental *tode ti* that determines what artworks are *per se*. Accordingly, though artworks of course have contextual properties, depending on the historical, contingent, and cultural background of production and appreciation, there are a number of intrinsic properties that works possess and that metaphysically justify why they exist as they exist. To the extent to which such intrinsic properties are seen as substantive, artworks can be regarded as mind-independent, for it is not our semantic rules, nor our intentions or our ways of talking that justify their actual "being in the world". At the epistemological level, according to this account our ontological

conceptions of artworks may be more or less correct, in the sense that they may more or less precisely represent the things which we are referring to while speaking or thinking about works of art. Adopting a realist account means believing that we may be right or wrong in our judgments, depending on the way the world 'really' is. This is what it is usually referred to as 'cognitivism'.

Anti-realism

Anti-realism, conversely, has it that artworks are not external to our minds, but intimately dependent on our thoughts and conceptions. To the extent that talk about the 'nature' of artworks is valid at all, they are thought to be *constituted* by our beliefs, intentions, and practices (constructivism). However, since there is no "way the world is", and artworks are nothing in themselves, this implies that ontological disputes are purely verbal. A dispute is merely verbal – it is thought -- when the interlocutors think they are disagreeing on some substantive matter, but in fact they are not since they are merely assigning different meanings to the same key term. This means that all possible perspectives on the identity of art objects are legitimated; all are potentially adequate for describing the same facts, insofar as they are supported by reference to current practice and linguistic uses. Epistemologically, thus, this ontological debate is shallow and, to recall Yablo[478], futile.

Skepticism

Somewhere in the middle, in the sense of between realism and anti-realism, skepticism seeks a third way to approach the question of the value of art ontology, to embrace a perspective that doubts its reliability outside of the mind. We do not know whether our ontological claims can grasp what artworks are themselves, given that we lack adequate epistemological justification; their truth-value remains unknown to us. In the Pyrronian sense, this may imply that our ontological claims and beliefs are neither true nor false; they are not truth-evaluable, possibly because we do not even know if there really are 'facts' about artworks that we can be sure of. In a Kantian-like version, *exceptis excipiendis*, this may entail that all we can know about artworks is ultimately grounded in our ways of thinking about works (thus purely

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[478] To explain the dismissivism grounding the idea that ontological debates are pointless, Yablo (2009) refers to what he calls the principle of "futility" and "vacuity".

conceptual in character), rather than in how such things are 'in themselves'. In both cases, though, fundamental indeterminacy prevents us from being able to evaluate objectively.

Worries with the three scenarios

Let us start with the most dismissive of the three scenarios.

Anti-realism, as the theory according to which the ontological enterprise with regard to works of art is pointless, merely verbal or futile, has been recently been brought to the fore by James O' Young. Relevantly, O' Young cites Carnap as his main source of inspiration: "The question of which ontology of music is correct is, in Rudolf Carnap's sense of the term, a philosophical pseudo-problem […] An incredible amount of effort and ingenuity has been invested in trying to find the one true ontology of musical works. It has been wasted."[479]

In O'Young's approach, anti-realism is equally inspired by Carnap's idea of linguistic frameworks, as well as by the distinction he makes between internal and external questions. In Carnap's terminology (1950) a framework is like a set of terms in a language with rules or "ways of speaking" that govern its use. Questions *within* the boundaries of a framework are called "internal": for instance, a question like "Is five a prime number?" is internal to the framework of arithmetic; internal questions can be answered either by logical or by empirical methods. But there are also external questions, which concern the reality of the system of entities "as a whole"; needless to say, ontological problems like "Are there numbers?" fall within this category. Since, according to Carnap, external questions cannot be answered either by logical or by empirical methods, they lack "cognitive content" and should be dismissed as shallow.

In the wake of Carnap, anti-realists like O'Young assume that most disputes on the ontology of art, precisely *qua* "external questions", are to be regarded as pseudo-questions. Although philosophers have deluded themselves into thinking they are arguing for a correct ontology, they have only been developing "frameworks" or "ways of speaking" which are all compatible with empirical facts about art. Therefore, we are told, there are no *alethic reasons*[480] for preferring one ontological proposal to another. True, *there are* some facts about art that are uncontroversial and empirically ascertainable: in the case of music, the fact that Mahler's tenth symphony is unfinished; the fact that on April 10, 1964, Glenn Gould gave his last public performance, playing in Los Angeles; the fact that in 1829 Mendelssohn conducted a performance of Bach's St Matthew Passion– the first since Bach's death – which

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[479] O' Young, J., 2011, p. 297
[480] See O' Young

contributed greatly to the revival of his music in Europe. *Nevertheless,* the anti-realist assumes, at the epistemological level, that none of these empirical facts about music will give us a basis for preferring one ontology to another. One cannot understand, simply by analyzing a specific compositional act, whether a composer is creating or just discovering a work of music. The assumption that composing is discovering rather than creating (or *vice versa*) depends on the *prior acceptance* of an ontology of musical works -- to use Carnap's terms, of a particular framework -- not on the ascertainment of certain empirical facts. Just as Carnapian's external questions can only be decided on the basis of convenience, since there is no other empirical reason to favor one solution over another, questions in the ontology of art, according to O'Young, are resolved by arbitrarily adopting a particular framework for all artworks, all frameworks being equivalent from an empirical point of view[481]. Rather than reflecting reality in any objectively right way, ontological theories simply represent possible alternatives for describing the artistic world.

Unlike anti-realists, we have claimed that 'shallowness' is not to be found in all possible ontological debates, but only in some of the disputes actually found in the literature; so while the latter are rightly jettisoned, others are not. In particular, the dismissivist approach we have taken in regard to the categorical debate derives more from the specific way we understand the aim of aesthetics --as a study of the aesthetic and artistic value -- than from the meta-ontological claim that the proposals in the debate are mere frameworks, or ways of talking about music. As we see it the point is not, as O'Young states[482], that the positions offered (Idealism, Platonism, Endurantism, etc) are *all compatible* with empirical evidence deriving from artistic practices, and, consequently, are *all unable* to bring us closer to whatever ontological 'truth' is there to know about musical works. First, because we are not convinced that this is true: that is, we do not believe that *all* the different ontological theories endorsed in the categorical debates are *compatible* to musical practice. In fact, as we have tried to show in Chapter 2, it is quite the opposite: most ontological positions are inadequate for grasping the number of empirical instances of practice. This may represent one of the main problems we have with this debate. Furthermore, the issue is not that, in our conception, these theories are

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[481] This somewhat relativistic use of the term "framework" can remind us of Kuhn's idea of "scientific paradigm", as a disciplinary matrix or model that generates key theories and also determines the application of those theories and the correct methodology to be used. Just as Kuhnian paradigms, the ontological theories on musical works here are taken merely as conceptual frameworks with a specific terminology, which and to impose on it a set of categories.
[482] See: O' Young, 2011, p. 290

incapable of "tipping us off to ontological truths" or of being a "guide to what is real"[483]. Rather, we have contended, the issue is that they are incapable to bring us any closer to *what it really means* to us, i.e., the role artworks play in our lives, and, especially, how this role is to be rationally understood through philosophical reflection. To this extent, more than futile or pointless in a metaphysical sense, such disputes are peripheral or secondary, which by the way is not the case for many other debates establishing the scope of musical (and artistic) ontology.

On the other hand, and from a more ontological angle, it seems that focusing on beliefs, practices and intuitions, in no way implies that *there is nothing more* than intuitions, concepts or practices in the world. Note indeed that attention to artistic practice involves examination of what artists and audiences think and do, but appreciating and producing artworks requires the *existence* of artworks in the first place and not just the truth of some propositions or beliefs about them. When we point out how ontological proposals should explain areas of practice, what usually comes to mind is that there is something more substantial at stake here than a verbal or semantic debate. Indeed, if we are to proceed further in our ontological investigation, this form of *lightweight[484]* realist constraint, at the very least, needs to be accepted: if our practice implies attributing an aesthetic or artistic property to a work, then, paraphrasing David Davies: "[…] the best ontology of art is one according to which the work in question *really has* the property in question"[485], and one in which works "are individuated in the way they are or would be in that practice"[486]. The motivation is simple to enunciate. Our critical and appreciative practice -what we say about and do with respect to artworks – is the closest evidence we have about these works of our concern. Accordingly, there is no reason to deny that the objects that common practice identifies as the artworks exist, as the vehicles through which art (the product of the artist's creative process) is made available to

[483] Ivi, p.287

[484] Compare the notion of "lightweight realism" as used in D. Chalmers, *"Ontological Anti-Realism"*, in D Manley,D Chalmers, R Wasserman (ed.), *Metametaphysics: new essays on the foundations of ontology*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2009 pp. 77-129.

[485] See the formulation of the pragmatic constraint offered in: Caplan, B., and Matheson, C., *Ontology*, in *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy and Music*, Theodore Gracyk and Andrew Kania (eds.), London: Routledge, p. 43

[486] D. Davies, *Art as Performance*, Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004, p. 18. Though it can be argued that Davies is not really successful in respecting the pragmatic constraint Davies does not deny that the object that common practice identifies as the artwork exists (though like common practice he leaves its precise nature unclear). He dubs it the vehicle through which the real artwork – the artist's creative act – is made available to the audience. The problem is that, even if part of what we appreciate is the artist's achievement in making that object, no sufficiently persuasive reason is given to deny that the object that is the culmination or exhibitor of that achievement is the primary object of appreciation (the artwork) as standard practice would have it.

the audience. To be sure, a 'realist' principle of this sort is mainly to be understood as the (somewhat) trivial assumption[487] that works of art concretely exist at least insofar as they are objects of our appreciation. In fact, more than a *heavyweight* realist assumption, this should count as a common-sense 'Moorian' principle to go hand in hand with our pragmatic commitment.

That we are not praising *heavyweight* realism will be clear if we consider the following.

In opposition to realists, we doubt that there is any clear sense in which the *nature* of artworks might turn out to be *independent* – in any fundamental sense -- from our concepts (or thoughts, or intentions). At least at first glance, works of art do not seem to have an *essential nature* in this sense. Even if we may discover what it essentially takes for something to be a cat (something like a cat-form or cat-substance), it appears that it is our concepts that determine what can be considered a sonata, a painting, or a statue. Considerations such as these have led us to hold that, though a concept of *real essences*, in Locke's sense, might be possible for natural things, such a theory can hardly apply to works of art or other kinds of artifacts. Works of art seem to have at best a *nominal essence*, a result of human choice, since it is humans that decide what to include in the definitions of what should count as a statue or as sonata, not a *real* essence discovered *via* empirical investigation (*pace* Essentialists). Not even Aristotle thought that the term 'nature' could be referred to artifacts, since 'nature' refers to the inner source of cause and change, while artifacts, apart from the nature of the matter that composes them, lack inner principles of change and rest (Metaphysics 192b13-23)

However, obviously determining whether artworks ultimately have real or only nominal essence is a matter we cannot hope to address in any proper way here. What is worth noting is that realism is not necessarily essentialism as such. It is indeed possible to argue, as many have done[488], that though works of art cannot be thought of as possessing fundamental essences akin to those of natural objects, they might nonetheless have a different sort of 'nature' that still may be as mind-independent and susceptible to mistakes, quests and discoveries on our part, as the 'real natures' of natural objects are. This, of course, leaves the question open as to what sort of 'nature' this might be. One possible answer that has been

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[487] In the sense that it lacks particular relevance, given that, as recurrently repeated, we see ontology as targeting things, works of art, that primarily matter to us as sources of pleasure, enjoyment and intellectual concerns, and not as just "something that exists in the world".
[488] Hilary Kornblith, as we have already had the chance to note, supports a similar position with regards to ordinary artifacts.

proposed[489] is to think of this 'nature' in terms of 'function'. In this regard, what makes artworks what they are is the fact that they perform a certain function. On closer examination, however, this line of reasoning is subject to a number of concerns.

Suppose we accept that all artworks of a certain kind share the same *functional* essence, just as natural objects share the same *natural/real* essence. Then the question that immediately springs to mind is what this proper function could be, if it has to be common to all works of art (at least to works of art of a certain kind). More specifically, what *notion* of function would be at play?

First, it seems that since artworks are things created from different needs, aspirations, and ideas, they may have many different functions, and even several at the same time or none: *una nessuna e centomila,* to cite Pirandello. Some artworks, for instance, may be created to embellish a space, others to respond to religious objectives, others to provoke self-righteous audiences, others to express the inner feelings and emotions of the artist, and others just to fill pockets. Not to mention the fact that the functions of art change with social and historical change.

Secondly, even if we agree to include generalizations in the list such as: "the function wanted by the artist", or the fact that "artworks are for show", or "that they are capable of affording an aesthetic experience" (which, by the way, may all be likely candidates for a non-essentialist 'definition' of art), it seems that appealing to function doesn't work in the business of determining the 'ontological nature' of artworks. How can we reasonably compare the claim that "the nature of artworks is, for instance, to be appreciated just like earlier works were appreciated in the past"[490] to the claim that "the nature of a cat is its specific "cat-form", its "cattitude", or "its substance", if there is any?

Moreover, while the notion of function puts us in mind of something that is actively done or performed, what really counts in the specific case of artworks is not, or not so much, what works *actually* do or perform *per se*, but what the artist or a competent audience *intends* for them to do. It is the latter, indeed, that give artworks their specific function. This seems true even in cases in which "providing an aesthetic experience" is considered to be the primary function of art; for it would be the relation that artworks have with our beliefs and sensations that is central: i.e., what artworks *are believed* to do to us, not what they are in themselves.

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[489] See for instance: Elder, C. *Real Natures and Familiar Objects*. MIT Press. 2004r for what concerns artifacts; and Pouivet, R., Contre le Pragmatisme en Ontologie de la Musique, "Aisthesis", 2013, pp. 87-99, for the specific case of musical works and artworks.

[490] See: *Artworks as Artifacts,* in E. Margolis and S. Laurence (eds.) *Creations of the Mind: Theories of Artifacts and Their Representation*, , Oxford: Oxford University Press, 74–84.

For all these reasons, it seems that if the notion of function is to gain some relevance with regard to works of art, then it can only be *intended function*.

However, talking about intentions leads us back to where we started: the idea that no mind-independent nature of any sort can be ascribed to artworks (*pace* Realists).

As repeatedly remarked, though, we do not think that mind-dependency is a sufficient reason for excluding artworks from the list of what 'really' exists in the world. We have already rejected the Eliminativist idea that for any object to be a genuine part of our world it must be fully autonomous from our thoughts and intentions. Such a criterion, we have claimed, cannot be applied to entities that, by definition, are supposed to be mind-dependent (since it seems the very idea of entities such as artworks – and artifacts, and social objects -- entails mind-dependency). The clear sense in which the nature of artworks turns out to rely on human concepts and human thought and intentions does not undermine their 'reality'[491].

As is obvious, however, all the above considerations do not take skepticism into consideration. The idea of skepticism can indeed be raised, even if something like '*art-objects*' actually exist in the world, so that our ontological theories are not just *façons de parler*. What guarantees that our concepts are effectively able to describe them?

According to Skeptics we do not know whether ontological theories have any foundation outside the mind nor can we be certain that relevant individual objects – say, musical works -- possess respectively and each unto itself the properties that we imagine.

Though this can often be the case, they say, we cannot prove it, because we lack an adequate epistemic basis for taking a stance.

We shall not try to respond to this objection directly.

First, because if the history of philosophy teaches us anything, trying to address skepticism on its own turf is likely to be self-defeating. But more relevantly, the point is that the skeptic argument, as defined above, does not question the specific area of philosophy we are interested in, i.e., the ontology of art. Skepticism in this sense is simply the consequence of a broader suspicion that our epistemological capacities, as a whole, are incapable of grasping the structure of the world, as a whole. In fact, lack of evidence in the ontology of artworks is just another instance of the general lack of evidence about how things appear to us (unless one believes that art theory is the only field where we do not have sure knowledge, which hardly

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[491] By mind-dependent reality, here, we mean the sum total of things whose existence is not, or not wholly, completely mind-independent, since money very arguably would not exist if no one thought that it did. The system of currency depends upon the confidence of its users that its units can reliably be exchanged for good. Of course, a piece of money could exist without anyone thinking of it as being money, but it would just not be qualify as money but merely as a piece of paper.

seems sustainable). Thus, to address the former concern, all that would be needed is a detailed argument against the latter. However, since such an argument would take us far beyond what we are interested in here, we simply refer the reader to the vast literature on the topic.

Rejecting the two assumptions

Addressing skepticism has certainly not been in vain, since it has helped us get to the point. Indeed, skepticism as applied to artworks, both in its fundamental and in its "regional" forms, asserts that concepts and objects constitute two separate, potentially conflicting, domains. This idea is not specific to skepticism alone: as we see it, all three scenarios discussed above do so, in a sense: they start from the assumption that our concepts of, and the objects that we call, artworks are metaphysically distinct, and eventually come to opposite conclusions[492].

Recall here that an implicit contrast between "the structure of thought" and "the actual structure of the world itself" is precisely what caught our attention to begin with, as the first assumption behind the criticism of a methodology focused on pragmatism (a). It is only in the context of a divergence between "the world of our thoughts about artworks" and "the world of artworks in themselves", that descriptivist methodology seems metaphysically unreliable.

We see things quite differently. Why, we ask, should we believe that there is an unbridgeable gap between the structure of our thoughts (on art) and reality itself? And why should this gap be thought of in terms of a contrast between structures of thought and reality itself , what is to be described?

This stems primarily from our research in the field of musical ontology. From this point of view, it seems difficult to understand how inquiry into the structure of our thoughts about music can really be divorced from relative ontological or metaphysical inquiry. That is, we are not sure that we even know how to separate our grasp of ontological categories from our grasp of the structure of certain of our beliefs and judgments about music. Ontological categories, like properties, dispositions, or events, are not just genuine categories of things, but concepts that reflect the structure of our judgments and thoughts. To the same extent, a claim like "musical works are specific forms of sound events" might equally well be understood as an ontological claim and as a claim about the structure of certain judgments involving certain kinds of generality.

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[492] Antirealists think that we are necessarily confined to former domain; realists think instead that we can overcome this gap and acquire significant knowledge also in the latter domain; skeptics doubt that we could even understand our epistemic position in this picture.

Notice that we are not saying that conceptual forms impose themselves on a world that somehow lacks any sort of structure, so that objects are just the projection or reification of certain forms of our thought (as in the constructivist hypothesis), or reducible to our "ways of speaking" (according to the anti-realist hypothesis). By contrast, our idea is that the structure of beliefs cannot be divided from ontological considerations, since, at least for the purposes of a study on the status of artworks, they can be seen as "two sides of the same coin"[493].

The suggestion, therefore, is that in investigating the structure of thought, understood in this way, we need not give up the notion that we are involved in general metaphysics, for the forms of thought we discover and elucidate aren't really any different from "the philosophical arcana"[494] of the concerns of traditional metaphysics.

But there is a further reason to question this assumption, and one that comes from an entirely different theoretical conception, namely, from the approach we have referred to as "ontological history". In this perspective, musical works can only be said to exist in a relevant sense as long as they enter into the spotlight of our attention and interest, and become the subject of our aesthetic appreciation. Musical objects and musical concepts are understood therefore as two interdependent dimensions, going along together, changing and evolving, becoming more and more real according to how densely they are interwoven and entangled. From this point of view the structure of the world and that of thought are taken as one and the same, at least to the extent to which our concern in pursuing an investigation into the ontology of art is meant to focus on their mutual relationship. In other words, the main thing is not what artworks are themselves, nor whether we can ever gain any such knowledge. What is worthwhile, on the other hand, is how artistic phenomena, events, and products are transformed into objects of aesthetic appreciation and philosophical consideration, and the way in which, in this regard, they take, at least for a time, the form of ontological entities.

We are perfectly aware of the fact that these may sound like strong metaphysical assumptions. Our interest, however, is not in making a metaphysical claim of any sort; and much less in endorsing a form of monism in which objects and concepts melt together into a sort of cosmological blob. The point instead is to raise a *deontological* (or *practical*, or *procedural*)

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[493] Rohrbaugh, G., 2012, p. 40. Recall Locke here. Nominal essences are purely mental products that come to be created by human choice, since it is humans that decide what to include in their definitions of species or genera. We take what nature gives us and we create our own concepts and taxonomical categories. However, the relation with our intentionality does not make these concepts and categories completely arbitrary or haphazard. Indeed, we account for what nature show us, and keep our definitions as close as we can to what it provides us with. To this extent, there seems to be a kind of harmony, like a fundamental coherence, between our conceptual frames and what nature tells us.

[494] See: Kania, A., 2008, p. 437

more than *ontological*, assumption. Art concepts and art objects can exist separately, and are rightly kept apart for all kinds of different theoretical reasons. However, the question of being "separate", the quality called "*choristòn*" in Greek (that which can be kept apart) has to do with being able to exist independently, that a work of art is capable of existing on its own, "*chorìs*", separately, is irrelevant for the scope of art ontology. The matter of which a work is composed can exist independently in this sense (think of the marble that a statue is made of, that existed before the statue was made and may survive its ruin), but it is not yet, as such, an artwork: it is just a quantity of a certain kind of matter[495]. Hence, even if works may be regarded as constituting definite individual things, as realists think (though presumably lacking real essence or *tode ti,* to use ancient terminology), it is not in the sense in which they are abstracted from our conceptual consideration that they assume relevance. It is not qua "*choristoì*" that these things matter to us.

If our proposal makes any sense, then our thoughts do not constitute "a curtain" between us and the artworks we are attempting to consider, making them somehow accessible or inaccessible to us. Accordingly, there is also no reason to suppose that only if there are *real things* behind the curtain, are our ontological claims justified or unjustified, objective or arbitrary.

Such considerations allow us to move on to the second assumption mentioned at the beginning (b), namely the idea that if our claims about the ontology of art are to be considered capable of providing "knowledge", then they must "correspond" to the relevant objects of their concern, i.e., works of art, thought of as being somewhere in the world. This assumption, obviously, may be seen as an instance of what is generally referred to as the correspondence theory of truth, as formerly described in Aristotle's Metaphysics (1011b25), theorized by Thomas Aquinas as the idea of the *adequatio* and later applied to any view embracing the notion that truth is correspondence (or conformity, or accordance) to facts. With regard to fields such as the natural sciences, where objective facts are easily detectable, the theory has merit: statements that fit well with reality are to be considered true. However, it seems to fail for others, such as the domain of aesthetics, where truth cannot simply be a description of

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[495] However, such a doctrine of course leads us again to the metaphysical thesis according to which the work does not coincide with the material object in which it is embodied. Compare: P. Lamarque, *Work and Object*, *Explorations in the Metaphysics of Art*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2010.

facts, because what counts as a "fact" is questionable[496] (nor, on the other hand, is it simply a matter of conceptual truths like 'All bachelors are unmarried') [497].

We do not wish to propose an alternative theory of truth for the ontology of art here -- this would require a thesis unto itself (though we believe that coherentism -- that is, the possibility that our answers are correct not when they uncover some objective conditions but when they cohere with the whole system of beliefs -- might be a tempting option for aesthetics). What we wish to highlight instead should be thought of as a principle of conduct, namely, the fact that we might do better to give up the idea that the ontology of art is committed to providing unrevisable truth. Indeed, if we reject the claim that when one is involved in art ontology one is mainly searching for absolute objectivity, then the objection against pragmatism we talked about at the outset no longer has any force. Some people believe that without a strong sense of truth, all that remains is a variety of interpretations, none any better than the other. That is, there are fears that philosophical inquiry cannot be pursued unless the utterances proffered have a determinate meaning. Reasonable as these worries might be, we need not take them too seriously. What we need to do, in fact, is simply rethink our priorities. Although it's true that we may expect few objective answers to our questions on ontology, this is not as serious an issue as one might think *prima facie*, as long as ontology is not seen as having to produce unrevisable answers -- cast in marble, unquestionable and unmodifiable -- but is seen as providing us with "a metaphysical framework flexible enough to represent accurately a wide variety of phenomena"[498] and critical views we find in artistic practices. In this perspective, the "flexibility" of the metaphysical framework makes the ontological knowledge obtained both corrigible and subject to interpretation, interpretation being itself an essentially corrigible activity. Notice that this idea is consistent with the claim that metaphysics gets its epistemological strength not from being demonstrative, but by taking as its starting-point the principles required for the very possibility of having genuine knowledge of the world.

Again, these suggestions are not to be taken as having a primarily theoretical significance -- in sketching some broad strokes of an alternative theory of truth -- but as methodological suggestions, a matter of how our ontological inquiry should be conducted.

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[496] Accordingly, Hume had already given two definitions of "true", one for logical truths, broadly conceived, the other for non-logical truths: "Truth or falsehood consists in an agreement or disagreement either to the real relations of ideas, or to real existence and matter of fact"

[497] Of course, what is behind, is the assumption is that every truth can be classified as either a conceptual truth or a descriptive of fact.

[498] Rohrbaugh, G., *Artworks as Historical Individuals*, European Journal of Philosophy, 2003/ 11, p.179

One Last Objection

At this point, among the several possible objections that could be raised to what we have just said, we are sure about one. Indeed, it may be pointed out, things are still unclear. Either we believe that the objects we refer to as artworks are kinds, or Platonic forms, or something of that ilk, in that they exist somehow independently in the actual world, and thus our claims about their status are correct or incorrect, or we have to think that they are "created" by us, in which case our claims are just prattle. If we agree that artworks are somehow in the actual world, then we are driven back to Realism. If we think that they do not exist in the actual world, but that they are freely invented by us in the course of the development of language or culture, then we are committed to anti-realism. According to the second hypothesis, we should think that works presumably ought to be the object of historical or anthropological investigation rather than ontological. So, which of the two?

Once again, this *aut-aut* is but an effect of the approach to art ontology we have been trying to undermine throughout this whole inquiry: the idea that either there are so-and-sos, or there is nothing that can ground our discussion. Reject the deflationary methodology at the basis of this theory, we have argued, and you will have no more difficulty getting out of the dilemma. Indeed, once the whole point of doing art ontology is rethought, the objection no longer makes sense.

We are well aware that if the above is not enough to convince true believers, nothing we can add presumably will. However, let us spend a few final words in support of our ideas.

Notice indeed that the realist/anti-realist dichotomy mentioned with regard to the specific case of artworks, may be seen as relying on a former distinction between objects that are *invented* (thus unreal) and objects that are *discovered* (thus real).

However, there was a period in history in which these metaphysically loaded terms were synonyms rather than antonyms. As Lorraine Daston reminds us[499], it was only in the Eighteenth century that the semantic distinction between the terms "invention" and "discovery" degenerated into radical opposition, the former being regarded as something fabricated, a product of imagination. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word "invention", indeed, entered into the English vocabulary ca. 1400 coming from the Old French "invencion", directly derived from the accusative of the Latin word "inventio", stemming from the past participle of the verb "invenire", meaning precisely "to *find*, to

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[499] Daston, L*., Introduction: The Coming into Being of Scientific Objects*, in L. Daston (ed) *Biographies of Scientific Objects*, Chicago University Press, 2000, p. 4.

discover". The meaning "finding or discovering something" lasted throughout the 15th century; the first usage in the modern sense as "things devised, created" is recorded in 1510, and became established only in 18th century. Evidence of this is provided, for instance, by "the Feast of the Invention of the Cross", celebrated on May 3, to commemorate the reputed finding of the Cross of the Crucifixion by Helena, mother of Constantine; in this context the word "invention" maintains the original etymology of "discovering". Following perhaps the same trajectory, two other important words for the domain we are concerned with, "fact" and "manufacture", changed their meaning in the same period to almost become antonyms. Still in the 1530's, "fact" indicated "action, anything done", from the Latin "factum" meaning, literally, "thing done", as the past participle of "facere", to do. The modern meaning of "things known to be true" "the real state of things" (as distinguished from a statement of belief) dates to around the 1630's. Formerly associated with something done, "fact" has became synonymous with "evidence" only since 1727, thus taking a 180 degree turn from its original sense to encompass the idea of "datum", "what is given" rather than what is made.

Why are we offering these etymological observations here? The reason is quite simple.

Though these semantic transformations should be further investigated to give our argument sounder roots, the underlying idea is appealing. Sometime in the course of history, between the 17th and 18th centuries, the distinction between "what is (there)" and "what is made" became an axiom, and eventually hypostatized into mandatory ontological opposites like that between realism and anti-realism, from which we started. There is apparently an entire family of interrelated terms, beyond those outlined above, which followed the same fate, migrating toward almost opposite meanings during the same period (objective versus subjective; positive versus natural). Of course, these oppositions differ somehow from one another, but they all seem to rely on the same metaphysical insight -- and qualms.

If this reconstruction is correct, reference to etymological history may give us additional reasons for avoiding the opposition mentioned above, and rejecting its methodological implications. Indeed, this dualistic way of putting things is not written "in the starry sky" above us, nor does it stand as a law within the innermost part of ourselves. Rather, it is precisely what it seems, just a way of putting things.

Accept this premise, and you may perhaps be more willing to understand the idea behind the methodological concern we have put forth. Rather than searching for ontological objects that can function as truth-makers for our ontological claims, our attention should be focused on examining how concepts and things interact in an on-going process of re-naming and re-

sorting our perceptions, and how such conceptual processes intervene in and form what we call reality. Indeed, it is only through a clear metaphysical understanding of the mutual interrelationship between conceptual forms and objects that we can hope to articulate the fundamental structure of reality.

These considerations are probably not enough to undo the deontological habit that forces us to think in terms of metaphysical alternatives, and eventually take a stand for one or the other: invention or discovery? objective or subjective? realism or anti-realism? However, if they can help shift the attention of ontologists from this way of interpreting what their job should be, then we shall be more than satisfied.

(Non) Final remarks

Given the high aspirations that galvanized us at the outset, our gains have been modest. The initial discussion, indeed, went only a short way toward answering some of the fundamental questions about method in art ontology, though we hope it shed some light on a possible way to proceed. We have tried to show that description of our practices need not be mere description, for in examining the structure of thought understood in such a particular way (as going along with the structure of the "art-world" [500]) we need not renounce the notion that we are involved in general metaphysics. Identifying the underlying forms of judgments in the area of artistic practice is another way of pursuing a genuine metaphysical task, to the extent that (a) [501] can be rejected, at least from the perspective of art ontology. While not standing outside of metaphysics, we have tried to indicate that this project does not stand within the project of either realist or anti-realist ontology either. Discarding "objectivity or truthiness, in a strong sense" in our discourses on art, as in (b)[502], should not worry us insofar as the business of art ontology is to explore how our conceptualization shapes and designs the objects of our concern. Conceptualization indeed seems to alter reality in significant ways: it renders evanescent phenomena more visible and rich, it amalgamates disseminated phenomena into a coherent category, and it sharpens criteria of inclusion and exclusion, and stabilizes regularities.

These considerations, we imagine, may seem like a plea for philosophers like Nelson Goodman, Thomas Kuhn, or Hilary Putnam, who, *mutatis mutandis*, have all insisted that

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[500] Or, better, with the world of artworks.

[501] (a): there is an intrinsic contrast between the structure of our thought and the structure of the world itself.

[502] (b): only if our claims are grounded upon "facts of the matter", i.e., features of the external world that are independent of our thought, can they aspire to objectivity.

objects are not 'out there', independent of our classificatory practices, both conceptual and linguistic. We are thinking for instance of Goodman's notion of "world-making" (1984), of Kuhn's 'world changes' as a result of scientific revolutions (1970, 1993), and of Putnam's claim that objects are relative to conceptual schemes (Putnam, 1981, 1992). In all these perspectives, objects are as much made as discovered[503]. Putnam, in particular, has been searching for a coherent alternative to a "black and white" picture of the world since he started his criticism of metaphysical realism.

However, in opposition to all these approaches, the focus of our inquiry has always been *methodological*, not *ontological*. Putnam's middle path between constructivism and realism may be proven obscure and eventually untenable, and there may be reasons to doubt we could ever avoid the dichotomy between realism and anti-realism in fundamental metaphysics. Nevertheless, what we have been trying to show all along here is that, *as far as the ontology of art is concerned*, this dichotomy is misplaced.

In 1967, Rorty famously predicted that future meta-philosophical disputes would center on "issues of reform versus description", namely, on struggles between positions that see philosophy as, at most, proposing how we should talk and think about the world and positions that see it as being in the business of making discoveries about the world. According to Rorty, this contrast, ever since the topic was introduced by Plato, is due to "a state of tension produced by the pull of the arts on one side and the pull of the sciences on the other"[504]. Assuming that if this distinction between "theorizing as proposing" and "theorizing as discovering" is to make sense at all, while acknowledging that the issue for general philosophy and fundamental metaphysics is much more controversial, we suggest that the ontology of art and music take the side of the former. Surely the fact that we should stop searching for objectivity in art ontology does not mean that ontology of art must come to an end: theoretical investigation does not perish when a particular approach is rejected. Ontologists shall continue to provide arguments for their philosophical conclusions as they always have done, questioning the form of deductively valid arguments. But the focus of their attention should be redirected, rejecting the idea that by pursuing an ontological investigation

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[503] Compare, for instance, Goodman's idea that: "as we . . . make constellations by picking out and putting together certain stars rather than others, so we make stars by drawing certain boundaries rather than others. Nothing dictates whether the skies shall be marked off into constellations or other objects. We have to make what we find". (Goodman, 1984, p. 36)

[504] Rorty, R.M., *Metaphilosophical Difficulties of Linguistic Philosophy,* in R.M Rorty (ed.) *The Linguistic Turn, Essays in Philosophical Method*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago And London, 1992, p.38

on art, they will discover eternal verities. Even if such eternal verities were possible, they would be irrelevant to our aesthetic concerns, for, unlike natural objects, art is not something found in nature, whose essence is independent of what we think and do.

The discussion, however, does not end here. In fact, this is where it begins.

Could it be said that all that is left to do is establish a complete, ultimate theory of art ontology that can answer all the main problems concerning method? We think not. For one thing, we believe that an ultimate theory about anything is an impossibility. In fact, the whole concept of an ultimate theory is contradictory. A theory is never finished, as it should always be open to revision: we need not add that in the history of philosophy there have been plenty of "ultimate" theories which have proved to be not quite as 'ultimate' as they were thought to be.

Furthermore, the point is that consensus about how we should interpret "pragmatic constraint" is hard to come by. Perhaps predictably, agreement on general methodology dissolves when it comes to specific issues of application. We may all accept that a combination of empirical perusal of artistic practice and recourse to ordinary intuition, calibrated as far as possible by systematic recourse to reflective equilibrium might have the potential for creating a rough, partial framework in which to ground ontology of art. However, problems would not go away in this case. In fact, they would get even bigger. Do we only need to explain the superficial forms of practices or do we need to do additional justice to the ways in which phenomena are conceived from within practices? How much should we be bound to the apparently metaphysical views of common practitioners? How much to those of art connoisseurs? Two fundamental concerns arise from these questions. One is that the amount of data coming from artistic practice is really much larger than a naïf interpretation of pragmatic constraint may suggest. The other is that there is no clear insight into what the best philosophical organization of these data should be, for the purposes of ontology or any other philosophical theory of art.

Even views motivated by the same pragmatic commitment disagree on these points. Of course we should look at our artistic practice, at linguistic usage, and at the way we conceptualize art, which itself is something that continuously evolves, but such things can only represent the departure of our inquiry. This may sound daunting, perhaps, but it is simply how things work in philosophy: the moment you feel to have reached the end-point of your inquiry, a whole new field of inquiry opens up.

Inspired by these reflections, we would like to conclude with the words of a 19th century poet and philosopher, Thomas Love Peacock:

"[…] The pleasure of metaphysical investigation lies in the means, not in the end; and if the end could be found, the pleasure of the means would cease […]The beauty of this process is, that at every step it strikes out into two branches, in a compound ratio of ramification; so that you are perfectly sure of losing your way, and keeping your mind in perfect health, by the perpetual exercise of an interminable quest"[505].

Our hope is that ontologists of art will continue to lose their way for a long time to come.

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[505] Peacock, T.L., *Nightmare Abbey,* Chap. VI

PART II

ONTOLOGY OF ART PUT TO THE TEST

Section 1

CHAPTER 3
ARTWORKS AND ART PHENOMENA

Introduction

Albeit provisionally, we have reached the end of our analysis, so perhaps it would be a good idea to address a few general considerations at this point. What lesson, we might ask, have we learned so far? From a purely philosophical viewpoint, the most significant is probably acknowledgment of the intrinsic complexity of the ontology of music (and art in general). Perhaps the best way to make sense of this insight is to consider some of the questions we had to address in order to proceed in our quest. In order of appearance, we have been considering the following questions: What is the relation between art ontology and "more fundamental" metaphysics? What is the relation between the ontology of art and aesthetics? Should philosophical questions such as value and aesthetic experience be the basis for the ontology of art? What role does provenance and the artistic-historical and contextual conditions surrounding the composition and reception of an artwork play in its ontological individuation? What is the proper methodology for investigating the ontology of art? What is the relation between art ontology and artistic practice?

We do not claim to have found definitive answers to any of these questions, nor was the search for definitive answers our main objective. From the beginning, the spirit behind our research into the ontology of art has been more that of a critical peregrination, than a theoretical demonstration. Therefore, if a moral is to be drawn from the former chapters, it is on the one hand that none of the aforementioned questions have easy or straightforward solutions, and, on the other, that they cannot simply be dismissed, as the Detractors of all the types under consideration are apt to contend. Hopefully, we were able to shed some light on these issues, showing their difficulty and their relevance at the same time. However, since every peregrination needs to lead somewhere if it is not be just idle roaming, we have eventually wound up with at least some results, that can be summarized as follows:

(1) There is no "monolithic" ontology capable of accounting for artistic phenomena as a whole, and any attempt to find a single category of objects that can account for the multiplicity of empirical data deriving from art practice is unnecessary. This seems especially true inasmuch as the category we call "art" clearly comprises more than just the totality of art*works*.

(2) Artistic practice is the subject-matter of art ontology, the only proper grounds from which it can proceed. Hence, there is no point in forcing appreciative and evaluative instances coming from practice to conform to an ontology which is understood as independently valid for intrinsic reasons of metaphysical consistency, parsimony or elegance. This implies, first, that ontology should be mostly descriptive and, second, take into account historical and contextual considerations.

Partial justification in support of these two contentions has been provided in the course of our enquiry, but something more can be added. It seems that many contemporary art forms, and performance art *in primis*, provide fertile ground for testing intuitions. Heterogeneous as these artistic phenomena seem to be, they have one thing in common: they all tend to the turnover of many of our most common assumptions concerning the nature of art and of art appreciation. Attention is thus shifted from traditional art *making* to the process of art *doing*, from *objects* to *activities*; from *artworks* to *events*, from *fixed* to *dynamic* art, and so forth, in a quasi-complete reversal of our standard assumptions. Philosophical examination of these new art forms, thus, represents a way of putting our intuitions to work. But why is this so?

The reasons are easy to express. With regard to the former claim (1), analysis of performance art (taken as exemplificative of similar provocative art forms) requires us to admit that artistic phenomena are not all *artworks* in themselves, nor performances of *artworks*: free improvisations and jam sessions, for instance, performances, happenings and flash mobs belong to this category. None of these phenomena can rightly be considered artworks, but they are still *art*. This is not to say that artworks play no relevant role in all types of artistic phenomena: the fact is that for most artistic events we *do* identify individual artworks as the particular object of our aesthetic interest. However, as we have already had the chance to note [see: Work(ing) and non-work(ing) ontology], the scope of the work-concept is restricting. Dismissal of the "work view" is a prerequisite to explaining all those cases in which art is not to be regarded mainly in terms of works. To this extent, we believe that philosophical examination of performance art can help us build a more

flexible framework for explaining the variety of phenomena we refer to as "art" and what is, in general, an artistic phenomenon. Art indeed seems to have both a *productive* and a *performative* character, where the former is be read in terms of *making* (something), while the latter in terms of *doing* (something). No ontology solely focused on the work-interpretation paradigm can be effective in satisfying this twofold requirement, namely, to account for art understood as a product and as a process[506]. The concerns raised by performance art question philosophers from a wide perspective, in so far as one might expect them to provide us with unitary accounts of the nature of art, the role of the artist, and artistic experience. In many essential respects, performance art rejects inclusion within the list of traditional art forms, highlighting the inadequacy of any monistic theory of art phenomena. If one wants to sidestep the intrinsic division between performance art on the one hand, and other kinds of art forms on the other, then one will have to make significant concessions in order to incorporate the problematic case of performances within the commonsensical theory of artworks in the standard sense. As we have claimed earlier, any such compromise would be at the very last useless to find, since it would misunderstand the project of performance art at its bottom. Performance art besets therefore the very idea of finding a unified account in the philosophy of art. By addressing performance art, one comes out of that investigation embracing a broader set of concepts and tools than those provided by standard reflection on traditional artworks, in the commonsensical sense. On the other hand, one is reinforced in the search for more general theories of art, artist, and artistic experience, since performance art obliges us to think about where we stand on these issues.

This leads us to the second claim (2). Indeed, if the above is correct, it suggests that ontological investigations must take place against the background of an adequate account of art in general, able to make sense of the fact that much artistic practice, though sometimes resulting in the creation of definite persistent objects, is primarily committed to a different sort of endeavor, whose value lies not in the end, but in the means. This entails of course that the object of our ontological understanding should be, above all, descriptive, and

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[506] The problem, we contend, is not much that, in focusing on the ontology of *artworks*, philosophers have misrepresented or misunderstood the nature of the objects of their concern. The problem is that, in concentrating on art-*works*, such philosophers have failed to assign due attention to the ontology of *art*-works, that is, they have finally miss consideration to what counts as art and to what is, in general, to be an artistic phenomenon. In lacking examination of the ontology of art in general, the resulting ontologies fail to establish that the metaphysical entities that their analyses capture –types, *abstracta*, perduring or enduring individuals- are in fact *artistic at all*.

receptive to historical and contextual considerations, if we hope to have a grasp on the evolving and multiform nature of such artistic phenomena. Indeed, only through their relation to certain historically situated artistic traditions, from which they emerge or by which they define themselves, can performance practices be identified. This is the approach taken by two prominent writers on the issue, RoseLee Goldberg (2001), author of perhaps the most influential history of performance art, and Noël Carroll (1986), who both resist the temptation to define "performance art," on the grounds that the phenomena we seek to lump together under one label are too diverse, thus defeating any attempt at *a priori* definition.

To sum up, focusing on performance art, as well as on other contemporary artistic practices, may be useful in reshaping the discourse on art ontology in anti-essentialist and anti-revisionist terms. Moreover, it may help us dismiss, once and for all, the idea that before one can know how to evaluate an artistic phenomenon, one must first know what kind of *metaphysical entity* it is, if any, and what the *identity conditions* are for that particular entity.

In the first part of this chapter, we will investigate our conception of *work* of art (1), arguing that there is a standard commonsensical idea that artworks exist, at least: are intentionally made; temporally resistant; independent of their creator. This conception, as we shall see, has a bearing on the traditional epistemological model of art appreciation and art understanding, and finds its historical origins in the European culture of the 18th century. We will also contend (2) that there is no need to subsume all art under the work concept. Drawing a distinction between artworks and other art phenomena need not mean praising the former to the detriment of the latter; on the contrary, it is the only way to give the latter due recognition.

In the second part of this chapter, we will tackle the issue of performance art head-on. First, we will look at the socio-historical context in which it emerged, and at the manner in which artists -starting from the mid-Sixties- have re-interpreted the tradition of the art making (1). Though performance art eludes rigid definitions, we will contend that a positive characterization of it as an art form is possible. The key point is that performance art does not hold up the art object, but is committed to the production of ephemeral events set in motion by the actions of all the subjects involved – artists and spectators (2). Sketching an analogy between performance art, experiments and games, we will see in what sense the appreciation of performance art *qua* interactive art differs from the appreciation of traditional art, *qua* immersive art.

Art-W*orks* and Other Art-*Phenomena*

Philosophers, critics and generic audiences tend to talk mostly about *works of art*, in their ordinary discourses related to the art world. This is understandable. As ordinary listeners, we are generally more interested in the complete execution of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* than in the number of rehearsals and training sessions single musicians, and the orchestra as a whole, have undergone before the day of the concert. To the same extent, we are more involved with *La Vergine delle Rocce* hanging at *Musée du Louvre*, than with the series of sketches and studies Leonardo did before carrying out the finished painting. If they do interest us it is in the sense of their function and as an insight into the artist's way of working, on how he created the work, and on the options he ultimately decided to reject. Sometimes, however, we are just as interested in artistic phenomena that are not *works of art* in themselves. That this is occasionally the case, is demonstrated by two different, quite common, situations.

First, it can happen that we are more concerned with a performance of a musical work than with the musical work itself. Though, for instance, we may be somewhat skeptical of the particular value of a particular piece, we can nonetheless be touched by a performance of it. We might not be great fans, say, of Mahler's second Symphony, **"*Auferstehung***", *Resurrection*, but still find that the particular execution of it in 1963 by the New York Philharmonic under the direction of Leonard Bernstein is extremely touching, powerful, convincing and so on. In this case, we think of the artistic value of the work and the artistic value of the performance as distinct and independent features of appreciation. Of course, regardless of the particular aesthetic importance of the performance, it still refers to the work, to the extent that it is an instance of, and constitutes the primary access to what the composer wrote. But the point is that such a performance is also appreciated and evaluated in its own right, and qualifies thereby as artistic *per se,* independently of the work it interprets.

On the other hand, it also happens that we are interested in artistic events that are apparently unrelated to pre-existent works. This occurs, for example, when we attend improvisations of many kinds (musical, theatrical, etc). In participating, say, in a *contact improvisation* show[507], our attention, as part of the audience, is focused on the sequences of

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[507] Contact Improvisation is a form of dance improvisation characteristic of postmodern dance, and mainly inspired by the experimentations of dancers Steve Paxton and Nancy Stark Smith, in the early Seventies.

actions that are being executed by the dancers *in vivo* before our eyes. Though no dance-work is being represented on the stage, the improvised, instantaneous, unpremeditated physical actions of the artists' bodies moving freely without music constitute the focus of our aesthetic appreciation, and play a role comparable to that played by a painted canvas in the visual arts.

Albeit with some considerable differences that will be elucidated later in this chapter, both these situations present a scenario in which something of artistic and aesthetic concern is under consideration, though it is not actually a "work of art". By reflecting this I'm sure that anyone will be able to understand what we mean when we say that not all we regard as art can be thought of in terms of "work". Presumably, thus, the question of what counts as *art* in the first place is not reducible to the question of what counts as a "*work* of art".

Uncontroversial as this claim may seem *prima facie,* in the vast amount of literature that has been offered by analytic philosophers on the topic of the definition of "art" these two questions -- what counts as art and what counts as a work of art -- are nonetheless usually regarded as the same. Investigations into the nature of *art*, have generally turned out to coincide with investigations into the nature of *works* of art. Indeed, since the very beginning, analytic aestheticians have typically been concerned with discovering, or working out a definition of what can be considered an artwork. The fundamental question has thus been taken to be: what are the identity conditions of a work of art? Or: what conditions must something satisfy if it is to be regarded as an artwork? In practice, this means that a large proportion of philosophical effort has been directed toward unearthing the fundamental requisites which establish the character of an artwork with regard to other ordinary objects. Notice that the coherence of *that* project is not ultimately compromised by the fact that analysis has been mostly focused on artworks, rather than on art in general. The issue is, instead, that the intrinsic difference between attempting to capture the nature of a subcategory of art — that which comprises art works -- and attempting to capture the nature of art as a whole has rarely been recognized. Theorists from different backgrounds and schools of thought have eventually failed in acknowledging the relevance of this difference; in fact they have almost tended to *neglect* it.

As evidence, let us consider a selection of well-known definitions of art proposed in the history of analytic aesthetics.

Take Arthur Danto's, for instance. His key objective is to provide an institutional account of the nature of art. In his 1964 paper "*The Artworld*" he famously writes: "To see

something as art requires something the eye cannot descry - an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of history of art: an artworld."[508] Eventually, though, he ends up talking exclusively about the conditions required for something to be a work of art. This is also explicit in his thesis that what distinguishes a work of art from a common object is not an observable property or any manifest quality that the former possesses with regard to the latter, but something indiscernible, non-perceptual. Works of art are therefore nodes in the network of cultural and social forces he calls the art-historical context, in the absence of which artworks are literally unrecognizable, undetectable.

Another influential institutionalist theorist, George Dickie, hastily moves – in his well-known *"Defining Art"*-- from talking about the definition of "art", to the definition of "work of art": "[…] it is, of course, the descriptive sense of 'work of art' which is at issue when the question of whether 'art' can be defined is raised"[509]. Though initially claiming that his aim is to shape a general theory of "art", as the title he chooses for the paper reveals, he ultimately provides the reader with a theory about "artworks". Along the same line is his renowned idea that: "a work of art is an artifact upon which some persons acting on behalf of the artworld, have conferred the status of candidate for appreciation" (Dickie 1971). The very definition of the notion of artworld is, accordingly, intended as a framework for the presentation of *works of art* by an artist to a public. (Dickie, 1984).

From a deliberately different perspective, Jerrold Levinson offers his intentional-historical theory of art with the goal of understanding what he refers to as the notion of "artness"; in this spirit, he opens his 1979 essay *"Defining Art Historically"* by stating: "The question of what makes something art is probably the most venerable in aesthetics. What is the artness of an art work? […] In this paper I would like to begin to develop an alternative to the institutional theory of art, albeit one that is clearly inspired by it"[510]. However, by the end of the first page he is already talking exclusively about "works of art" and "artworkhood, and it is in these very terms that he proposes his historical-intentional definition: "*a work of art is a thing intended for regard-as-a-work-of-art*: regard in any of the ways *works of art existing prior to it have been correctly regarded*"[511].

Now, with regard to the object of our concern, the problem with all these definitions is not so much that, as has frequently been contended, they are either too *narrow* or too *broad*;

[508] Danto, A., *The Artworld*, Journal of Philosophy 61 (19): 571–584, 1964, p. 580
[509] Dickie, G., *Defining Art*, American Philosophical Quarterly Volume 6: 3, 1969, p. 253
[510] Levinson, J., *Defining Art Historically*, p.232
[511] Ivi, p. 234

namely, that they are either incapable of including within their scope *all* the objects we generally consider to be artworks, or that they encompass entities which are *not* artworks in the first place. This may be true, but what concerns us the most here is rather that, while claiming to talk about art in general, -- these definitions focus solely on artworks, and thus reduce, without any plausible explanation, the concept of "arthood" to "workhood". Not all artistic phenomena, though, are artifacts or artworks. Many *art-phenomena*, where by "phenomena" we mean things of all kinds, no matter their physical medium and status (events, words, sounds, material objects, light structures, videos[512]), are not strictly *works* of art, but are still art instances of other kinds. Consider, again, the aforementioned examples. The 1963 performance of Mahler's Second Symphony directed by Bernstein is an *art-phenomenon*, in the broadest sense of the term, but it is not in itself a *work*, nor it is identical to the work it is a performance of, at least from an evaluative point of view[513]. The same can be argued, for different reasons, for contact-dance improvisation: it is to be regarded as an *art-phenomenon* in its own right, but it is not a "work" *per se* (we will see why further on).

What these situations were meant to suggest is that the distinction between art-*phenomena* and art-*works* plays an important role in our art practices, and should therefore find a place also in our ontology of art, if it is to be descriptive. This consideration is particularly relevant in introducing what is going to be our *leitmotif* here, namely, that something can be *art* even if it is not, in itself, an artwork. To put it otherwise, our point is that arthood – the condition of being art -- must be distinguished from workhood – the condition of being a work. It seems that these two notions not only are asymmetrical (since works are a subset of art, and not the contrary), but can even be orthogonal to one another -- for instance in the case of kitsch or bad art, where it is usually admitted that there are works, but there is no art. If this is true, then there must be conceptual criteria for the objects we refer to as "artworks" that can be used to distinguish them from other art-phenomena that are non-works, as well as independent reasons for identifying something as artistic but not as an artwork *per se*[514].

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[512] Compare with Levinson's talking about art-objects as "*any thing whatsoever*. Thus, material objects are of course comprised, but also words, thoughts, structures, events, situations…" (Levinson 1989: 39)

[513] To say that "Mahler's Second Symphony", the work, is relevantly different from its performances, is the usual starting point of Platonist ontologies of music, but it is clearly not in this sense that this claim matters to us here.

[514] 514 Lee B. Brown (1996, 2005) is one of the few philosophers to have discussed the tendency to ignore non-work art objects.

Ars per via negationis

So now we are apparently left with two important questions to address: on the one hand, what must something possess to be art? and, on the other, what are the requirements necessary for something to be considered a "work of art"?

In addressing the first question we would need to provide an overall characterization of "arthood"; in addressing the second, our job would be to determine a broad outline within which the standard notion of "artwork" should fit. Though our main interest in this chapter is art phenomena in general, rather than just works of art, we will not address the first question directly here, because this strategy, we fear, would be self-defeating (if plausible at all). Rather than trying to define overtly what art *is*, then, we will proceed *via negationis*, and attempt to clarify the variety of artistic experience through discernment of what it is *not*, or, not necessarily (namely, reducible to works). Therefore, we will adopt the opposite methodology of that used by most analytic philosophers, such as those mentioned above. Instead of trying to describe *art* through defining what art*works* are, we will advance by clarifying what the commonsensical notion of works of art is, in order to shed light on what other art phenomena are not.

However, attempting to tackle this question on its own is no easy business. We will play it safe by assuming from the outset that we are not trying to provide a definition in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions, if there can be any. Moreover, we also confess that we have no compelling logical arguments to offer for what we are going to say, and that we will refer only to commonsense conceptions and ordinary intuitions about our classificatory artistic practices to support our claims, together with reflection on empirical cases. Thus, *pace* revisionist theorists, ours would be an analysis of the *folk conception* of artwork, and one which is only able to tell what we currently take artworks to be. Hopefully, though, this will be enough to satisfy the overall general purposes of our reasoning; since we are engaging in a descriptive metaphysical project here, common sense is all that we need.

This said, there are two important *warnings* that we need to stress before starting our inquiry.

Notice, first, that the fact that we will appeal to our ordinary repertoire of ideas about art does not imply that we will be concerned with the *words* we use to indicate the relevant artistic classifications we make, but with the *concepts* underlying these classifications. This has some implications. Though we almost indiscriminately use the expression "work of art"

in a large number of different contexts and situations, we are nonetheless not interested in assessing the usages of the term, nor in determining whether they are appropriate or inappropriate. Furthermore, and relatedly, we commonly use the label "work of art" in an evaluative manner[515], as when, for example, we applaud someone for having cooked the perfect dinner, or for having given birth to a wonderful baby ("You made a masterpiece!"). This evaluative use, however, *is not* our concern here.

The second *caveat* takes to heart the historical nature of our investigation, mainly with regard to the characterization of the notion of workhood. In the spirit of our past inquiry, the commonsensical notion of "artworks" to which we will make appeal *is not to be taken ontologically as a given*, nor as a natural phenomenon. Rather, it is to be regarded as a product of a specific historical and geographical context. To refer once again to etymology, "artwork" as the objectified entity to which, we will see, our current conception seems to refer, arose as a crucial theoretical concept only in the late Eighteen century. As *The Oxford English Dictionary* reports, the first attestation of *work of art* entailing "artistic creation" is from 1774; earlier (1728) we find only the meaning as "artifice, production of humans", as opposed to nature[516]. Plausibly, the emergence of the notion developed concomitantly with the development of what has been defined as "the era of the museum" *[517]*; for it seems that our modern concept of artwork could never have arisen until there was the need for something to fill the newly-conceived national museums. So it seems no accident that the first exhibition spaces opened to the general public in the very same years, precisely, in the second half of 18th century (the British Museum was funded in 1759 and the Louvre in 1793), largely under the influence of the Enlightenment and the encyclopedic spirit[518]. These are crucial dates, not only because they mark the transition to a modern concept of museum, which was finally established as an institution in the second half of the 19th century, but because they mark the point at which the artwork-concept became part of a broader historical and aesthetical movement. Again, artworks, as the "nomadic entities" described further on, found their privileged collocation in these new museums.

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[515] See: Kania, A., 2011, p. 391 "Another common usage is the evaluative one, whereby we praise something for being excellent of its kind, even though it may not be art at all (for example, a paella)".
[516] Compare the entry "work of art" in *The Oxford English Dictionary*
[517] However, for an history of museum see: Geoffrey Lewis, *History of Museum*, on Encyclopedia Britannica, online; M. C. Mazzi, *In viaggio con le muse. Spazi e modelli del museo*, Edifir Ed., Firenze 2005
[518] Denis Diderot, for instance, in the ninth volume of his *Encyclopédie*, published in 1765, offered a precise project for the constitution of a national museum for France.

However fascinating this topic may be, our purpose however is not to offer a history of the notion of "artwork" *per se* and much less a history of the concept of museums, though we shall consider some historical considerations. If these suggestions are to make any sense they must be placed in a meaningful concrete scenario, so as not to give the impression that we are simply talking in an abstractly metaphysical way.

Art*works*, a General Characterization

Some Ontological Conditions

That having been said, we are ready to pose the first question: what are the attributes of 'artworks', as opposed to other art-*phenomena*? Common sense has it that to define something as a work of art, it must fulfill at least some general requisites, fulfilling both ontological and epistemological implications. In its generality, these requisites apply to all fields of art – the visual arts, literary works, music and dance. The first requisite is what we may refer to as 'intentional'. Artworks must be products of 'intentional activity', in the sense that they are brought into existence through the creative purposeful actions of one or more individuals, the artist(s). This implies that artworks are *made* as a result of deliberate purpose. Of course, not all of an artist's actions are significant with regard to his main artistic intention. When for instance a pastry chef makes a lemon meringue pie for one of his customers, his intention is of course to make the cake, but he also produces scraps (lemon peels, or eggshells) as by-products of his work. Such by-products are a result of the maker's intentional actions, but they are not 'intended' products in themselves. Some art objects, to the same extent, are by-products of art. Leonardo's sketches and studies for *La Vergine delle Rocce*, mentioned above, fall into this category just as drafts of a novel or of a symphony do[519]. Equally, not all the actions carried out by a pianist in the course of a concert performance are intentional. The very fact that, for instance, the performer may tend to move and nod in time to the rhythm is not necessarily relevant to his interpretative purposes (with some border-line cases: Glenn Gould's humming while playing *The Goldberg Variations* may be taken as part of his execution).

The pastry-chef example gives us grounds for examining a further question, namely, whether in our commonsensical conception artworks can be regarded as equivalent to *artifacts*. That works of art are necessarily artifacts is an argument frequently found in

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[519] Of course, these non-work art objects can be put to many different uses (one can use them to understand the psychology of the artist, or the society in which the work was created, and so on). But none of these uses distinguishes these objects from art.

aesthetics[520]. To our knowledge, if an artifact is intended, in the broadest possible sense, as something that has an *author*[521], then all works of art, including musical and literary works, can plausibly be called "artifacts", insofar as they are taken to have been intentionally made by someone for some purpose. However, the notion of work (as an art product) and artifact should be understood as germane *only* to the extent to which they involve authorship. Otherwise, if artifacts are characterized, as is often the case, as having "proper functions"[522], and are identified according to their use, the assumed equivalence with artworks falls short. Artworks, indeed (as we have argued elsewhere), can serve many different purposes, and more than one at a time: think for instance of a photo-portrait, that can be an object of aesthetic regard, but can also be a useful tool for the police. Note, however, that being the result of someone's "intentional agency", is by no means as sufficient a condition as distinguishing art*works* from other art-*phenomena*, since intentional agency is presumably part of what defines *arthood* in general.

The second general requisite that comes to our attention is what may be considered a 'temporal' condition. Basically, the idea is that, for something to be an artwork, it must at least be an *enduring* object, in the sense that it must be something that persists through time. From an ontological point of view, this implies that what we normally consider artworks cannot be transitory, ephemeral, events. No matter how broad a sense we adopt for the term, one which includes concrete and abstract individuals, material and immaterial things, it is reasonable to think that an artwork is an artwork only if it resists over time. Therefore, we agree with Paul Thom (1993) in stating that if there is a unified conception of artwork that is widespread across the arts, it is that: "A work of art can be defined as an enduring thing created in some medium (such as oil or canvas) by an author (such as a painter) in order to be beheld in a particular kind of way (namely, to be viewed aesthetically)[523]. Classical musical artworks can be seen as satisfying this description if we regard them, as Thom does, in terms of enduring "directives for performances", appreciable through and in virtue of their performance. In this regard, though performances are in themselves ephemeral events, the directives persist over time. Of course, endurance does not imply immutability: artworks change over the years; carved sculptures acquire a patina of oxidation, pigments tend to yellow by exposure to light and air, and paintings darken,

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[520] Davies, S., (1991) 120–141; Levinson, J., (2007), 81–82
[521] Hilpinen (1993), 156–157
[522] Baker, R., (2008) 3; see also Kornblith, H., (1980), 112
[523] Thom, P., (1993) 28

turning bright springtime scenes into melancholic autumnal ones. Nevertheless, just as a person remains the same despite aging and changing, the work itself does not lose its identity, and remains true to itself despite variations it might undergo over time. In other words, it can always be numerically individuated as *one* (*this* sheet, *that* statue).

The 'oneness' of a work leads us to the third requisite that defines our conception: that is, what may be called the 'existential', or 'physical' requisite. Regardless of the particular medium in which it is realized, a work is always commonsensically *independent*, at least in part*,* from the person who created it, namely, the artist. For once an artwork is created, it starts to take on a life of its own. This implies that works can acquire greater fame and recognition than the artists who create them. The case of musical works is paradigmatic here: there are musical pieces that everyone knows (at least in part), because they have become part of mass culture, but whose authors are practically unknown[524]. Think for instance of Khachaturian's Adagio from the ballet "*Gayane*": many would probably recognize it since Stanley Kubrick used it in *2001: A Space Odyssey* for the famous scene of the "setting foot on the Ship Discovery". But how many know who Khachaturian is?

Furthermore, *qua* distinct entities existing beyond their creators, works can (at least in principle) be transported and transferred to different places at different times. They are 'nomadic' entities, with no fixed collocation. On the other hand, note that the 'separate' nature of a work of art is to be intended not only in terms of the artist alone, but also in terms of its potential viewers. The physical and existential independency of the work is what warrants that audiences are presented with a distinct object of consideration; susceptible to being repeatedly appreciated, interpreted and examined.

And some epistemological conditions

These ontological requisites, i.e. intentionality, endurance over time, and independence from creators and audiences, are all intrinsically related. Taken together, they give rise to what we referred to as the "commonsensical conception of workhood", which in turn has a bearing on our epistemological relationship with works. The notion of artworks as "authored", "enduring" and "separate" constitutes the basis for what we may call "the standard interpretative model of art", which is based on the rigid duality between production (which is the artist's job) and reception (which is the audience's job). Note that this duality can also be read in terms of a difference between "subjects" --the artist and the

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[524] Compositors often eclipse beyond their work.

audience -- and 'object', the focus of the subject's concern. The clear ontological distinction between "artist as producer" and "work as product" is what allows the work to become a proper object of perception and concern for its spectators. The model has it that, since 'production' and 'reception' occur at different times (and places, usually), works of art must be both temporally and physically autonomous entities, separate, fixed, and transferable --able to exist unto themselves. The work of art is created as a 'singularity' whose "distinctiveness" never vanishes. It exists as an artifact (in the abovementioned sense), which remains consistent to itself regardless of its being experienced. The temporal condition seems crucial here. Indeed, only if they endure can objects be appreciated by a large and potentially increasing number of people in different periods and contexts. Indeed, the fact that artifacts, sculptures, paintings, or scores persist multiplies their accessibility (in the case of texts and musical scores, the availability extends to different spaces at the same time). This enables a wide community of viewers to enjoy common experiences, and to maintain ongoing critical accounts of them. In principle, receivers can return repeatedly to the same work of art over the course of their lives, discovering ever new particularities and possibilities for reflection and thereby finding new meanings within it. In this sense, they can be engaged in a life-long dialogue with a work of art.

This dialogue must be intended as characterized by a particular form of interest and a specific form of appreciation. This means that that the work is meant to be regarded and experienced in a *distinctive way* by the audience (where audience is not meant to include only art critics or connoisseurs). People can be said to be interested in, and appreciate, all sorts of things, but artworks require a special kind of consideration which is absolutely unique. Proper interest and appreciation are understood as the main purpose for which artworks are created. This is not to imply that this interest and appreciation needs to be, as in Kantian-like theories, totally disinterested contemplation. Artistic regard is rather the kind of regard that must be accorded to certain phenomena in order to grasp their artistic meaning. Art may serve many different cultural or social functions (as in the case of photography used as an identification tool by the police), but it is *also* conceived to serve some other special purposes we refer to as 'artistic' or 'aesthetic'. And it is with regard to the latter that "interest and appreciation" are defined. The question, thus, is not whether all artworks are intended for disinterested contemplation, which is surely not the case, given the ritual, social and political functions they serve. Rather, the question is whether viewers are able to attend to artworks in a distinctive way in order to grasp their meaning. The

above is also meant to distinguish artworks from objects of reflective attention outside the arts. Indeed, the fact that artworks in general call for a specific kind of concern and attention on our part, and that they do so in virtue of the ways in which they are purposefully designed or realized, is what makes artworks different from their *indistinguishable counterparts*. By "indistinguishable counterparts" we mean things that share all the perceptible qualities of works of art but are not (consider the case of Wahrol's *Brillo Boxes*). According to the interpretative model, our manner of regarding -- attending to artworks -- differs from our manner of attending to other common, everyday things. The kind of regard that artworks deserve has been described by David Davies (2011). What makes something an artwork is not only, *per s*e, "the elements of which it is composed or the way in which those elements are put together", but the fact that the artist is guided, in creating the work, by the expectation that it will be "the object of a distinctive kind of regard on the part of an intended audience"[525]. Once again, only as distinct, separate, persistent individuals can artworks be intended as objects of this special attention.

Objections

Obviously the commonsensical conception of artworks, described above, should be intuitively appealing if it is to make any sense. A number of concerns, however, will surely come to mind at this point. We shall try to reply in advance to the objections we foresee.

The simplest possible objection to what we have just said is that there is are a huge number of objects we label as 'works of art' that are not independent or enduring. Recent art forms like performance-art and improvisation of any sort (musical, theatrical, dance) produce ephemeral events, which in no sense can be taken as physically and temporally independent from their authors. Such performances, however, are often called works of art. Against these counter-examples, we may start by repeating our earlier warning. We are not primarily concerned with how we use the *term* 'work of art': in fact, we must put that use aside if we are to reach a definition of 'work of art' as a classification. Moreover, reflection on performance art, rather than undermining our position, strengthens our point, in a sense: namely, that there can be art without a work of art. The performative approach that visual art has taken on since the early Sixties, formerly with action painting and body art, then with light sculptures, video installations, and so forth, developed mainly because of the refusal of artists to create traditional enduring *works of art*. Performative artists started to

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[525] Davies, d., (2011), 17

realize ephemeral unrepeatable events in opposition to the alleged bourgeois universe of values that they evaluate with the production of artifacts. Rejection of the traditional artwork-making stigmatized much of the provocative spirit of these new art forms in their attempt to probe us about what we tend to accept as a given in art. Consequently, any proper understanding of performance art -- historical and critical -- requires an understanding of the concept we are trying to bring to light. Thus, we are not splitting hairs if we exclude improvisation and performances from the domain of "works of art". This choice has art history on its side. But again, whether or not we should continue to use the term "works of art" in referring to performances such as those of the FLUXUS group, Vito Acconci or Marina Abramović, to mention a few, is of little relevance to us here, since we are not interested in linguistic practices, but in the concepts underneath.

A related objection points a finger at the criteria of 'separateness' and 'transferability' of artworks. Not all artworks, it may be retorted, can be thought of as 'separate' and 'transportable'. There are works that cannot be removed from their immediate surroundings without being destroyed. Artworks of this kind are *site-specific* in the sense that it is (ontologically) impossible for them to exist without their surroundings, since they were created to be in a certain place. While a painting or a statue is independent, nomadic objects, such as earthwork sculptures, say Robert Smithson's 1970 *Spiral Jetty*, is a context-dependent object whose material is the northeastern shore -- salt crystal, mud and rocks -. of the Great Salt Lake in Utah. Of course, it is not possible to detach it from the original landscape in which it was built, in the way a painting can be detached from a museum wall, nor can it be considered distinct from the landscape in which it was placed. *Spiral Jetty* demonstrates, therefore, that works of art are not separate entities.

As in the case of performance art and improvisation, our reply consists in rejecting the idea that site-specific art, as well as installation art, are artworks in the ordinary sense. Of course it is more difficult to classify this kind of art. Clearly the actions of the artist are intended to produce *something* that is at least partially meant to exist independently from his/her own physical presence. Careful consideration, however, reveals that it would be better to think of environmental art as the creation of an *event*, rather than a traditional *work*. What Robert Smithson created in 1970, for instance, is a transitory event, intended to evolve with the natural context in which it was created, and to decay as a result of natural forces (wind, rain, sun, etc.). The evolving, transient nature of *Spiral Jetty* implies considerations about the fleeting character of human actions and the both attractive and repulsive power of

nature, but it also ultimately contains a statement that goes against the standard conception of art objects as separate and transportable, and thus not saleable and alienable like other goods. This provocative spirit must be understood in order to appreciate the artistic meaning of such phenomena. Environmental art, indeed, is meant from the outset to reject the traditional concept of 'artwork', as described above (i.e. as enduring and separate objects). This notion, once again, must be implicit in debates on art, since it has so often been rejected and discussed, and therefore should be recognized in the descriptive ontology of art.

However, one might repeat, *site-specific* art is not as exceptional as it may seem. We know very well that many ancient works of art as well as post-modern installations we have occasion to appreciate in galleries and museums were not created to be removed from their original contexts. In the pillages following Napoleon's suppression of religious orders in 1810, for instance, several altarpieces of the Sixteenth Century were stolen from Italian churches and transferred to museums. In a museum, an altarpiece -- decontextualized from its *locus* -- inevitably loses its original function and meaning, to be appreciated as a mere 'painting' by unsuspecting viewers.

This is true, of course. But does this give us adequate reason to consider environmental art (or art of this kind) as solidly inserted within the commonsensical conception of artworks? We doubt it is. Instead, it demonstrates that most ancient art as well (i.e., produced before the 18th century), eludes the very concept of 'artwork' we have been offering. So, it would be just as unfair to force most of contemporary art into the boundaries of the traditional concept of 'artwork'. Presumably, this gives us further reason to think that the standard concept of 'artwork' is not open enough to encompass all artistic phenomena and cannot account for all types of art, and this is not particularly surprising if we consider its historical origins.

This might raise some protests. Someone might complain that if we agree to deny the status of 'works' to many important and valuable events -- performances of various sorts, free dance, improvisations and so on -- then it is as if we were relegating them to a lower-level of art forms with respect to traditional arts. As with the first two objections, this contravenes our earlier caveat. Indeed, in our sense the label "work of art" has no evaluative meaning. If it weren't already clear, our claim that performance art and other recent art-forms do not give rise to any work *should not* be taken as a pejorative assessment of any kind. In fact, this claim was not meant as a *normative* at all, since what we argued

for is simply the need to abandon the concept of 'works' if we are to understand the main features of most contemporary art.

However, the idea that there are reasons to assume *a priori* that, say, ephemeral performances and improvisations are more valuable than independent artworks or enduring art objects is sometimes, even unwittingly, upheld. This is interesting; for it shows that the evaluative use of the term "work of art" is a product itself of the commonsensical concept of artworks. On philosophical grounds, the claim that artworks, as such, are endowed with some intrinsic value as opposed to other non-persistent art phenomena, is generally related to what Davies calls "the prejudice of the work creation"[526], that is, the assumption that the production of traditional artworks is more creative and valuable than giving rise to an ephemeral event. The root of this idea is to be found in the suggestion that, because traditional works are made to exist and resist beyond the life of their creator, they are potentially eternal. And aspiring to eternity, in this perspective, is what distinguishes good from bad art: this is why the works we refer to as the "classics" (of music, literature, cinema, etc.) are those which were able to endure over time, while preserving their relevance and meaning[527]. To this extent, we are told, artworks in general, *qua* out-of-time, are better than performances. Nevertheless, as Davies correctly remarks, this assumption is simply a bias, and mostly unjustified, as our following inquiry is intended to demonstrate.

Of course, it may still be noted, the fact that traditional works of art endure implies that, as the years go by, they will get more attention and from a larger audience than other ephemeral art-*things*, whose lifespan is limited, by definition, to the sole moment of execution. Certainly, performances can be preserved through audiovisual and photographical recordings and can thus resist through time. Recording can expand and widen the number of potential spectators of an artistic event, but is it enough, we wonder, to transform a performance into a "work" in the commonsensical sense? This is a complicated matter. On the one hand, it would seem strange to believe that the contingent fact that an event is susceptible to being documented can change the perception of its artistic status. The very idea that recording can affect the quality of what is recorded appears implausible, at least at first glance[528]. On the other hand, however, things are more

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[526] Davies, D., (2004) 206-35

[527] Compare Italo Calvino's definition: "*Un classico è un libro che non ha mai finito di dire quel che ha da dire*".

[528] Since the controfactual is not true: if a performance is not recorded this doesn't change the qualities that make it particularly relevant to us. But also Compare, Adorno,T.W., *A Social Critique of Radio Music*, The Kenyon Review, Spring 1945.

problematic than they would seem. Performance documentation can be integral to the meaning and the impact of the artistic piece itself. Consider, for instance, the case in which artists for their live performances to be documented. In this case documentation is more than just a way to retain the object, but provides evidence to viewers who were not able to witness the event that it really did take place. In other words, if a performer knows that his or her actions are staged for documentation, the act of documenting becomes part of the performance, whether acknowledged or not.

But is this enough to transform the object into something that the public can appreciate as a traditional work of art as it is commonly known? This is a difficult question and deserves much deeper consideration than we can grant it at this time. So we will limit ourselves to offering a clue, in the hope of finding time to return to it later. Documentation of artistic performances, while not changing the ephemeral status of the events in themselves, often constitutes *another work of art*, and a traditional one. This is the case for instance with most of the documentation of classic performances and body art from the 1960s and 1970s: photography, videos, sound recordings, and creative collection and displays of 'remnants' from performed actions which are generally experienced, *per se,* like most conventional works of art[529].

A further objection, in this regard, can be raised against our theory, that goes in the opposite direction but shares in a sense the same spirit[530]. If the first objection questions the ephemerality of performance by appealing to recording and documentation, this last questions the persistence of works considering normal conditions of appreciation. One can argue, indeed, that from the point of view of concrete art experience, all art-phenomena – both artworks and events- are to be regarded as ephemeral, to the extent that our encounters with them is always occasional and transient. For instance, though Leonardo's *La Vergine delle Rocce* is an enduring, physically separate object, our concrete encounter with it can be restricted to the single time we have visited the Louvre and, more particularly, to the little time spent in front of the canvas. The empirical situations in which we are able to enter into contact with enduring art-objects, are, in this sense, not specifically different from those in which we attend a performance or an improvisation. That something we encounter in this ephemeral manner is in itself ephemeral, i.e., available only on particular occasions (like performances) and doesn't deserve a place in our conception of the artistic status of that

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[529] On the theme of documentation, see Auslander, Philip. "*The performativity of performance documentation*." PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art, 28.3 (2006)

[530] Compare, David Davies,2011

thing. Therefore, we are told, it isn't clear why we should maintain the idea that only enduring things can be artworks.

This is a sophisticated objection, and certainly one that lacks theoretical reasons. However, our basic response to this concern is that this is not the way we normally intend our relation with artworks. Most people indeed tend to make a distinction between enduring objects – repeatedly appreciable- and events –transient and ephemeral. Perhaps, this is simply because they lack adequate philosophical insight. But it is precisely *their* concept of artwork that we are trying to ascertain. Thus, this distinction cannot be ignored, since it would contravene the descriptive spirit of our project. Our point is not to argue about what people *should* or *should not* think concerning the status of artworks, but what they do think. And plausibly most people think that since artworks are enduring, separate objects of appreciation they *can* be examined and contemplated more than once. The idea is, simply, that we know that if we ever come back to the Louvre, we can view *La Vergine delle Rocce* again, unless something unexpected happens, say, that the painting is out of the museum for a temporary exhibition, for restoration purposes etc. These factors, though, are not relevant to the issue. Being an object that *potentially* can be appreciated on several occasions over time, the condition we have posited as a traditional feature of artworks, enters into our conception as a corollary of the fact that works are distinct entities.

This is a sophisticated objection, and certainly one which lacks theoretical reasons on its part. However, our basic response to this concern is that this is not the way we normally intend our relation with artworks. Most people indeed tend to operate a distinction between enduring objects –repeatedly appreciable- and events –transient and ephemeral- on the other. Perhaps, this is simply because they lack adequate philosophical insight. But it is precisely *their* concept of artwork that we are trying to excavate. Thus, this distinction cannot be ignored, since this would contravene the descriptive spirit of our project. Our point indeed it is not to argue what *should* or *should not* be maintained concerning the status of artworks, but what we do actually maintain. And plausibly, most people have it that since artworks are enduring, separate objects of appreciation they *can* be multiply examined and contemplated. The idea is, simply, that we know that if we ever come back to Louvre, we could visit *La Vergine delle Rocce* again, albeit, of course, some unexpected factors, like, say, that the painting is out of the museum for a temporary exhibition, for restauration purposes etc. These factors, though, are not relevant to the issue at stake. Being the object of *potential* several occasions of appreciation in time, the condition we have

posited as a traditional feature for artworks, enters in our conception as a corollary of the fact that works are distinct entities.

Work*hood*: some further considerations

We have put enough irons in the fire, so let's take stock.

We started from the claim that the question of what *art* is, and the question of what a *work* of art is are different problems, though they have often been treated as the same by most philosophers in the analytic tradition. *Artworks* are indeed only a subcategory within the broader domain of *art phenomena*. Therefore, we asked ourselves what this notion of *workhood* is about, in order to understand, comparatively, why other art forms cannot fit into the concept of artwork. In this regard, we offered a descriptive account of what seems to be the "common conception" of works of art, and found that traditional "artworks" are characterized by intentionality, persistence in time and physical independence from the artist and the audience. These conditions, we argued, contribute to shaping the traditional epistemological way in which we interpret our relation with artworks.

We then addressed some of the perplexities that may plausibly be raised against this conception. By responding to these concerns, we hope to have shown that these objections beg the question, in the sense that they assume what was implicit in our first claim, namely, that the work-concept is not able to encompass all art phenomena.

Having summed up the philosophical path we have taken so far, let us take some time for a few additional observations. Throughout the former inquiry, our aim has never been evaluative, and even less normative. That is, the point is not to demonstrate that the common conception is inadequate for describing the object of its concern, i.e., works of art, that it misinterprets or misunderstands them, etc., and that therefore, it needs to be revised, if not abandoned *tout-court*.

By contrast, if it weren't clear enough, we believe that the common conception of workhood fits well with what goes on in traditional and modern works in the various arts, where works are the kinds of things one can encounter in galleries, concert-halls, and libraries. Most of these works of art, which hang for instance on the white walls of the Kunsthalle, or are performed in theaters and opera houses, *are* in fact the kind of entities the work-concept describes as enduring, separate, independent objects and so on. Accordingly, they well deserve the distinctive kind of regard Davies so effectively

describes as "special interrogative attention". Nor, on the other hand, could it ever be otherwise, if only for historical reasons.

Here it may be useful to recall the historical suggestion we offered at the outset. The common conception is a result of a process of reification of art products as separate objects of aesthetic fetishism which formed in a specific time and place, namely in 18th century Europe. The idea that artworks, *qua* separate objects, are designed for a special kind of distinctive contemplation is indeed mostly the product of that historical development Walter Benjamin so famously described in his "*The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technical Reproducibility*". It suffices to reread some passages of this essay to have an idea of what this development meant. It was, as Benjamin describes it, the historical path that has led from the magical and cultic treatment of certain objects, through designating them a sacred function in religion, to the final secularization of these objects, now seen as works of art, in the cultivation of pure beauty and disinterested contemplation. For Benjamin, this history is to be largely defined in terms of the distance and "auratic" dimension art has progressively acquired. But to our mind, the development of "auratic" art, whose function affirms values of uniqueness, distance, individuality and contemplation, couldn't but establish itself whenever art products are thought of, as in the common conception, as enduring separate entities. The condition for the existence of aura is that there be *true distinct* art objects, noticeably diverse from natural and mechanical ones: exactly the *true, distinct* works of art in the sense described above.

It is not surprising, by the way, that the common conception of artwork plausibly started to form in the 18th century, the epoch that saw the establishment of Aesthetics as a philosophical autonomous discipline, mainly thanks to the philosophical contribution of Alexander G. Baumgarten, among others. On the other hand, the mid-18th century also saw the beginning of the modern system of fine arts (including music, poetry, painting, sculpture, dance, and architecture), primarily upheld by Charles Batteux, in the Enlightenment spirit of redeeming the arts from their allegedly servile equivalence to handicraft. It is clear, then, that what is at issue in this epoch is not so much the term "work of art" (though, as we have seen, it entered into the English vocabulary in the same years) but the value of the concept itself. In fact, the very status of a proper philosophical and theoretical theory on artworks depended on the existence or non-existence of a real epistemic object. Without a separate object of contemplation, no aesthetic reflection is possible.

Of course we would have to go into much more detail to take due account of these historical transformations, their cultural causes and their philosophical import, but the general pattern should be clear now. Sometime in the eighteenth century, what we have formerly called "the standard model of art (appreciation) understanding", including works as separate enduring entities intended for the disinterested contemplation of the audience, museums, as the "temples" of art veneration, and finally, aestheticians as the priests of art worship, became mandatory, an axiom. This religious terminology is also found in the metaphor which sees the production of a work of art as analogous to God's creation of the world: just as God created the world completely and holistically, the artist brought forth his work of art, with the receiver granted the role of co-creator for the meaning of the work. With the development of the cult of "genius" at the end of the eighteenth century, the paradigm of the artist as the "lonely hero" who autonomously creates his self-standing work of art finally achieved its definitive formulation. Though Structuralism and twentieth-century aesthetics eventually relativized and even ended up rejecting this romantic image of art as divine enterprise, the central position that artwork has enjoyed in aesthetic reflection since the 18th century has remained intact to the present day in our minds, and in those of analytic philosophers of art. So the work of art has remained the point of reference for all aesthetic reflection.

All this sketchy historical explanation should not be taken as having intrinsic relevance *per se*[531]. Rather, it is meant to explain, on the one hand, *what* the scope of the common concept of a work of art is -- namely, modern or early modern art as well as all the art done after the age of what we may call the *aesthetic revolution* and in *that* spirit. On the other hand, however, it is meant to suggest why the work-concept simply cannot encompass most of recent art phenomena (like performance art, installations and many other art forms we haven't mentioned) which are explicitly created *outside of this* tradition, either to refute or to ironically challenge it. Once again, however, it would be mistaken to write it off as simply arbitrary and unworkable. If it is so regularly challenged by contemporary artists, this is because it still informs most of our ordinary discourses on art; thus, to grasp the meaning of these challenges we need to understand the object they are directed against in the first place. That is to say, art phenomena of the twentieth century cannot be properly regarded unless we have a clear idea of what the concept of workhood traditionally implies, for only in this way, can we make sense of their reasons (and this was the point of our past

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[531] Though, obviously, they are of a clear appeal to us.

inquiry). For it is indeed as if most artists were claiming, in accordance with our initial intuition, that the plurality of ways in which art manifests itself is not reducible to the production of artworks.

A pluralist choice

So what is the only real problem with the common concept of artworks? We argue that it is not something internal, but rather something external, related to its being injudiciously applied as a tool (the only tool) valid for judging all types of art, no matter what kind. The puzzlement and skepticism on the part of audiences when presented with certain contemporary types of art is a result of this *mistaken application* of the common concept of artworks when assessing phenomena which are *wittingly* created to stay outside of its boundaries. This is why we do not believe, unlike many philosophers of art, that we can solve the problem of non-traditional art forms simply by accommodating them to the common conception of workhood, however it may be amended. Nor do we feel, conversely, that we have to dismiss the conception as simply inappropriate.

The first solution is maintained, among others, by Alperson (1984, 1998) and Stephen Davies (2001, 2003), who both contend that performances and improvisations, though not works in the classical sense, are artworks just as much as sculptures or symphonies are. That is, the event itself, rather than the sound-structure it instantiates is a work of art. Clearly, this view is at odds with the classic concept of artworks, namely, that works must be intentional, enduring and separate objects.[532] The problem with these positions, again, is that by employing the work-paradigm in order to understand art phenomena we risk making the same mistake that has caused people to misevaluate and misunderstand artworks throughout history. If we judge free musical improvisation as we do traditional works, we probably lose much of its aesthetic value, which resides largely in its being outside the constraints of workhood. The first solution is maintained, among the others, by Alperson (1984, 1998) and Stephen Davies (2001, 2003), who both contend that performances and improvisations, though not works in the classical sense, are artworks just as much as sculptures or symphonies are. That is, the event itself, rather than the sound-structure it instantiates, is a work of art. Clearly, this view is at odds with the commonsensical view of

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532 It is perhaps worth mentioning again here that Lee Brown is one of the few philosophers to make this condition explicit (2005) 215, (1996) 353 and 366. Alperson considers it briefly, but rejects it (1998) 478-9.

the concept of artworks, namely, that works must be intentional, enduring and separate objects. The problem with these positions, again, is that employment of the work-paradigm to understand these art phenomena risk to land on in the very some grounds upon which such art forms have been misevaluated and misunderstood, by common audience, throughout their history. If we were to value free musical improvisation as traditional works, we would probably lose much of their aesthetic value, which is largely reside in their being outside of the workhood constraints.

The second solution, notably adopted by David Davies (2004), claims that there is no compelling reason to distinguish between artworks and other art phenomena, such as performances and improvisations, since they should all be considered performative *acts* that engender a "focus of appreciation". This includes all the arts, since paintings, novels as well as jazz improvisations or dance-contact events have in common the fact that they are not artworks in the common sense, but rather coincide with the *generative performances. All* artworks are therefore: "intentionally guided generative performances that eventuate in contextualized structures or objects...or events...performances completed by what I am terming a focus of appreciation"[533]. So, for instance, Millais' *Ophelia*, hanging in the *Tate Gallery* in London, is not an artwork *per se*. Rather, it is a vehicle or medium through which the painter has elaborated a particular artistic statement in carrying out a performance; and this performance – this act of generation - is the artwork. Accordingly, *Ophelia* is not essentially different from a jazz performance, in the standard meaning of "event". To this extent, Davies's ontology of art is strongly *monistic*.

Needless to say, if we were to accept the claims that David Davies makes in *Art as Performance*, we would have to rigorously revise our commonsensical conception of artworks. Indeed, what Davies characterizes as our "empiricist" common-sense theory of art, including an ontology ("the artwork is the material object hanging on the wall"), an epistemology ("to appreciate the artwork it is both necessary and sufficient to perceive it"), and an axiology ("the value of the artwork derives from the value of the experience we have engaging with it") conflicts with many, if not most, art phenomena of the twentieth century. This is not simply caused by an unjustified extensive employment of the common sense theory to encompass non-work phenomena, as we argued above, but its *inappropriateness* tout-court. Though confining his theory to the (correct) principle that ontology of art should not contradict our ordinary experiencing art, Davies eventually

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[533] Davies, D. (2004) p. 98

propends for a critical revision of common sense which radically damages our intuitions and ordinary ideas.

In disagreement with both of these two solutions, we opt for a third option. We go *pluralists*. There is no single ontological category, we contend, able to encompass the plethora of artistic phenomena, whether it be artworks or performances. Artistic expression is infinite and topics available for questioning and discussion are limitless. Art, indeed, does not manifest itself in a *unique* way insofar as human creativity is not necessarily constrained to a few kinds of expression, but manifests itself in a multitude of different practices and activities.[534]

This last contention may give rise to some protests. You adopted a pluralist perspective, one might retort, to argue that only some art forms, like painting, or sculpting, produce objects that can be considered within the scope of the workhood concept; other art forms give rise to very different phenomena. However, before you seemed to adopt a view in which all art that eventually eludes the work-paradigm belongs to the same, unified, category. How can this assumption coexist with your pluralist credo? If you regard the multitude of art forms being produced today (and in the recent past) as one and the same *qua* non-work artistic phenomena, are you not making the same mistake you said you deplore, say, monism, or reductionism?

This objection raises an interesting point. Surely the wide variety of art forms that have evolved since the beginning of the Twentieth century[535], from performance art through environmental art, to video art, and eventually cyber art, can be seen as belonging to one cohesive category. We agree that a distinctive philosophical analysis of each of these particular artistic forms is a possible and by no means satisfactorily accomplished task. However, the myriad of kinds and styles of art and art-making that fall into the category of non-work art movements have at least one thing in common: they are intended to make us think; and thus ask pressing questions that challenge what we take for granted in the world of art (to this extent, the commonsensical conception of work –with its epistemological corollary- is a standard target). This is why these artistic movements have attracted (and

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[534] Nor that this is meant to imply that there are no rules in creative actions: rules are, instead, the necessary ground for creativity to express itself. See: Bertinetto, A., *Improvisations and Artistic Creativity*, Proceeding of the European Society for Aesthetics, vol.3 (2011) 81-103

[535] With the (questionable) exclusion of cinema and photography, which seem to be still more relied on the traditional artwork paradigm, at least for what concerns the modality of appreciation. Of course, this suggestion can be contested in more than a way, but unfortunately, we have no room to address these objections here.

still attract) much controversy and debate, and this is also why they have so often been seen as crossing the boundary between art and philosophy[536]. In fact, this tendency to evoke argument and debate lies at the very heart of what these art forms set out to do, and gives us reason to discuss them as a whole. Nevertheless, to take on such an undertaking would require a whole dissertation (if not more) which is obviously not possible here. Therefore, in the second part of this chapter, we have chosen to focus mainly on performance art, to see how it provokes us, the issues it poses, and how we may go about addressing them philosophically.

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[536] Paradigmatic here is the case of conceptual art.

CHAPTER 4
PERFORMANCE ART FOR THE PERPLEXED (AGAIN)

Introduction

Few recent events have influenced the history of art as ubiquitously as the shift in the early Sixties toward *live art*. The boundaries between the various art forms became fluid, and artists increasingly tended to reject what Greenberg called the "purity of medium". This "perfomative turn" [537] not only coincided with a general tendency in traditional art forms to move toward experimentation (the case of Jackson Pollock is paradigmatic), but eventually led to the creation of a new art genre, what has come to be known as *performance art*. Performance art has never lost its ability to provoke intense and even radical reactions in audiences. Of all the fringe art forms — experimental theater or installation sculptures of everyday objects—performance art is one of the most inaccessible. At its worst, performance art can seem gratuitous, outrageous or just plain ridiculous. Many simply deny that it is art. Performance art, it seems, does not allow for half-measures: either one is committed to it, or one detests[538].

This puzzling characteristic is far from fortuitous, however. As we will see, most performance art purposely aims at being controversial, to the extent that it forces us to think about issues that we generally take for granted, in a way that can be disturbing and uncomfortable. Not only does it call into question what we consider art, but also what the job of the artist is, and what our role as an audience should be, as well as many other basic assumptions. So it is not surprising that it provokes strong reactions on the part of audiences, who may loathe or even reject it, since this is precisely part of what it intends to do: shock audiences into reassessing their notions about art and its relation to culture. By reacting strongly to performance art, we are, in some sense, doing its bidding.

Much of the theoretical interest in performance art lies indeed in the particular way it declares itself to be a borderline case. Of course, at the beginning of the 20th century avant-garde movements had already strived to transcend and dissolve the limitations and boundaries of art and make forays into other cultural realms. To this extent, Symbolism, Expressionism, Futurism, Surrealism, Dada, Cubism —- among others -- were all perceived as intensely threatening. However, despite the outrage provoked at the outset, much of

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[537] Fischer-Lichte, E., *The transformative power of performance : a new aesthetics*, [Ästhetik des Performativen] translated by Saskya Jain, Routledge, New York 2004.
[538] This is what E. Schellekens and P. Goldie (2011) writes about conceptual art.

yesterday's avant-garde has eventually become today's establishment. If performance art differs from other art movements in this respect, it is because the challenges it poses are so radical it resists assimilation into the history of art.

Never before had commonsensical assumptions as to what art is, can, or should be, been called into question with such drastic, anarchical and broad-ranging scope as in performance art. Its antagonism towards the centrality and predominance of the conventional "artwork" emerges particularly in its rejection of the claim that artistic creativity can only manifest itself in the production of artifacts, fetishized as objects of economic and cultural value. Accordingly, performance art is tied to an idea of creativity as a universal human capacity, which enables everyone to be what he/she really is. The form of this creation is not of particular importance: ones concrete existence and ordinarily actions can become the same as ones artistic endeavor. This is the reason why many performers can write, give public lectures, or engage in political action and consider such activities "art".

Given the philosophical import of the issues raised by performance art, it seems indeed quite surprising that so little attention has been paid by analytic philosophers to the topic, in comparison to more traditional performing arts[539]. This is not to say that much ink has not been wasted on the performance aspects of music, dance and theater, with scholars mainly attempting to understand the ontological relation between works (texts and scores) and enactments. What is missing is a distinct theoretical account of the specific issue of *performance art*. And this despite the fact that in recent years there has been a surge of philosophical interest in non-traditional art forms such as rock, jazz, musical and jazz improvisation, and conceptual art[540]. With a few notable exceptions, however: Noel Carroll (1986), Paul Thom (1993) and, more recently, David Davies (2011) who have all contributed to the exploration of the identity and the meaning of this art genre (if it is one). There are also interesting gleanings on the subject of performance in the philosophical literature on theater, such as the works of Hamilton (2007) and David Osipovich (2006). But all this work still does little more than scratch the surface of the problem. This relative lack of attention seems even more striking when one considers the extent to which cultural performances have dominated other scientific domains, for instance Cultural Studies in the

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[539] *Vis-à-vis* what happens, for instance, fro philosophical reflection on the case of musical improvisations.
[540] E. Schellekens and P. Goldie *Philosophy and Conceptual Art (2007)* and *Who's Afraid of Conceptual Art? (2008)* were amongst the first major published philosophical efforts on the subject.

United States, where interest in performance has led to the creation a whole new field of study, called *Performance Studies*[541]. A surge of interest in artistic performance has also characterized the latest developments in *Theaterwissenschaft* in Germany, especially thanks to the work of the philosopher and theatrical scholar Erika Fischer-Lichte, author of an important work on the aesthetics of performance art. Our approach, of course, is the result of the collective energy of all the participants in this debate, for it is this specific intellectual context which inspired our philosophical curiosity in performance art.

If we turn back for a while to analytic aesthetics, what, we may ask ourselves, is the reason for this philosophical omission? At first glance, we may think it is no coincidence, and that the notion of "performance" is simply unattainable to the traditional methods of analytic philosophy. Perhaps its conceptual toolbox is simply inadequate –too rigid or too clear-cut -- to make sense of the elusive and multifaceted nature of this notion. Perhaps another philosophical approach *tout-court* is needed – such as phenomenology, or Heidegger's conception of art – in order to grapple with the questions performance art raises.

However, it is our contention that this idea is based on a bias. In the first place, indeed, we believe that there is no such thing as a fixed, ready-to-use "conceptual toolbox" distinctive to any particular philosophical tradition, rigidly determining the scope and the ilk of the questions that it can address. Secondly, we believe that for a philosophical approach to be adequate it must simply facilitate an interpretation of the complexities of the object of concern. When the object of concern is the arts, or something related to it, then this should be done in a manner that is both philosophically rigorous, and satisfying to those involved in art practice and the art-world in general.

So there really is no reason to assume *a priori* that analytic aesthetics should not take up the challenge of performance art. And this especially because, as we shall see, performance art can be comprehensively understood as an experimental artistic investigation into the definition and the status of art as such, which is the meat and drink of most analytic philosophers. This investigation often does not involve any claims whatsoever on the part of artists regarding putative ideational aspects of a new ontology of art, to replace or accompany the traditional one. However, though performers do not express such claims explicitly, *it is the* task of philosophers to bring them to the surface.

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[541] Performance studies is an interdisciplinary field which encompasses examinations of the performing arts, of anthropology and sociology, by means of a broad employment of the term "performance", to include not only artistic and aesthetic events, but also social, political, religious and even sportive rituals.

The prominence of radical differences in performance art, we believe, is a stimulus for philosophical reflection. In challenging the habitually accepted categories of art, performance art demands a new approach — in which many of our commonsensical ideas appear to be[542]. Our aim is thus, in the first place, to understand what really makes it profoundly different from other kinds of art. *How* the dissolution of boundaries between different artistic media, together with the fact that creative process tend to be realized in and as events, instead of in "works of art" in the traditional sense, *threatens* our traditional interpretative model of art? *In what way* the turn toward performance has impacted on the conditions for art production and reception?

These are only some among the questions that performance art urges us to consider. Of course the subject would require a whole separate philosophical inquiry: so let us content ourselves here with a few considerations that put performance art under serious scrutiny. In doing so, we hopefully invite to entertain a less skeptical perspective about both on performance art as a movement as well as on "performance" as a deeply intriguing philosophical notion.

Some historical remarks

As we have seen, reflection on performance art is not merely reflection on one specific art form. It is philosophizing about one of the most revisionary kind of arts, one that sees its particular task making us question our most deep-seated beliefs about art. This is why many of us are suspicious and negative about it. But more than that, philosophizing about performance art means philosophizing about art in general, for only if we compare it with traditional art can we come to see what it is about performance art that provokes these responses. The answer cannot be simply that performance art is a new or innovative art[543]. The fact that something is new is neither necessary nor sufficient for it to threaten commonsensical views. Gustave Courbet's *Un enterrement à Ornans*, for instance, outraged both critics and the public when it was first shown in 1851 *Salon.* The

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[542] Note, however, that the institutional aspect of performance art is never done away with entirely. In its reflexive self-investigation, performance art has remained oriented around the institutional framework of art galleries, and traditional art spaces. Whilst it would be of little philosophical interest to offer an emphasis on the institutionalism of performance art as a simple rejoinder to overblown claims about the borderline character of such art, it is important to recognize that the institutional framework is a constitutive aspect of performance art's questionings, and not only in a negative sense. When a conceptual artist uses a gallery as the stage to his artistic actions, he does not do away with the institution of the art-world tout-court, but rather foregrounds it as what is most at stake in performative practices.

[543] It already is fifty years old!

"enterrement" upset standard conventions by depicting a prosaic ritual on a scale customarily reserved to religious or royal subjects and without the usual sentimental rhetoric. Despite the initial scandal, the painting eventually become a paradigmatic example of what we now think of as traditional art. In fact, what was particularly innovative in 19th century art – and this goes for Realism as well as Impressionism - was the content and the techniques being used, but the commonsensical status of the artwork as a distinct enduring object remained untouched.[544]

If performance art differs from other "innovative" art movements, so much that it resists assimilation into the history of traditional art, it is because it rejects not only the content and the subject-matter of artistic production, i.e., *what* art expresses, but also the modalities and forms in which it is produced, i.e., *how* artistic creativity expresses itself. Furthermore, it does so in the most anarchical way.

This explains why the first problem we run into in an investigation of performance art is to identify the very object under examination. We *must* get a reasonable grip on what performance art is if we are to take up the many challenges it poses to art in general and to our conception of art in particular. What criteria, if any, does an art phenomenon have to meet in order to be considered a "performance" in the proper sense? And what makes someone a performance artist?

Perhaps the best approach –at least initially- would be to identify performance art according to its relation to certain historically situated traditions of art from which it emerged or by reference to which it has defined itself. This is indeed the perspective taken by both Noel Carrol in his 1986 essay "Performance", and by art historian Rose Lee Goldberg, author of an important history of performance art. Goldberg's chronological examination of performance art, in particular, explores its origins before the 1960's, and goes on to the end of the 1990's, touching on all the different ways in which performance art has manifested itself: music, dance, theater, visual representations, video, film and many other mediums. In fact, Goldberg argues, life itself is generally the medium of performance artists; since it is in the physical space between artist and audience that performance art itself takes shape, changes and grows.

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[544] As time goes on, artworks lose their unfamiliarity. Of course we may continue to enjoy previously experimental artworks, although they have become familiar to us: namely, canonical, rather than innovative.

As Goldberg stresses, the roots of performance art are to be found in the happenings of the second half of the twentieth century, in earlier movements such as Italian Futurism, Russian Constructivism, Dada, Surrealism, and Bauhaus, whose aim sprang from a "revolutionary impulse whose initial expressions, today widely ignored, were in performance"[545]. In line with Goldberg's reconstruction, Carrol insists on the particular role of avant-garde theater as another crucial source of performance art. Avant-garde theater did not focus – as the 19th century traditional theater did -- on a faithful rendering of the text, it focused on the performers themselves and the visual spaces, the spectacle. In a reaction to traditional theater as dramatic representation, it stressed the performative aspects of groups of individuals on a stage, and the value of the *mise en scène* that is achievable thereby.

The traditional theatrical orientation of representation, spectatorship and fidelity to script was replaced by a concern with the presentational, the participatory, the visual and gestural. Rather than the performer mediating between the audience and a character, focus shifted to performativity, and unmediated interaction between performer and audience. In the very same years (the early decades of the 20th century) Max Herrmann, founder of theatre studies in Berlin, was advocating the centrality of performance in theater and pushing for the establishment of a new discipline in the arts – the *Theaterwissenschaft*.

It is performance, not scripts, he argued, that constitutes theatre. This reversal of performance to script, implemented by Herrmann, was not the only development that influenced avant-garde experimentation. At the turn of the last century, ritual studies also emerged as an academic field. While the nineteenth century maintained a clear hierarchy of myth over ritual – whereby ritual merely illustrated "performed" myth – this relationship was now increasingly called into question. Ritual, not myth, was given primary attention: myths merely served to interpret rituals. The arguments for the establishment of both ritual and theatrical studies were similar in kind. Both cases promoted the reversal of hierarchical positions: from myth to ritual and from the literary text to the theatrical performance. In other words, both ritual and theatrical studies repudiated the privileged status of script in favor of performance.

All these cultural phenomena had a bearing on the performative art of the Sixties, mediated by avant-garde movements at the beginning of the century, providing artists with sources of inspiration and reflection. However, if Goldberg is right, the relationship between performance art and the avant-garde movement should not be over-estimated. Performance

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art developed at a time when avant-garde seemed to implode into a creative impasse and dissatisfaction with established artistic practices brought about a much-needed breakthrough. In this sense, performance art can be understood as a kind of "avant avant-garde", with an obviously controversial "boundless manifesto". Its anarchistic character, Goldberg contends, eludes precise description beyond the simple tautological statement that it is essentially "live art"[546]. In Goldberg's reconstruction, a key moment in the history of performance art can be found in the early Fifties, with John Cage's "Untitled Event" (1952) – a complex event involving a lone figure dancing in the aisles; simultaneous poetry readings; film projections and white canvases, along with music from a "prepared" piano. But it was only in the Sixties that all kinds of art simultaneously experienced a shift toward performance, with artists such as Joseph Beuys, Wolf Vostell, the FLUXUS group, Hermann Nitsch, Marina Abramović (alone and with her partner Ulay) and the Viennese Actionists, who were at the forefront of this new form of art. John Cage, Stockhausen, Mauricio Kagel for music, Bernhard Minetti and the group Angelus Novus for literature, Claus Peymann, Handke, Schechner for theater, also began performing in the early 1960s. Artists started to present themselves before audiences painting, displaying their decorated bodies, or showing themselves in other ways. They used or abused their own bodies to make their particular artistic statements, which could involve violent practices such as mutilation, or they pushed their bodies to their physical limits. Alternatively, they invited viewers to move around the exhibits and interact with them while others stood by and watched.

In the politicized environment of those years, many artists also employed performance to address emerging social concerns. For feminist artists in particular, using their bodies in live performances was a means to challenge historical representations of women on the part of male artists for male patrons. Artists such as Carolee Schneemann, Hannah Wilke and Valie Export displayed their nude bodies for the viewer's gaze; but they resisted the idealized notion of women as passive objects of beauty and desire. Emphasizing the artist's action and the viewer's experience in real space and time, performers also enacted forms of political resistance: they contested the allegedly bourgeois production of artistic objects to be sold, collected, or exhibited. By opposing commodification and reification, and, going beyond the standards of public decency, their actions scandalized most conformist audiences.

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[546] Goldberg, RL. 2001, p.9

On this basis, it should not come as a surprise that performance art became in every sense "the more tangible art form" [547] in the very decennial of counterculture and social revolution. According to Goldberg, however, performance art only started to be acknowledged as a proper form of creative expression in the next decade, in concomitance with the heyday of conceptual art. The relationship between conceptual and performance art was, from the beginning, much closer than it may seem; and performers were often regarded, in the Seventies, as followers of the *Art & Language* group, acquiring from this comparison authority and dignity in the eyes of the critics. In that same period, performance art started to spread throughout the art world, with art spaces opening up in major urban centers, museums sponsoring festivals, and special courses being introduced in academies. From the Seventies to the Eighties, it wasn't though until the Nineties that performance art gained growing acceptance, both academically and within the art world itself. In reference to *Presence and Resistance* by Philip Auslander, a famous performance art critic, Sally Banes writes for instance in this regard: "[…] by the end of the 1980s, performance art had become so widely known that it no longer needed to be defined; mass culture, especially television, had come to supply both structure and subject matter for much performance art; and several performance artists, including Laurie Anderson, Spalding Gray, Eric Bogosian, Willem Dafoe, and Ann Magnuson, had indeed become crossover artists in mainstream entertainment"[548]. However, since many of these performances were only witnessed by small groups within the art world, this art form remained quite unapproachable to the general public.

Performance art: a philosophical account

Goldberg is right in thinking that performance art should be primarily regarded in art-historical and sociological terms, since it is only within a broader historical frame that many of its most controversial features make sense. But *our* interest in performance art is also more theoretical. What we are concerned with, therefore, is getting to the conceptual heart of this art form, to see whether there are some philosophical characteristics that are typical of it, and whether some of these characteristics are more superficial than others.

Recall some of the reasons why we started our inquiry on the notion of workhood, in the first part of this chapter. The plan, there, was to understand what kind of thing an "artwork"

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[547] Fischer-Lichte, E., 2008, p.18
[548] Banes, S. *Subversive expectations: performance art and paratheater in New York, 1976–85*. New York,: The University of Michigan Press, 1998, pp. 120

is commonsensically considered to be, in ontological and epistemological terms. This, we argued, could possibly put us on the right track for understanding –*via negationis*- more unconventional forms of art, and performance art *in primis*. What was the main objective behind this plan? In general terms, our point was to explain why nontraditional art is so often unappreciated or even not taken into consideration by the general public. One cannot appreciate a form of art if one does not have at least a general idea of what it is. Conceptual questions (of definition, ontology and epistemology), are important for the appreciation of art. This is not so much the case for other domains of human experience: for instance, there is apparently no need to understand the nature and the identity of a particular food to be in a position to appreciate it. In the case of food, as in many other everyday-life situations, appreciation is, at least at first glance, less or completely non-theoretical. But this is not the case for art, where appreciation depends, at least to a certain extent, on conceptual issues. This is not to say that we need a precise and wide-ranging philosophical system to appreciate art: general commonsensical insight, as the one we have tried to describe, is usually enough.

These considerations, we imagine, will leave more than one person skeptical. It is not so! it might be retorted, one does not need to know about art to appreciate Klimt's works at the Galerie Belvedere in Vienna, at least no more than one needs not to know the recipe for *Sacher Torte* to find it delicious. Protests of this sort, however, only strengthen our point. Indeed, the reason why we manage to appreciate traditional artworks so well (say modern or early modern) is because we *have* an implicit conceptual account of the notion of artwork, even if we are unaware of it. And it is this tacit account that (normally) makes it so easy for us to appreciate conventional artworks. Though we might not always be aware of the implications of this concept, it nevertheless grounds our experience in traditional art (our aim in the first part of this chapter was to uncover it).

To see how our commonsensical presuppositions work in our experiences with traditional art, consider the example we have already used, i.e., Leonardo's *La Vergine delle Rocce*. This painting may be seen as a paradigmatic case: when in front of it, we assume its ontology as a separate, distinct object; we take for granted that it has intentionally been created by an artist named Leonardo da Vinci; we presume that the work –which is now at the Louvre- could in theory be shown elsewhere, since it is a transferable object. The wall on which it hangs it is not part of it, nor is the frame that contains it. Moreover, we presuppose an epistemology. We assume that the proper way to gain access to the painting

is to contemplate it from the front; that touching it –provided it were allowed- would be irrelevant; that we can potentially have more than one encounter with it in our lifetime etc. All these things together make it very easy for us to appreciate it, so that we generally have no problem with works like *La Vergine delle Rocce*. With traditional art, conceptual issues are considered obvious: but even though these theoretical presuppositions are implicit, they still play an important role.

Now consider a piece of performance art like Dennis Oppenheim's "*Reading Position for a Third Degree Burn*" (1970). The artist lay in the sunlight for 5 hours with a book on his chest, until his skin, excluding the part protected by the book, was badly sunburned. Plausibly, confronted with such a "work" most us will wonder if it is *really* art; and even assuming it is, what *kind* of art it is. Obviously it is not an object that we are being exposed to, something separate from its author, enduring in time and transportable from one art gallery to another. So *where* and *what* is the "work" here? Is the artwork the sunburn on Oppenheim's body? Or is it the graphic outline left by the sun? What is its meaning? Does it simply means that anything can be art? And, finally, how are we supposed to appreciate it?

In the case of performances like Oppenheim's, clear answers don't come readily to hand, as they do in the case of artworks like *La Vergine delle Rocce*.

On closer scrutiny, however, Oppenheim's performance is quite rich in inference. There is a reference, for instance, to both the art of painting and to photography. The body of the artist is a captive surface, just like a traditional canvas, to be "painted" upon by the sun. As the artist explains: "[…] Painters have always artificially instigated color activity" "[…]I can regulate its intensity through control of the exposure time. Not only do the skin tones change, there is a change on the sensory level as well. I feel the act of becoming red"[549]. The piece originates therefore from polemic as opposed to traditional artistic media, against the notion of artworks as "auratic" masterworks. To understand all these philosophical implications, however, one needs to cast off the traditional commonsensical conception of what a work of art is and observe with the same disinterest and sarcasm as the artist.

Critics and art connoisseurs, of course, have long ago learnt to do this. But the everyday commonsense notion of workhood is still prevalent in most of us. This unreflective conception remains loyal to what we have called the traditional interpretative model of art and explains why many of us are skeptical about performance. The question: "Is

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[549] In the accompanying text for the original piece (1970)

Oppenheim's performance really *art*" meets with a firm no from most people exactly *because* it fails to satisfy the traditionally understood image of art as creation of distinct enduring objects independent of their authors. Critics and galleries-goers might well accept performance art as art, but common people continue to see it as a treachery.

Defining performance art?

At first glance, the opposition between performances such as Oppenheim's -understood as events- and traditional commonsensical *artworks* seems striking**.** These performances are "fleeting and dynamic" *art phenomena* in that they explicitly refuse the status of fixed artwork. Artists like Oppenheim are mainly questioning the traditional model of artwork production and reception which implies creation of separate, transferable objects that can exist in time and space independently of their creators. Their artistic endeavor, instead, takes place as something ungraspable and practically unrepeatable, as well as inseparable from their own physical bodies.

On reflection, performances like "*Reading Position for a Third Degree Burn*" lead us to wonder whether performance art can only have a *negative* characterization, as opposed to more conventional art forms. Of course, as we have repeatedly claimed, it is fundamental to understand the "negative" aspect of this phenomenon,. But is there any reason to exclude the possibility of a *positive characterization* of performance art? Is it possible to achieve a "definition of performance art"?

According to Goldberg, this question has a negative answer: one main characteristic of performance art, she argues, is precisely the fact that it rejects definition. It is *anti-definition* in the sense that, in the first place, it is simply too elusive and complex to come under a single description. Performance art does not employ one specific technique, nor accept categorization under a standard typology of artistic expression: the performer's contention, indeed, is that the means of artistic expression are infinite and potentially limitless, and artistic creativity can be pursued in any possible way. On the one hand, therefore, to label it performance art, is too broad and encompassing. At the same time, however, "specifically", as the artist puts it, it is: "too small, too quick, too much the thing of this or that individual (artist, scholar) who is doing the doing: perhaps every performance artist has his own statement of what performance art is". To further complicate things, performance art is an art between visual art and traditional performing arts, between theater and ritual, between art and real life. Since its beginnings it has striven to violate the borders between disciplines

and genders, between private and public and between everyday life and art[550]. A quality of the unknown, the explosive, the enigmatic, Goldberg writes, is inherent in this domain and frustrates all attempts at definition, and this is why trying to get a grip on performance is like trying to catch a fish with ones bare hands: it always slips away. The only thing that can be said about performance art, Goldberg concludes, is that it is "live art".

Intuitively, there is something appealing about the claim that performance art eludes all attempts at definition, for the very idea of definition seems to preclude the possibility of innovation, renewal and novelty, which are at the heart of this kind of art. As Arthur Danto once put it: "Definition is incompatible with revolution"[551]. One might notice, however, that at least in this respect performance art is not so different from most traditional art. There are a number of reasons why trying to define art, as it is generally understood, can be regarded as hopeless despite all the noble efforts of analytic philosophers in the recent past. Some also argue that art is among those concepts that simply resist reduction to one single label.

But what does it mean when we say that art cannot be defined? In general, when we argue that a concept cannot be defined what we have in mind (if we are philosophers) is that it *is not* possible to find a set of *necessary* and *sufficient* conditions that fit each and all. So, for instance, finding the *necessary* conditions for performance art would mean determining one or more constraints that a performance must fit into in order to qualify as a performance; whereas finding the *sufficient* conditions would be establishing a number of conditions that, if satisfied, guarantee that it is a performance. To this extent, saying that performance art is undefinable means denying that a set of such conditions can ever be determined.

But imagine now that we could resist seeing definitions *only* in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. If "definition" were understood in descriptive, rather than normative, terms, we could think of an account of performance art that is not restrained within rigid criteria of identity, compelling constraints or conditions. Would performance art still resist a characterization of this kind? Perhaps: but since our purpose here is to provide this art form with a better theoretical account, in order to make its appreciation easier (as far as possible), then we have to at least *try*.

Consider again Goldberg's assumption: namely, that performance art is indefinable, albeit the fact that it is a *live event* is what matters most. Fischer-Lichte, in this sense, individuates in the notion of event the focal point of this art form. Artists, she argues: "replaced the

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[550] We will focus on the feature later in this chapter.
[551] Danto, A., The Transfiguration of the Commonplace,

artifact with fleeting, unique, and unrepeatable processes[…]The artistic and aesthetic nature of performance would instead be derived solely from its nature as event." Again: "Among the many impulses for the creation of action and performance art was the urge to resist the production of artworks as marketable artifacts and commodities and instead replace them with fleeting events[…] The ephemerality of the event, its uniqueness, and singularity became a focal point. The performance's aestheticity is manifested in its nature as event[552]. And elsewhere: "The specific *aestheticity* of performance lies in its very nature as an event"[553].

Neither Goldberg nor Fischer-Lichte tell us what performance art is specifically. However, they *do* tell us something. They tell us that performances are fleeting, unique and unrepeatable *live events.* So let us start from this single positive datum we have in our hands.

A number of concerns come easily to mind. First, one may wonder, what is an event? Apparently, the category "event" is broad and encompasses phenomena which are not all *performances*. Furthermore, among the events which *are* performances, some have nothing to do with art. So what distinguishes a sport performance from an artistic performance? And, is there a difference between the different types of artistic performances one can find in music, dance and drama? Finally, what differentiates performance art from other types of performances, for instance theatrical performances?

In the remainder of this chapter, we will address these issues in turn. Whilst reaffirming that our search is not for *necessary and sufficient criteria* that all and only performance art satisfies, we will try –as far as possible- to tie up these loose strings. Our quest will lead us from the generic notion of event to the specific consideration of performance art, through the notion of audience and live participation. Of course, this is only one of the many possible threads one could take up, and perhaps not even the most appropriate. Remember, however, that our aim here is not to provide performance art with a conclusive wide-ranging theoretical account, but just to sort out what this art form is in order to help us understand and appreciate it for itself rather than constantly holding it up for comparison with traditional art.

Hopefully, the path we shall follow will proves adequate for this purpose.

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[552] Fischer-Lichte, 2008, p.165
[553] Fischer-Lichte, 2008, p.38

What is an event?

Religious rituals, art performances, summer storms, the shivers, sport matches, fashion shows, academic lectures: all these things are *events*, in the sense that they are things that *happen* or are *performed*. To this extent, both Oppenheim's *Reading Position for a Third Degree Burn* and a graduation ceremony are on exactly the same level. Certainly, they are obviously different in more than one respect; yet, according to the broad meaning offered by the dictionary, they have at least one thing in common: they *occur*. But what does it mean that events are things that *occur*? To answer this question, a useful approach may be to consider the relation between the category "events" and what appears to be its main ontological competitor, "objects".

People usually differentiate between events and objects by a number of elements. First, there is a difference in their *way of being*: material objects such as paintings and statues are said to *exist*; events instead are said to *occur* or *happen* or *take place.* Second, objects and events differ in terms of space and time. As Varzi and Casati put it: "Objects are supposed to have relatively crisp spatial boundaries and vague temporal boundaries; events, by contrast, would have relatively vague spatial boundaries and crisp temporal boundaries" [554]. Third, objects can move; they are transferable, while events cannot. Finally, while objects are meant to endure over time—they *are in* time and *persist* through time -- events *occupy* time, or *take* it *up*.

As you might have noted, our commonsensical conception is that *artworks* are exactly the same as normal physical objects (i.e., existing, distinct and transferable things). Opposed to this object-based model, artists have begun to produce *events* as art. The implicit dialectic underlying this tendency toward performance, as has been said repeatedly, is therefore the between objects *and* events**.**

It seems that we naturally tend to distinguish between objects and events. The reason is probably, as again Varzi and Casati note, that both objects and events are conceived, commonsensically, "as *individuals*. Both appear to be concrete, temporally and spatially located entities organized into part-whole hierarchies. Both can be counted, compared, quantified over, referred to, and variously described and re-described"[555]. Metaphysically, however, the distinction between objects and events might not be as significant as it intuitively appears to be. Some philosophers, for instance, think that the gap between

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[554] Casati, Roberto and Varzi, Achille, "Events", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed).

[555] Ivi

objects and event is just a matter of degree. In this regard, objects –though apparently more stable and firm- can be understood as 'events', namely, as things that develop and change over time, even if more slowly[556]. If this metaphysical approach is correct, then the difference between art-objects and art-events must be rethought, together with that between traditional artworks and performances. Though this idea is to a certain extent fascinating[557], we have to reject it here. In fact, this is simply not the way we normally see things (nor is it the way *performance artists* did in the early Sixties), for we do make an *intuitive* distinction between events and objects. This is why it is important to preserve this distinction, regardless of its actual metaphysical import, and continue to look at art phenomena both as events and as objects. In our commonplace conception events have distinct qualities of impermanence, and "ephemerality" that radically distinguish them from objects. This does not mean that events are insubstantial or unserious. It means that there is something vital about events that vanishes as they occur, in the very act of materializing. Events are thus understood as having special features of uniqueness, unrepeatability, restrictedness that require live presence to be appreciated. Moreover, unlike objects, they manifest a sort of constant uncertainty that makes their nature elusive and indeterminate.

What type of event is a performance?

If we look back at the list we offered at the outset, we see that not all type of things we call events can be regarded as performances: performances are a special sub-set of events. But what are they, more specifically? At first glance we might think that performances are simply *activities or actions[558]*. This suffices to explain why events such as summer storms are not to be considered performances. However, it is still not enough to provide an outline of what characterizes a performance, because, as Davies remarks[559], not *all* activities are performances. Think for instance of an ordinary activity such as crossing the street. Obviously we would not call it a performance. It *can* be called a performance only in an evaluative sense, say, to praise a child for how carefully he/she has carried out this otherwise banal activity[560].In this regard, a better definition may be that performances are

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[556] Compare with Quine (1970)

[557] One might recall Davies' ontology here. But while Davies insists on artworks as generative performance, the focus here is in emphasizing the "lifetime" of the work, namely *how* it was made, and *how* it changes over time, and *how* it interacts with those who view it.

[558]In what follows, I use "activities" and "actions" interchangeably, and in a non-technical sense, to refer to our common-sense notion of performance.

[559] Davies, D. (2011), p.4

[560] We found a similar evaluative usage with regard to the term "work of art".

actions which have an *accomplishment* (1) and are intended to be *presented or displayed (2)*.

One might reasonably ask that we be more specific. So let us try to be clearer. First, by saying that performances are *accomplishment*s (1) we mean that they are naturally categorized as events that are *intentional*. As *intentional actions*, performances have, implicitly or explicitly, a purpose and a specific result they are aiming for. This is the way they differ from *unintentional* events and mere *bodily movement*. This is why we exclude the shivers from the category of performances, because they are not intentional. Performances are also actions that are *presented*, or *displayed* (2). To this extent, to perform -as Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett rightly says[561]- [562]- is not only to do, execute, or carry out to completion in an intentional way, to perform is also, and primarily, to *show* an action or *(display)*a behavior.

This last consideration leads us to a further element, namely, the importance of the *audience* to which performances are addressed. A person can be said to perform *only if* his/her actions are intended for an audience that observes, evaluates and judges what is being done. As Paul Thom (1993) remarks, performances must always be *for an audience*, both in the sense of being directed to an audience by the performers, and in the sense of being received by an audience. Every performance, therefore, consists of two necessary functions, i.e., showing and watching, for the very concept of showing entails that there is someone watching, someone to whom the thing, whatever it is, is shown. Accordingly, even the execution of ordinary routine tasks can qualify as a performance, as long as it is executed for an audience. Recall our former example: if the child carefully crosses the street with the expectation of being applauded by his/her parents, we can reasonably say that he/she is performing.

As intentional achievements executed for an attending audience, performances constitute indeed a "broad spectrum" of human actions, ranging from ritual, play, sports, popular entertainments, arts, and everyday life to the enactment of social, professional, gender, race, and class roles. Habits, customs, and social practices -what Pierre Bourdieu calls habitus- are also performances. Potentially, there seems to be no historically or culturally fixable limit as to what is or is not "performance*"*. This explains why scholars from wide-ranging

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[561] Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B., "*Playing to the Senses: Food as a Performance Medium*," Performance Research 4, 1, 1999, p. 1–2

[562] Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B., "*Playing to the Senses: Food as a Performance Medium*," Performance Research 4, 1, 1999, p. 1–2

disciplines are interested in the field of Performative Studies. But our concern here is to identify what distinguishes *artistic* performances from performances in general, so we need to go one step further.

What is an artistic performance?

We insisted that performances in general are intentional achievements made to be presented to a public watching them. According to Thom (1993), however, *artistic* performances such as theatrical representations, musical and dance events, are not simply *presented* to a public. Rather, they are: "directed towards some kind of audience"[563]; performers do not simply *show*, but *are guided* in their actions by the expectations, judgments, and responses of an audience. Being directed toward, or guided by, is indeed not the same as being mere *displaying* to an audience, and this is part of what distinguishes artistic performances from other kinds of performances.

Graduation ceremonies, sport matches, fashion shows, Thom argues[564], while usually requiring the presence of spectators, are not *directed* nor explicitly *addressed toward* the audience. In an event like a football match, for instance, the players' energy and attention is not focused on the spectators in the stands, but on their adversaries or other team-members. Undoubtedly, active participation of supporters may influence the score of the match, but it remains one among other secondary factors which may have a bearing on the game, for instance the weather, the physical condition of the players, and so on.

In the case of *artistic* performances, by contrast, the performers' attention is explicitly turned to the audience. It is, Thom continues, as if the actors were saying to the spectators: "Attend to this!"[565].

Moreover, artistic performances differ from other kinds of displays in the kind of regard they solicit from spectators. Attending concerts, ballets or dramas implicitly requires a special type of attention from spectators that Thom calls "playful beholding". This playful beholding can take a number of forms, but always implies *active* (playful) participation on the part of spectator.

According to Thom, therefore, the essence of artistic performance lies in the particular relationship that exists between the performers and the audience, whereby the former address the latter in a particular way, and ask them for special attention and consideration.

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[563]Thom, P. (1993) p. 172
[564] Ivi, p. 179
[565] Ivi, p.173

"In doing something that has the force of saying, 'Attend to me', I am not just making a hypothetical address, as the author of a work does, to whoever happens to be an addressee, rather, I make categorical address to the audience, whom I assume to exist. In performing, I'm believing myself to be referring to present persons, to whom I am in effect saying 'You, attend to me'"[566]. This is also what distinguishes performers from authors or composers. In Thom's view painters and novelists intend their work for whoever is in a position to appreciate it, but even if their work never finds a receiver, it is not particularly problematic for them. Though we doubt that many writers or painters would be content to consider their audiences "mere dispensable accessories", as Thom claims, he is surely right in saying that one cannot deny a painting its existence as such just because no one has seen it. A novel is still a novel even if no one has read it. But a performance *needs* an audience: "if its reference is to succeed and if its assumption of audience attention and demand is to be warranted". In other words, no performance can be considered a performance if nobody has experienced it.

This leads us to a further question that has received much attention in the literature[567]: must the audience of an artistic performance be *real*?

Quite predictably, the answer is, in Thom's opinion, a definite yes. Without an actual audience, he states, there is not only no artistic performance, there is no performance at all. The reason is simple to understand. If the performers' stance toward the audience takes the form of an *exhortation* (attend to this!) then this exhortation must refer to *someone* actually existing in order to be successful. If none is present, in other words, there is a failure of reference. By contrast, if a novel remains unpublished, or a painting unexhibited, then there is no failure of reference, since the work did not refer to anyone in the first place, even though it was created for a public to behold. But this is not the case with performances, where the real audience is an indispensable accessory.

 Is Thom's idea viable? Davies doesn't think so[568]. He agrees with Thom that each performance requires an audience, in the sense that it is intentionally directed at spectators by whose expectations the performer is guided. However, the performer doesn't need to his audience to *exist* in order to be guided: he can simply act *as if* there were a real audience before him, by recurring to a sort of game of "make-believe". This is why, Davies argues, the audience doesn't need to exist concretely: it can simply be imagined or *intended*.

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[566] Ivi. P. 205
[567] See, among the others: Thom (1993), Godlovitch (1998), and Davies (2011)
[568] Davies, D., 2011, p. 177

Consider the situation in which a pianist thinks he is playing for someone who in fact slips away right after he starts to play. This would be a case in which the performer believes there to be an audience, for whom he is playing, when in fact there is none. He has been performing for no one. However, we would all agree, Davies states, that the pianist has nonetheless produced a real performance in this case: he has acted *as if* he had an audience. It might be objected that in the situation described the musician *did* intend for his/her playing to be heard. But this sort of consideration is not particularly relevant, according to Davies, since the idea is not that performers must assume someone is listening, but that they must have an audience in mind *to whom* they are directing their playing. A similar case is true for instance when a musician plays (or a dancer dances, or an actor acts) for a deceased loved-one: here the performer is guided by the expectations and tastes of the absent beloved. He/she literally acts as if there was a living person listening.

But Davies goes even further. For it can happen, he argues, that musicians perform for *themselves,* and do not imagine the presence of an external audience judging and observing them. In this situation, the way they perform will depend on their own expectations and judgments. They both show and watch. They are their own audiences Though this last example may be questionable[569], Davies' line of reasoning is clear: there is no need for actual viewers, to have an actual performance. An *intended* audience, *pace* Thom, suffices.

Both Davies and Thom offer good reasons. So, it is legitimate to ask who is right. To our mind, the answer is both. But we must delve deeper to see why.

What is a "live" theatrical performance?

Davies' idea that an *intended* audience –an audience which is simply imagined or presupposed- is a sufficient condition for there to be a performance has a certain appeal. It enables us to account for some very common situations in artistic practice, such as solitary performances, recordings, and rehearsals, all cases in which - *regardless* of the fact that there are no real viewers - we intuitively agree that a real performance is carried out.

However, Thom is surely right in stating that the relation between artistic performers and audiences is more restrained and intimate than that between players and spectators of a

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[569] The claim that the performer can be identified with his own audience can be criticized in at least two ways. The first is that performance is a kind of communication, and thus essentially other-directed. One cannot perform for oneself for the same reasons one cannot communicate something to oneself. The second is that a performer is simply not in the right kind of position to receive the performance he is giving, because his is not in a position to give the necessary attention to the entirety of what he is playing.

sporting event. And this seems especially true for *some* particular performing arts. Take the case of theater. Theater, as philosopher James R. Hamilton states, is an inherently social activity, in the sense that it involves, by definition, *actual* "audiences," namely, *actual* gatherings of people. A theatrical performance, therefore, cannot take place with an "intended" audience, as Davies argues.

But this is not to say that Davies is necessarily wrong, for it can simply be the case that there are performing arts such as theater that always involve the actual presence of people, and others, such as music, in which the *intention* to perform for someone suffices. Hamilton calls the former "audience practices" and the latter "non-audience practices". While an "audience practice" is an activity: "requiring some level of skill with a view to presenting the activity, some of its features, or its products to an audience", a "non-audience practice", on the other hand: "is the conduct of an activity that also requires some level of skill for its execution with a view to *realizing* the activity, but with no necessary view to being presented to others"[570]. Music and dance, he contends, can both have audience and non-audience performances, but theater has no possible non-audience form of practice.

If Hamilton is right, any proper account of theater: "must be constrained by the fact there is no non-audience practice of theater. It must, that is, make plain and explain the social nature of theater"Music and dance, he contends, can both have audience and non-audience performances, but theater has no possible non-audience form of practice."[571]Theater indeed essentially presupposes a form of causal interaction between performers and audience. Though only in recent years, have analytic philosophers started to ponder the nature of the interaction demanded by theatrical performance[572]. This interaction, it is usually thought, requires particular sensitivity on the part of the actors as well as on the part of the spectators; both must be prepared to respond in various ways if the event is to be relevant.

Audiences do not simply watch and listen passively, trying to make sense of what is being presented -- they react. Although some of these reactions might be limited to internal processes, perceptible responses are equally significant: they laugh, sigh, cry, sob, shuffle their feet, hold their breath; they yawn, fall asleep, and begin to snuffle; they cough, whisper, or shout comments, yell "bravo" and "encore", clap their hands, and sometimes even get up, leave the theatre, and slam the door on their way out. Of course, merely watching and listening to performers is already a form of reaction, but the attention theater

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[570] Hamilton, J. R., *The Art of Theater*, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing 2007, p. 46
[571] Ivi, p. 47
[572] See for instance Hamilton (2007, 2013), Osipovich (2006, 2012), Woodruff (2003)

requires is more complex. It requires what Thom called "a playful beholding", which implies engaging in an imaginative, emotive, cognitive and biographical effort on the part of the audience.

Actors, on their own, shape what they do with a view to the fact that audiences will observe them, and modify their actions according to the reactions of the audience. They move through space, they gesture, they change expression, they modify their tone of voice, they manipulate objects and so on. Depending on the response of the audience, the actors' action on stage gains or loses intensity; their voices get louder or more seductive; they are stimulated to invent gags, to improvise, or they get distracted and miss a cue; they step closer to the lights to address the audience directly or, alternatively, move to the darkest corner of the stage.

In other words, actors tailor their performances to the particular audiences who are viewing them, so that the performances change according to the audiences present. Indeed, most actors consider the ability to respond to audience reactions an indispensable skill of their craft, and some of them think of it as the most important one.

Theater scholar David Osipovich refers to this special form of interaction as the "*liveness*" quality of theater that most qualifies it with respect to the other performing arts[573]. Liveness, he says, means that theater audiences and performers share the same space at the same time, so that the functions of showing and watching –typical of performance in general- occur at the same time. Performers and spectators *contend* with each other: "Each affects the other and is affected by the other. Noting that audience and performers have to contend with each other in shared space and time is just another way of saying that theater is live"[574]. According to Osipovich, liveness is to be identified with "contention" because performers and audience –in the course of a theatrical performance- collide to a certain extent in their mutual expectations and reactions. In short, this means that whatever the actors do elicits a response from the spectators, which impacts on the other spectators' reactions (for instance by increasing or decreasing the extent of their participation, interest, or suspense) as well as on the entire performance. Such constant interaction is what Fischer-Lichte describes as the theatrical "feedback loop"[575], a notion which aims at describing the relation between actors and spectators as a potentially infinite circle of

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[573] Osipovich, D., *What is a Theatrical Performance?*, The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, 64 (4), 2006 p. 466
[574] Ibid.
[575] Fischer-Lichte, 2008, p. 165

stimuli and responses. Of course, the feedback loop can only exist in the case of a real audience. i.e., if theatrical performance is *live*. Liveness indeed, is what defines theatrical performances as always partially unpredictable and spontaneous[576].

What is performance art with regard to theater?

These last considerations help us get closer to the main aim of our inquiry, namely, defining performance art. But before we face this challenge head on, for the sake of clarity let us take a short break to sum up what we have learned so far.

We started our analysis with the notion of event. In our commonplace conception, events, we claimed, have distinct qualities of uniqueness, impermanence and elusiveness, which distinguish them from material objects. Not all events are performances, though: performances are special types of activities that intentionally aim for a result (i.e., they are accomplishments) and are presented to an audience. The notion of audience served to distinguish artistic performances from performances in general: the former, unlike the latter, are explicitly directed and guided by the assumed expectations of the spectator. But this is not to say that the audience of an artistic performance must actually be *present*: in the case of music and dance, in fact, it is enough for the audience be intended, that is, imagined by the performer(s). Theater, however, as a live artistic practice, *does* require an actual gathering of people. The interaction between actors and viewers is indeed essential to its identity as an independent form of art, whose character is, at least to a certain extent, extemporaneous and unstructured.

Quite interestingly, the elements of "contingency" and "volatility" distinctive to the theater become paradigmatic facets of this newborn form of artistic expression in the sixties.

The specific "live mediality" of performance art –like that of theater- consists in the co-presence of live performers and spectators, gathered at the same time and place for a given period of sharing. From their encounter – interactive and confrontational –"the fleeting event" of the performance, to use Fischer-Lichte's terminology, is produced. As in the case of theater, the pivotal role of the audience is acknowledged as a pre-condition in performance and explicitly invoked as such by the artists themselves. "Performance is a kind of unique form of art" performer Marina Abramovic stated in an interview on the occasion of her 2010 MoMa retrospective, "and it is very temporary […] all the work is

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[576] Note however that *liveness* is common to a number of other social non-artistic performances, as for instance –among our previous examples- academic lectures.

done for the audience, without the audience this work doesn't exist, it doesn't have any meaning."[577] The feedback loop, understood as the fundamentally open process of co-creation of the performance, is therefore a crucial principle of this new art form.

But what then, if anything, distinguishes theater from performance art, the job of the actor from that of the performer? At first glance, it seems undeniable that there is a close relation between these two art forms. We only need think of the important contributions experimental theater (the Living Theater, The Performance Group, Jodorowsky, etc.) and happenings (Allan Kaprow, the Fluxus) have made to the development of performance, as well as how performance art has influenced theater recently. Just as some experimental forms of theater are hardly distinguishable from performances, many performances, likewise, are highly theatrical in their fundamental structure. Moreover, one can easily find examples of artists or groups of artists working somewhere between these two art form (Societas Raffaello Sanzio). The feedback loop, understood as the fundamentally open process of co-creation of the performance, is therefore a crucial principle of this new art form.

However, a difference can apparently be made between theater and performance art - despite the fact that often occupy the same stage -- one that enables us to treat them as distinctive activities.

Perhaps, one may initially guess, the difference is not necessarily struction. Maybe it simply depends on the intentions with which each practice is conducted. But this suggestion is easily proved misleading. Both theatrical performances and performance art do not seem to have different intentions; both can be intended to entertain, provoke, teach, communicate, amuse, unsettle, inform, incite to action and reflection, and so forth. There are in fact a great variety of intentions that might apply to either, often to several at once[578]. So how are we to distinguish "performative intention" from "theatrical intention"? And how can we decide, broadly speaking what intentions apply to a given type of performance? More plausibly, then, the difference between theater and performance art consists in some essential factors that characterize the two practices. To help us isolate this difference, let us take the example of a specific performance. Consider for instance Marina Abramović's *The Artist Is Present*, performed on the occasion of the 2010 MoMa retrospective mentioned

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[577] Our transcription from: https://www.khanacademy.org/partner-content/MoMA/artist-interview-performance/v/moma-abramovic-what-is-performance-art
[578] The same happens with works of art in general. We have often had the chance to note that talking in terms of a "function" for art is misleading.

above. The performance involved a 736-hour and 30-minute static, silent piece, in which the artist sat immobile with spectators taking turns sitting opposite her for a while and exchanging gazes in an "energy dialogue." "Sit silently with the artist for a duration of your choosing" were the only instructions given. Watching recordings of the performance, one cannot help but be struck by the intentness of Abramovic's gaze: audience members frowned, smiled, and eventually wept[579].

For our purposes however, the thing to be noted is that the performance involved people staring at Marina Abramovic herself, who was "the artist": in other words there was no fictitious representation of any kind. Abramovic was simply "doing" herself as the title interestingly revealed, "*the artist*" was present.

This gives us a first clue. While theatrical performances always involve the *enactment* of characters, this is (almost) never the case for performances. On stage, performance artists do not "represent" others: certainly, they allow a multiplicity of selves to unfold and enact in front of the audience, but this is only possible because performers are truly themselves. As artist Gómez-Peña puts it, when performance artists "perform" multiple personas, they don't exactly "play" them or act like them, but they "slightly morph in and out of them without ever disappearing entirely as "themselves"[580]. Here is a quote by another performer, Annie Sprinkle: "On stage I simply shared who I was, which happens to be a lot of things that a lot of people love to judge and to hate; an ex-prostitute, a pornographer, a witch, a Jew, a lesbian, a feminist, and yes... a performance artist"[581].

Apparently, then, while actors always enact or play a character, performers mostly tend to be themselves. But what does it mean that actors "enact a character" or "play a character"? In the most basic sense, it means that actors *act as if* they were someone other than the actors they are. This is true of all theatrical performances, but it is perhaps more evident with regard to traditional theatrical representations.

An easy objection to this is that it may not be as true as it seems: there are theatrical performances in which actors simply "play" themselves. Consider for instance Michael Frayn's 1982 *Noises Off*, whose three acts contain a performance of a play within a play, a farce called *Nothing On*. Much of the comedy emerges from the subtle interplay of each actor switching from interpreting a character and being him/herself.

[579] There is also a tumblr called "Marina Abramovic Made Me Cry," devoted solely to photos of people who cried while sitting across from her.
[580] Gómez-Peña, G., 2004, p. 76
[581] Annie Sprinkle, in T. Sant, *Franklin Furnace and the Spirit of Avant-Garde*, a History of the Future, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2011, p. 54

In the case of representations like *Noises Off*, or in the case of other improvised performances[582], actors step out of their characters and speak in their own voices directly to the audience. In all such cases, however, the theatrical fiction is still warranted by the fact that the action is supposed to take place somewhere else, or that the audience is supposed not to be present, or to be other than the audience of a theatrical performance. But the point is that some sort of *pretense* is necessarily involved (that actors are not themselves but characters, that the action is something other than what it actually is, that it is taking place in a location other than where it is taking place, that the audience is not there etc).

This consideration leads us to sharpen our definition. It is not so much that theater involves the *enactment* of characters; it is, rather, that theater always involves *pretense* of some kind[583]. Obviously enough, when an actor playing Hamlet walks across the stage, he is not just pretending to walk. He is actually walking on the stage. Nevertheless, it is the pretense in the context that allows his walk to acquire another meaning; it is the pretense in the context that makes the audience see Hamlet walking to Gertrude's chamber, instead of an actor walking across the stage. This is what theatrical "enactment" implies, i.e., the fact that both performers and audience are aware of this pretense, and agree to "play" with it. To use Osipovich's words, theater can actually exist without a building, stage, lights, costumes, or music and even without words and scripts. The only thing that is necessary is this mutual commitment on the part of actors and spectators, to *pretend* that an alternative reality is being created out of their co-presence.

If we go back now to Marina Abramovic's "*The Artist is present*", where, we may wonder, was the *pretense* in this performance? Apparently, nowhere.

For one thing, as we have said, Abramovic was not performing as an actress, playing the part, say, of a dramatic character sitting as a queen on her throne, or a motionless statue of an ambiguous divinity. She was herself.

Moreover, there was not even a pretense in the context (a fictional location or a fictional action, for instance), justifying a theatrical enactment.

The "time of the performance" was the "time of real life": the present moment of the performance was the present moment of real life. This allows us to formulate one more claim. While in theater the presentness of the action always remains an "as if," a sham, performance art, by contrast, calls for "real" presence: what occurs always happens in real

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[582] As well as in Brechtian Epic Theater, where actors are supposed to play their character self-consciously, in order for audiences to find it difficult to identify blindly with the characters.
[583] See Osipovich, 2006, p. 468

space and time, *hic et nunc*. Abramovic's performance is a good example of "the reality", the intimacy that can occur between performers and their audiences, that goes beyond the "fakeness" of a play. Confronted with the powerfulness and truthiness of the moment, most spectators of *"The Artist is Present"* understood immediately what makes *live* performances so special: it is the simple yet decisive fact that the artist *"is present"*.

But, it may be retorted, without pretense of any kind, how can one tell performances apart from ordinary situations? Some sort of fiction must indeed be deployed in order to distinguish performances from other human gatherings where people are together and look at each other.

Well, this is exactly the point. Performance art purposely calls into question the boundary between art and non-art, between *what is* and its artistic imitation, *mimesis*. As Fischer-Lichte argues[584], performance art contributes to setting these notions into motion, to making them oscillate, and possibly to dissolving them entirely.

Does Performance Art overlaps Life?

Since ancient times, the distinction between art and reality has been of fundamental importance to art theory. Regardless of the particular intended function of art, its fundamental *independence* from reality has nearly always been considered a given. However, the notion of the autonomy of art from life was only distinctly formulated around the 18th century, when, as we have seen, the domain of the aesthetic finally found its ground in European culture. However, it became prominent with the Art for Art's sake movement of the 19th century, shaping in a sense the avant-garde experiences of the early 20th century and becoming part of today's commonsensical model of art evaluation. Of course, "autonomy" refers not only to the distinction between "artworks" and "ordinary objects", but also to the special meaning of artworks as secularized objects of worship (in Benjamin's sense), fetishism and commercial exchange.

Throughout the mid-twentieth century, performance art has been closely tied to the search for alternatives to this ideology. Insofar as performance artists reject any form of artistic (or theatrical) pretension, they are constantly performing actions that are indistinguishable from reality, to the extent that what they do on the performance stage *actually* occurs in real life. This indistinguishability of art from reality marks once again the gap between theater and performance art. In the words of Abramovic: "Performance art is the moment when the

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[584] Fischer-Lichte, 2008, p. 172

performer, in his own idea, steps, in his own mental physical construction, in front of the audience in a particular time. This is not theater…in theater you repeat, in theater you play somebody else: theater is the black box. Performance art is real. In theater, when you cut with a knife, and there is blood, the knife is not real and blood is not real. In the performance, the cut and the knife and the body of the performer are real"[585].

This anti-art approach is explicitly theorized by Allan Kaprow, creator of the first Happening, in what he calls "lifelike art". "The line between art and life" Kaprow claims, "should be kept as fluid, and perhaps indistinct, as possible."[586] Western art, he explains, has had two avant-garde histories: one of "artlike art", and the other of "lifelike art". While the former holds that art should be fully independent from life, the latter, by contrast, argues for the connection between art and life. But while the first occupies the majority of attention from artists and public, lifelike art, in contrast, concerns an intermittent minority (Futurists, Dadas, guatai, Happeners, flux artists, Earthworkers, body artists, provos, postal artists, noise musicians, performance poets, shamanistic artists, conceptualists). In opposition to formalist and idealist interpretations of art, lifelike art makers suggest that art be at the service of life. It is for this reason that much lifelike art is not appreciated: "If you don't know much about life, you'll miss much of the meaning of the lifelike art that's born of it. Indeed, it's never certain if an artist who creates avant-garde lifelike art is an artist"[587]. For artist Joseph Beuys, accordingly, there should be no clear demarcation between art and life. Since human life, he contends, means primarily life in a community, life with other people, artistic activities must have direct social impact[588]. It is not that the purpose of art is simply to better society. Rather, for Beuys, this is more of a philosophical stance: every human being, he claims, has creative potential, but this potential can only be realized in communion with others. So the particular creative abilities of individuals can only be fully realized when they are part of an effort to build a new society based on solidarity, creativity and freedom. In such a community, everyone, according to Beuys, can find his/her true identity. This is why Beuys perceives *life* as the great art medium and *society* as the greatest *work of art*, like 19th century utopist *Gesamtkunstwerk*, but inverted in sign. Like Kaprow's

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[585] Our transcription from: https://www.khanacademy.org/partner-content/MoMA/artist-interview-performance/v/moma-abramovic-what-is-performance-art

[586] Kaprow, A. *The Real Experiment*, in Kaprow, A., Essays on the Blurring between Art and Life, University of California Press, 2003, p. 204

[587] Ivi, p. 205

[588] Confront: Beuys, J*., L'arte come vita*, interviewed by Letizia Omodeo Salè, Accademia San Luca di Milano, 2003, http://www.liberaconoscenza.it/zpdf-doc/articoli/omodeo-joseph%20beuys.pdf

lifelike art, Beuys artistic practices do not have an aesthetic purpose, nor do the materials used in his more conceptual art productions pretend to be anything other than what they are — unpleasant, rough natural materials. They are real. Their truthfulness, like the truthfulness of his movements in performances do not *mislead,* do not *deceive*.

In keeping with Kaprow and Beuys' real-life approach almost every sort of activity has been explored by performance artists -walking, sleeping, eating, drinking and cooking. Consider for instance Tom Marioni's first major event, a beer party at the Oakland Museum in 1969 with the dada-like title "*The Act of Drinking Beer with Friends is the Highest Form of Art*", or Bonnie Sherk's "*Sitting Still*" (1970) and "Public Lunch" (1973) or again Marioni and Linda Montano spending three days handcuffed together in order to achieve, in their own words: "a heightened awareness of habitual behavior patterns".

Referring to these examples, one might be tempted to conclude that performance art has ultimately achieved the business of blurring the difference between Art and Life, a purpose that, from Duchamp to Andy Warhol through the conceptual art movement, has practically constituted the *idée fixe* of most Twentieth century Art. Are we to think, then, that performances ultimately cancel the distinction between art and reality, thus negating, once and for all, the outdated notion of the autonomy of art? Is this really the case?

Apparently not, would be our guess. Of course, performance art intentionally plays around with muddling the boundaries between art and life, but it would be misleading to think of it as able to *cancel* this difference, provided this could ever be possible, for this difference, we claim, still has a fundamental role in most performance experiences. To understand what we mean, there is a further issue to be considered, the implications of which we hope will help us understand the novelty of the approach required for the appreciation of performance art. This is the question of the relation between performance art, experiments and games.

Performances as Experiments and Games

In ordinary life, as well as in the natural sciences, people often set up experiments with the goal of verifying, refuting, or establishing the validity of hypotheses, understood as a number of expectations about how a particular process or phenomenon works. Experiments provide insight into an intuition by demonstrating what occurs when this intuition is concretely tested in the context of a paradigmatic situation. Children, on their own, often use naïf forms of experimentation to answer their "what-if" questions, without any specific

expectations about what the "experiment" will reveal. In philosophy, scholars set up thought experiments in order to come to grips with their hypotheses about whether a concept has any application in a particular context.

In the field of art we generally to most unusual are as *experimental* i.e., art that introduces something new or makes changes in things that have been established. Experimentalism is thus generally invoked in reference to cases in which art phenomena are out of step with dominant techniques and styles, and look unfamiliar, unusual, or puzzling to us. Experimental art indeed casts off convention, imports ideas and techniques from one medium to another, or simply subverts tradition.

Needless to say, most performance art can be considered *experimental* in this regard, in that it defies our common understanding of art and provocatively tests our standard artistic notions.

On reflection, however – and this is our contention -- it is also experimental in a much more literary literal sense. Let us see why.

In the last paragraph, we have seen that one of the core aims of performance art is to challenge commonplace views on the boundaries between art and real life, mainly to overturn the notion of the autonomy of art. One way to do this is through what can be called "live" experiments. Artists set up scenarios that *recreate* daily-life situations. These situations *resemble* reality, but they constitute effectively a sort of laboratory experiment. As experiments they cannot be equated to ordinary life. Even Kaprow's "Lifelike" art is an experimental *mise en scéne* in this sense. For instance in one of his most famous performances, "*Eat*", the "audience" was led to a platform where there was food and wine, and invited to eat and drink randomly for an hour. Kaprow's idea was that: "the work itself, the action, the kind of participation, was as remote from anything artistic as the site was."[589]

The point was, admittedly, to integrate art and reality by recreating an absolutely ordinary situation, like that of people eating together at a *vernissage* buffet. The resulting happening, however, was more like a laboratory experiment than an everyday life situation. Kaprow conceived it, controlled it, and eventually observed how the subjects behaved under these experimental conditions. Just like a scientist, he took the role of a detached observer: his work was life*like,* but it was not *life.*

The case of Kaprow is common to most life-like performance art, where artists -- by creating and implicitly supervising the scenario of the performance -- organize experiments

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[589] In *Allan Kaprow,* Journal of Contemporary Art, Inc. Archived from the original on 14 May 2008.

that seek to offer answers and provide opportunities for exploring specific functions and conditions of human experience. Much like scientific laboratory research, these performance events are aimed at isolating crucial factors of daily behavior so as to glean some sort of insight into it. In examining the broad range of our everyday intuitions -- concerning art, human relationships, ethics, politics and so forth -- performances are not just committed to finding out what our ideas and views on art are. They are committed to *testing experimentally* whether these ideas stand up to scrutiny, and to *empirically* push the boundaries of our everyday concepts to the breaking point.

Seeing performances as experiments, on the other hand, gives us further evidence for distinguishing between theater and performance art. If most performance art is committed to enacting "live experiments", this explains why performers, unlike theater actors, do not have to rehearse. This is not to say that they do not to prepare: in fact, much time is spent a priori researching the site and subject matter, gathering props and objects, studying the audiences, brainstorming with collaborators, writing notes and comments. Furthermore, a lot of physical and psychological work is also generally required on the part of the artist. But this complex preparation cannot be called "rehearsing" in the traditional sense. The absence of rehearsals is justified in a sense by the unpredictable nature of performances as experiments; artists set up a circumstance, but then it is the situation that is meant to impose itself on the performers. This implies that, just like scientists, performers do not know in advance what is going to happen onstage, they do not know what the *outcome* of their work will be. It is as new for them as it is for the audience. The degree of indeterminacy of performances (as of experiments) recalls what Goldberg and Fischer-Lichte regarded as the typical elusive and indefinable character of performance art. But for our purposes, the notion of indeterminacy also constitutes the heart of the second analogy we want to propose here, namely, that between performances and games.

Let us begin by asking what the staging strategies are in performances that are "enacted" live experiments. Of course, given the variety of means deployed in these performances, there is no simple answer. We propose that they be seen as "game instructions". In this way performances can be regarded as "social games" in which actors and spectators are co-players. This is to say that through their physical presence, perceptions, and responses, all the participants co-generate the performance by taking part in the "game" the artist has set up. It is true that many performances play inscrutable (and often brutal) games with spectators -- putting them in liminal situations, or forcing them into nasty and even

offensive contexts -- for instance, the many productions of Schechner and Castorf or performance events like those of Fusco and Gómez-Peña.

If this analogy between performances and games is to work, however, what needs to be stressed is of course the notion of rules. Obviously, while games *traditionally* have simple, clear, satisfying rules, spectator-players are given greater freedom in performance art, all participants negotiate the rules of the game to the same extent. However, the rules the artist sets up to govern a performance can be thought of as corresponding to the rules governing a game -- albeit with some important differences. They represent, in other words, the structure or the framework within which the experience of the "recreated reality" is contained. By setting up rules that force participants to act or react in certain ways, performances, like games, fabricate scenarios that resemble life but are in fact virtual.

Of course, it may be noted, all art can fit into the "game" analogy, to a certain extent[590]. In this sense, it may not be accidental that art, like games, eludes attempts at definition. Just as when we play a game – it could be argued -- in our experiences with traditional artwork we play according to the rules the author has provided us with: we put ourselves as best as we can into the mind of the creator -- painter, writer, sculptor, composer and so forth -- and try to perceive and feel whatever he/she is telling us to. Observance of game-rules given by the artist is also part of experiencing traditional art.

Comparing art to a game certainly has a strong philosophical appeal. It can help us understand the centrality that Kantian aesthetics gives to the notion of "play" as one of the central features of the aesthetic experience. However, in our case reference to game-playing is the result of a very different kind of consideration. Out aim is to understand what the exact difference is between appreciation of performance art and appreciation of traditional artworks like novels, musical pieces or paintings.

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[590] Indeed, just as it is difficult, if not impossible, to capture the notion of game within a single simple definition, it is impossible to reduce all performance art under a single label. As well known, in the §66 of *Philosophical Investigation* Wittgenstein famously considers the example of what we call "games" to articulate his idea of "family resemblances". The section mentions card games, board games, ball games, games like ring-a-ring-a-roses and concludes that we can go through the many, many other groups of games in the same way; we can see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing. The thought is that though we can find a complex systems of similarities, relationships, overlaps, among the things we call games, there is no single feature or groups of perceptible features which is definitive of, or necessary and sufficient for something to be a game.

Immersion, Interactivity, and Performance Art

In the first part of this chapter, we mentioned how the standard model of art interpretation, as developed in Western Europe around the eighteenth century, prompts us to view artworks in a particular way. According to this model, in order to properly appreciate works of art we must look at them in a special way, different from how we look at common objects. It could be described as an act of thoughtful respect, deep concern and serious reflection. This is what is generally understood as the concept of "art contemplation". Etymologically, the notion of contemplation has to do with both "admiration" and "meditation", but it also seems to involve a sort of "engagement", on the part of the receiver, that helps bridge the gap between him/her and the artwork: something we can refer to, according to the scholar and critic Marie-Laure Ryan[591], as "immersion". Appreciation of traditional artwork, that is to say, requires a process of absorption of texts, sounds, or paintings, by way of a virtual bodily projection into the world of "artworks". This spatial, temporal and emotional immersion is indispensable if we wish to experience traditional art. As proof of this, consider the way we become involved with our favorite paintings, sculptures, music, novels: we let ourselves go and become enraptured with the work to the point of being overwhelmed by emotion from this immersion. It would seem safe to say that our capacity to be moved, to respond emotionally to works, is in part a result of this process of absorption into the artwork-world. The fact that traditional art is committed to the ideal of *immersion* is evident in many of our most common ways of speaking -- we say that we "are getting lost" in a good book, that we are "absorbed" in the musical flow of a symphony, or "captured" by a painting.

Immersion, of course, is not a characteristic but rather an *effect* a work may produce in a receiver, and it is always, at least to a certain extent, dependent on the receiver's own willingness: no matter how capturing a work of art is intended to be, the viewer can always maintain a critical distance and refuse to be immersed. But the point is that resisting immersion means to a certain extent failing to appreciate the work.

Though immersion has to do with appreciation rather than creation, the history of art has seen the development of several techniques meant to strengthen the immersive power of artworks. In painting, the introduction of perspective took a step toward immersion by creating a sense of depth that draws the spectator into the pictorial space. Take for instance

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[591] Marie-Laure Ryan: "*Immersion vs. Interactivity: Virtual Reality and Literary Theory*" SubStance 28.2 (1999) 110-137.

the paradigmatic work of Italian Renaissance, "*La Flagellazione*" by Piero della Francesca. The spectator is situated to the left of the three characters depicted in the forefront, before the scene of the scourging shown in the background. The technique of perspective simulates depth on a flat surface, and makes the spectator feel as if he/she is virtually breaking through the canvas and walking into the pictorial space.

To a similar extent we believe that a good book can plunge the reader into the fictional world of the novel, and enrapture him/her, in a sense. Writers, of course, know how to facilitate this process by employing a number of literary "stratagems", and tactics, one of which is, for example, is a gradual zoom from a birds-eye view to a particular scene of narrative concern. Recall the beginning of *I promessi Sposi* (*The* Betrothed) by Alessandro Manzoni. From an aerial view of Lake Como, to a vision of a mountain range, shoreline, vineyards and country roads, we finally make the acquaintance of the curate Don Abbondio, strolling along on his evening jaunt, reading his breviary. It is almost as if the reader is taken by the hand and gradually encouraged by Manzoni to immerse him/herself into the atmosphere of the novel.

The same technique is of course commonly used in cinema, to help viewers lose themselves in the story. An easy example is the first scene of Kubrick's *Shining*, in which the camera follows a car climbing up a narrow mountain road from the air, the same car in which — we discover at the end -- the main characters of the movie are travelling.

Appreciation of traditional works, thus, demands that the addressee engage in an imaginary relationship with the world in which the work is situated, which leads him to metaphorically "enter" into the story. Immersion entails purely imaginary states of affairs able to *transport* the perceiver into the work. The concept of physical and mental "transportation", by which the recipient distances him/herself from the immediate physical surrounding environment, is a requisite of the standard model of art reception. By way of this virtual transportation, traditional art places the recipient at the heart of a work: the boundaries between the real and the imaginary are broken down and appreciation is ultimately possible. Though not overtly formulated in these terms, the notions of "transportation" and "immersion" are also at the core of Kendall Walton's theory of fiction and make-believe. According to Walton, a fictional text (as well as a painting) is a "prop in a process of make-believe"[592]. The activity of make-believe consists of imagining a fictional world, according to the directives encoded in the artwork, intended as a *prop*, i.e. a

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[592] Walton, K., *Mimesis and Make-Believe*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1990, p. 11

support. The emotions experienced in making believe may carry over to the real world, causing physical reactions in the recipient such as crying or tensing up in fear. The affinity of Walton's theory of fiction with the concept of our concern, i.e., immersion, resides particularly in his insistence on the appreciator participating in the fictional world: it is truly a theory of "being caught up in a story".

As a result of Walton's ideas, the role of immersion in art appreciation is nowadays a much-disputed theoretical topic among philosophers and theorists. Unfortunately, there is no room to address the issue here. To our purposes, however, what is really worth noting is that the whole experience, aesthetic and emotional, that we experience in immersing ourselves in traditional artworks seems *prima facie* missing in performance art. In its refusal of theatrical pretense as well as its attempt to cross the line between art and life, performance art explicitly intends to be anti-immersive. This intentional rejection of the traditional epistemology of immersion appears therefore to be one of its most significant features, and the one that affects our responses to this art form the most. This may explain why it is so difficult for ordinary people to appreciate it (remember the case of Oppenheim's performance: "How am I even to appreciate it?").

These considerations, we foresee, will worry most careful readers. Skepticism about immersion, it may be objected, has not arisen with the advent of performance art in Western art theory. The theme of the dangers of immersion can be found in much famous traditional art theory –- consider Cervantes' Don Quixote, for instance. Interestingly, Cervantes describes his main character as a victim of immersion: "In short, he so immersed himself in those romances" he writes about Quixote, "that he spent whole days and nights over his books; and thus with little sleeping and much reading, his brains dried up to such a degree that he lost the use of his reason".[593] Another honored martyr of immersion is of course Flaubert's Madame Bovary, who ends up losing the capacity to acknowledge the boundaries between fiction and reality because of her insane passion for low-rate romantic novels.

In more recent times, the blindness caused by immersion -resulting in a loss of critical consciousness on the part of the spectator- has been harshly condemned by most critics of postmodernism as passive subjection to the authority of the work-designer, supposedly with political overtones. As in the case of Madame Bovary's beloved two-penny novels, according to these theorists, immersion is a trademark of popular culture: losing oneself in

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[593] Cervantes, 58

a fictional world is the goal of naive art or art aimed solely at entertainment[594]. Post-modernism's hostility toward immersion (especially in the case literature, i.e. the work of the *OuLiPo* group) is epitomized in its rejection of fiction, seen as a reactionary artistic device.

Remarkably, these anti-reactionary ideas are shared by most contemporary performance artists. The relationship between post-modernism and performance art is actually very complex and would require an in-depth study[595]. We simply want to stress the fact that performance and postmodernism are, in a sense, products of the same cultural environment. This explains why some critics have found "postmodern" a useful tag to apply to much contemporary performance art and performers themselves have used the term to give their experiments a contemporary cachet[596].

However, there is clearly a more intimate relationship between performance and postmodernism than can be explained by an occasional exchange of labels. One conspicuous symptom of this *liaison* is, among others, how self-concerned performance art and postmodernism are. The theme of self-reference in the arts, in itself, is nothing new. Many traditional artworks are self-reflective, in that they contain statements about their condition as works of art (consider self-portraits, which are doubly self-referential in that they depict the painter and indexically demonstrate his identity by revealing his personal style).[597]

Though this is nothing new, scholars have nonetheless labeled self-referentiality as a hallmark of postmodernity, and a highly controversial one[598]. In an era where everything seems to have been said and the grand manifestos of avant-garde have lost their credibility, postmodernism, we are told, encourages visual and the audiovisual art, literature, theater and so on to be increasingly self-referential, autotelic: art should only concern itself with art. This post-modern interest in self-reflective art has a bearing on the work of many performers who reflect on the definition and the boundaries of the art-making and on the status of art itself. This is not to say that *all* performance art is self-referential, but it is

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[594] (Bolter 155)

[595] For an introduction on the theme, see: Aulander, P., *Postmodernism and Performance*, in P. Auslander, *From Acting to Performance: Essays in Modernism and PostModernism,* Routledge, London and New York, 1997

[596] Compare: *Performance and the Postmodern*, in Carlson, M., Routledge and New York and London,2004, p. 137

[597] For example, Escher's *Triple Self-Portrait* does not only depict the painters, it also *is* a Escher (painting) that is to say, it communicates "I am Escher" through all possible means.

[598] For an introduction on the theme of auto-referentiality and postmodernism see: Nöth W.,Bishara, N. (eds.) *Self-Reference in the Media,* Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin and New York, 2007

prevalent. Of course self-reflexivity is not *per se exclusive* to performance art, since it also counts as a typical feature, say, of conceptualism, of Warhol's pop-art, as well as of most other contemporary artistic movements.

However, if one searches for an almost *exclusive* feature shared by post-modernism and performance art what easily comes to mind is a commitment to *interactivity* (resulting from the rebuttal of the culture of immersion). Interactivity is in this sense seen as working against immersion. By enabling a transition from immersion (in traditional artworks) to interactivity (in games and experiments), performance art pursues the postmodern dream of artists to distinguish themselves from traditional art forms such as films, novels and music. The key point of contention with traditional immersive art is that the viewer is passive. Given the interactive nature of performances, there is simply no room for passivity: audiences at a performance – intended as *co-authors-* are no longer mere spectators, but engage in the performance as *participants*. As such, they do not merely *attend* the performance but actively *cooperate* in its creation by interacting with the performers.

As Fischer-Lichte remarks, since the mid-Sixties performances have deployed a huge number of tools and techniques to explore the specific function, condition, and course of interaction between performers and spectators, and the underlying factors that have a bearing on this mutual confrontation[599]. Exploration of interactivity in performance art, she argues, has mostly focused on three closely related processes: first, the *role reversal* of actors and spectators; second, the *creation of a community* between them; and third, the creation of various modes of mutual, physical *contact* that can help us understand the interplay between proximity and distance and visual and tactile contact. Different performances –Fischer-Lichte continues- may involve a great many different strategies to pursue these aims, but they all have this in common: they do not simply depict or represent role reversal, the creation of a community between spectators, and the collapse of proximity or distance between them and the performers, they actually create these interactive processes.

But what does this prominence of "interactivity" mean exactly? What is interactivity and how does it elicit emotional and physical responses from the audience? At first glance, one can indeed be stuck by the vagueness of the concept: interactivity covers a broad spectrum of meanings, going from "procedural" to "participatory". As an initial foray into this area, we suggest the philosopher Aaron Smuts' 2009 much general explanation: "*X and Y*

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[599] Fischer-Lichte, E., 2008, p. 175

interact with each other", he argues, "if and only if (1) they are mutually responsive, and (2) neither X nor Y completely control the other, and (3) neither X nor Y responds in a completely random fashion. Based on this relation we can derive a definition of interactive: *Something is interactive* if and only if (1) it is responsive, (2) does not completely control, (3) is not completely controlled, and (4) does not respond in a completely random fashion"[600].

To put it succinctly, according to Smuts, "interaction" may be seen as a mutually responsive form of activity that is neither completely *controlled*, nor completely *random*: neither completely *active*, nor completely *passive*. The most interesting thing about this definition is –to our mind- the dialectic it posits between these pairs of contrasting concepts: a dialectic which may be proven fundamental to our understanding of performance art. Let us start by focusing on the alternative notions of randomness and control. On closer scrutiny, they can be seen as corresponding to a couple of categories that have a long history in anthropological theory[601] and also play a central role in Victor Turner's model of "social drama". The first is "*alea*", meaning chance, accident, casualty; the second is *agon*, meaning strategy, tactics and organization. Though seemingly unfamiliar, these two theoretical concepts in fact are closely related to common concerns of contemporary performance art.

It can be shown, in reference to art history, that an interest in *alea* –the unplanned, the uncertain- became part of performance art partly as a result of experiments in avant-garde theater, the happenings of the 1960 and partly because of the work and writings of a key figure in the development of this art form, namely, John Cage. It was largely in the wake of Cage's experimentation with the haphazard in music, that many performance practitioners looked to chance as a means of breaking free of the normally highly codified structures and expectations of conventional theatrical practice: the emphasis shifed to subversion, destruction of stability and fleetingness. Quite relevantly, inasmuch as performance art has mainly defined itself in opposition to traditional theater, it has stressed *alea* against *agon*, championing the role of chance and physical awareness of the performative situation as

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[600]Smuts, A., *What Is Interactivity?*, The Journal of Aesthetic Education, 43, 4, Winter 2009, p. 65
[601] See Huizinga, J. (1938) and Callois, R. (1958). Caillois especially has used the notions of *agon*, *alea*, *mimicry* and *ilinx* in his classification of games. He spoke of competition games (agon): to indicate both sportive and mental competitions; games of chance (alea), to refer to all the games in which luck plays a prominent role; "simulacrum" games (mimicry): for the so-called "role play" where one becomes "another"; and finally "Vertigo" games (ilinx): in which one plays to provoke one ownselves.

opposed to the control and strategic preparation of conventional theater. The notion of *agon,* foremost in theatrical planning, logic, and control, is considered detrimental to the intentionally indeterminate and spontaneous character of performances.

As we know, however theater -- be it classical or modern -- is also interactive to some exent, and leaves the door partially open to *alea,* the uncertain. For just like performances, theatrical spectacles also depend to some degree on the receiver's collaboration -- both *mental* collaboration, since viewers are required to make sense of the play, and *physical* collaboration, since they are meant to respond to what goes on onstage. Traditionally, though, the role of the audience in theater is mainly to *watch* the actions on stage; that is to say that, however responsive they may be, they are not supposed to interfere, nor to cooperate in the creation of the play. In performance art, conversely, participants are often *forced* to intervene in the action. Their interactive intervention, that goes beyond standard theatrical limits and conventions, integrates audiences into the time and space of the performance and changes their role from observers to co-players.

This is especially relevant, for if art is no longer conceived of as a representation, a work, an object, which the audience, on its own, is expected to watch, interpret, and eventually immerse itself, what *occurs* between the actors and the spectators is *what* actually constitutes art. It is crucial, thus, for *something* to happen between the participants, and less important *what* it is exactly, for it can be said that it is the relationship between players and viewers that mainly constitutes the reality of art. A key role in this interactive relationship, as we have seen, is played by *alea*, the unforeseen[602]. Notice that the degree of haphazardness that interactivity presupposes gives us even more grounds to justify our comparison between performance art and games. For instance, even if a professional tennis player is capable of returning every ball to the other side of the net, he can never determine the nature of his opponent's strikes. Analogously, *alea* is at the heart of performances understood as interactive experiences.

We must not underestimate the importance of the notion of *agon* in performance art, however. Despite appearances, preparation and control play a key role in the work of many contemporary performers. Recall in this regard our comparison between performances and experiments. If it is true that, on the one hand, spectators -as participants of a game-

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[602] Note that the space for indeterminacy also enable performances to become what Nicholas Bourriaud calls *social interstices*: "The interstice is a space in human relations which fits more or less harmoniously and openly into the overall system, but suggests other trading possibilities than those in effect within the system (Bourriaud, 2002, p.6)

cooperate with artists in establishing stage dynamics, they are nonetheless forced into the scenario the performer has put forth, and -just like laboratory rats- are obliged to follow his directives, wittingly or unwittingly. This is to say that artists do not only see performances as mysterious chances for unforeseeable, random encounters with audiences. Part of their job is to develop conditions in which this interactive encounter can be tested in an experimental way. These strategies are aimed at enhancing the "feedback loop", promoting factors and variables that encourage it, and minimizing, if not fully eliminating, those do not. Obviously enough, it is difficult to evaluate the outcomes of these experiments, but this, fortunately, is the business of art critics, not philosophers.

So, to sum it all up in a catchy phrase, interactivity in performance art relates, as in Smuts' account, to an open relationship between *alea* and *agon,* games and experiments, activity and passivity. Both elements are necessary, for it is in their constant negotiation that contemporary performances are born. These forms of negotiation vary, at times significantly, with each performance as they do with each production, making it impossible to draw even approximate conclusions. That is to say, it cannot be clearly established whether a performance constitutes an experiment testing the relationship between artists and audiences, or a play with the diverse variables and parameters of this relation. In either case, however, the playful nature of the experiment –*agon*- and the experimental nature of play –*alea*- reinforce each other.

"*Alea* and *agon*", "activity and passivity", "randomness and control", are no longer opposites but merely mark different states that can occur in a performance consecutively as well as simultaneously. This is what Fischer-Lichte's seems to imply when she states, in her phenomenological terminology, that performance art threatens "our binary way of thinking the world"[603], and undermines commonsense by constituting a new reality – "unstable, blurred, ambiguous, transitory"- in which "one thing can simultaneously appear as another", and boundaries are dissolved. "For me performance art is a conceptual 'territory' with fluctuating weather and borders," is how artist Gómez-Peña puts it: "a place where contradiction, ambiguity, and paradox are not only tolerated, but also encouraged". Performance artists, he continues: "Converge in this overlapping terrain precisely because it grants [them] special freedoms, often denied in other realms […]. In a sense, [performers] are hardcore dropouts of orthodoxy, embarking on a permanent quest to develop a more inclusive system of political thought and aesthetic praxis". But, he continues, it is precisely:

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[603] Fischer-Lichte, E., 2008, p. 177

"in the sharpened borders of cultures, genders, métiers, languages, and art forms that [performance artists] feel more comfortable […] In the act of crossing a border, [they] find temporary emancipation[604].

Interestingly, these considerations also bring the threads of our previous discussion together in an attempt to "reconcile" immersion and interactivity. In introducing the claim that performance art intentionally aims at overcoming the culture of immersion, we assumed quite debatably that immersion and interactivity are two opposite trends. The issue between traditional immersive and postmodern interactive views of appreciation was thus seen in terms of a conflict, based in large measure on the assumption that a search for interactivity necessarily involves sacrificing the special pleasure derived from immersion: the more interactive, the less immersive art will be.

The alleged incompatibility of immersion and interactivity can of course be justified in some cases with regard to traditional art (while immersion depends on the forward movement of a linear narration or plot, interactivity involves spatial and physical participation; while immersion presupposes pretended belief in a fictional world, interactivity thrives in a fluid environment that oversteps the boundaries between art and life; while immersion aims at the transparency of the physical artistic medium, interactivity exploits the materiality of it and so forth). Nevertheless, this alone does not give us reason to think that performance art entirely fails to provide the kind of aesthetic appreciation and emotional involvement that we get from immersive art. For it seems in fact that it comes the closest to *combining* both types of appreciation –immersion and interactivity- by attempting to orchestrate them through a sort of game of in-and-out. This is to say that, in attending a performance, people can simultaneously experience *both* mental or intellectual immersion *and* physical participation. So, if immersion may offer occasional threats to interactivity, the converse does not hold, for the more interactive a performance is, the more immersive the experience. Immersion and interactivity, therefore, are not in conflict --or at least not necessarily -- and this is something we experience in everyday life. In our ordinary existence, the greater our freedom to act, the deeper our bond to -or immersion in- the environment.

The following example may help us clarify this claim. Take the games children play together with puppets, dolls or toy soldiers. These can be considered "games of make-believe", to cite Walton, to the extent that they are, generally understood, kinds of

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[604]Gómez-Peña, G., 2004

imaginative activities, and, more specifically, exercises in imagination requiring some form of agreement: "Let's imagine that we are pirates searching for a treasure on a desert island", one child says, "Ok, and let's say that while climbing the Deadman's Pick we are attacked by a tribe of natives," responds the other. Joint fantasizing makes children pool their imaginative resources. Together they are able to think up more interesting and exciting scenarios than if they were alone; moreover, they can also share their ideas and compare their reactions. But what is most significant to us is that these games, as social activities, enable them to have a deep imaginative experience of immersion and, at the very same time, a rewarding type of interactivity. The case of children's games is easy to grasp, and thus helps illuminate what happens – in a more sophisticated manner- in the case of performance art. Understood as the same sense of enchantment and captivation children experience in games of make-believe, immersion is a central feature in the appreciation of performance art. Borrowing the term used by the psychologist Mihali Csikszentmihalyi, Victor Turner famously called this sensation: "flow". Flow characterizes, according to Turner, the supreme "pay-off" in ritual, artistic, sports, and game performances. During flow, he writes: "Reflexivity is swelled up in a merging of action and awareness, a focus upon the pleasure of the present moment and a loss of a sense of ego or of a movement to ward some goal". The merging of action and awareness is the crucial component of enjoyment, but, relevantly, it is only possible when our usual dualistic way of seeing the world is suppressed: "[….] there is no dualism in flow"[605] Turner argues. "In this state homogeneity is felt instead of heterogeneity. We feel impregnated by unity and purified from divisiveness and plurality"[606] .

Turner's insistence on unity, anti-dualism and homogeneity, as characterizing the experience of performative "flow", inspires us to some conclusive considerations. If there is anything like a lesson we can learn from the examination of performance art, it is probably that, as Fischer-Lichte's suggests, it encourages us to postulate an "as well as" rather than an "either–or" approach[607]. It is exactly this either-or approach that we have been trying to undermine throughout this whole inquiry We have repeatedly argued against this dualistic approach, for it is not cast in the stone, but is just one way of seeing things. By destabilizing the structure of binary opposites with which we are used to understanding and

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[605] Turner, V., *Notes on Processual Symbolic Analysis*, in Turner, V. and Turner, E., *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian culture*: *Anthropological Perspectives*, Columbia University Press, p. 245
[606] Ivi, p.255
[607] Fischer-Lichte, E., 2008, p. 177

describing how we experience art: immersion or interactivity? Actors or spectators? Objective or subjective?, reflection on performance art has satisfied the overall purposes of this dissertation. More than it may have seemed at first glance, it has played into our hands. It remains to be seen whether such binaries are suitable heuristic tools for describing everyday non-artistic reality as well. But this is really a different story.

A brief summary and some final sketchy considerations

Before closing, for the sake of clarity, grant us a little extra time to re-examine the journey we have made throughout this chapter.

The first broad theme we addressed concerned the kind of art performance art is, and in what sense –if any- it can be defined, if its self-avowed aim is precisely to question the very idea of definition. A related question concerned whether performance art can only be understood if we think of it as a reaction to the commonsensical conception of what an artwork is.

If performance art is to be appreciated only as a provocative response to what has gone before, then of course we are misguided in setting out to assess it solely in terms of the interpretative model related to our standard commonsensical view of art.

But our aim was nonetheless to find – as far as possible- a positive characterization of performance art as a kind of art. So we first looked at the socio-historical context in which it emerged, and at the manner in which artists seek to readjust certain imbalances in art. The pivotal point is that performance art does not hold up the art object -detached from and independent of its creator and recipients - as the locus of artistic creativity. It is rather committed to producing ephemeral events that are set in motion and terminated by the actions of all the subjects involved – artists and spectators. This characterization of performances as special kinds of live events enabled us to pose the question of what art events are in general, and in what sense they can be considered performances. Without claiming to be exhaustive, we followed a *fil rouge* that took us from the generic notion of performance, through an examination of artistic performances, to theatrical performance and, finally, to performance art. One crucial manifestation of the character of performance art is the way it challenges our traditional ideas about what art is by intentionally blurring the boundaries between art and life. In this sense, much performance art seems to suggest the worrying idea that everything and anything can be considered art: not only every object, but even every ordinary *act* in everyday life.

One possible way to look at the way performances are set up to challenge the accepted boundaries between art and life, we contended, is an analogy with experiments and games. This led us to our second broad theme, namely, the relation between performance art and appreciation: how performance art challenges our understanding of what experiencing art is. The starting point was the way in which our standard conception of art

has apparently been shaped by the concept of "immersion". This implies engaging in fictional pretense and make-believe, which however is not the case in performance art. By contrast, performance art – in accordance with postmodernism- focuses on stimulating processes of interaction and mutual exchange between spectators and performers. Proper appreciation of performance art as art (and the frequent frustration it often gives rise to) can only be understood once this difference between immersive and interactive art has been clarified. Interaction, we claimed, has to do with the dialectic between control and randomness, that is to say, between strategy and haphazardness, what we referred to as *agon* and *alea*. Though indeterminacy, as a result of interaction, seems to play a major role in performance art as it does in games, performers, nonetheless, like experimental scientists, control and supervise the scenario. We realized indeed that performance art can only exist within the negotiation of these allegedly opposite notions. In more phenomenological terms, this can be expressed by saying, in the words of Fischer-Lichte, that performance art liquefies dichotomies such as those that exist between artists producing events and observers passively experiencing them, making it increasingly difficult to sustain a distinction between appearances and reality, facts and make-believe, surfaces and depths.

But an important coda must be added, however. We began our analysis by wondering why we find ourselves lost in uncharted waters in the face of performance art, though we feel at home with traditional art most of the time. Aren't we right to feel that performance art threatens our traditional common-sense notions of art, and to feel resentment and frustration at what the art world puts in front of us for our appreciation? Or are our commonsensical ideas so inviolable that we should dismiss all performance art as failing to live up to our expectations? The aim of this chapter was in a sense to contribute to the disambiguation of this art form, in order to help us better make sense of it, rather than hold it up for comparison with traditional art, since conceptual understanding, we claimed, facilitates art appreciation. We fail to appreciate because performance art has no place in

our folk conception of art, and audiences judge it with the standard criteria of the traditional approach to art.

Despite these great expectations, we fell slightly short of the mark. At best, what we managed to do was to contribute to outlining, in broad strokes, some of the underlying factors that, to our mind, must be considered when theoretically addressing performance art. By no means, however, was this outline meant to preclude the possibility of approaching the concept from other points of view. Since, as we explained, our task was not to draw up an essentialist definition, none of the notions or suggestions we offered were meant as sufficient conditions, on their own, to fully embrace performance art.

By contrast, we hope to have shown that even if it were possible to define performance art (and we doubt it) it would imply an enormous amount of work for the willing philosopher. Examining the status of an art form always involves tackling more than one artistic "category" at the same time, and addressing questions of definition (What is this type of art?, What is the difference between other forms of art? What is the role of the artist?), of ontology (What is the medium used in this art form? What are its identity conditions…?) of appreciation (What is the role of the receiver? What is there to be perceived? What kind of pleasure are we supposed to feel?. etc). All these categories cannot be separated, for each of them is to be conceived in relation to the other. Take for instance the notion of artwork, with which we hope to be more familiar with at this point: it is dialectically related to the value and meaning of art and to art appreciation, in a tangle of issues that is often difficult to unravel. This also explain why challenging any artistic category –for instance that of a work as an enduring separate object- always implies defying our whole system of beliefs about art.

Though our journey may not have contributed very much to our understanding of performance art, if it has raised any philosophical interest in the topic at all, we shall be more than satisfied.

Examining performance art from a philosophically informed perspective may help us to see what presuppositions ground our commonsense attitude toward traditional art appreciation, that might otherwise have gone unexamined. Theoreticians have good reason to approach performance art differently from the way they approach traditional artwork, but this doesn't mean that they have good reason to dismiss it.

Given the long-standing and venerable history of the work-concept, the fact that performance art implicitly negates it in favor of the notion of event seems almost heretical.

It is heretical insofar as it questions the relevance of one of the most fundamental requisites of traditional art, namely, the production of an art-object, and by this challenging our commonsensical idea of art as a whole.

But shouldn't the very fact that it is heretical be of concern to philosophers? And aren't philosophers – especially analytic philosophers - supposed to love a challenge?

The gauntlet has been thrown, so to say. It remains to be seen if philosophers will pick it up.

Section II

CHAPTER 5

PHILOSOPHY AND RESTORATION

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we defended the idea that art is not necessarily found in art*works.* We started our inquiry by two examples: let us now reconsider the first of them. One, we claimed, can be skeptical on the particular artistic value of Gustav Mahler's Second Symphony and at the same time appreciate the 1963 New York Symphony Orchestra's interpretation of the work, under the direction of Leonard Bernstein. This is not as exceptional a case as it may seem. We often find musical concerts *unexpectedly* delightful, that is, delightful *despite* the works they are a performance of: when this happens, we evaluate the artistic character of the performance *more* and *independently* of the work itself. But though in such cases the value of the performance is *apparently* the principal object of our critical attention, it is so simply because it provides the work with a special charm that makes it more easily attainable to us. A good performance teaches us how to look "correctly and satisfactorily" at the artwork in itself, understood as the creative result of the artistic endeavor. Performers, on their own, have thus the duty to do all what is in their power to render the work accurately, and to produce performances that can serve the goals of being stimulating, revelatory, precise, and all that is needed to put the audience in the right position to appreciate the work. This implies, on the one hand, that they must aim at as much *clarity of form and content* as it is consistent with the artist's instructions: But, on the other hand, this also means that they can be allowed to adventure in original and interpretative approaches, *insofar* as the latter facilitate the work appreciation. The question is, of course, to understand *when* and *to what extent* this is the case, both on an aesthetic and on a historical ground. For what determines the maximum degree of acceptable "interpretative freedom"? And what justifies the performative decisions of the musician?

Clearly, it is not just the good taste of the interpreter that is at stake, in this decision. Taste matters, as it determines the performer's ability, but it is not enough *per se*. In fact, what *is* at stake is the issue of what it means to be "*truth*" or "*authentic*" with respect to the work, and, relatedly, the issue of what is, essentially and fundamentally, the work to which such faithfulness is owed.

Unsurprisingly, philosophers have been fascinated by the issue, so much that it has become a literary *topos* in recent aesthetic literature. Reflection on authenticity in music involves indeed simultaneous consideration of aesthetical, ontological and historical aspects and thus represents a real puzzle for the willing theoretician.

Ontologically, the most puzzling feature rises from the fact that it is part of our idea of music that it can be properly or fully appreciated *only* through truthful performances. But what is a truthful (or authentic) performance? As we know already, someone has invoked here the criterion of the so-called "sameness of spelling": truthful performances are those which respect all and only the indications written in the scores. Others, however, have argued that textual sameness is too strict and at time too loose a requirement. A performance may contain some inaccuracies, but it can still remain authentic overall: we would not usually condemn a performance that achieves spontaneous vibrancy in expressing the "spirit" of the work, even at the cost of some minor errors. The performer, it has been claimed, should be seen as having something more than the responsibility of a child with coloring a book, in turning the compositor written sketches into rounded artworks.

Similar considerations have opened the way to a further series of problems: if authentic performances are not reducible to performances which comply with the score, *what* then are they, metaphysically? Is precise respect of the tempos, of the dynamics and the instrumentations *necessary* as well to produce an authentic performance? But if so, are we to consider the performances of Wilhelm Furtwangler, which so freely interpret the text and the indications of the composer (adding unnoted nuances and perpetually varying the tempo) untrue to the work? This sounds weird: Furtwangler after all, was committed to authenticity as any other more philological director, like John Eliot Gardiner, for instance.
The fact that the authenticity ideal is commonplace roomy enough to house both Furtwangler's and Gardiner's performances has given some philosophers reasons to attempt at re-assessing the debate on completely different foundations. It could be that authenticity is in the end something of aesthetical, rather than of metaphysical, concern. In this regard, "being an authentic performance" is akin to "being a good performance". But since what is good changes in time, that is, evolves alongside with the evolution of tastes and customs,

authenticity –we are told- ultimately depends on history[608]. Therefore, understanding the concept also involves investigating its historical and philosophical sources and on the way it impacts the socio-artistic outlook of our musical practice.

As you see, the multiplicity of puzzles that arise in conjunction with the conception of authenticity connects with metaphysical, epistemological, historical and aesthetical questions.

Thorny as it is, the issue of authenticity, however, is not only relevant to music.
Consider for instance, in how many areas other than the philosophy of music the word authentic is used, and in some senses that are quite unrelated to those outlined above. We find reference to "authenticity", "being authentic to oneself", "living authentically" in ethics and political philosophy throughout the whole history of thought: from ancient Greek philosophers, through Enlightenment authors, to existentialists and contemporary social theorists[609]. All these views on authenticity vary, but there is a common theme of authenticity as a pervasive *ideal* that affects social, moral and political thinking, and one that does not allow for any possibility of 'partial authenticity'. In this regard, we are steered toward an interpretation of the concept of authenticity as an *absolute*, something which accepts no degrees, as the terminology used to describe it witnesses: authentic is synonymous to "true", "genuine", "original", "real", "self", or "natural".

Despite the widely different contexts in which the term authentic is applied in philosophy, the distinction nevertheless tends to form around the same two broad categories of sense. Either the term "authentic" is used in the strong sense of being "of undisputed origin or authorship", or in the weaker sense of being "faithful to an original" or a "reliable, accurate representation". In other words, to say that something is authentic is to say that it is what it professes to be, or what it is reputed to be, in origin or authorship.

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[608] In our first two chapters (*What is the Ontology of Music)* we mentioned how different philosophers in the music field have addressed such issues.
[609] The social barrier to achieving authenticity was emphasized for instance by Rousseau, Heidegger said that authenticity is choosing the nature of one's existence and identity, Sartre argued that there is no unchanging essence to the self, but we have a free will that allows us complete freedom to determine our lives from the choices available, Camus (1913-60) claimed that to be authentic, one must be aware of the absurdity of a world with no objective morality and purpose, and create meaning in life through rebellion against the absurdity.

This consideration is particularly relevant with regard to the debate concerning authenticity in the so-called singular arts –namely, arts like painting and sculpture, in which the work is "one", and admits no proper instances.

As philosopher Dennis Dutton notes, whenever the term "authentic" is used in this context, a good first question to ask is, authentic as opposed to what? In the relevant literature on visual arts, authenticity has been mainly contrasted with "falsity" or "fakery", thus with the production of forgeries and plagiarism[610]. But authenticity seems to be a much broader issue than one of simply recognizing and getting rid of fakery in the arts. Establishing the authenticity of a work of art, identifying its maker and provenance[611], comes indeed from a will to make sense of a work of art according to its original canon of criticism: what did it mean to its creator? How was it related to the cultural context of its creation? To what established genre did it belong? What could its original audience have been expected to make of it? What would they have found engaging or important about it? These issues are often framed in terms of the artists' intentions, which in part determine and constitute the identity of a work; and intentions can arise and be understood only in a social context and at a historical time. External context and artistic intentions are thus intrinsically related and both impinge on the authentic/inauthentic distinction. For the value and meaning of the work, it is often claimed, can be rightly assessed only against a background of correctly determined authenticity.

But why, it is legitimated to ask, does authenticity matter to us? Why is authenticity to be thought as granting the artwork any special value and so as to have a bearing evaluative assessment? As straightforward as this point might seem, it is essential to how we should assess the value of authentic objects. People are quick to increase their valuation of a given object based on an attribution of authenticity. However, the mere fact that an object is authentic should not be where the evaluative assessment stops—rather, it should be where evaluative reflection begins.

In a famous paper[612], philosopher Mark Sagoff for instance defines authenticity as *necessary* to an artwork's aesthetic value. For Sagoff, only insofar as authenticity is established can the artwork be appreciated and evaluated and further judgements regarding

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[610] For discussion see Dutton 1983; Goodman 1976; Currie 1989; Levinson 1990

[611] The historical origin of an object is what Dutton calls, in the context of artworks, the object's *nominal authenticity* (this is contrasted with *expressive authenticity*, the "object's character as a true expression of an individual's or a society's values and beliefs").

[612]

its other aesthetic qualities can thus be made. If factors showing the artwork's authenticity are lacking, the work may be deemed a forgery, and attempts at aesthetic evaluation stop. In other words, since the aesthetic value of a given artwork depends upon its authenticity, unauthentic works cannot simply be subjected to evaluation.

The underlying idea that ground our commonsensical understanding of authenticity is that we consider some objects –like works of art- to be valuable in a *distinctive* way, per se, thus resistant to replacement. Resistance to replacement is thus a peculiar feature of the notion of authenticity. If our pen is stolen, or breaks up, a replacement is precisely what we want, and problems aside, we feel no regret about this. This is because the majority of pens are all valuable in the same way to us, and therefore perfectly interchangeable. But it is not the same with works of art, where replacement is generally not allowed: we would not accept the substitution of a stolen painting with a copy.

Of course, the relevance of authenticity in the case of visual artworks is closely tied to their provenance and context of creation. But does this mean that authenticity is fully established in the limited process of the act of creation, namely, at its initial point of existence? This is a first important question.

If one says yes, then one is committed to the idea that authenticity is determined, once and for all, by the early work of the creator. In this sense, following its origins, the authenticity of the artwork remains static, and, as a precisely determined condition, is presupposed as a universal given, exempt from the historical flux. But since, on this view, artworks have completed their process of development by the time the initial creative act is over, as they age or are subjected to the threat of change or to damages, their authenticity is progressively threatened.

Contrary to this, it is also possible to think that the authenticity of an artwork is something which importantly connects both creation and temporal alterations; for these together define the artwork as an *historical* being. In this regard, while it may be right to emphasize the importance of authenticity and to connect this to the social and historical contexts within which an artwork is created, this context might be expanded to include the entire duration of the artwork's life. For as long as the artwork exists, on this view, its authenticity is dynamic: the ongoing, evolutionary life of the artwork is of relevance to its authenticity. That is, the authenticity of the artwork is subjected to an ongoing process of

development, and damages and changes are elements which can confirm its authenticity to its audiences (e.g., recognizable damage marks as evidence of the artwork's history).

If we see the artwork's authenticity as extending beyond creation, which is to say, if we see the artwork as a temporally situated object, then we accept the changes that occur to the artwork over time as a part of its authentic existence. Potential alteration is itself a welcome –even crucial- component of the artwork's historical existence. Conversely, if we see the artwork's authenticity as ultimately defined at the point of creation, then we take alteration as an unwelcome, external, and perhaps avoidable threat to the artwork.

In this regard, a second important question concerns the ontological distinction between the material object and the artwork. Is the notion of work to be disengaged from that of the physical object in which it is embodied, namely, from the characteristics of the material thing the work is (namely, the specific properties, features and constituents of the material)? Answer to this ontological distinction is a crucial one if we are to understand the precise nature of authenticity.

Indeed, if artworks are taken as "individuals", like *living beings*, distinguished, in essence, from the material object they are composed of, they can be seen as experiencing changes and alterations as part of their normal life. In considering artworks in this way, we consider all their ongoing history as significant to their identity. Beginning with its creation and with the elements which, at that time, might have established its authenticity (e.g., characteristic techniques of the era or artist or the geographical sources of the materials used), the life of the artwork extends over time.

By contrast, if the notion of artwork is thought as coincident to that of the material object it is made of, then the work-identity becomes coextensive to the object-identity; consequently, all alteration in the physical structure of the object are taken as damaging or threatening the work. Focus on the object implies attention on the physical state of the work and to its original material conformation.

These two perspectives can also be understood by means of the difference between an "active" and a "passive" notion of artwork. An *active* artwork is viewed as having a kind of "life of its own", and as such, is more likely to benefit from the passage of time, to exhibit relevant novelty, and an extended period of impact. A *passive* artwork is more like a unanimated object which, from the beginning, is created, observed, preserved, maintained or damaged by means of external force. Therefore, it is also less likely to flourish in time, and less likely to *endure* over time.

The important point, however, is that opposed interpretations of the significance of authenticity impinge distinctly on the actions taken by the social communities with regard to the relevant artworks. That is to say, the way in which the artwork is engaged with by the aesthetic communities is significantly different depending on how the artwork's authenticity is viewed.

This is particularly relevant for what concerns actions concerning art *restoration and conservation,* where the fervor of debate on authenticity is proved fundamental. In the case of the alternative visions on authenticity described above -the historical and the object-based view, so to say- two principle positions emerge. When the authenticity of the work is seen as ultimately defined at the point of creation, concerted effort are made with the intention of restoring what we perceive to be the original or desirable nature of the material object. The goal is here to preserve the artwork as it is at one given time, namely, as it stands as creation. When, conversely, authenticity is understood as extending throughout the whole "life" of the work, then actions are aimed maintain to preserve the intactness of what remains, limiting intervention to avoid deterioration.

Modern approach and opinion on the subject would seem to promote the latter position. The Venice Charter, for example, establishes an approach to restoration that is as concerned with the living history of the artwork. This living history is protected as witnessing the artwork's authenticity. However, the alternative has not died. At its most innocent, this is shown in contemporary attempts at the repairing, making good and reinstating of the original. However, it can also represent the practice of complete alteration of the existing to the supposed former state of the original.

But what are, historically, the origins of these two positions, and how have they evolved?

A key point may be found in sculptor Antonio Canova's refusal in 1816 to restore the scrappy Greek sculptures brought to England by Lord Elgin. None, not even he –Canova claimed- could improve on the style of the original artist; so that their scrappy state should thus be maintained. Canova's stance defied the convention of fully restoring fragmentary antique sculptures, which was usual at that time. His refusal to intervene relied apparently on two fundamental principles: the desire to preserve the authentic work of art (thereby maintaining the aura of the artist's authorship), and the acceptance of damage incurred since its conception (since physical evidence of the object's history seemingly conveys authenticity). However, in that same year, Danish sculptor and collector Bertel Thorvaldsen completely restored the sculptures of the pediment of the Temple of Aphaia at

Aegina, including the addition of modern replacements for heads, limbs, drapery and armor.

Canova and Thorvaldsen's two alternative views persisted and informed conceptions intrinsic to twentieth-century conservation theory: on the one hand, the need to preserve the integrity of the original, and on the other, the belief that the authenticity of the work is not established once and for all.

An important element in this debate is faith in science, as derived from Positivistic ideas about objectivity, rationality, and material evidence. Since technological developments –it is thought- permit the identification of original materials, science can pinpoint the artist's "original intention" (where integrity and authenticity are presumed to reside), thus giving added weight to the belief in the conservator's objectivity. But over the past two decades, publications in the field[613] have probed not only the premise of objectivity, but also other presuppositions that have guided contemporary restoration theory and practice, including authenticity, minimal intervention, and the role of the conservator. These recent unveilings of the contradictions entrenched in some restoration's key principles compel philosophers to a further reflection on this theme.

In the light of these considerations, the chapter herein attempts at capture thinking restauration and conservation theory under a philosophical light. By focusing on the philosophical distinction between the objective material-based view of authenticity and the historical one, we will try to offer some snapshots of how conservation narratives and ethics can be considered, interpreted, and configured in conceptual terms. Far from being definitive, however, this outlook is opened to further investigation and inquiry.

On Art Restoring

It often happens that most interesting philosophical issues come out from trivial ordinary issues. This should not come as a surprise to those who believe that, however technically specialized it has become, philosophy is nevertheless strongly fastened to everyday life. Daily life has constituted -throughout the whole history of thought- an ideal *reservoir* of philosophical stimuli. And what else could supply, otherwise?

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[613] For discussion, see: *Conservation, Principles, Dilemmas and Uncomfortable Truths*, ed. by Richmond, A. and Bracker, A., Elsevier Ltd, in association with the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 2009

On this basis, we hope to be forgiven if we decide to start from the example of one second-rate cultural product: internet advertising. Second-rate, but also ubiquitous, for internet advertising is everywhere on the web: on newspaper websites, on the homepage of companies, institutions, foundations and, naturally, on social networks. On-line marketing, perhaps more than television or printed advertising, is a truthful mirror of nowadays people's desires, ideals, hopes, interests. But moreover, it also provides a good outlook on the variety of hi-tech innovations offered to contemporary internet buyers. Much web advertising is dedicated to the promotion of technological tools which are envisaged to *reproduce* artificially almost any natural thing. There are online plugs publicizing non-diary milk and cream, vegan-friendly non animal-leather, non-wood wood, non-pottery pottery. Is angora wool soft and smooth? Acrylic is washable as well. Is turf green and beauty? *Tufted* synthetic grass does not even need to be treated.

Let us dwell a bit on this last example. The companies engaged in the production and sale of synthetic grass inform their potential customers that it represents a completely innovating way of gardening, suitable to the frenetic modern life-style. It created a grass skirt that is perfectly natural, and there is also an option to add some yellow, if green is too green to be real. But above all, there are other incredible advantages; no more need to water and mow the lawn as it remains perfect in time: once installed, it can last forever. Advertisings are persuasive: the benefits of choosing an artificial lawn are manifest, and the aesthetic effect is preserved!

However, something still leaves us perplexed. Even though the visual effect of the *Tufted* may be indistinguishable to that of organic grass --all perceptual characteristics of the natural object being in fact preserved[614] -- there is however something that we don't like in it. And indeed many of us would find it strange, perhaps a bit *kitsch*, to replace their authentic lawn with a new perfect artificial one. The point is that we apparently find desirable qualities in objects that we believe are real. If objects are only suspected of being imitations, they lose much of their charm to us. It seems thus that we instinctively despise the artificial, the forged, and the faked. Yet, when asked why, we don't have any clear answer, beyond the fact that it represents a sort of deception to our eyes.

Our very preference for the authentic against the inauthentic stands as given to us. Yet, there is no clear reason to explain this inclination. One possibility is to think that we value

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[614] Let us suppose, for the sake of the argument, that synthetic grass also has the same smell of a real lawn.

one object more than the other because it is the product of a different process of creation (Sagoff, 1978). To this extent, we evaluate the imperfect hand-made textile more than the impeccable factory fabric; we prefer natural processes to the mechanical procedures of the assembly line, and we privilege human hands to machines. Although the use, the handiness, and even the external features of the artificial objects can be identical to those of their natural counterparts, we always tend to prefer the latter. We would be willing to pay more for a 19th century, termite-eaten wobbly table than we pay for a new one just come out of the factory. And indeed, a whole branch of the furniture industry tends to age its furniture, reproducing insect-like small holes on the surface of some pieces of furniture.

In other words, it looks as if we evaluate things not only for their visible features, or for the aesthetic effect they produce, but for what they are, for their history of production, and for the process through which they have been created. In this sense, process and product are distinguishable but normatively bound.

The case of art is, to this extent, the most striking. No matter how well it is done, we cannot appreciate a forgery by means of pretending that it is a masterpiece. And this, though forgeries can look better than originals in terms of neatness and clarity: their color are generally more vivid, their lines more clear, and they may produce a better impression on the unaware audience. After all, paintings change so much during time that, after hundreds of years, they may not resemble themselves any more. The search for verisimilitude leads forgers, just as the furniture factories mentioned before, to use complex techniques to darken or fade their works in order to make them look like old paintings. Indeed, once the deception has been revealed, all the charm of the fake would disappear. We would misjudge those who continued to find an artistic and aesthetic interest in a fake, since –once the pretense is revealed- it may only have a documentary and historical value to us. On the other hand, we would have a similar reaction if someone claimed that he prefers to see theatrical representations on television than live in the theater, just because one can hear and listen better from home than from an Opera balcony.

 But why it is so? Why do we assign so much importance to the authentic, the genuine, the original? Why do we allocate such a high price to authenticity, so that we would not be prone to give it up for anything in the world?

If only perceptual visible effects had meaning to us, then there would be no problem in replacing the Venus of Milo, for example, with a whiter, shinier copy having both the right and the left arm in the right place. If only visual qualities and the aesthetic effect they stem

really mattered in our relation with artworks, then we would prefer reproductions to the originals.

But this is not the case. For it seems conversely that we feel obliged to respect artworks for what they are, almost in the same sense in which we feel ethically obliged to respect people for what they are, not for the sum of their qualities or for the way they make us feel. In this sense, the identity of art-objects seems crucial to art appreciation and evaluation. But the issue here is thorny. Indeed, it is plausible that we appreciate works of art partly for what they intrinsically are and partly for the feelings they arose.

When reflecting on the issue of authenticity, forgeries are of course the first thing that comes to mind. Yet, there is another example that can trigger our inquiry, and that is the case of restoration. As we will later see, restoration indeed calls into question a range of issues going from theory to practice, from ethics to history, from art criticism to art ontology. More than forgery, restoration concerns a number of actual practices in the art world and impinge on several concrete situations involving works of art.

But, if this is true, why –one may ask- has forgery, instead of restoration, attracted so much attention in the contemporary literature on authenticity? The reason is indeed quite clear. Forgery is a borderline case: and philosophers love borderline situations, on the thought that they are much informative, thought provoking and stimulating in terms of the inputs they provide to reflection[615]. This is not to say, however, that the case of fakes is unusual, in the history of art. Forgeries and fakes are old as art itself. Leaving aside the famous example of Han Van Meegeren, the history of art is populated by excellent forgers who have devoted their talent to plagiarism: Icilio Federico Joni and Leo Nardus for paintings, Francesco Martinetti for archeological findings, just to mention a few. However, the problem of forgery in its strong connotation (that is to say, not just as a mean used by students to learn pictorial techniques), is not as ubiquitous as one might infer by looking at the enormous philosophical production dedicated to it.

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[615] The point is that borderline cases shed much more direct light on a topic than ordinary ones. For example, philosophy of language has been pushed forward by the attention paid at a certain point to some linguistic practices that at first appeared to be exceptional and unordinary, as, for instance, performative acts. Sometime it can also happen that what was once considered a borderline case turned out later to be the norm. However, the legitimacy of using borderline-case arguments in philosophy of art may be challenged (one can also argues that artistic production is made by singular borderline cases, so that no norm is identifiable).

We have formerly claimed that any viable account of artworks should be ground in the creative and critical practices in which the individuation of the work takes place. It may be true that the practices associated with the arts are not sufficiently coherent to constrain theorizing: but –puzzling and confused as these practices may be- they must nonetheless represent the starting point for any enquiry into the ontology of the art.

Therefore, though philosophers have mostly focused on forgery and fakes when tackling the issue of art authenticity, we choose here to address the issue of *restoration*, for,we claim, forgery is just a borderline case of restoration.

To this extent, contrary to the current habit of regarding restoration as a special form of forgery, we will instead regard forgery as a special form of restoration. Thus, we will ask ourselves questions such as: when does restoration produces forgery? What is restoration grounded in, conceptually? Though these issues mostly concern professional conservators, our aim is to show that a philosophical analysis of restoration has relevance for philosophy of art as well. In doing so, our hope is to invite theoreticians to a more serious consideration of restoration not merely as a practical craft, but as true philosophical topic. This implies a twofold aim: on the one hand, we wish to show the relevance of a philosophy of restoration, on the other, we wish to underline the practical relevance that debates about the ontology and the identity of art have to restoration.

The relevance of a philosophy of restoration

The role played by restoration in the art world is crucial. Restoration is primarily concerned with the creation of art in itself, as the process of bringing about something in the world. Once created, art objects, as other common artifacts, grow old. Generally, aging is constant over time, but sometime, accidental disruptive events accelerate the aging process in an exceptional way. We might put it by saying that wherever there is a work of art, there is a work of art which is aging, and sooner or later there will be a work of art in need of restoration.

Restoration is primarily concerned to our interest in safeguarding the existence of works of art. This concern is grounded on a range of interdependent considerations: that humans organize in societies to transmit what is taken to count as valuable to future generations; that art is something that needs to be preserved for those who will come after; that this

preservation must retain the historical and documentary value of art, whilst upholding its aesthetic relevance.

To this extent, it seems that restoration has a strong ethical relevance, that has to do with the responsibility of one generation towards the future one. This is less surprisingly than it may seem *prima facie*, for authenticity has a moral connotation as well. Our instinctive predilection for the original – namely, for the authentic - may be read indeed in the terms of a moral obligation which requires us to privilege the *true* to the *untrue*. This explains why so many "ethical guidelines" concerning restoration have been promoted across the world. The entry *"Ethical Issues in Conservation"*, in the *Conservation OnLine,* for instance, provides a number of papers dedicated to ethical issues in conservation and to wider moral debates, such as the debate as to whether art is worth preserving *per se*.[616] At a first glance, one might think that similar discussions are futile, or simply redundant. Art, one might argue, is always worth preserving, unless it is not good; but if so, then the point is to understand what is *good art*, not whether art is worth preserving in general. But even provided that this is true, the problem remains: why, one can indeed retort, should we assume that *good art* deserves to be preserved in time?

It seems that we feel uncomfortable in admitting the natural death of works of art. Pradigmatically, in its aim to extend the lifetime of the works in principle to infinity, modern restoration is obsessed by a desire of eternalization. And since it resulted, historically, from the encounter of art and science, it is from a positivistic setting that restoration derives faith in its power of eternalize.

But why do we need to eternalize things in the first place?

An easy answer is that we do that because we are committed to a never-ending fight against death. Seeing the decomposition of what we consider beautiful revolts us. By restoring, thus, we attempt at resisting the natural cycle of life and death: though of course we cannot "eternalize" our beloved, at least we can try with works of art. Again, the comparison between artworks and persons is revealing. The fear of death that underlies restoration motivate people to undergo plastic surgery. The relationship between restoration and plastic surgery is indeed more intimate than one may believe, as cosmetic industries are well aware of this, if they have often financed restoration of paintings (especially those representing beautiful women).

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[616] See: Weil, S.E, *Too much Art?* , ArtNews: 232, October 1989

Psychoanalyst Gérard Wajcman[617] provides an interesting example in this regard. *American Express*, he tells us, has recently devolved to the church of Saint-Bavon, in Belgium, a special cage made of a glass that is supposed to survive nuclear explosions, to protect its Van Eyck's *The Mystic Lamb*. In this way, Wajcman remarks: "Il n'y aura plus d'église Saint-Bavon, plus de Belgique, plus d'Amérique et plus *d'American Express*, qu'il aura encore l'Agneau Mystique de Van Eyck".

This sounds puzzling, especially if one considers the fact that, whilst worshipping eternalized art objects, our society multiply the number of throwaway objects. So it happens the visitor of a museum – understood as the sacred space where the everlasting works of art are conserved - uses corrective lenses that he will throw off the same evening. He takes brochures and maps at the entrance, just to toss them in the garbage at the exit. Somehow, Wajcman concludes, our relationship with artworks reflects many of the contemporary society contradiction.

Though moral issues have a relevance for the philosophy of restoration, our attention here will be mainly directed elsewhere. For our aim is to underline the interest restoration has with regard to our conception of the nature of artworks.

We may begin by noting that restoration is never generally restoration of "art", but restoration of individual works or individual parts of singular works. Therefore, reflection on restoration puts great attention on artworks as distinct, enduring and separate objects. In this regard, restoration shares common ground with the ontology of traditional art. Ontology of art, as we have formerly pointed out, is not concerned with the broad concept of art *tout-court*, or to art production as a most general characteristic of humans as a species. Rather, it is definable as a metaphysical inquiry on art*works* understood as discrete objects of which one could say: "It is this" or "It is that one". Since restoration is always restoration of singular art objects, it has to do with ontology. As we shall later see, restoration relies on the duplicity of the art products, taken alternatively as works and as physical objects: we restore works of art *qua* mere physical objects and at the same time we restore mere physical objects *qua* works of art. This is why theories of restoration must necessarily take into account the problem of the nature, the origin and the source of the aesthetic properties of art objects. We will address these issues in the section entitled "*Ontological Issues concerning Restoration*".

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[617] Wajcman, G., *Un désir d'éternité ?,* Nuances, 31, 2003/1

At a first glance, it seems that restoration involves a sort of realistic approach, at least for what concerns the ontology of aesthetic properties: in order for restoration to have sense, it is necessary that works of art are taken as really possessing their own individual qualities. Of course, these qualities are dependent from our subjective emotional responses, but this should not entail that they are created by us, or that they cannot count as real. In fact, if our aesthetic responses are thought as *generating* the properties of the relevant artwork -as in a naïve phenomenological account- then restoration would not make sense.

On a similar extent, restoration is incompatible with aesthetic idealism or mentalism, just as it is at odds with extreme Platonism. According to Idealism, a *work of art* is an ideal object existing in the mind of the artist who created it, thus, it is not, or not primarily, a material entity. Yet, if it is not a material entity, then it cannot be restored, for restoration deals with material entities. On the other hand, according to Platonism, aesthetic properties are instantiated universals, thus eternal, indestructible, and uncreated. This assumption is implausible with restoration.

But restoration also concerns one focal point of divergence in the analytic and continental traditions, namely, the notion of aesthetic experience. Underlying the importance of the aesthetic experience leads one to formulate a theory of restoration mainly focused on the effect, to the detriment of authenticity.

As obvious, thus, restoration raises concerns that matter for philosophers, aestheticians and conservators as well. However, contributions are not abundant in the philosophical literature. Interesting attempts at disentangling the issue have come from Marc Sagoff (1975, 1976, 1978), Yriko Saito (1985) and David Carrier (1985). Most theorists recognize the relevance of restoration for the philosophy of art but do not tackle it directly[618]. Things are not better in the conservation field. Restorers - particularly over the past twenty years or so − have experienced a growing awareness of the implicit socio-cultural responsibility underpinning their profession, and this has provoked discourses concerned with ethical and principled conservation theories and practices[619]. However, rigorous conceptual self-analysis is still lacking. In this regard, conservator Hanna Jedrzejewska has regretted the absence of a methodological analysis of conservation ethics, whilst architectural

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[618] See : Amy Thomasson 2004, 2006; Peter Lamarque 2010
[619] See, for instance:

conservator Frank Matero has observed that the profession has thus far: "avoided a critical examination of its own historical-based and culturally based narratives"[620].

Why does the profession perceive a scarcity of critical evaluation? Perhaps because consensus on an over-arching definition of what restoration is does not exist. Or perhaps because conservation theory has emerged from within specialist practices concerned with varied materials (wood, ceramic, stone, paper, textiles and, recently, foodstuffs and other fugitive materials) and object types (paintings, sculpture, installations, artefacts, books, furniture) from within different contexts (collections, buildings, monuments, sites). It would seem that the fragmentary nature of the conservation profession confines critical analysis to specialisms: restoration is regarded mainly as a craft –restorers being considered technicians exercising a practical profession, albeit one which requires some knowledge in art history. Of course it is true that good restorers must be acquainted with several techniques, materials and mediums, if they have to reproduce them. Their job often requires them to work with chemical substances and physical structure, so they have to master in chemistry and in physics.

However, restoration is not only a matter of technical hyper-specialized skills: for it also demands consideration of a huge number of theoretical concerns. Restorers should possess, for instance, an empirical type of wisdom to adapt to the different practical situations in which they work. They make their operative choices in the light of some ideas and conceptions on the identity and nature of the relevant work of art, and on its value and meaning[621]. They play a fundamental role in relation to society and in assigning and perpetuating cultural value. This provides further evidence in favor of the need for a dialogue between philosophy and restoration.

For the concepts that guide conservation and restoration theory and practice, including issues on authenticity, aesthetics and ontology *are* of philosophical import. In restoring, one is always "writing" the history of the object, and even a decision to do nothing at all constitutes an interpretation of the identity and meaning of a work of art. Thus, the assumption that restoration is theoretically neutral and fundamentally practical in nature is untenable. Unveilings of the contradictions and fallacies embedded in this idea compel us

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[620] F. Matero in, M. Cassar, M. Marincola, F. Matero and K. Dardes, *A Lifetime of Learning: A discussion about conservation education*, The GCI Newsletter , 18(3), 2003, p. 11.

[621] In Italy, thought, practical decisions are mostly taken by local supervisors: restorers are mostly restricted to perform the tasks they are given. In case of disagreement, the final word is usually given to "*Sopraintendente*" the Head of Fine Art Regional Board, who can make appeal to a council of experts, among which there can occasionally be some philosophers.

to rethink the principle of this activity and profession. Indeed, where no urgency of philosophical reflection is experienced, generally it is not because there is no actual need of it, but because an unconscious philosophy, namely a *bad* one, occupies the place of a more serious scrutiny.

Theories of restoration

We would be mistaken, however, if were to affirm that reflection on restoration has been completely deserted, in the history of art theory. But when and how has critical reflection on restoration begun?

The first consciously organized attempts to preserve the cultural heritage can be dated back to the Nineteenth Century, thanks to the contrasting influence of Eugène Emmanuel Viollette-le-Duc (1814-1879) in France, on the one hand, and John Ruskin (1819-1900) in England, on the other.

Ruskin and Violette-le-Duc's opposed conceptions had a strong bearing on later thinking about restoration and conservation: while Eugène Viollette-le-Duc was notably a strong proponent of the former, Ruskin strongly advocated for the latter.

But what is the difference between the two notions, it is legitimate to ask? In ordinary language the terms are usually taken as synonyms: we indifferently refer to restoration or conservation of buildings to mean the interventions made to preserve it; but in fact, restoration and conservation are more like antonyms. Literally, restoration means to return something to its original condition by means of rebuilding, repairing, repainting, or generally re-perfecting it. Conservation, by contrast, means to safeguard the object in its current state, adding nothing that could change it: it is to stabilize it, and to preserve its integrity.

Viollette-le-Duc is usually regarded as the father of the so-called "stylistic restoration". His idea is that restorers should in a sense identify with the creator of the work, and to integrate the missing parts (whether they have been destroyed, deteriorated, altered, or even never actually realized) as the author would presumably have done. In the *Dictionnaire raisonné de L'Architecture Française du XIe au XVIe siècle* he famously states:

«*Restauration* : Le mot et la chose sont modernes. Restaurer un édifice, ce n'est pas l'entretenir, le réparer ou le refaire, c'est le rétablir dans un état complet qui peut n'avoir

jamais existé à un moment donné. (…)Ce programme admet tout d'abord en principe que chaque édifice ou chaque partie d'un édifice doivent être restaurés dans le style qui leur appartient, non-seulement comme apparence, mais comme structure. (…) L'architecte chargé d'une restauration doit donc connaître exactement, non-seulement les styles afférents à chaque période de l'art, mais aussi les styles appartenant à chaque école.(…) Si l'architecte chargé de la restauration d'un édifice doit connaître les formes, les styles appartenant à cet édifice et à l'école dont il est sorti, il doit mieux encore, s'il est possible, connaître sa structure, son anatomie, son tempérament, car avant tout il faut qu'il le fasse vivre. Il faut qu'il ait pénétré dans toutes les parties de cette structure, comme si lui-même l'avait dirigée, et cette connaissance acquise, il doit avoir à sa disposition plusieurs moyens pour entreprendre un travail de reprise. Si l'un de ces moyens vient à faillir, un second, un troisième, doivent être tout prêts ».

Historically, sources of stylistic restoration can be traced back to the first half of the Nineteen century, as a response against Napoleon's cultural politics. Throughout the reign of Napoleon, destruction of ancient monuments for ideological – namely, to remove the alleged signs of feudal oppression- and economic reasons – that is, for material and land recovery - was highly common. As a reaction, a growing interest for the Middle Ages in literature and archaeology started to develop. The set-up of the historical novel, as a new literary genre, contributed to create interest in historical reflection among writers and intellectuals. Victor Hugo was for example personally involved in the defense of ancient monuments, writing to this extent the pamphlet "*Guerre aux demolisseurs*" and the novel "*Notre Dame de Paris*" (whose central character is surprisingly not a man but a cathedral, as representing the ideal expressive form of medieval society). As Medieval architecture increasingly acquired intellectual recognition and respect the foundations for the first actions of protection and restoration were laid. Around the year 1830, Romanticism was fully developed in France, with its poetics of ruins and remains. Ten years later, by 1840, Viollet-le-Duc began to define the guidelines of stylistic restoration.

Architect and restorer himself of some of important gothic churches (the *Cathedral of Notre-Dame*, the *Abbey of Vezelay*, *Saint-Denis*, *Chartres*) and castles (*Pierrefonds*, *Carcassonne*), Viollett-le-Duc had great influence on 19th century theory of restoration.

Grown up within the historicist and scientific spirit of the epoch, Viollet-le-Duc is a careful historian of Medieval architecture and minor arts, as well as a creative theoretician and a

popularizer. His training consisted mainly in the direct observation and survey of monuments and ruins, but throughout his education he was also influenced by the archaeological findings which were at that time rediscovering the Middle Ages.

In his first period of activity (1840-1850), Viollet-le-Duc idea of restoration is still much conservative. He complains against clumsy repairs, which he takes to be as pernicious as radical destruction of ancient works; he maintains a preference for copies instead of arbitrary inventions, and he urges restorers to master in the knowledge of monuments and styles. Architecture, he claims, is one of the most relevant concern for social history, thus deserves to be studied analytically. In this former period, he distinguishes clearly between architecture and restoration: "Nothing is as dangerous as hypothesis in restoration work": his method consists of removing all accretions added to the work in time, in order to return to its primitive unity and purity of style.

Afterwards (1850-1870) he gradually starts to emphasize creative aspects in restoration, and to encourage the reestablishment of the original expressive value of the work. Monuments, he argues now, should be completed according to how they were originally meant to be. This may imply reconstructing the work's missing parts by filling up voids and lacunas, in order to re-obtain its initial integrality. "Restoring a building", he maintains at this time, "is not just to conserve it, to repair it or replace it, is to reestablish a state of completeness that might not have existed at any given time". This epitomizes in a sense the principles of stylistic restoration, and contributes to shape the contemporary reflection on restoration.

In the wake of Viollet-le-Duc's later approach, a reconstructive trend rapidly takes place in European theory of restoration, alongside with the increasing mastery in the study of medieval architecture. Eventually, integral restitution of buildings to their original state become the standard: ancient buildings' lost parts are replaced, and substituted with other substantially different items. In 30 years the original principle of absolute respect for history was almost forgotten.

In this perspective, restorers are not constrained to the mere maintenance of pre-existing features of the object, but have the right to intervene directly on the work -to rebuild the work's lacking parts, for instance - as long as the *spirit* and *intentions* of the author are preserved. This means that restorers must not only be acquainted with styles of different epochs, but also with the stylistic patterns and techniques of singular architectural schools:

the fundamental rules of restoration is the principle that monuments are to be restored "in the style they had".

The aim is indeed to bring back the restored work to the original project of its creator, that is to say, to its lost unity of style, which might turn out to be a non-existing ideal of perfect design. Each monument is a indeed a more or less consistent product of a determinate style, where style is regarded as historically and formally definite, that is, as something unified, coherent, and temporally well identifiable that can be inferred or deduced via "scientific" procedures of abstraction from careful direct observation.

Though purity of style – on this view- is mostly obtained by eliminating all accretions added in time, thus restituting the work to its original structure, this may not suffice. Given that all the elements of the work collaborate to the work's stylistic wholeness, they are all equally indispensable and necessary. Incomplete or defective works must thus be "completed", because lacunas, voids and gaps obstacle the aesthetic appreciation of the work by affecting the stylistic harmony of the whole. No classical sculpture, no monument, no work of art, however beautiful, can be considered worthy of display unless entire. But since classical antiquities are mostly found damaged, they must be refined either by adding new elements or by combining fragments from different origins. Emphasis is put on the notion of "completeness": either a work is complete –we are told- or it is not a work.

At the same time in which Viollet-le-Duc develops in France the methods of stylistic restoration, in England the work of the art critic and historian John Ruskin influences the radical anti-restoration approach of the English *Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings* (SPAB), founded by William Morris and Philip Webb in 1877. The type of restoration promoted by Viollet-le-Duc is harshly decried by Ruskin. Restoration, he holds, is the worst destruction an artwork may undergo, and destruction accompanied with false description of the thing destroyed. In his famous *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* he argues:

"Neither by the public, nor by those who have the care of public monuments, is the true meaning of the word *restoration* understood. It means the most total destruction which a building can suffer: a destruction out of which no remnants can be gathered: a destruction accompanied with false description of the thing destroyed. Do not let us deceive ourselves in this important matter; it is *impossible*, as impossible as to raise the dead, to restore

anything that has ever been great or beautiful in architecture. (…)For, indeed, the greatest glory of a building is not in its stones, not in its gold. Its glory is in its Age, and in that deep sense of voicefulness, of stern watching, of mysterious sympathy, nay, even of approval or condemnation, which we feel in walls that have long been washed by the passing waves of humanity."[622]

In the introduction to the work, Ruskin insists that architects must keep the history of the building as one most precious cultural heritage. In this regard, he promotes the concept of "integrated conservation": it is important, he claims, to preserve *both* the original style of the architecture *and* the current status of its conservation. To preserve does not mean to interrupt the life cycle of the building, but just to favor the maintenance of the work, in order to delay as much as possible the process of its decadence. In preservation, the age of construction is crucially significant, for it is a sign of the work authenticity. The kind of restoration sponsored by Viollet-le-Duc thus represents, for Ruskin, the worst kind of *deception*.

Ruskin's approach can be found in the *Manifesto* of the SPAB that Morris writes in 1878, which constitutes the philosophical basis for the Society's work up to present days:

"The civilized world of the nineteenth century has no style of its own amidst its wide knowledge of the styles of other centuries. From this lack and this gain arose in men's minds the strange idea of the Restoration of ancient buildings; and a strange and most fatal idea, which by its very name implies that it is possible to strip from a building this, that, and the other part of its history - of its life that is - and then to stay the hand at some arbitrary point, and leave it still historical, living, and even as it once was. In early times this kind of forgery was impossible, because knowledge failed the builders, or perhaps because instinct held them back. […]But those who make the changes wrought in our day under the name of Restoration, while professing to bring back a building to the best time of its history, have no guide but each his own individual whim to point out to them what is admirable and what contemptible; while the very nature of their task compels them to destroy something and to supply the gap by imagining what the earlier builders should or might have done"[623].

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[622] Ruskin, J., *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (Paperback). Dover Publications, 1989, pp. 233-234.
[623] https://www.spab.org.uk/what-is-spab-/the-manifesto/

The Society promotes new methods for architectural conservation extended to buildings of all times and styles: "It is for all these buildings, therefore, of all times and styles, that we plead, and call upon those who have to deal with them", the Manifesto concludes, "to put Protection in the place of Restoration". It is important to *repair* buildings, whilst avoiding all restoration. Repair is to "stave off decay by daily care", to prop perilous walls or mend a roof, but involves "no pretense of other art", and avoids all alteration or enlargement of the old work. In accordance with Ruskin's rigorous discipline, the Society focuses its interest on ethical, political and social reasons, emphasizing the historical and antique value of the work rather than to its purely aesthetical appearance. The aim of conservation is on this view to keep a historic building as close as possible to its original state as it has evolved in time, by means of the stabilization and repair of existing materials in the building.

An intermediate stance between Viollette-le-Duc and Ruskin is developed in Italy thanks to the work of Camillo Boito (1836-1914) and Gustavo Giovannoni (1873-1947). Boito and Giovannoni's idea is to differentiate the integrative intervention of restoration from the pre-existing parts of the artwork, *via* a clear distinction of the material employed and a simplification of the forms used in restoration. Viollette-le-Duc's approach is criticized as anti-scientific, namely, because it operates arbitrarily and produces forgeries and fakes. Stylistic restoration, Giovannoni claims, relies indeed on the claim that we can reduce to a "fictional unity of style" what history has instead transformed in a multiplicity of stylistic influences:

"Se il restauro (stilistico) riesce bene, crea dubbi e confusione negli studiosi, che non riescono più a distinguere quello che è autentico da quello che è nuovo; se riesce male, cosa probabile, reca disarmonie insanabili nel carattere d'arte" (…) "Il Violetteleduchismo ha fatto più male che bene, ed è ora superato nei moderni restauri, ma non nella semicoscienza e semicultura del popolo, che è tuttora attratto dalla pericolosa formula del ritorno all'antico"[624].

And Boito writes, on the same line:

"Ecco la teoria (…) ci si mette al posto dell'architetto primitivo, e s'indovina ciò che avrebbe fatto se i casi gli avessero permesso di ultimare la fabbrica. Questa teoria è piena di pericoli. Con essa non c'è dottrina, non c'è ingegno, che valga a salvar dagli arbitri."[625]

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[624] Giovannoni, G., *Questioni di architettura nella storia e nella vita. Edilizia, estetica architettonica, restauri, ambiente dei monumenti.* Roma 1929, p. 51
[625] Camillo Boito, 1884

Giovannoni distinguishes between different types of restoration: 1) restoration with the aim of consolidating the work, thus limiting the number of interventions required to a minimum; 2) *anastylosis*, the process of reunifying -each by each- all the elements composing the original pieces of a collapsed building; 3) restoration which aims to liberate the work from non-artistic accretions, but in the respect of superfetation; 4) restoration with the purpose of completing the accessory parts of the work, whilst avoiding remaking and forgery; 5) restoration done by adding essential parts to the work. This last form, which he calls innovational restoration, should be rejected in principle, Giovannoni claims, but at times turns out to be necessary: decision *for* or *against* one or the other type of intervention is empirical, and cannot be determined *a priori*.

Though Giovannoni and Boito's scientifically inspired theory of restoration had success in the course of the last century, Nineteenth Century theories on restoration have survived until ours days. A revival of John Ruskin's most conservative positions can be found in the so-called *de-restoration* movement of the Seventies. De-restoration theorists reject all forms of integration on the artwork justified with style, and argue for the removal of these modern additions. Many examples might be given of the renaissance, baroque and classicist restoration of antique sculptures and the subsequent removal of these restorations during the 1960s and 1970s (such as the *Laocoon group*, the *Apollo Belvedere*, the statues of the temple of *Aphaia*, etc.)

Violette-le-Duc's positions, by contrast, are currently held in Italy by curator Paolo Marconi, for instance, who rejects the relevance of the notion of authenticity in architecture. In Marconi's words: "La replica dell'architettura è il solo metodo per conservare a lungo l'architettura e le città, a condizione beninteso che sia filologicamente ed artisticamente qualificata"[626]. Replicating and re-perfecting the work, according to Marconi, is a legitimate form of restoration, for restoration's goals are not only to maintain, but also to enhance the beauty of those places and buildings which have become true urban and architectural icons [627]. Integral conservation approaches, Marconi argues, inhibit curators from intervening concretely on the work. Curators simply produce graphic relief studies, maps of the material degradations and computerized tabs, but avoid any concrete

[626] Marconi, P., *Il Recupero Della Bellezza*, Ginevra-Milano, Skira, 2005, pp. 178-328
[627] Ivi

action on the work. By contrast, Marconi's conception of restoration as a "*rifazione à l'identique*" calls for a direct intervention of restorers on the work. Strange as it may seem, examples of this type of restoration are not uncommon in present days; just consider for instance the case of Dresden' *Frauenkirche*, bombed in February 1945 by the Royal Air Force and accurately reconstructed and inaugurated in 2005; the case of the 1975 restoration via *anastylosis* of those parts of the Parthenon dispersed after the 1687 explosion shafts in Greece; or in more recent time, think of the case of Mostar's bridge, completely rebuild in 2004 after its complete destruction in 1993.

Brandi's *Theory of Restoration*

Far from being exhaustive, this brief overview may have left more than someone unhappy. Our aim here, though, was not to delineate a history of restoration, but rather to highlight some of the most general trends that may be relevant for a philosophical inquiry on the issue. To sum up, common positions concerning restoration are:

1)Stylistic restoration, originally derived from the work of Eugène Violette-le-Duc;

2)Conservation or the anti-restoration trend, inspired by John Ruskin's ideas;

3)Scientific restoration, the idea that restoration implies application of scientific methods, and assessing each intervention independently on an empirical basis.

These positions rely on distinct theoretical grounds, and imply different ontological approaches regarding the nature of works of art. However, none of them is fully philosophical. The literature concerning restoration consists mainly in technically specialized texts written by architects, art historian or restorers and dedicated to the professionals. But there is, however, a notable exception to this trend.

In tracing hitherto the *status artis* of restoration theories, we have intentionally omitted the role played in the debate by Cesare Brandi. Critic, historian, and philosopher of art, Brandi is internationally known as one of a theorist of restoration. His famous "*Theory of Restoration*" was written throughout the 40' and the 50', but eventually came out only in 1963. The work has recently experienced a new surge of interest, thanks to its translation in French (2001) and English (2005) and to the organization of a number of events, in 2006, celebrating Brandi's centennial year. The notoriety of Brandi's *Theory of Restoration* at an international level is probably explained by the originality of a project that hardly finds other current echoes.

As philosopher Paolo D'Angelo remarks[628], Italian scholars have nevertheless rarely devoted their attention to Brandi's theory of restoration, by focusing mostly on his philosophical production, such as the series of dialogues called Elicona (1945). In recent years, however, there has been a renewal of concern for Brandi as a theorist of restoration. His ideas are used as a tool to examine of specific artistic genres Brandi himself had not contemplated. By referring to Brandi's conception of restoration, for instance, João Manuel Mimoso[629] offers an examination of the restoration of *azulejo* panels, Lilian Hansar attempts at widening his principles to urban developed environments[630], whereas Francesca Valentini[631] applies his ideas to the restoration of contemporary works of art.

More institutionally, Brandi's *Theory of Restoration* has served as the basis for many international document on conservation, starting from the 1964 Italian "*Carta di Venezia*" a code of professional standards that gives an international framework for the preservation and restoration of ancient buildings.

For its widely historical-critical approach, his theory is regarded as a paradigm in the development of conservation policies.

But why is his Brandi's work on restoration so *conceptually* relevant? An easy answer is that more than being just a practical manual for the professionals, his *Theory of Restoration* is also, and primarily, a theoretical inquiry on the philosophy of restoration.

The work begins with some few fundamental concepts aimed at delineating the essence and the specific nature of works of art, so as to highlight the role of what Brandi calls "the critical-historical definition" thought as the basis of any intervention of restoration. His idea of restoration as "the methodological moment of the recognition of the work of art" limits the field from the outset to works that are explicitly recognized as Art, leaving aside, for instance, restoration of industrial products. Restoration, Brandi argues, starts with an act of recognition: as soon as something is recognized as art, then its preservation becomes a cultural must. He is not explicit on the modalities of this recognition: he describes it as an acknowledgement in the conscience of singular individuals or communities. However, this discernment always implies at least what can be called a "critical act of separation". For regardless if they are fruits of human spirituality or products of human craft, when works

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[628] D'Angelo, P. *L'estetica italiana del Novecento*, volume di pp. 302, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2007

[629] Mimoso, J. M., *Cesare Brandi's Theory of Restoration and azulejos*,

[630] Hansar, Lilian, *The Lacuna, an Empty Space in Urban Construction. Cesare Brandi's Restoration Theory in the Integral Preservation of Old Town Areas,* pp.139-151

[631] Valentini, F., *Cesare Brandi's Theory of restoration: some principles discussed in relation with the conservation of Contemporary Art* 2007

are identified as art they are literally *disjointed* or *separated* from other objects of common use:

"It is essential here to state that the special product of human activity called a work of art is such because of a particular and conscious recognition. […]The human product that deserves this recognition is there, before our eyes, but only as long as the conscious appreciation of it as a work of art does not definitely exclude it from the community of other products can it be generically classified as a product of human activity".

Those familiar with contemporary philosophy of art might be skeptical toward the immediacy of this recognition. Many contemporary works of art, it may be argued, are not easily discernible and thus cannot be easily distinguishable from everyday objects. In the case of ready-mades, conceptual and multi-medium works, the difference between artworks and "mere real things", to use Danto's terms, is matter of debate. But Brandi is subtler than one might initially think. For he states that a work of art is not a work of art until it is recognized as such; it needs our special regard to exist as art: "Do not think that one must begin with an ideal in mind, for […] what is essential for the work of art is its recognition as a work of art"[632].

Obviously, Brandi is mainly concerned with traditional artworks, whose expressive purposes and media are clear: pictorial works on canvas and wood, frescoes, painted tablet and architectural pieces. The difference between a work of art and a "product", he contends, relies on the fact that works of art originate from a creative process, whilst ordinary products are created to serve practical needs.

In this regard, architecture can be properly considered an art even if it has functional purposes, for it results from a creative process[633]. Once this act of recognition has been accomplished, Brandi continues, the work of art "offers itself to the individual consciousness" in a dual way. As a product of human activity, a work of art is always characterized by two contrasting aspect: an aesthetic and an historical one. That is to say, a work of art has an impact on the viewer both as an *artistic exemplar*, with unique aesthetic features and properties, and as a historical *document* of past human history. This is particularly important for restoration, for restoration is defined as: "The methodological

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[632] Brandi, C., *Theory of Restoration*, ed. by G. Basile, translated from Italian by Rockwell, C., Teoria del Restauro, Istituto Centrale per il Restauro, Nardini Editore, 2005, p. 47
[633] To this extent, we can suppose that Brandi's account is liberal enough to include design in art.

moment in which the work of art is recognized, in its physical being and in its dual aesthetical and historical nature, in view of its transmission to the future."[634]

From the viewpoint of restoration, thus, works of art are always at the same time both artistic exemplars and historical documents. The co-presence of the historical and the aesthetic instance in the same artwork is fundamental, yet it is also the source of all the problems concerned with restoration.

When the two-fold identity of artworks fails to receive adequate acknowledgement, restoration incurs in mistakes. The first consists in overestimating the *aesthetic* case (istanza estetica) to the detriment of the historical case (istanza storica): to our purposes, it can be symbolized by the approach of Viollet-le-Duc, examined above. The second consists, conversely, in overestimating the *historical* on the aesthetic case, and it can thus be exemplified by the approach of John Ruskin.

In the first case, restoration gives rise to what Brandi refers to as "the most serious heresy": stylistic restoration[635]. Proponents of stylistic restoration take on the role of the original artist and aim at the reestablishment of the aesthetic appearance of the work. However, trying to bring a work back to its original condition means, according to Brandi, to perform a historical falsification. In rebuilding parts or entire works, advocates of stylistic restoration merge indeed the old and the new and create a mix of inauthentic and authentic elements, thus producing a general sensation of deceitfulness.

In the second case, restoration results in the integral conservation of the current *status quo* of the work, something which Brandi calls "archeological restoration" (p. 64). If works of art are primarily intended as historical documents, then their value is taken to reside primarily in their age. Older the age, greater the value; as Ruskin put it: "For, indeed, the greatest glory of a building is not in its stones, not in its gold. Its glory is in its Age, and in that deep sense of voicefulness, of stern watching, of mysterious sympathy, nay, even of approval or condemnation, which we feel in walls that have long been washed by the passing waves of humanity."[636] Yet, according to Brandi, this conception is only viable in the case of ruins, but does not apply indistinctly to all works of art. For works are also, and primarily, objects of our aesthetic appreciation; and it is the aim of restoration to preserve this aesthetic character.

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[634] Brandi, C., 2005, p.48
[635] Brandi also calls it "restoration by fantasy" "(…)There will be (and certainly have been) people who would insert restoration into precisely this most intimate and unrepeatable phase of the artistic process. This is the most serious heresy of restoration: it is restoration by fantasy." (2005, p.64).
[636] Ruskin, J., 1989, pp. 233-34

Contrary to both these approaches, Brandi formulates two famous axioms which summarize what he believes the goals of restoration should be. Interestingly, he calls them "the deontological" principles of restoration:

Principle 1: "Only the material of a work of art is restored".

Principle 2: "Restoration should aim to re-establish the potential oneness of the work of art, as long as this is possible without committing artistic or historical forgery, and without erasing every trace of the passage through time of the work of art.

These principles raise a series of different concerns.

Notice, in the first place, that the prominence assigned by Principle 1 to the physical dimension of the artwork may open the door to a number of ontological considerations, concerning the peculiar status of the artwork *material*. What, one may wonder, is the material of a work of art? Why does it play such a central role for restoration? And what ontological consequences follow from insisting on its relevance for restoration?

Principle 2, by contrast, entails that restoration has to preserve the integrity of the work of art without producing forgeries. In this way, it paves the way for a reflection on the role played by the notion of authenticity in art. But what does "authenticity" mean, exactly? What does it imply? And in what way can the concern for authenticity coexist with the concern for aesthetics?

But Principle 2 also insists on the fact that restoration should never: "erase tracing of the passage of time". To this extent, it should be said that Brandi has a theory on the temporality of works of art, which he takes to be tripartite. First, he claims, there is the moment of the work creation, i.e. the period in which the process of artistic making has taken place. Extrinsically, it coincides with the epoch of the author and with the social, cultural, political environment in which the work has come into light. Intrinsically, it is the moment of the work ideation, arrangement and physical actualization. Its length may thus vary, but it is nonetheless a concluded time ending with the last gesture of the author on the work. Second, there is the time elapsed between the end of the artistic process and the moment of its present appreciation. This interval of time coincides with the life-time of the work. It is characterized by the material changes the art object has experienced in time, and expresses the work's historical dimension. Third, there is the moment of the current appreciation of the work, which Brandi identifies with the work's recognition in the consciousness of observers. It is the time in which the object is identified and appreciated

as a work of art. Thus, it coincides with the present moment in which the art object is physically before our eyes as an entity of perception and as an object of aesthetical appreciation. These three chronological moments - that of the work production, that of its existence in time, and that of its current appreciation- coexist and contribute to the work's identity. Restoration should never cancel historical time nor re-activate the author's creative process, unless it creates forgeries. The only possible time to restore is the time of the work's current appreciation, for restoration should never attempt at reversing time nor aim to abolish history:

"the only legitimate moment for the act of restoration is the actual moment of conscious awareness of the work of art. At this time the work exists in the moment and in its historical present; yet it is also part of the past and, at the cost of not being part of human consciousness, is thus part of the history."[637]

Brandi's principles of restoration allow us to appreciate all the complexity of the issues raised by restoration. Restoration is not merely something of aesthetic interest, nor is it simply an historical matter. Rather, it represents one most challenging issue, and one in which aesthetic, historical, and cultural concerns are simultaneously involved and require contextual consideration.

Bringing all these aspects together epitomizes what Brandi calls: the dialectics of restoration. In the wake of Brandi, we will address some of these problems separately.

We will begin by trying to understand what impact restoration has on contemporary ontological discussion.

Ontological Issues concerning Restoration

Brandi's first principle is based on the presupposition that the physical form of a work of art should in principle last as long as possible. Recognizing a work of art as art, he states, coincides firstly with being aware of its physical and material consistency. He distinguishes between two aspects related to material: the material understood as structure and the material understood as appearance. These two facets represent two sides of the same coin. Even if they can be separated in theory, the notions of material structure and material appearance are indivisible. As structure, the material supports the appearance:

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[637] Brandi, C., 2005, p.64.

in a wooden panel, for instance, the structure is the wood, whereas the appearance is the painted picture. The picture, in turn, is what transmits the image, namely, what Brandi regards as the true object of the aesthetic appreciation. The work of art, hence, exists as an image, but necessarily subsists as a material object.

What is particularly relevant, however, is that restoration always deals with the material of the work, thus operating both on its structure and on its appearance. To explain the notions of material structure, appearance and image, Brandi provides the example of a collapsed building, been partially destroyed by an earthquake. Reconstruction, he argues, should modify the internal *structure* of the building to ensure it against other natural disasters, but it should not change the *appearance* of it, so that its *image* is preserved:

"In this case, appearance cannot be limited merely to the outer surface of the stone blocks for they still have to remains as blocks – and not only on the surface. Nevertheless, the interior wall structure can be altered to protect the building against further earthquakes. Even the interior structure of any culoms can be changed, as long as the appearance of the material is not altered. In all likelihood however, a delicate approach will be necessary to ensure that the altered structure does not influence appearance"[638].

In this regard, material is, according to Brandi, what "transmits the epiphany of the image". As it is obvious, the phenomenological terminology he employs appears to be modeled on Husserl's vocabulary, read through Sartre's *L'imagination* and *L'imaginaire*. As several scholars have pointed out[639] Sartre had actually a strong influence on Brandi, and especially on his conception of the transcendence of the aesthetic object (what he refers to as the image) with regard to the material that composes it. To this extent, one might wonder whether Brandi can rightly be considered an idealist, at least just as Sartre was. This is a tricky point. However, given his insistence on the difference between the perceived object (the brute material, the panel, the fabric, the marble) and the aesthetic object *qua* object of appreciation, and given the relevance he assigns to the material of the work, he cannot be considered an idealist. At least, not an idealist *tout court*. For what concerns the theory restoration, for instance, Brandi anti-idealistically defends the sensorial primacy of the material of the work of art as the unique object of restoration. Yet, in the context of artistic
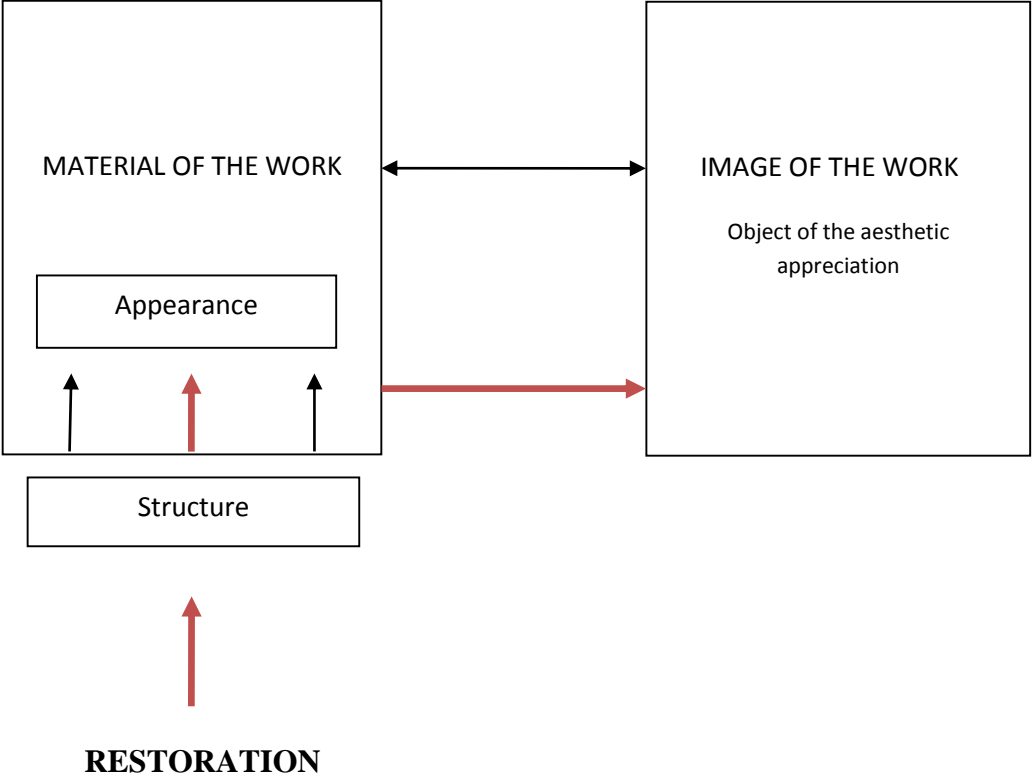
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[638] Brandi, C., 2005, p. 52
[639] For discussion see: D'Angelo 2006, Carboni 2004, Philippot 1953

creation, he idealistically thinks that the material has a secondary function with respect to the importance of the *image* that is generated.

Beyond exegetical issues, what should concern us the most, however, is that in Brandi's conception many "lamentable and destructive" errors come about because of failures to investigate the dual nature of the material of the work of art *qua* structure and *qua* appearance. In the following, we shall see what these mistakes are, and what ontological basis they are grounded in.

Bolder arrows represent Restoration interventions:

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┌─────────────────────────┐          ┌─────────────────────────┐
│                         │          │                         │
│                         │          │                         │
│  MATERIAL OF THE WORK   │◄────────►│   IMAGE OF THE WORK     │
│                         │          │                         │
│                         │          │  Object of the aesthetic│
│   ┌─────────────────┐   │          │      appreciation       │
│   │   Appearance    │   │          │                         │
│   └─────────────────┘   │          │                         │
│     ▲     ▲     ▲       │═════════►│                         │
└─────────────────────────┘          └─────────────────────────┘
      ┌─────────────────┐
      │    Structure    │
      └─────────────────┘
              ▲
              ║
              ║

          **RESTORATION**
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The positivist fallacy

This is the conception according to which the material determinates and even generates the image of the work:

"The error is concealed in the view – dear to the positivism of Semper and Taine – that material generates or determines style. This sophistry stems from paying insufficient attention to the distinction between structure and appearance, and from assimilating the material, as the vehicle of the image, into the image itself".[640]

This fallacy erroneously reduces the aesthetic image of a work to its physical or structural properties. Translated in ordinary philosophical terms, this means that it misunderstands the relation insisting between the material and the aesthetic properties of the work of art.

If the aesthetic properties of a work are reducible to an ensemble of fundamental material properties, individuating an aesthetic property is equivalent to individuating of a primary properties. On a first glance, the positivist fallacy can thus be understood as a form of strong *epistemic reductionism*. With epistemic reductionism we mean the claim that knowledge of the aesthetic domain can be reduced to knowledge of the fundamental level – namely, of the physical structure - of art objects. On this view, aesthetic propositions are true as long as the aesthetic properties they entail are reducible to physical or structural properties. But what is the "aesthetic domain"? And what this "reduction" means?

Epistemic reductionism has it that the attribution of secondary properties - such as aesthetic properties - is equivalent to the attribution of a number of fundamental (structural) properties. Thus, aesthetic properties are reducible to an ensemble of fundamental properties. This implies that no difference is possible at the level of secondary properties without a difference at the level of fundamental properties: change may happen in the aesthetic aspect of the work (in its *image*) if and only if there is a correspondent alteration in its structural feature.

However, this is *prima facie* debatable. As time goes by, art-objects continue to acquire or to lose aesthetic properties, without that any change in their physical structure is envisaged. If Danto is right, the aesthetically relevant properties possessed by works of art *increase* with time:

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[640] Brandi, C., 2005, p. 52

"Suppose an artist determines that H shall henceforth be artistically relevant for his paintings. Then, in fact, both H and non-H become artistically relevant for all paintings, and if his is the first and only painting that is H, every other painting in existence becomes non-H., and the entire community of paintings is enriched, together with a doubling of the available style opportunities."[641]

After the emergence of abstract art, in the Twentieth Century, Turner has come to be considered a sort of precursor of abstractionism *ante-litteram*. Viewers who are well acquainted with abstract paintings can now look at Turner's pictorial production – and at the use he makes of light, especially – with an eye to Rothko's canvas. Turner's paintings have acquired, over time, qualities that they did not originally possess. As Danto puts it: "Each new experience in art changes one's view of the history of all art in the way that one's vision of colors is no longer the same after experiencing Impressionism."[642]

This provide evidence against the idea that the aesthetic (the *image*) can be reduced to the structural (the *material*).

But, one might note, more than a form of *epistemic* reductionism, the positivist fallacy could better be thought as a form of *explanatory* reductionism. Explanatory reductionism is concerned with the idea that second-order properties, such as aesthetic properties, can be explained in terms of first-order physical properties. The idea that aesthetic descriptions can always be successfully replaced by physical descriptions is, however, questionable. It can be that second-order properties have an *explicative role* not reducible to that of first-order properties. To this extent, physical properties may be deficient in explanation and a full comprehension of a work of art may require a reference to an ensemble of second order expressive properties. As Pouivet shows, the replacement of a physical predicate to an aesthetic predicate does not preserve the meaning of the latter:

« Soit les deux enoncés suivant qui s'appliquent tous les deux à *La Joconde* :
(1) *La Joconde* est un tableau rempli de grâce et de mystère."
(2) *La Joconde* est un tableau rectangulaire et contenant un certain ensemble de couleurs.

[641] Danto, *The Artworld*, Journal of Philosophy 61, no. 19, October 1964, p. 571
[642] Danto, 1964, p.583

(2) n'est pas substituable à (1) *salva veritate*. Les prédicats de (1) n'ont pas la signification des prédicats de (2) dans le langage ordinaire. Rien ne garantit évidemment que si un tableau est rectangulaire et possède certains couleurs il sera gracieux et mystérieux. »[643]

The non-reducibility of aesthetic predicates to physical predicates implies that the two are neither identical nor extensionally equivalent. However, this does not entail that the presence of an aesthetic property is inexplicable. While physical properties represent the necessary condition to explain the emergency of aesthetic properties, they are not sufficient by themselves. Certain relations of dependence of aesthetic properties on physical properties should be acknowledged to escape the risk of aesthetic reductionism and ontological dualism (that is, the idea that the aesthetic and the physical are completely independent domains).

The fact that aesthetic properties are not reducible to physical properties does not imply that there is no relation between the two. If no such relation is allowed, then the aesthetic properties could no more be thought as *real* properties of the object. Besides, restoration would not make sense, at least insofar as restoration entails, according to Brandi, intervening on the *material* of the work to intervene on its *image*, or, to put it otherwise, intervening on a determined bundle of material properties of the work to affect its aesthetic appearance.

Restoration, therefore, requires that some relations between aesthetic and non-aesthetic properties (the image and the material) is admitted, even if it is not describable by means of a law of cause-effect.

The presence of some non-aesthetic traits is a symptom of the presence of certain aesthetic traits: from the former, we deduce the latter. Let us explain this point with an example.

Consider *The Scream*, by Edward Munch. The painting expresses the desperate pain that pervades nature. The figure is deformed by an indescribable fear: his grimace stimulates in the viewer a feeling of anguish and anxiety. Each element of the painting contribute to this sensation: the use of acid color and long strokes, the wavy and diagonal lines, the light hitting the face as a flash. All these things make the viewer experiencing a sense of disease, but this sense of disease depends on the technical and structural devices used by Munch. This is important: the presence of non-aesthetic features such as "cold ad sharp colors", "distorted lines" "deformed figures" indicate that a particular aesthetic effect will be

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[643] Pouivet, R*., L'ontologie de l'oeuvre d'art*, Edition Jacqueline Chabonne, Paris, 1999, p.

produced in the viewer. In other words, this means that the aesthetic effect *emerges* from the structure of the painting.

In recent philosophical literature, the notion of "emergence" has been examined in the light of the modern notion of *supervenience*. In aesthetics, use of the term "supervenience" can be found in Levinson (1984, 1990), Currie (1989), and Pouivet (1999), among the others. Such an employ, however, had been already foreshadowed by Frank Sibley who, while never using the term, had laid the basis for its application to aesthetics in his *Aesthetic Concepts* (1959) and *Aesthetic and Nonaesthetic* (1965). Analysis of the notion of *supervenience* may be useful to shed some light on Brandi 's idea of "the epiphany" of the image from the material, understood as the vehicle and support of the image. But what is *supervenience* in aesthetics? And what do we mean when we say that something *supervene* on something else?

At a first glance, to say that aesthetic properties *supervene* on non-aesthetic properties means that the former are ontologically dependent on the latter whilst being irreducible to them. In more general terms, a set of aesthetic properties A is said to supervene on a set of non-aesthetic properties B when differences at the level of A cause differences at the level of B. Supervenience thus imply a form of loose dependence that is not reductionism. There is no reduction of A to B: knowledge of A does not permit knowledge of B, and accordingly, knowledge of B does not imply knowledge of A. From the presence of properties of the A-type, we cannot deduce the presence of B-type properties, because no set of basic properties B suffices for predicating the instantiation of a specific set of aesthetic properties A.

To put it bluntly, this means that two artworks having different material structures may express the same emotions, say, sadness, whereas two artworks sharing the same material structure may entail a completely different expressive content. Supervenience does not provide a nomological model nor a causal explanation to the question as to why some aesthetic properties emerge from some non-aesthetic properties. It is just a device to describe the phenomenon. There are three fundamental that characterize supervenience:

1) co-variation: two things indiscernible in their basic physical properties are indiscernible also in their supervening properties;

2) dependence: the supervening properties of an object depend on its basic physical properties;

3) irreducibility: the supervening properties of an object are irreducible to its basic physical properties)

According to Levinson[644], the aesthetic properties of an object supervene 1) on its structural properties, understood as its perceivable features, shape, color, etc..; 2) on its sub-structural properties, namely, on its physical and /or micro-physical non-perceivable features; and 3) on its contextual cultural features. Though the aesthetic properties of an object are thought as dependent on its non-aesthetic properties, they also are a function of the relationship between the object and a judging subject, that is to say, aesthetic properties depend on our beliefs about objects. As Pouivet highlights, aesthetic supervenience is not direct, but always mediated by a perceiving subject. In Pouivet words:

"Les propriétés esthétiques surviennent sur des propriétés intentionnelles, comme celle de croire avoir affaire à un tableau, par example. Autrement dit, pour qu'une œuvre ait une propriété esthétique, disons d'être triste, il faut que le tableau soit triste. Il faut aussi qu'une personne possédent la croyance qu'il s'agit d'un tableau puisse attribuer cette propriété à ce tableau (…)Il y a des propriétés réelles des objets appréhendées seulement en termes de croyances supposant un apprentissage »[645]

Since aesthetic properties always involve a *relationship* between a subject's beliefs concerning a particular object and the status of the object in itself, they are *relational*. This does not imply that they are non-objective or completely subjective, for aesthetic properties are features of the *objects* of our beliefs, not features of our *beliefs* in themselves. Notice, here, that saying that aesthetic properties are relational doesn't mean that they are unreal. That something is relational does not diminish its degree of reality. Relational properties can be conceived as "external" properties, as opposed to the internal properties an object has *per se*. To this extent, a property is relational or external with respect to an object if it depends on the relation with other entities. Does this necessarily imply that external properties are subjective or lack ontological reliability? It seems questionable: it is not because it is internal that a property is objective. Of course, a distinction between a strong form of objectivity -namely, total independence from the perceiving subject- and a moderate form of objectivity – partial independence from the perceiving subject – should here be envisaged: aesthetic properties are in this sense partially objective. This is to say

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[644] Levinson, J., *What Are Aesthetic Properties?*, in Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplement 78, 2005.
[645] Pouivet, R., 1999

that though they depend in part on subjective projections, they rely however on a physical basis. In no sense, however, they can be taken as fantasies of our mind .

The idealist fallacy

According to Brandi, the idealist fallacy is when one neglects the role played by the material *qua* structure in the constitution of the work of art, thus reducing the image of the work to the work's appearance. It is the error of those views that can be called, in D'Angelo's words, theories of the "non yet painted picture"[646]. Originated in the work of Plotino and fully theorized in the Twentieth Century by Croce and Collingwood, these idealist or mentalist approaches deny that works of art are physical objects.

First, idealists argue that, in order to produce a work, an imaginative act is not only required but also sufficient. Artworks consist of something that is *in* the head of people (the artist and the public), they do not consists of physical structures: they are what appears in the mind of the viewers, i.e. to the mental image that is generated. This seems to be what Brandi has in mind when he affirms that the idealist fallacy: "Reduces the image of the work to its aspect".

Our mental experience in experiencing an artwork is considered −on this view- as totally independent from the physical object that generates it. According to idealism, artworks are like the shadows projected on the Platonic cave: knowing what produces them is ultimately not interesting, since all that really matters is the effect these shadows create.

Notice that if artworks are mental representations, then there is also no point in asking about their ontological status.

Second, idealists deny that works of art are made available to the public in a direct encounter. The artists is the only who can have direct access to the work. Artworks are regarded as the emotions felt by the artist, the simplest and rawest being the psychical emotions, the most complex being the intellectual emotions. Viewers have access to artworks, understood as emotions, only through the artist's mediation. Just like one cannot experience directly the pains and beliefs of another person, the same goes for emotions. When we listen to the sounds of a musical performance, observe the shapes and colors of a picture, or when we admire the shapes of a statue, we are not properly appreciating the

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[646] D'Angelo, P., 2007

artwork, idealists contend. Colors, sounds, stones, are just devices used by the artist to exteriorize the imaginary event he has lived in his mind in the creation of the work. True experience of a work coincides instead with an *imaginary* act. This act of imagination, that each viewer singularly undergoes via the perception of the art object, *is* the real work of art. To this extent, idealism assumes that works of art are private entities. Each viewer, in appreciating the artwork, is seen as privately engaged in his own, incommunicable, imaginative act.

As Thomasson remarks[647], different positions coexist in the idealist camp. Whereas Sartre, for instance, in his work *L'imagination,* conceives works as mental objects created and sustained by imaginative acts, Collingwood stresses the role of imagination in perception to argue eventually that works are just mental *experiences* dependent on human intentionality (that is, they are neither entities nor structures). Despite these differences, idealists all agree with Croce that there is a distinction between the moment of the formulation of the pure image *in interiore homine*, and the moment of its physical realization. These are two different actions, both theoretically and practically separated.

The contrast idealism assumes between the ordinary perception of objects and the contemplation of works of art may find reason in an inadequate phenomenology of ordinary experience. According to the idealist approach, "imagining" consists of highlighting some aspects of reality and attenuating others. Hence, imagination grabs more than raw perception. Imagining a work of art, to this extent, corresponds to what doctors do when they hypothesize a diagnosis just observing mere symptoms. Yet, this does not entail that the imagined object (the work of art or the disease) is imaginary and exist only in the observer's mind, nor than ordinary perception *per se* is neutral or imagination-free.

Before concluding, notice that a possible argument in favor of stylistic restoration may draw upon the idealist assumption that artworks are unchanging things only contingently related to those material objects in which they are embodied. Preserving their original artistic value would mean to erase all the effects time has produced on them, and to imagine seeing them as if they had been just completed, as we could step into a time machine. Yet, to see paintings, for example, as if they were timeless, we must both learn much which a knowledgeable observer of the time would have find self-evident, and also

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[647] Thomasson, A., L., 2005

forget much about what we presently know: "While that does not necessarily undermine the belief that artworks are like Platonic forms, it does show the complexity of such an ideal"[648]. Indeed, if Danto's historicist argument is true, then even the perfect preservation and integral restoration of an artwork's colors would not conserve their original effect. That system of color relations will look different to us now than when it was initially conceived, because we bring to it different expectations, associations, analogies. Again, seeing is not a neutral or passive activity, but always implies active imagining.

The "Physical Object" Fallacy

In contrast with idealism, the "physical object hypothesis", to use Wollheim's famous definition, is the conception according to which works of art can be reduced to their material structure, that is to say, to the physical object that constitute them. Whereas to explain the "positivist fallacy" we referred to *epistemological* reductionism, here we can introduce the notion of *ontological* reductionism. Often called *physicalism* or *materialism*, ontological reductionism is a default stance among most ontologists and metaphysicians. In aesthetics, ontological reductionism corresponds to the idea that works of art are fundamentally constituted but by the physical properties of the object which the work ultimately is.

This is, according to Brandi, highly controversial. Of course it is true that only the *material* of the work of art is restored, but what he refers to as the "material" does not merely coincide with the "physical stuff" of which the work is made of. The *material* of the work is formed by the air, the light, the site to which the work belong, the surrounding environment and even by by the fact that the work is regarded in a certain way. This wide notion of material is fundamental to understand much contemporary art, like for instance environmental art, land art and conceptual art, which are site-specific by definition. But leaving contemporary examples aside, architectural works in general have a special relation with the environment in which they are placed: buildings, indeed, are things "with a habitat", so to say. Interaction with the surrounding context impinges on the work's meaning and aesthetic value. This is the reason why Brandi claims that the removal of a

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[648] David Carrier, Art without its artists? *British Journal of Aesthetics* 22 (3): 1982, p.293

work from its original place must be avoided, unless for reasons of preservation. Isolating an artwork from its habitat, he argues, means indeed to falsify it.

But let us closely consider the notion of material, in Brandi's definition. Why, we may ask, is *the material of* a work of art so important?

The physical medium of the work has a massive relevance, for Brandi, because it is the *locus* by which aesthetic meanings emerge. The structure of an artwork – produced by the artist's manipulation of physical materials – constitute the basis of its particular identity. Alteration in the physical material of the work may result in a change in the meaning. Insofar as the aging process alters the physical structure of a work, it can threaten its identity and meaning¸ Brandi claims, this is why we restore.

But what is the relation between the artwork and the material of which it is made of?

An easy answer is that works are "something made out of something", namely, of certain material. The basic example is that of a sculptor carving out a statue from marble: in this case, we say that the statue is made out of the stony material. Clearly, the notion of material has to do with what we call art *medium*: to this extent, we generally say that an artwork is constituted by the material of a peculiar medium. Though media are commonplace reduced to physical materials, however, they are not exactly the same.

We can indeed distinguish between two notions of medium: the stuff or physical material of which the work is made, on the one hand, and what conveys the work's artistic content on the other. Davies adopts this distinction in *Art as Performance* when distinguishing between the "vehicular medium" and the "artistic medium". The latter, he argues, is closer in meaning to "art form" than to "physical stuff", in the former sense. According to Davies, the "artistic medium" involves: "The conception of a work by its author as being a work of a certain type"[649], that is, it is determined by how the author conceive the work: "attention to the artistic medium of a work necessarily refers us to the intentionality of a maker who acts in light of these supposed understandings in manipulating a vehicular medium"[650].

The notion of *artistic medium*, however, may be also useful to overpass the gap between the two ways of describing what the artist does –namely, manipulating a vehicular medium, on the one hand, and articulating an artistic content, on the other. Artistic medium expresses thus, in Davies words: "A way of characterizing the result of the artist's manipulations of the vehicular medium: considered in terms of the artistic medium, mere

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[649] Davies, D., *Art as Performance*, 2004, p.60
[650] Ivi

marks on the canvas are "brushstrokes" or "impasto" for example"[651]. Artistic medium therefore constitutes the required bridge between the artist's manipulation of the vehicular medium and the artistic contents that can be recognized in the artwork.

The distinction between vehicular and artistic medium is interesting, for it provides us with a thorough understanding of what it is to create a work of art: artwork results do not only result from the artist's manipulation of a vehicular medium but also from the articulation of an artistic medium.

Relevantly, it seems possible to apply the concept of artistic medium to Brandi's wide idea of "material". The distinction between artistic and vehicular medium can be equated in this sense to Brandi's distinction between the "physical stuff" of the work, namely, what the work is made of, and its "material". As we have seen, the aesthetic image of an artwork, according to Brandi, is not reducible to the physical features of the object the work is, i.e., to the *vehicular medium*. Works transcend or exceed the physical object they are made of, since they result from the *combination* between one vehicular physical medium (such as marble, paint, and even sounds or words) and the contextual, historical, atmospheric, environmental artistic material. When applied to restoration, this claims proves fundamental.

However, this notion of "material" (or, in Davies' terms, of "artistic medium") is far from being obvious. What, we may wonder, does it exactly mean? And how are we to preserve it?

Of course, if "material" encompasses the whole environment surrounding a work of art, then it cannot be fully preserved. However, there is clearly a difference between, for instance, building a new supermarket near to the Sistina's Chapel and removing the frescoes to place them in a museum. But if some small changes in the work's "material" are acceptable, how are we to stop?

We are here on a slippery slope. But at least we are sure of something: ontological reductionism in aesthetics is to be rejected, for it provides a naïf account of artworks.

Objects and works

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[651] Davies, D., *Medium*, in The Routledge Companion to Philosophy and Music ed. by T. Gracyk, and A. Kania, Rotledge, London and New York, 2011 p. 49
2011

We are left now with some thorny issues to address: what is the relation between artworks and objects? How can a work be ontologically different from its constituting object whilst at the same time depending structurally on it?

At a first glance, we can assume that the existence of the constituting object – a painted canvas, a piece of shaped marble- is not enough for the existence of a work. As Brandi says, there is more to a work than just the stuff that constitutes it. However, it is also true that works are underdetermined by the structural properties of their constituting object. Roman Ingarden has an effective way to put the issue: "In its structure and properties" he claims "a work of art always extends beyond its material substrate, the real thing which ontologically supports it, although the properties of the substrate are not irrelevant to the properties of the work of art which depends upon it."[652]

In aesthetics, the idea that a work of art is identical to its composing material is generally taken as a consequence of Leibinz's *Law of the Indiscernibility of Identical.*

Leibniz's Law implies that an entity *a* is identical with an entity *b* if, for any property *f*, if *a* has *f* then *b* has *f*. To put it otherwise, all properties possessed by *a* must also be possessed by *b*. This principle have often been used to show that a work cannot be identical with the mere real thing: a statue is not identical with the constituting piece of marble because there is a number of properties of the former that the latter fails to have.

Sculptures, for instance, have certain conditions of identity and survival that lumps of material do not possess: the clay can continue to exist even though the sculpture itself has ceased to exist. Moreover, some predicates apply to the physical object and not to the work: works of art have representative, expressive, and aesthetic properties that mere physical objects do not possess.

When Danto writes for example that Duchamp's *Fountain* is: "Bold, impudent, impertinent, witty and intelligent"[653] he attributes a set of properties to it that cannot be ascribed either to the material stuff – the ceramic - nor to the object, namely, the urinal. Kit Fine, on the same line, notices that the range of descriptive predicates that may be truly applied to the statue cannot be applied to the physical object: "In the familiar case of the statue, there will be a clear sense in which the statue may be *defective, substandard, well or badly made,*

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[652] Ingarden, R., *Der Streit um die Existenz der Welt* , Bd. I/II. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1964/1965, p.198
[653] Danto, A., The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, Volume 33, Issue 2 (Winter, 1974), pp. 139-148

valuable, ugly, Romanesque, exchanged, insured or *admired* even though the alloy which makes it up it is not."[654]

However, one may object, it may be that the properties of the physical object and the properties of the work of art do not *really* differ, in an ontological sense: to this extent, the alleged difference may not be a difference in the *things* – the physical object and the work - but in the *descriptions* we furnish of the relevant things. Physical objects and work are the same, where "to be the same" is synonymous to "to coincide spatially and materially" (notice, though, that spatial and material coincidence are not the same: a t-shirt and the cotton of which it is made are materially coincident yet they may not be spatially coincident).

This view may be identified as a form of ontological monism. Where pluralists see several entities: a statue, the marble from which is made, the portion of marble, monists see just a single entity: the marble statue. Monism intends the apparent difference in properties as a difference in the way a single object is described. A famous example of monism is in Quine's *Reference and Modalities*: it is *necessary* that 9 is greater than 7; it is *not necessary* that the number of planets is greater than 7. Are we then to conclude that the number of planets is not the same as the number 9? Of course, no. In a similar way, Quine claims: "we should not conclude from the facts concerning the temporal (or modal) vicissitudes of the clay and the statue that they are not the same."[655]

Of course, the physical object and the statue may be distinguished by reference to a number of different predicates. A chair can meaningfully be said to be comfortable, though not the wood from which it is made; a statue can meaningfully be said to be Neoclassical, though not the clay itself; and one can meaningfully be said to spend a penny or a dollar, though not some metal or paper[656]. These differences have to do with the meaningful application of predicates, for predicates have meaningful application only with respect to a determinate sort of objects.

The idea that there must be a correspondence between a set of predicates and a determinate sort of objects is what philosophers refer to as: "the appropriate sphere of talk".

With regard to an appropriate sphere of talk, chairs are made for sitting on, thus they can meaningfully be said to be comfortable; statues are made for aesthetic appreciation (in

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[654] Fine, K. "*The Non-Identity of a Material Thing and Its Matter*". Mind 112(446): 2003, p.206.
[655] Quine, W.v.O., *Reference and Modalities,* Journal of Symbolic Logic. Harvard University Press., 1953, p.139-57
[656] Fine, K., 2003

much general terms) thus they may be meaningfully described as Neo-classical; money is a unit of exchange and, as such, is can meaningfully taken as something which we spend.

The point is, therefore, that differences in predication derive from the roles objects play in our daily life. Back to works of art, this means that objects, when becoming works, acquire distinctive new status and role. Yet, it remains unclear whether this phenomenon is merely linguistic, namely, whether it concerns the different descriptions we give of objects, as for the monists; or it is ontological, so as to imply that objects, *qua* works, acquire new properties and become "really different", as pluralists argue.

To understand this question, consider a situation taken from everyday life. When one gets married, something happens that makes him/her to be subjected to a new conventional range of duties and responsibilities. Get married is a status that a pre-existing subject, a person, may acquire at a time and that can (generally) be drop out. As an effect, the person's role in the society changes: he/her is different, in a sense. Is the married subject identical to the unmarried person he/she was? Is there just one and the same person before, during and after the marriage?

The same questions are also of concern with regard to works of art. When a work is created, it acquires a conventionally defined status that makes it different from the physical stuff – the vehicular medium- it is made of. Are we then to say that artworks are physical objects that have changed their social status or role, as monists contend? Or are they brand new different objects with different properties and conditions of existence, as held by pluralists? The answer is unclear.

A possible solution comes in this regard from applying to artworks the so-called "idiom of the *qua*-objects". It is only *qua*-married that a person possesses the property of "being the husband/wife of". Likewise, it is only *qua*-statue that the piece of bronze possesses the property of "being an object of aesthetic attention". After having melted down, the bronze survives *qua*-piece of bronze, but not *qua*-statue. A statue is material entity but not the very same as the piece of marble that constitutes it.

The *qua*-objects terminology entered contemporary philosophical debate in 1982, with Fine coming up with his famous paper "*Acts, Events and Things*".

According to Fine, for any object O and any property P, if O has P, then there exists a distinct object "O *qua*-P". O constitutes the basis of the resulting object O *qua*-P, while F functions as its description. *Qua*-objects in Fine's sense are intensional entities: they are identical only if they share the same P (description), and they are distinguished from their

bases, though they exemplify, at any given time and in any given world, all the properties of their bases. This is to say that, while being distinct from their bases, *qua*-objects inherit many of their bases' qualities. A person *qua*-married inherits many of the unmarried-person's qualities: his character, his physical attributes, his "being the son of" etc. Analogously, an object *qua*-artwork inherits many of the properties of the merely physical object.

To explain the issue, philosophers often use the example of Superman and Clark Kent[657]. A number of properties possessed by Clark Kent *qua*-Superman are not possessed by Clark Kent and *vice versa*; *qua*-Superman Clark Kent is a hero, *qua*-normal person he is not; Clark Kent existed before Clark Kent *qua*-Superman, and may survive to him etc.

Despite all these differences, Superman and Clark Kent are the *same* person. So Leibniz's Law is in a sense revisable: being superman is a property that a Clark Kent possesses at a time without changing his essential identity.

Nevertheless, the *qua*-idiom is ambiguous, and the ontology it gives rise to is problematic.

There may be reasons to be skeptical of the actual existence of *qua*-objects and besides *qua*-objects also face problems of ontological proliferation (for instance the statue *qua*-created by Michelangelo and *qua*-created by the author of the Sistina's Chapel are to be regarded as different in the *qua*-object idiom). The main arguments against qua-objects can be summarized as follows.

First, according to the *qua*-object theory, an object (namely, the physical basis) constitutes another object (the *qua*-object) simply by possessing a property (understood as the description). The relation insisting between the basis and the *qua*-object "turns out to be exactly the same as the relation between, say, a bit of rock and that rock *qua* red-colored, or the relation between Socrates and Socrates *qua* sitting."[658]

However, for what concerns art, this relation is too vague to capture the way in which the material object, say, the clay, constitutes the work, say the statue: "Even if clay, we cook up some odd philosophical property, like the property of constituting a statue, the clay qua constituting a statue is not the statue; nor does its having that property offer any insight into how, or in virtue of what, a statue can be made out of, or constituted by, some clay."[659]

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[657] See for instance Lamarque (2010)
[658] S.J.Evnine, 2010, p.13.
[659] Evnine, p.14.

Second, the conditions of identity of *qua*-objects imply that if two *qua*-object have different bases, then they are distinct. The identity of a *qua*-object is dependent on its base, so it cannot have a different base unless becoming a different object. If a statue is constituted by "some clay *qua*-F", then it cannot have its constituting material altered in time without becoming a whole other statue. In other words, if a given statue loses a few molecules of material, a brand new statue comes into being. But of course a statue can change in its material by the effect of time, by the aging process etc. However, we do not believe just for this reason that it has become another object, or that the original statue has ceased to exist!

Third, the *qua*-object theory is unsatisfying with regard to the description it provides of what is to create something, say, to produce a work of art. Commonsense has it that bringing a work into existence is bringing *something new* in the world, not just changing the status of some already existing objects.

Brand new things, we believe, are introduced in the world when an artwork is made. When an artist makes a statue, he creates *ex novo* an object which is the result of his activity: without such activity, the object/statue would not exist. But the *qua*-object theory is unable to account for this idea.

Artistic creation, it maintains, is when: "One brings it about (in a certain way) that x has P", as Fine puts it. What is P? Essentially, P can be taken as the property of "being statue-shaped". This means that, on the *qua*-theory view, a new object, the statue, is brought into existence when a piece of marble comes to have the property of "*being statue-shaped*" by means of the intentional activity of an artist. Arguably, this account is not adequate to describe the complexity of the phenomena involved in art creation and production. Statues do not come into existence whenever an object simply acquires a new property, namely, the property of being statue-shaped. Nor is the artist, on the other hand, simply concerned with trying to shape the matter in order to make it possess the right type of property. By contrast, it seems that artistic creation involves something more complex than "instantiating" a property. Again, it entails creating a whole new object: as such, the notion of art creation is an intuition not to be abandoned.

What Ontology from Restoration?

At this point, one might reasonably suspect that we have deviated from our programmed path of a philosophical inquiry over restoration through analysis of Brandi's text. However, all the issues we have tackled – we believe - are *in nuce* contained in his *Theory of Restoration*.

Questions concerning the relevance of the physical constitution of artworks and of the ontological status of aesthetic properties *have much to do* with restoration. Our analysis, however, has not brought us to the formulation of a clear ontology of artworks. However, we have at least shed some light on what artworks *cannot* be, ontologically.

For what concerns aesthetic properties:

Aesthetic properties cannot be equated to physical properties neither in the sense of *epistemic reductionism*, namely, the idea that reference to the physical properties of artworks suffices to explain them; nor can they be interpreted in the sense of *explanatory reductionism*, i.e., that aesthetic descriptions are replaceable *salva veritate* by physical descriptions; and not even in the sense of *ontological reductionism*, that is, the conception according to which aesthetic properties are reducible to the physical properties of the object.

This is not to say, however, that aesthetic properties are just illusions inhabiting the minds of the perceivers. Aesthetic properties have ontological reliability, even if they are not epistemically, explanatorily or ontologically independent. They *depend* on the structural/physical properties of the object but are not reducible to them. This relation, we have claimed, is that of supervenience: aesthetic properties supervene on physical properties, i.e., they *emerge* from them. This means that variations at the level of first-order properties cause differences at the level of second-order properties and *viceversa,* without bijection or one-to-one correspondence (bijection is when the elements of the first set are exactly paired, each by each, with elements of the other set, and *vice versa*).

Clearly, though, aesthetic properties also depend on the relation between the art object and the perceiver' responses, for the only access we have to aesthetic properties is perceptual experience. Aesthetic properties, to this extent, are *relational* properties. This implies that they are not objective in the sense of being "objectively possessed" by the art object without references to the subjective responses of perceivers. Objectivity here does not

imply strong metaphysical necessity: rather, it is just a way of saying that aesthetic properties inhere in the objects, that they are properties *de re*, not *de dicto*.

For what concerns works' conditions of identity, restoration urges us to think that works of art are not just *ideal* entities in the mind of their creator, but are *real*, at least to the extent to which they are public and perceivable and can be seen, heard, and experienced.

Besides, restoration requires that we distinguish clearly between the work, on the one hand, and the constituting physical object, on the other.

Works do not coincide with "mere physical things": in the first place, because what we may call the *material* of the work exceeds brute matter, and results from the combination of what we have called vehicular and artistic media. Second, because works and physical objects have different properties and distinct conditions of identity and persistence. Although it is not clear whether this distinction is ontological or linguistic, it is nevertheless fundamental. We can fully appreciate the aesthetic role that artworks play in our life only if we allow the fact that, once created, artwork always constitute a "new object" with respect to their physical material.

This distinction is also important for what concerns the artworks' conditions of survival. As we know already from Brandi's first principle, the material of the work plays a key role in restoration. However, even if the material of an artwork has undergone a gradual deterioration in time, so that little of the original has remained in the current state, the work nonetheless survives as such, at least as long as the original arrangement of lines and colors is still discernible. If the aesthetic character is at least partially preserved, then the work is safe.

By contrast, when artworks irreparably lose all their aesthetic character, they become what Brandi calls "ruins", that is, mere residuals of matter which only have historical, or documentary value. Notice that just as complete destruction, integral reconstruction can threaten the work-survival as well: after the rebuilding, something like the work survives, but not the work in itself.

Not every case is such a clear cut, though. A marked flexibility characterizes the work conditions of survival. As Lamarque remarks[660], physical degeneration in visual artworks is comparable in a sense to inaccuracy in musical performing. This leads us back to our initial

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[660] Lamarque, P., *Work and Object*, 2010, p. 76

considerations. Provided that the *distinctive* qualities of the work are retained, few mistakes in a performance do not by themselves threaten the work-identity. In the same way, partial deterioration of the work due to the action of time does not challenge the work identity, if its essential aesthetic properties are preserved. But what are the distinctive quality of a work of art, the loss of which means the loss of the work? What are its essential features? Arguably, to distinguish clearly between the work's essential and unessential properties is impossible, both in music and in the visual arts; and yet, it is fundamental if one wants to provide a clear account

But what is particularly worth noting, though, is that the comparison between restoration and performance is less weird than it seems. The current trend among restorers is to regard restoration as aimed "to facilitate the readability of the work" , as in the European code of conservation (ECCO), or "to make works of art comprehensible, in the definition provided by the ICOM-CC.

However, the concept of readability is not in itself unproblematic. Note for example that in English there is a difference between the two terms of "legibility" and "readability". While "legibility" is to be understood as a technical and material legibility (for example, the clear writing of an inscription allows the philologer to read a Greek epitaph), "readability" concerns a more intellectual readability, something which implies the understanding of the contents (for example, the Greek epitaph is readable by philologers, a legal text by specialists of law ecc). Brandi has a similar idea: restoration, he claims, is a *critical act*, to the extent that it always intervene *a posteriori*.   Brandi's idea of restoration as a "critical act" or as an "act of interpretation" seems decisive as it helps clarifying both the concept of works' *readability* meant as the aim of restoration and restoration unexpected closeness to the interpretative practices of some performing arts such as music. Such issues shall of course be further investigated. But for now, just note that when practiced for a purpose other than "*scientifically interpreting*" the work restoration leads, according to Brandi, to arbitrary defective results.

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