

7.

Weather Reports: Discourse and Musical Cognition

vibrant

"Through it all, Welser-Möst and the [Cleveland] orchestra are dashing partners, surrounding their guest [Radu Lupu] in *colors without washing out any of his*. On Thursday, they also helped steady him during the Adagio [of Bela Bartok's Piano Concerto No. 3], when a ringing cell phone twice *poked holes in the silken musical fabric he was weaving*. To listeners, the noise was simply rude. But to Lupu, it must have been painful, *like lightning striking*."

Zachary Lewis, "Ensemble offers up an appealing *climate*", *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 01/17/09

"*Clouds* occasionally gather in the E-flat trio, though Schubert is resilient enough to emerge from minor-key territory and *let the sun shine* in his inimitable way."

Donald Rosenberg, "Trio Conveys Wonder of Schubert's Work," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 27/03/10

Italics mine in both quotations.

Abstract:

When music is experienced, and especially when it is felt as important to the subject and as beautiful, the subject's critical – descriptive and evaluative – discourse regularly uses references to imaginary spaces and to states and events taking place there, including meteorological phenomena and cosmic visions, so that critical accounts almost come to resemble weather reports, or poetry. We discuss some examples of this extremely common but still curious cognitive phenomenon, which pertains to the problem of musical meaning: Is mental space-building involving imagery of this kind part of the semantics of music? Can spatial imagery be dismissed as core semantic components in the content of musical experiences? – We add a semiotic dimension to the discussion by comparing the phenomenon in question to double-space perception in the experience of coded signs and language. Signs become artful when their codes are weakened; instead of functioning as performative signals, they then give rise to playful, artful, auto-referential performances, and their signified content deepens and changes into autonomous imaginary 'worlds' inducing feelings of sacredness. This happens in music,

which in fact constitutes the main medium for those sacred, not necessarily religious but still 'spiritual', extra-worldly, oniric experiences that human beings enjoy in art.

The concert referred to in the epigraph comprised meteorological works such as Richard Strauss's *Alpine Symphony*, György Ligeti's *Atmosphères*, and Claude Debussy's *Nuages*, before the Bartok concerto. In the history of written music, the Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and Modern musical writing, monumentally demonstrated by Beethoven's "Pastoral" 6th symphony, has allowed rather explicit references to aspects of meteorology as constitutive elements of the meaning of music, of musical semantics.¹ Composers, critics, lay listeners, and remarkably also musicians find it meaningful to describe what music is "about" in terms of such visionary experiences of nature and its elements and thus find it relevant to account for properly musical events in terms of more or less lyrical "weather reports."

This phenomenon is what I reflect on in this essay. The question is extremely simple: Why does music solicit such atmospheric or cosmic visions—and inspire corresponding commentary in terms of "poetically" spatial discourse?

1. Semantics

Remarkably, this "aboutness" is of course semantic, in the sense that some sort of iconic sign relation must hold between the tonal signifier and this spatial signified; but it is *not referentially semantic*. It does not report that a meteorological event was really taking place at a certain time and a certain location. It just evokes an imaginable event of this kind, happening in some imaginary space at some imaginary time, paradoxically coinciding with the real time of the musical performance. It happens in an imaginary time-space of qualia: of light, colors, shapes, flows, movements, in which the listener is

¹ Charles Rosen, *Beethoven's Piano Sonatas: A Short Companion* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002). Charles Rosen, who is skeptical about musical imagery and who bluntly dismisses commentary that reports it as "pseudo-poetry" and "philosophical speculation," admits that Beethoven's sonata op. 31, no. 2, may be inspired by Shakespeare's *Tempest* but that he probably did not read much more of the drama than the title. In Rosen's great study *The Classical Style. Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven* (New York: Norton, 1997), 375, he writes that the "Credo" of Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, with its crossing scales, "must be accepted as Beethoven's audible *image of eternity*, and they [the scales] are the equivalents of the words, "I believe in the life to come, *world without end, amen*" (my italics). The Cleveland Baroque Orchestra Apollo's Fire recently offered concerts featuring Rebel, Vivaldi, Rameau, and Duchiffre (the latter a contemporary postmodern baroque composer) under the title "Earth, Wind, and Fire."

not bodily involved but is nevertheless present as an observer, an experiencer, a traveler, insofar as he or she is a listener. Cognitive semanticists might call this signified a fictive space; but it is of course not a fiction in the literary sense. What it is may be intriguingly difficult to determine.

If we compare language and music with regard to their meaning and sense-making, we will find that the main semantic difference is, in fact, the general *referentiality* of meaning in language. We will sometimes say, “It is raining again,” and this impersonal statement of a meteorological situation will necessarily refer to the state of affairs somewhere specifically at some specific time; impersonal constructions in language have implicit locative complements.² Not so in music; here, for example, in Chopin’s “Raindrop” Prelude, if it rains somewhere, it would be “in the music,” that is, in the semantics of the piece as performed, intended, and perceived. What do we mean by talking about “rain in the music”?

Allow me a linguistic digression on this point. In language, there are morphemes and lexemes such as the determiners (*a, the*), the pronominal forms (*I, you, it; this, that*), the deictic, anaphoric, and coreferential adverbials (*here, there; likewise, therefore, so*) that allow us to narrate, describe, and argue while referring to a stable space-time or conceptual referent, either in *the* world or in some other, imaginary “world.” If we eliminate these linguistic devices, or reduce their efficient presence significantly in a text, we will get a poetic, lyrically floating effect, which listeners or readers will often qualify as “musical.” This effect will imply a dominance of content experienced as imagery. Poetry is reputedly relying on images for this very reason: not because poetic texts contain more images than pragmatic texts but simply because the poetic, nonreferential mode makes content into imagery. Poetry works with what is left when the referential operators are blocked; it does not have to *add* iconicity to the arsenal of metaphors, comparisons, and the like already available and current.³ “Images” are

² But as the French poet, poetician, and mathematician Jacques Roubaud ironically remarks, when a poem says that it rains, it means that it rains in the poem, nowhere else. Jacques Roubaud, *Poésie, etcetera, ménage* (Paris: Stock, 1995). My question: how are we to understand this statement?

³ The Russian linguist Roman Jakobson’s famous “poetic function” lets the “message” of a text be focused on in itself, which it has to be, when the text is dereferentialized. If the poem is not internally dereferentialized—if, for example, it looks like a private letter—it can be dereferentialized externally by appearing in a context of undetermined addressees, e.g., a book of poetry (as such addressing everybody and nobody). Roman Jakobson, “Closing Statements: Linguistics and Poetics,” in *Style in Language*, ed. T. A. Sebeok (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960).

simply what semantic items become when their reference is eliminated. By contrast, there are no referentializing elements like *it* in music; a musical phrase cannot mean “the aforementioned idea” without replaying or quoting the idea in question; and it cannot just say *now* or *then*, as language, including sign language, easily can. In particular, tonal art has no pronouns; and experimentally, if we remove all pronouns from a verbal text, it will acquire a “musical” sound or character.⁴

2. Spaces, Intrinsic or Extrinsic?

Music critics extensively exploit as imagery what in a first approach appears to be a spatial or meteorological stand-in for the lacking reference.

In the article quoted in the epigraph, Zachary Lewis does so, and he adds a metalinguistic remark on the rhetorical status of his own phrasing: “Ligeti wasn’t necessarily thinking about weather when he wrote ‘Atmosphères.’ But *shifting heavenly vapors* is certainly an apt metaphor for this dense, slow-moving work” (my italics).

So why would such a metaphor certainly be apt? Is there something in Ligeti’s “dense, slow-moving work” that contains “shifting heavenly vapors”? Is there a cloudy sky, or something behind this image, *in this music*? Even if the metaphor is “only” a metaphor, as we often say, its target has to somehow match what the image offers. What is it? This is a truly embarrassing problem; no wonder that many musicians and musicologists prefer not to go there or to beg the question by declaring that spatial imagery is extrinsic to music. How does the intrinsic then evoke the extrinsic? If arbitrarily so, then the extrinsic weather reports simply cannot make sense, which is highly counterintuitive.

So, understandably, some composers of the modern era tend to reject “aboutness” altogether and to declare, as Igor Stravinsky famously did, tautologically,

⁴ The only exception (example of music not being nonreferential) I can think of is the phenomenon we call a *jingle*: musical signals and short, stereotypical phrases informing us of the imminence or the presence of a generic entity in the space of performance: it is deictic—it does say *here, now, this*. Jingles are signatures, equivalents of proper names. Jingles are regarded as degenerate, rudimentary musical expressions, but they may alternatively have been at the origin, in the evolution of human symbolization, of what we now consider autonomous and “genuine” music. We still use a particularly tonal prosody when we *call* on someone by a name, in the vocative mode. As Steven Brown has suggested, music and language may have a common ancestor. Steven Brown, “The ‘Musilanguage’ Model of Music Evolution,” in *The Origins of Music*, ed. Nils L. Wallin, Björn Merker, and Steven Brown (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 271–300.

that music is about *music itself*.⁵ Here is a significant fragment of a dialogue between Stravinsky and his friend Robert Craft:

R.C. Have you ever thought that music is, as Auden says, “a virtual image of our experience of living as temporal, with its double aspect of recurrence and becoming?”

*I.S. If music is to me an “Image of our experience of living as temporal” (and however unverifiable I suppose it is), my saying so is the result of a reflection and as such is independent of music itself. But this kind of thinking about music is a different vocation altogether for me: I cannot do anything with it as a truth, and my mind is a *doing* one. Auden means “Western” music or, as he would say, “music as history”; jazz improvisation is the dissipation of the time image and, if I understand “recurrence” and “becoming,” their aspect is greatly diminished in serial music. Auden’s “image of our experience of living as temporal” (which is also an image) is above music, perhaps, but it does not obstruct or contradict the purely musical experience. What shocks me however, is the discovery that many people think below music. Music is merely something that reminds them of something else, of landscapes, for example; my *Apollo* is always reminding someone of Greece. But in even the most specific attempts at evocation, what is meant by being “like” and what are “correspondences”? Who, listening to Liszt’s precise and perfect little *Nuages* gem, could pretend that “gray clouds” are a musical cause and effect?⁶*

Stravinsky needs to stress and repeat his rejection of the idea that music may be “about” or “mean” places, feelings, event-related emotions; such things are “below music,” but they are persistently uttered. By contrast, however, Nicholas Cook explains in detail how a contemporary British composer, Roger Reynolds, derives the structure of an entire

⁵ Igor Stravinsky, “Quelques confidences sur la musique” (1935), in Eric Walter White, *Stravinsky: The Composer and His Works* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 539.

⁶ Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Conversations with Igor Stravinsky* (New York: Doubleday, 1959), 15. For an excellent account, see Richard Taruskin, “Stravinsky and the Subhuman—A Myth of the Twentieth Century: *The Rite of Spring*, the Tradition of the New, and ‘the Music Itself,’” in *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 360–89.

symphony from a peculiar rock formation on the shore of Honshu, in Japan.⁷ Intimate relations as these between visual and sound images are easy to find in professional musical literature. Do we think they are external, indirect, secondary, inferior, metaphorical, whereas musical meaning as such is *unrelated to imagination*, and all its visual, in particular mentally visual, properties reported by listeners and musicians are core elements of musical phenomenology?

When we *speak*, and especially when we *write*, about music as experienced, there is evidently an important amount of cross-sensorial—visual, tactile, gustatory, olfactory, and even auditory—associations that are brought to the fore, some of which may be pertinently seen as mere conveniences of discourse rather than as constituents of the musical experience. Emotional experiences are often rendered by conventional comparisons and metaphors.⁸ Other figurative components of our reports may, however, be intrinsically and indissolubly bound to the experience: the elementary feeling that *something is happening* cannot be done away with. In this sense, musical meaning definitely comes with an event-oriented “aboutness,” an intrinsic narrativity justifying our extrinsic reports of induced spatiotemporal representations, even if this aspect can be felt as inessential by some subjects.⁹

3. On Quality and Space.

So, basically, we may admit that there is, in our tonal imaginary, a multimodal or amodal spatial setup, which language-about-music can refer to, because *music itself* really has it. We may admit it, because we often have to report that it is there, and we wish to explore *what* is there—*what there is*—in the phenomenological reality of music, as a significant part of our shared human reality.

⁷ Nicholas Cook, “Imagining Things: Mind into Music (and Back Again),” in *Imaginative Minds*, ed. Ilona Roth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 123–46. Roger Reynolds describes his method in *Form and Method: Composing Music* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

⁸ Even in newer theory of metaphor as a prelinguistic, semantic, conceptual process, the distinction between “source” and “target” or between constituent “input spaces” maintains the corresponding distinction between the object of attention—the reference, or “target”—and the way in which it is grasped *extrinsically*, through a “source” theme that does not have to be part of the experience itself. However, this question of the *extrinsic or intrinsic* status of a metaphoric description is not easy to answer. In the scene of the ringing cell phone quoted in the epigraph, is the “poking holes in a silken fabric” an extrinsic or an intrinsic description—is the metaphor part of the phenomenon itself as experienced by the attentively listening critic, or is it an a posteriori part of its recall in the writing mind of the critic?

⁹ Some disturbing “noise” in the debate may stem from the modernist routine declaring that art is about itself insofar as it is “pure” (an idea prolonging the Parnassian *l’art pour l’art* of the nineteenth century).

Consider the following utterance in a concert review by the Cleveland critic Donald Rosenberg: “The program’s other extended work, Schubert’s *Fantasia in C major, D. 934*, was an opportunity for the performers to *delve into profound and wandering terrain*.”¹⁰ The musicians “delve,” and the listeners supposedly follow them in this locomotor activity. The “terrain,” which is “profound and wandering,” is a spatial setup surrounding or globally framing the local events that will happen during the trajectory of these imaginary delvers or travelers. If the performers are in fact to delve into the wandering depths of the alleged terrain, while simultaneously staying on the framing *extramusical* material stage as artists with their material instruments, we will have to suppose that they will delegate their imaginary, immaterial avatars to this *intramusical* space. Beyond the mental space of the present performance, another mental space is built, and subjects can miraculously be in both spaces simultaneously.¹¹ Not only is this semiotically possible, since Rosenberg’s and an infinite amount of other reports every day say so, but it seems to be important to say so to evaluate the quality of the performance. It is aesthetically important that this space delegation be possible and take place; *good music* does this, whereas music is bad if it does not. We may ask, why is quality reportedly dependent on space delegation? There is a general problem for cognitive aesthetics in this normative phenomenon.¹²

Often, however, space delegation goes to uninhabited spaces: the tonally induced experience of imaginary space seems to be void of human beings, as in the following account, again by Lewis, from a review of a concert presenting compositions by Olivier Messiaen:

Most transfixing was “The Resurrected and the Song of the Star Aldebaran,” from Part III, in which the strings and glockenspiel player Sindre Saetre evoked a *serene, otherworldly realm*. Active throughout “Canyons” were the percussionists, especially xylophonist Jennifer Torrence, whose vibrancy readily depicted *everything from warbling birds to rushing*

¹⁰ Donald Rosenberg, in *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 30 September 2008, my italics.

¹¹ Cf. Gilles Fauconnier, *Mental Spaces* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), and newer accounts of mental space theory in Per Aage Brandt, “Music and the Private Dancer,” in *Spaces, Domains, and Meaning: Essays in Cognitive Semiotics* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2004). See note 21.

¹² Cognitive aesthetics is a branch of cognitive science and deals with art: why is there art at all? How do we perceive and understand it? What are the social functions of art? What is going on in the brain when we perform or are exposed to art? A good musicological example of cognitive aesthetics that draws on the subbranch of cognitive semiotics is Ole Kuhl, *Musical Semantics* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008).

*winds. At several points, another player shook a sand-filled drum to mimic the sound of rain and ran a bow against a tiny cymbal in spine-tingling evocations of vast space.*¹³

Otherworldly realms, vast spaces, with birds, winds, rain—we are enthusiastically sending unembodied observers to these imaginary spaces. Their properties are “evoked,” “depicted,” “mimicked,” and like pictorial landscapes, potentially void of human presence. But they are still part of the excellence of the piece of music responsible for the delegation.

My generalization: it is part of the experience on both sides, the artists’ and the listeners’, to *mentally see spaces*, when music is produced and perceived, at least if enjoyed. The more important and meaningful the music is felt to be, the more clearly this spatial imagination is present. Space-building in the listener’s mind is apparently precisely what this music is expected to achieve. The value of mentally spatial imagination must be somehow stably related to the value of beauty or truth or the morally good.¹⁴ But why would spatial imagination at all be linked to the feeling of value in this Platonic sense? Why this connection, if it exists, between space and importance? How general may the connection be? Could it be something all art does or can do, to some extent?

4. Art in Semiosis.

A general semiotic consideration may be useful here. It is extremely common to *perceive in two spaces*, as we do when we share intuitions of spatial meaning in music. This is what we constantly do in social life, which is built on symbolic signs: in one space we process signifiers, and in the other space we process the concepts signified by these

¹³ Zachary Lewis, in *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 16 December 2008, my italics.

¹⁴ My claim is that music experienced as bad or uninteresting does not trigger the space-building that critics report and most listeners are likely to recognize; the better the music, according to listeners, the more they will mobilize spatial imagination and attribute it to the music. My evidence? The critical response occurs rarely in negative reviews of music and frequently in positive reviews. Alex Ross reports that Stockhausen excitedly wrote to Goeyvaerts, one of the coinventors of the “total serialist language,” about the new technique and its application to the electronic medium: “This music sounds indescribably pure and beautiful!” He then likened it to “raindrops in the sun.” Xenakis, talking about his *Metastaseis*, likened the effect of the glissandos to the sound of hail drumming on a hard surface or millions of cicadas singing in a field on a summer night. Alex Ross, *The Rest Is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 395, 398. These are comparisons; the composers use them to qualify something they feel to be beautiful, and the means of doing so are clearly forms of spatial imagination.

signifiers. Signifiers and signifieds have to be connected by codes, and these can be of variable strength: *strong codes*—explicit lists of conventional concepts to be learned by their users—convey strong meanings, namely, orders, instructions to follow, deontic signals of many kinds; strong codes express the impersonal will of society itself (example: traffic sign systems). By contrast, weak codes are implicit, rooted in inherent structures of human cognition; express personal, individual thinking; and characterize the signs we call iconic: pictures, images of all kinds, diagrams, maps, and gestures.¹⁵ We communicate interpersonally by using both types, symbolic and iconic signs; language combines them, since words are strongly coded, whereas the codes of syntax are weak.

Human semiosis is complex but can be approached through the study of dynamic sign processes. These will show how symbolization can develop out of iconic communication, as through a strengthening of codes, which leads to conventionalization, ritualization, and sedimentation of “history” in our social world. On the contrary, and interestingly, codes can be weakened; when used out of context or combined freely or recombined in new contexts, sign meanings change and are negotiated in what we call playful behavior. *Code weakening produces playfulness*, theatricality, simulation, mimetic activity, reflecting imaginative thinking of all sorts. In this way, symbols may again become iconic—the best example being what I think happens in art, literature, music.¹⁶ The artist, the author, the musician, are agents of code weakening, in the sense that they inherit semiotic material that tends toward gaining symbolic strength, and they repersonalize this material by playfully recombining its components, until the result calls on principles “deeper” than knowledge, principles of human cognition as such, in order to make sense.

Weak coding or, dynamically put, *the weakening of codes* is, I believe, characteristic of all art (literature, painting, sculpture, architecture, etc.); so how does it work in music? The “strong code” of a musical expression would be the inventory of tonal (rhythmic, melodic) signals used in highly organized social situations: military

¹⁵ Strong codes characterize institutionalized symbols; weak codes characterize interpersonal icons. Symbols typically express obligations, and icons express facultative ideas. (Although formulated in a different way, this modal observation was originally made by C. S. Peirce in his semiotic papers.)

¹⁶ As mentioned in note 4, jingles are referential, whereas pure music is not. Jingles are also strongly coded. If music is the result of code weakening—“de-jingling,” so to speak—it is easy to understand its lack of semantic referentiality. The code weakening discussed here is not intended as a theory of art. It does characterize playful behavior in general, I think. Playfulness, however, is closely related to artfulness.

trumpet signals, maritime horn signals, ceremonial bell signals, traffic honking and pedestrian-strip beeping, announcement jingles, telephone rings. The weakening of such signal codes is operated when signals become songs and extend into longer sequences that can inspire and coordinate interpersonal body movements (especially dancing, walking, running).¹⁷ This operation of productive code weakening through extending and elaborating paradoxically entails increased formal complexity: technically it involves the cultural development of metric rhythms and tonal modes, melodic phrasing through tonal and modal variation over rhythms, and ultimately, polyphonic harmony and timbre. The weakening of tonal signals may have evolved into music; and music therefore may have to be just as symbolico-iconic as all other arts. They all *return*—reinstall—imagination in the space of meaning that social semiosis had filled with injunctions. When art itself becomes an educational injunction (code strengthening), it has to start all over again (code weakening), and of course this semiotic “dialectic” is its constant condition of instability.

“Schönberg’s music introduces us into a new realm, where musical experiences are not acoustical, but *purely spiritual*. This is where ‘Music of the Future’ begins” (Wassily Kandinsky, *On the Spiritual in Art*).

5. The Other.

The origin of semiosis in human evolution is hard to determine. Still, perceiving meaning that is only connected to the present by intentional signifiers is an ability we must have evolved as a species-characteristic sensitivity to *the mind of others*: there are other minds “out there,” and they “intend” to address myself as a mind, just as I intend to show them what I “have in mind.” This is, I think, what meaning means: other minds, other spaces. When minds meet, they “mean” to each other, and they are able to perceive what is “meant” by signifiers issued by others, in terms of contents of meaning spaces. To perceive an intending Other is to open a mental space behind the space of this perception—a space for the Other’s mind, so to speak.

This peculiar, basic, semiotic double perception, perception in two spaces, one of which signifies the other, makes exchange of information possible and constitutes

¹⁷ So, in a sense, art generically seems to be socially negative: playful where religion as an institution needs to be serious and socially affirmative. Church music may be useful for creating feelings of awe and sacredness, but it is also reportedly dangerous, because it is playful, hence possibly diabolic.

communication in the ordinary functional sense, when codes are strong and referential. But it generates what we sometimes like to call *emotional* communication, whenever codes become weaker and more iconic, and meaning therefore becomes partly or entirely generic, nonreferential, “imaginary.”¹⁸ This form of communication may be “emotional” or “affective” to the extent that it simply turns our attention to the content of the singular mind of the Other. We are rarely emotional without other persons involved. Here I am not only referring to basic emotions such as joy, fear, surprise, disgust, anger, shame, and so on but also to the feelings of *intensity*, elation, instant happiness and awe, shivering spines, piloerection, and the like, induced by experiences of beauty. I would suggest to subsume this affect under the anthropological concept of the sacred: *an instant state of presently felt sacredness*. The arts, and first of all music, have been associated with sacred rituals and religious practices since the dawn of humanity. In contemporary music, the religious reference in the framing is still predominant; the list of modern composers who were fervent religious believers is very long. Still, we are essentially talking about a form of semiosis, one that may generate “spirituality” as an experiential force inherent in the sharing of generic and emotional meaning. The “spirit” would cognitively be the unembodied “mind” of the shared meaning of this kind. When such meaning is shared by you and me, it is neither “mine” nor “yours,” so it gets its own signature as the spirit “in” which we communicate.

There is in music, if I am right, a necessary connection between *spatial imagination and affective communication*. Attention focused on nonreferential, weakly coded expressions generates affective, interpersonal meaning effects; affect, in turn, can be related to world states, but in many different ways. We know that *desires* (volitive states of mind) contain an orientation to specific objects, acts or events; while *moods* refer to background qualities of experience such as lightness/darkness, color,¹⁹ sound/silence, and vast/narrow scopes of time and space, and *emotions* are motivated by episodic narratives (offense → anger, loss → sorrow, danger → fear, luck → joy, etc.); and we know that *passions* (love/hatred) entail intense mental interest, concentration, obsessive awareness, linking the subjects to their targets, potentially for a lifetime. All these semantic aspects of affect presuppose spatial intuitions, whether the

¹⁸ In language, this could be a definition of rhetoric.

¹⁹ Cf. Duke Ellington’s beautiful “Mood Indigo.”

domain be natural, societal, or directly interpersonal. These intuitions, for a music listener, are *signed by the Other Mind, the "Spirit"*—not the composer or musician, but the state the composer or musician (the person by whom the music comes into being) was “in.”²⁰

What constitutes music (as distinct from space-inducing sounds in general) could in fact be this intentional reinforcement of an inherent semantic spatiality of auditive perception.²¹ Beyond, or in front of or permeating, the material space of the musical performance, a second, immaterial, “spiritual” space emerges in the experience, giving rise to a “sacred” phenomenology, sometimes composed of shared experiences of supernatural presences and trancelike feelings of spatial alienation allowing our minds to encounter and address (at least sense the proximity of) divinities, ghosts, phantoms, dead people, magical forces, demons.

The effect of this spatial, transcendental alienation in social life is forceful, and its function is overwhelmingly important to all symbolic endeavors. Music “bathes” the celebrating community in fantasmatic nocturnal sunshine and so on, and here is where social laws and principles, authority of all kinds, are constituted. Language—the great structural builder of immaterial (hypothetical, conditional, counterfactual, fictive) spaces of meaning—would not have had a chance without music (to constitute the spaces it fills).²² When discourse now reports on spatial experiences of music, and

²⁰ Peter Szendy begins his book *Listen: A History of Our Ears* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008) by mentioning the lost moment when he “began to *listen to music as music*. With the keen awareness that it was *to be understood* (entendre) [*sic*], deciphered, pierced rather than perceived”: “If this moment . . . can’t be situated in my immemorial past, what I know or think I know, on the other hand, is that musical listening that is *aware of itself* has always been accompanied in me with the feeling of a *duty*. Of an imperative: you *have* to listen, one *must* listen” (1). Listening to music is different from hearing a noise, because it is a form of paying attention, because someone is “saying” or intending something, and the listener is ethically involved. Szendy’s development of this overture goes slightly more in the direction of the listener’s self, whereas my analysis goes through the Other and beyond the attention shared to what the music is felt to be “about.” (Szendy seems to react to the word itself, “listen,” from an old Indo-European verb that means “obey”; cf. Ancient Greek *klúo*.)

²¹ Simply put, the meaning of something heard must be something happening in space, even if we hear it in the dark or with our eyes closed. Auditive perception is per se space-creating, whatever be the causal, physical source of the sound. But if what we hear is *produced (intended) for hearing*, it creates a *mental space*—namely, an idea of a space in the Other’s mind, to be shared as we share emotions.

²² In *Spaces, Domains, and Meaning*, I critically discuss the notion of *mental spaces*, a category developed in cognitive semantics to account for the possibility of meaning in language altogether. If an event is thought to “take place,” according to some sentence, we have to understand the event as happening in some imaginable surrounding. So how does the mind do this? That is of course an empirical question; all data suggest that we are using inner vision, provided by the occipital visual cortex. How, if so, did we develop such a forceful inner vision? I ask. Music, or protomusic, as Steven Brown suggests in “The ‘Musilanguage’

typically on the basic, meteorological binding of our feelings to the weather—the elementary idea of time: (French) *le temps qu'il fait*, which has determined our lives and deaths over the millennia—it just gives back, so to speak, what it inherited from it in the first place: the culturally decisive human mental capacity to immediately transcend the immediate.

6. Postscriptum: Inverse Metaphor?

Reconsider Rosenberg's "Schubert . . . let[s] the sun shine." As a simple conceptual metaphor in the critic's discourse, this expression does not work at all, since there is no intelligible mapping between notes and astrophysical objects. And yet it makes as much sense as the canonical reference to moonshine: chords, timbres, and melodic phrases somehow easily evoke beams of light. Here is a new way of analyzing this phenomenon: whereas in metaphor, the *signifying* imagery is presented as a *generic* content, mapped onto a *signified deictic* referent—as in "Achilles is a lion," where "lion" is generic and "Achilles" is deictically referred to—in the semantic structure of musical double-space experience, the *signifying* tonal event series is inversely given as the *deictic* percept, present here and now, and the inherently *signified* spatial content is given as its *generic* referent—namely, the light and darkness, meteorological visions of all kinds that the music evokes. To my knowledge, there is no name for this cognitive configuration, but it is known from rituals in magic and religion (which often call for musical accompaniment). Maybe we could dub it *inverse metaphor*. The weather reports would thus be the source and the tonal events their target; however, here we paradoxically access the source imagery through the target, not the target through the source. This configuration yields the "spiritual" character of music, since the acoustic act hereby opens the doors to the imaginary space of the spirits—which is what music invariably does.

Model of Music Evolution," may have paved the way. This is what I am claiming here: the mental operation we use when imagining a story, for example, unfolding in a fictive universe, may have been developed through the phenomenology attached to playful, intentional performance and interpretation of sounds (including dancing), produced by the body and some instrumental extensions of it. In short, music may have shaped the capacity of the human mind to unfold a world-independent semantic dimension in language. On cognitive semantics and mental spaces, see Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

