

# The Meaning of Music in Hegel

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## *Abstract*

I begin by defending Heinrich Gustav Hotho's foundational edition of the *Lectures on Aesthetics* (LA) contra Gethmann-Siebert and others who argue for a non-systematic view of Hegel's aesthetics generally and music specifically. I defend Hegel against the common conceit that his comprehension of music was somehow deficient and introduce the Hegelian idea of absolute agency as performative in art and music. Reference to Kant's transcendental aesthetics then allows us to grasp how, in Hegel, meaningful tones arise from the vibratory oscillation between selfhood's presiding unity and its temporal self-positing. I then trace back further elements of musical architecture, such as rhythm, harmony and melody to the temporal oscillation arising from within selfhood. The fundamental ambiguity within temporal oscillation is the source of meaningfulness in music, the feeling that its experience is meaningful without telling us exactly what that meaning is. Meaningfulness forms the absolute *Ur-Ton* of beautiful music, which arises as determinate tones within selfhood and resonates into the soul of the listener. The temporal vanishing of musical tones within a compositional framework is a pre-linguistic expression of meaning, performative of the ambiguous oscillation between the human and the divine.

**Keywords:** absolute; ambiguity; harmony; Annemarie Gethmann-Siebert; Heinrich Gustav Hotho; Kant; meaningfulness; melody; oscillation; rhythm; selfhood; soul; time; vibration

There are many reasons to reflect upon what Hegel writes about music, primarily in his *Lectures on Aesthetics* but also in other corners of his oeuvre. For example, a broad aesthetic approach might address the “sociological aesthetics of music [where] Hegel is a figure who stands behind that of T.W. Adorno” (Johnson 1991: 152). This field of enquiry includes the exploration of music in different historical or cultural settings, as is the case in *Music in German Philosophy: An Introduction* (Sorgner 2010) where Hegel appears along with Kant, Schleiermacher, Schelling and others. In a more dedicated fashion, music may be discussed within the territory of Hegel studies. For example, John Sallis’s (2011) “Soundings: Hegel on Music,” constitutes an important chapter in the *Blackwell Companion to Hegel*, or Lydia Moland’s “The Sound of Feeling: Music” in her monograph, *Hegel's Aesthetics: The Art of Idealism* (2019).

A third approach involves the fruitful relating of Hegel’s thoughts on music to philosophical reflections on hermeneutics, ontology and what might be called, in neo-Kantian terms, transcendental psychology. Andrew Bowie’s *Music, Philosophy and Modernity* (2007) presents music as a form of human iteration that rivals and finally surpasses philosophy in the project of overcoming the essential contradictions of modernity. The problem with his approach is that it presents the Hegelian philosophical project in strictly non-metaphysical terms, making use of Brandom’s reading of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* in order to claim that music’s calling is to supply what philosophy misses: metaphysics. Thus, for Bowie, “Beethoven’s *Eroica*, or his late quartets, and Wagner’s *Ring* or *Tristan*... articulate something that philosophy cannot” (2007: 136). The idea that music accomplishes the metaphysical pretensions of philosophy is similarly iterated, earlier, in Julian Johnson’s article (1991: 160), where we find that “Beethoven was, in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, discovering in music the same principles

of a higher reconciliation of pairs of opposites as the basis of a dynamic system of becoming, as Hegel was in the dialectic.” That which cannot be said must be played, as music.

Finally, contemporary musicologists might themselves glean something helpful from Hegel’s thoughts on music. For example, the philosopher may inform ongoing debates on the programmatic versus the pure or “absolute” vocation of music or again, inform contemporary debates on formalism versus anti-formalism (Eldridge 2007: 120). Detailed musicological references to Hegel can be found in Herbert Schnädelbach’s “Hegel” (2010: 69-93), who quotes Franz Liszt remarking that Hegel conceived of instrumental music as “a kind of liberation of the soul” (2010: 91).<sup>1</sup> Hegel’s time was particularly rich in the compositional figures of the musical pantheon: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn and others, so what he wrote about music might provide philosophical insights into the seminal contradictions arising in the music of that time.<sup>2</sup> My principal interests in Hegel’s thoughts on music stem from the access that they provide into crucial themes informed by his philosophy. Briefly, music in Hegel provides a privileged field of enquiry where fundamental questions of selfhood, time and meaning come into play.

Although it has been approached and interpreted in different ways, the relationship between selfhood and time is readily apparent in Hegel’s remarks on music in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, as we will discover below. On the other hand, how these elements pertain to the question of meaning remains to be adequately explored; this is the subject of the present paper. Briefly, my contention is that, according to Hegel, music arises from a temporal vibration that has its source within the self, in the oscillation between its fixed self-identity and its essential self-positing. This vibratory aspect between psychical identity and difference informs all the elements of music addressed by Hegel: tones, measures, rhythms, harmony, and melody.

Together, these elements conspire to produce, in the musical listener, a feeling of meaningfulness without actually determining what that meaning is. Hegel helps us see that music's essential ambiguity springs from its very source in the vibratory temporality at the heart of selfhood.

I proceed as follows. First, it is necessary to defend Heinrich Gustav Hotho's foundational edition of the *Lectures on Aesthetics* (LA) from which I develop most of my material on Hegel and music. The discussion allows Hegel to defend himself against the common scholarly conceit that his comprehension of music was somehow deficient and hence should not be taken too seriously, along with the opinion that, in fact, his recorded thoughts on music were not truly his own.

My defense of Hotho's edition of the *Lectures* allows me, in the subsequent section, to address the absolute dimension of Hegel's art in general and in music specifically. As a form of absolute spirit, music presents a revelatory aspect in a language distinct from those of religion or philosophy. In the third section, we see how meaning arises in musical tones, through the vibratory temporal interplay within selfhood. The fourth section discovers temporal oscillation within the elements of music. The fifth section addresses the feelings of meaningfulness that music arouses in the human soul. Finally, my exploration of music and meaning in Hegel leads us to the idea that its essential ambiguity, the indeterminate meaningfulness that so moves us in our musical experience, reflects the oscillatory play, the uneasy harmony, between the human and the divine.

### **I. Defending Hotho and Hegel (Contra Gethmann-Siefert)**

In his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, Hegel presents music as one of the romantic arts, following discussions on architecture and sculpture. More specifically, music appears between two other

recognizably romantic artforms: painting and poetry. It is well known that the Hegelian *Lectures* are the edited production of his student Heinrich Gustav Hotho, based on the notes that he took in the actual lectures together with those taken by fellow students as well as Hegel's own lecture notes. Since many of the sources upon which Hotho based his published *Lectures* are no longer extant, there is some debate as to how faithfully his canonical version of the *Lectures* corresponds to Hegel's own thoughts on aesthetics.<sup>3</sup> Arguably, the principal actor in the debate is Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert, whose essay, "The Shape and Influence of Hegel's Aesthetics," introduces both the German and English editions of the now published Hotho *transcript* of the 1823 Berlin *Lectures*.

In the succinct summation of the English-language translator and editor of the student transcript, Robert F. Brown, "Hotho had his own theory of aesthetics that differed in some important respects from Hegel's and, in the judgment of Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert, he imposed these views on the materials in ways that made them appear to be Hegel's own" (Hotho 2014: 1). In the words of Gethmann-Siefert herself, the transcript shows the presence of an "original 'Hegel' [and] a conception of Hegel often decidedly different from the published [Hotho] version [of the *Lectures*]" (2014: 11). This view has taken on a life of its own, reappearing, for example, in Sallis (2011). There, Hotho's "considerable expertise as regards music" is presented as an indication that he took it "upon himself to compensate for the deficiencies that, because of Hegel's lack of expertise, remained in the lectures" (Sallis 2011: 372). As further proof of the supposedly apocryphal and even spurious nature of the Hotho *Lectures*, Sallis remarks that they contain "the sudden switch to first-person forms," a tone which is "foreign to Hegel's lectures" (2011: 372).

I find Gethmann-Siefert's argument unconvincing. First, showing that Hotho's original thoughts and theories on music somehow interfere in his editing of the *Lectures* would require an exhaustive, detailed comparison between Hotho's own work on the subject, in his *Vorstudien für Leben und Kunst* (1835) or in his *Vorlesungen über Ästhetik oder Philosophie des Schönen und der Kunst* (1833), and the *Lectures*. Such a study has never, to my knowledge, been carried out. If it were, I suspect one would discover Hotho's thoughts on art and music to be thoroughly informed by his deep familiarity with Hegel and his philosophy. The question thus becomes: Who is influencing whom? Second, the Hotho publication cannot reasonably be said to "deviate considerably from Hegel's own lectures" (Sallis 2011: 372). A summary comparison between the transcript and the *Lectures* shows that the latter generally represent a development or extrapolation of the material contained in the transcripts rather than a deviation or, much less, a contradiction. Besides, since Hotho drew upon other student notebooks and from Hegel's own lecture notes and writings, and not just from his own transcript, one can easily account for the further development and extrapolation of the material that Hotho finally penned in the *Lectures*. Further, since both the transcript and the *Lectures* stem from Hotho's pen, is it really possible to say that one is more faithful to the original source than the other? In summary, what we may conclude from a study of Hotho's *Lectures* is "his commitment to, and competence at, reading Hegel's lectures [on music] through the lens of his broader philosophy."<sup>4</sup>

Regarding Sallis's remark on the first-person usage in the Hotho *Lectures*, as somehow alien to Hegel, there is at least one counter example in a *Zusatz* compiled by Michelet from student lecture notes in the *Philosophy of Nature*. In a lengthy paragraph, precisely on sound and music, Hegel remarks, "How as a matter of history we have arrived at our present customary way

of regarding as fundamental the succession of notes c, d, e, f and so on, I do not know” (§301; PN: 143; W9: 180).

The view of Hegel’s musical ineptitude is mainly based on his first-person admission in the *Lectures* that “I am little versed in this sphere [of music] and must therefore excuse myself in advance for restricting myself simply to the more general points and to individual remarks” (LA: 893; W15: 137). Hegel’s profession of musical ignorance tends to be taken at face value and repeated in chorus, and with a soupçon of *Schadenfreude*. In his “Re-evaluation,” Johnson writes, “The inadequacy of Hegel’s understanding of music is not hard to demonstrate” (1991: 152). In a footnote to his translation of the *Lectures*, Knox avers: “This confession of limited knowledge comes as a relief. It might have been more comprehensive. Hegel studied and loved painting, but in music he was less at home” (LA: 893). For whatever reason Hegel (or Hotho?) uttered it, this profession of musical ignorance is largely disingenuous. Hegel was a frequent concert-goer, organized concerts in his own home, knew and frequented important figures in the Berlin musical world and, as we will see, had a solid grasp of music theory.<sup>5</sup>

Arguments for Hegel’s musical deficiencies refer to some apparently damning facts: ecstatic (naïve?) letters to his wife praising the Italian opera singers that he enjoyed while visiting Vienna (instead of seeking out Schubert and Beethoven?), his promotion of Rossini (barely) over Mozart, his lack of reference to the “cutting edge” instrumental music of his time, particularly to Beethoven, and his ignorance of Schubert’s wonderful *Lieder* on Schiller’s poems.<sup>6</sup> The feeling seems to be that Hegelian wisdom should somehow have foreseen the progression of music into its contemporary modernist forms, where Beethoven and program music are taken as a necessary step in the dialectical progression leading to Wagner, Prokofiev, Schoenberg and Reich!

In fact, Hegel's coherent musicological references to chords, triads, thirds, fifths, dominants, time signatures, bars, overtones, scales, keys, syncopation, harmony, rhythm and beat, relative majors and minors, etc. show a substantial knowledge of music theory. Knowing where the beats fall in 6/8 time (e.g., LA: 917) requires a certain degree of musicological sophistication. The assertion that this theoretical material comes from Hotho is again contradicted by the fact that much of it appears in other contexts, for example, in the *Philosophy of Nature's* lengthy *Zusatz* to §301 (PN: 141; W9: 177), where Hegel refers to Tartini's work on the science of harmony (1754), while discussing harmonic intervals in detail. So, while Hegel may not have learned the counterpoint and the compositional theory that his student Mendelssohn certainly mastered, he is definitely acquainted with the fundamental aspects of music theory and enough of its history to be able to refer knowledgeably to Bach, Palestrina, Durante, Lotti, Pergolesi, Tartini, Gluck, Haydn, Mozart, Rossini, Paganini, and Handel. While some of the names may indeed have been added by Hotho, since Hegel is notoriously chary with his use of names, the references themselves show a clear grasp of the music discussed. Further, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century reader might bear in mind that musical knowledge and taste involved, at Hegel's time, listening to *live* music. Not only did this mean that to hear a composer's works one had to attend concert performances, but if one *wanted* to hear Schubert (or Beethoven) and did not live in Vienna, one had to travel there by horse-drawn coach or carriage.

In fact, the core position underlying Gethmann-Siefert's influential thesis that Hotho, in his *Lectures*, somehow denatures the authentic or original Hegelian thoughts on music appears to rest on what might be called the anti-systematic prejudice in Hegel studies. Of course, she is not alone in this "Hegel as neo-Kantian" tendency, which views any systematic pretention as unduly totalizing, closed, metaphysical, absolutist, and so on—all qualifications that fly in the face of a



more contemporary view of art as fragmentary, ironic, and generally reflecting the disintegration of “grand narratives” (cf. Lyotard 1979).<sup>7</sup> Thus, for Gethmann-Siefert, it is Hotho’s “speculative art history” (Hotho: 9) that is presented in the *Lectures*, and not Hegel (Hotho: 9), an assertion that clearly ignores the fact that the term “*spekulativ*” is virtually synonymous with “Scientific” and “systematic,” and used throughout all Hegel’s *Encyclopedic* writings, where “art” represents the first articulation of culminating Absolute Spirit.

Gethmann-Siefert’s anti-systematic (*anti-spekulativ*) leaning is expressed throughout her introduction to the transcript edition of the *Lectures*: “Other auditors of Hegel’s lecture series too confirm that in his lectures Hegel did not proceed systematically” (69). “[...]n his lectures on the philosophy of art, Hegel at least sought to avoid delivering his ‘system’ of aesthetics in a mechanical-dialectical construct of concepts” (69).<sup>8</sup> In Hotho’s *Lectures*, we find “a severe, systematic reorientation” that tends to make Hegelian aesthetics “non-relevant” (Hotho: 141). Thus, in the Hotho transcript, “the whole [original] conception remains unbalanced and necessarily unfinished, whereas [in the edited *Lectures*] music takes the shape of a well-rounded part of the system, with a philosophically speculative foundation” (Hotho: 144).

Against this anti-systematic view, I am arguing that the elements that essentially inform Hegel’s conception of music, namely meaning, selfhood and time, have necessarily metaphysical, absolute and therefore systematic dimensions. Nonetheless, I will approach these issues through references to the discreet elements that Hegel addresses in his discussion of music. Inevitably, these elements will open onto a broader vista, which is only fitting since, as I mentioned, music in Hegel is a form of *absolute spirit*. It is thus impossible to address the art of music adequately without referring to the Absolute itself. Since I plan to arrive at the Hegelian idea that the indeterminate meaningfulness of music is ultimately derived from the oscillatory

ambiguity between the human and the divine, we must begin by acknowledging in Hegel the absolute, systematic dimension of art generally. It is this dimension that is eschewed or avoided in non-systematic, strictly anthropological readings of Hegel's aesthetics of music.

## **II. Over to You: Absolute Dimensions of Art**

As an expression of *schöne Kunst*, music arises within the province of absolute spirit, as a precursor to Hegelian considerations on religion and then philosophy. Within Absolute Spirit, the final chapter of the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, art, religion and philosophy fall under what Hegel, in his Neo-Platonic logic, presents as the Idea (of the beautiful, the good, the true). The revelatory *agency* of the Idea is what constitutes the Absolute. It is impossible to fully grasp the meaning of art generally, and that of music specifically, without acknowledging its “sacred” or revelatory content.

In the *Lectures*, music takes place within the broader genre of “romantic” art because, for Hegel, any fine (*schöne*) art following the death of God (i.e. the death of Christ) is one where absolute essence or spirit *has been* exiled beyond the world. The classical world of Greek sculpture, where the stone-like gods were present in the temples of the city, is finished. The ultimate, most perfect, most beautiful earthly “artform,” the singular Christ himself, is dead (Reid 2020). The best that post-classical and thus “romantic” (Christian era) art can do is endlessly strive, symbolically, to recapture the absolute essence that has been sent beyond, alienated from the world. Art endlessly attempts to re-discover an adequate finite and natural form that embodies what has been lost. In its romantic pursuit, therefore, art moves toward human-made aesthetic forms that Hegel considers to be more adequate to the revelatory content or meaning of the Absolute. Romantic (Christian era) artforms become increasingly linguistic

because language is generally more spiritual (*geistlicher*) and has greater possibilities of determinate meaningfulness or essence than other non-linguistic art forms.<sup>9</sup> Thus, for Hegel, music anticipates verbal artforms, not because he did not understand or appreciate instrumental music but because art, within the grand narrative of Science, must make way for religion (expressed in the language of doctrine) and philosophy (in its written texts), the final forms of absolute spirit. More precisely, in the *Lectures*, after music comes poetry. However, what is fascinating in music is precisely the fact that it is pre-linguistic, that in music itself we can discover pure indeterminate meaning or rather meaningfulness *per se*.

Art first seeks to recapture and portray (*darstellen*) alienated essence or meaning symbolically, in painting, and later, in the linguistic representations (*Vorstellungen*) of poetry. Between the two, falls music. In music, we *hear* the breath of the Absolute, and the endlessly indeterminate possibility of meaning (*sens* [Fr.], *Sinn*, *Bedeutung*, *Meinung*) itself, before it becomes embodied, for a time, in words. The romantic artforms presented by Hegel become increasingly linguistic because it is in the language of Science that art will find its ultimate, systematic truth and meaning. Instrumental music tends toward opera and opera toward epic poetry because words are more *determinately* meaningful than pre-linguistic sounds, tones, or notes (both are *Tönen* in German). So the question is, how does meaning arise within music itself before it accomplishes its vocation (calling) in linguistic embodiment?

Of course, besides being revelatory of the Absolute, art is fundamentally human. Its expressions participate in what Hegel refers to as “spirit,” which can be broadly defined as human consciousness in its temporal activity of overcoming and reconfiguring nature. Spirit may thus espouse an historical narrative, and indeed Hegel’s accounts of the various aspects of spirit (psychology, law, art, religion, philosophy) are all presented as histories of their material.

However, in *absolute* spirit (art, religion, philosophy), the human historical agency, broadly known as “reason,” encounters and shares in the revelatory agency of the Absolute, also known as the divine (Reid 2017).

Forms of absolute spirit thus involve forms of what can be conceived of as forms of worship (“Cultus”), communal configurations where the human and the divine celebrate and know one another (Reid 2020). This is obviously most apparent in Hegel’s religion. However, forms of “worship” are apparent in art, for example in the communal and quasi-religious ceremonies of the ancient world, where the gods, as statues, figured in the frequented temples and rites or in the collective theatrical celebration of Greek tragedy, and later, in the romantic, modern (Christian) era, in the shared celebration of music. Musical “worship” involves specific articulations and elements, such as rhythm, melody, harmony, performance, as well as their reception: the powerful and essentially ambiguous effect that music has on listeners. All these elements are addressed in Hegel through the question of how meaningfulness arises in music. I return to the devotional aspect of musical meaningfulness at the end.

### **III. Meaningful Tones**

Music arises in the interplay between elements that are comprehensible with reference to Kant’s transcendental aesthetics: first, time and space, then, the presiding unity of subjectivity best known as the synthetic unity of apperception but which also takes the form of the transcendental imagination. In Hegel’s presentation of music, we grasp how these elements cooperate in a dynamic fashion. The essentially temporal nature of music means that it performs the overcoming of space. This is a general feature of time in Hegel from the beginning of the *Philosophy of Nature*, where the initial indeterminacy of empty space is first negated or

determined by a punctuality that is essentially temporal.<sup>10</sup> Time in Hegel is a fundamental expression of ideality, which may be simply defined as the negating agency of thought, whose source is transcendental selfhood.

Music is essentially a vibration or oscillation. Discovering the source or nature of musical vibration takes us to the very heart of selfhood and its temporal ideality. Indeed, it is the depth of the relation between the self and time that ensures the profound effect that music might have on the inner self or soul (both *Seele* and *Gemüt*). The essentially vibratory nature of temporal selfhood is both at the source of musical creation and that which is animated or set in vibratory motion in the self that listens to music.<sup>11</sup> The fundamentally oscillatory nature of music is also at the heart of its meaningful ambiguity.

The transcendental source of musical sound occurs in the temporal oscillation between the self as a presiding unity and selfhood as a self-othering, spatial overcoming activity or ideality. Referring to the transcendental form of time in sound production, Hegel remarks, “At first this self-identity remains wholly abstract and empty” (LA: 907; W15: 156). However, as “activity,” selfhood posits itself in “externality,” as “time” *per se*. It is as a self-positing unity that the ideal activity of time annuls the indifferent (*gleichgültig*) spatial dimension in which it posits and negates itself. However, the “object” that subjective temporality negates (the pure form of space) is in fact nothing other than the posited ideality of the subject itself, so the posited self-identical “unity” remains “abstract” and “empty.”

In drawing itself together through the temporal negation of indifferent spatiality, the externality of time takes place as the punctual “now,” as an “object” that is no more than the temporal instant (*Zeitpunkt*). However, the inner negativity of the subjective unity cannot help but again overcome this posited instant, whose vanishing produces another “now,”

indistinguishable from the first, and so on. Consequently, in sound production, we can conceive of a “movement” of time in its “externality,” a “change” wherein each new point is nonetheless “indistinguishable” from the other. The result of this temporal activity can therefore be seen as a pure oscillation, an “empty movement” that goes nowhere, a simple vibration. An “empty movement of positing itself as ‘other’ and then cancelling this alteration, i.e. maintaining itself in its other as the self and only the self as such” (LA: 908; W15: 157). Thus, “The self is in time, and time is the being of the subject itself.” Further, since “the time of the sound is that of the subject too,” the sound of music “penetrates the self, grips it in its simplest being [whereby] the temporal movement and its rhythm sets the self in motion” (LA: 908; W15: 157).

More precisely still, the oscillation between the “subjective unity” of transcendental time and its “ideal negative activity” (LA: 907) enacts the vibrations at the heart of sound, which first may be conceived as repeated iterations of the temporal, punctual “now.” In the musical production of sound, the negating temporal action of time on space necessarily involves the negation of some fixed spatial element: a string, air in a confined space, vocal chords, a drum or cymbal, etc., setting them into temporal vibration whereby notes (nows?) are produced. Hence, musical notes are themselves manifested temporally, not only determined by vibrational frequency (oscillations over time) but also because notes follow one another in time. Indeed, it is the essential nature of the musical note to appear and disappear or vanish in time (LA: 913; W15: 165), to be always and again “now.”

Vanishing is an essential element in understanding meaning (or the essence of things) in Hegel generally, and in music this is specifically the case. I will return to this question below. For now, I want to stick with the generation of notes, as they arise from the inner depths of the musician’s temporal soul in order to resonate in that of the listener. To proceed, we must first

distinguish between sound per se (*Klang*) and tones (*Tönen*), the term that also designates musical notes.<sup>12</sup>

First, tones must be distinguished from sounds, which, in turn, must be distinguished from noise. Through references to the *Encyclopedia's Philosophy of Spirit* and to the *Logic*, we see that sound requires vibration, the oscillating movement that we have just visited above in the *Lectures on Aesthetics* with reference to the temporal nature of musical notes. A sound (*Klang*) is not a noise (*Schall, Rauschen*) for Hegel because the latter lacks the crucial element of presiding unity that sound entails. John McCumber uses the example of a hammer cracking and shattering a stone to represent a noise (2006: 115). On the other hand, a presentation of sound can be found in the *Philosophy of Nature*, in the Physics of Particular Individuality where Hegel discusses specific gravity of an individual body in terms of its capacity to produce sound, rather than noise: “A body has the specific gravity that it does because its inner unity allows it to re-assert its inner cohesiveness under the shock of otherness, setting in motion a vibration that is manifest” (*Encyclopedia* §300 *Zusatz*) as sound [*Klang*]. In the *Philosophy of Nature*, as in the *Lectures on Aesthetics*, Hegel presents vibratory sound as an expression of subjectivity, evocatively, as the “plaint of the ideal in the midst of violence” (*Encyclopedia* §300 *Zusatz*). As such, sound is already inchoate subjectivity, *qua* the ideal or the temporal overcoming of outer objectivity in its spatial dimension, under a presiding “unity” and “cohesiveness.”

While a further distinction must be made between sounds and tones/notes, it is important to realize that the distinction is not exclusive. Musical notes, as *Tönen*, obviously retain their general sonic qualities. A plucked guitar string emits a sound that is also a musical note, emitted from the presiding unity of the musical instrument and that of the guitarist. Ultimately, what constitutes a musical note is its temporal nature, its transient, vanishing quality, its essential,

reiterated “nowness.” As Hegel remarks in the *Lectures*, the tone, in its coming-to-be, is annihilated by its very existence and vanishes of itself (LA: 890; *Werke* 15: 134).

It is the vanishing quality of the tone/note that lends it meaning or essence, which generally for Hegel, only manifests itself in what has been (*Wesen ist gewesen* [*Werke* 6: 13]). Nonetheless, it is important to note that such essence, to be determinately meaningful, must be grasped within structures of greater meaning. Ultimately, in music, a note is not merely a sound because the note participates in a work of music. It only does so by vanishing temporally within that work. As Hegel puts it: “The note/tone is an expression [*Aüßserung*] and an externality, but an expression which makes itself disappear again precisely because it is an externality” (LA: 891; *Werke* 15: 136). The question of meaning is central to my enterprise here, particularly as it pertains to music. It is meaning that allows us to distinguish between sounds and tones/notes. The latter are meaningful sounds. Meaning arises through the vanishing quality of tones.

Tones are meaningful because they arise from the temporal vibration within subjectivity itself, between the “presiding unity” of the self and its idealizing activity. Given this, we can say that tones are meaningful sounds arising from the innermost depths of the self. Further, and equally important, tones should be distinguished from sounds in terms of their destination or vocation. As I mentioned above, in Hegel, discreet elements draw their determinate meanings from the greater structures (of meaning) in which they take place. In the context of music, we can say that musical notes, as tones, are sounds that are meaningful because their essential vanishing takes place within the greater systematic structure of the musical work, even if that work is as simple as a basic musical scale. Briefly, meaning spills out of musical notes, in their essential vanishing, within structures where that meaning becomes musical. A note is a meaningful sound because it both partakes *in* and *of* a determinate musical context. As we will



see, that context necessarily involves other elements that Hegel discusses: rhythm, harmony, and melody. McCumber (2006: 117) discovers a supporting quotation for this idea in the *Science of*

*Logic*:

The individual note first has a sense [*Sinn*, meaning] in the relation and connection to another and to the sequence of others; the harmony or disharmony in which a circle of connections constitutes its qualitative nature, which rests upon quantitative relations. The individual note is the tonic [*Grundton*] of a system, but equally again a single member of a system of a different tonic [SL: 355; W5: 421].

Besides providing another example of how Hegel's familiarity with music theory was appreciable and not confined to the Hotho *Lectures*, the quotation illustrates the point that I've been making: how the vanishing transience of musical notes or tones is meaningful within greater structures of significance. As an individual self, I may produce vocal sounds and even tones but they are only notes when they are part of a song. Otherwise, my single tone, if it can be considered as such, remains a meaningless sound.<sup>13</sup>

At the Scientific (*wissenschaftlichen*, systematic) level, it is within the *Encyclopedic* whole that art gains its significance (what Hegel calls "its truth"), and it is within art, as an expression of absolute spirit, that music has its true sense. Since scientific sense is best expressed in words, in philosophical *logos*, it is no surprise that the destiny of tones should be seen as coming to form the thoughtful vocalizations that inform words. Language *per se* is not my concern here, except to recall that Hegel's supposed lack of appreciation for instrumental music, compared with his evident love of opera, is not due to a lack of musical sophistication on his part (where he could prefer Rossini over Beethoven, for example, cf. Moland [2019: 15]) but the acknowledgement of music's vocation: an abstract, indeterminate form of meaning (*Sinn*) whose tones come to inform linguistic signs, thereby determining meaningful words ultimately within

the context of Science. Thus, in the *Lectures*, epic poetry anachronistically follows music because language, from a conceptual (i.e., retrospective, Scientific) point of view, necessarily comes “after” the meaningful tones/notes that are the substance of music. Meaning first comes to words as sounds and tones. This is the phonocentric core of Hegel’s philosophy of language. However, it must be stressed that the truth of language does not reside in that core but rather in later, more systematic/Scientific articulations.

Simon Jarvis, who explores “the relation between language, music and thinking in Hegel’s thought” (Jarvis 2005: 57), remarks that for Hegel thinking generally involves “making-explicit” and “referentiality.” Jarvis notes that music forms a kind of pre-referential “preliminary movement towards thinking, a thinking which has left so much implicit as to leave in question whether it deserves the title of thinking” (2005: 59). Jarvis draws his reference to “musical thinking” from the expression Hegel uses in the “Unhappy Consciousness” section of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (PhG: 131, W3: 168) where he describes it as “a movement towards thinking,” which “does not get as far as the Concept” (Jarvis 2005: 58). I take what Jarvis is referring to as pre-referential or “musical thinking” as meaningfulness *per se* or as indeterminate meaning. In music *Sinn* has not yet attained the linguistic determination of “making-explicit” in an actual *Bedeutung*. It is this thoroughly ambiguous indeterminacy of meaning that forms the incantatory content of music, informing the actual musical structures (songs, sonatas, symphonies, etc.) in the same way, remarks Hegel, as the statues of the gods stood in relation to the temples of classical architecture (LA: 894). The devotional, revelatory and indeed absolute content of music that Hegel alludes to in the *Lectures* appears in the “Unhappy Consciousness” section of the *Phenomenology* as “the chaotic jingling of bells or a mist of warm incense” of musical thinking. In both cases, we encounter pure indeterminate meaningfulness.

Again, I defer the revelatory aspect of music until later. For now, I explore how indeterminate, ambiguous meaning presents itself anthropologically as inner feeling both as it arises from within the musical artist and resonates in the listener.

#### **IV. The Vibratory Elements of Music**

We have seen how the production of tones/notes is grounded in the temporal aspect of subjectivity. In musical notes, temporal ideality posits itself “spatially” but then negates this empty self-positing since there is nothing solidly objective for it to grasp onto. As Hegel puts it, as opposed to the representational arts of sculpture and painting, “what alone is fitted for expression in music is the object-free inner life, abstract subjectivity as such” (LA: 891; W15: 135). Musical notes are produced from the “ultimate subjective innerness as such” and thus music is “the art of the soul [*Gemüts*].” In fact, music frees us from the “independently free objects and our relation to them”, which we experience in painting and sculpture (LA: 891; W15: 135). In music we are therefore torn out of our enthralled “independence” to the objective world, where we are always independent *of* something. In the object-free experience of music, we are thrown back on the “free unstable soaring” (LA: 891; W15: 135) of our own selfhood. We are captivated by our own “inner subjective life” (LA: 891; W15: 135), a self-captivation where we are freed from the ambiguous relation that consciousness experiences in its relation to objects.<sup>14</sup> Such object-free captivation is akin to a form of madness, one which Hegel associates with a state of *Gemüt*, and which I will return to.<sup>15</sup>

We have seen how the unity of selfhood presides over its self-positing, ensuring that the temporal movement has something to return to before setting out again. The oscillatory or vibratory nature of the relation between temporal positing and return into unity rings out as

tones/notes, which have no determinate spatial reality but are simply evanescent iterations of the “now.” However, as we have seen, notes are only such to the extent that they are further determined within greater musicological frameworks, whose “architecture” involves bigger structures of rhythm, harmony, and melody.

While it is not my intention here to explore in detail Hegel’s analysis of these fundamental musical elements, I want to briefly explain how, in the best of cases, they should not be alien to the inner subjective life of the artist or that of the listener. Rather, in music as in fine art, rhythm, harmony, and melody should be viewed as further developments of the oscillatory dynamic at the source of musical sound itself, between a temporal self-positing and the presiding subjective unity and order. The point is to show how beautiful music presents an artistic form that is fully appropriate to its content, and vice versa, an organic notion that informs all instances of artistic beauty (*schöne Kunst*) for Hegel: the perfectly adequate cohabitation of form and content in a singular aesthetic experience. Of course, such a singular cohabitation can never last, nor should it. Indeed, all artworks are temporal, finite, and vanishing. What music exemplifies through its own incessant vanishing is how such vanishing is the ground condition of meaning.

The idea that notes comprise a series of indistinguishable, temporal instances of the “now,” each one “passing away [in] the vanishing and renewal of points of time” (LA: 914; W15: 165) is not sufficient to produce a beautiful musical artform. Here again the unity of selfhood presides over the process and determines it: “Contrasted with this empty progress, the self is what persists in and by itself, and its self-concentration interrupts the indefinite series of points in time and makes gaps in their continuity” (LA: 914; W15: 165), producing a beat. Thus, in the further rhythmic determination of notes or tones, we once again recognize the temporal

oscillation that we discovered at the very source of sonic production. Indeed, the first architectural element of music, the bar or measure results when the “indefinite variety of particular quantities... running riot” is again “contradicted” by “the unity of the self” (LA: 914). The musical bar or measure appears as “an ordering of the arbitrary manifold” (LA: 915), where, Hegel states, the “unity and uniformity” that “solely belongs to the self [...] is inserted into time by the self for its own self-satisfaction” (LA: 915). Significantly, “in [selfless] nature this abstract identity does not exist” (LA: 915).

Even within the unifying regularity and “uniformity” of the bar, oscillating temporality again arises. For although bars share a common time signature (4/4, 3/4, 6/8...), which Hegel acknowledges, *within* each bar notes still have varying and apparently arbitrary durations. Thus, the “definiteness” of the bar or measure “must absorb the variety into itself and make uniformity appear in what is not uniform” (LA: 916; W15: 167). Indeed, while the bar (*Takt*)<sup>16</sup> or measure (*Gleich* in Hotho’s student transcript) may share some of the regularity of classical architecture and its uniform columns (LA: 915), bars still incorporate different note lengths and quantities that fall within their time signatures. It is this tension and diversity that begins to make music interesting and artistic.

The rhythmic result of the vibratory oscillation between unity and diversity within the musical bar is further instantiated in the “accent” or “stress” that occurs within the bars. Here, the German makes it difficult to distinguish between the bar (*Takt*) and the beat (*Takt*). However, what Hegel is clearly referring to is the fact that different time signatures involve different beats within their regularity, some “strong” and some “weak” (LA: 917; W15: 168). As an example, Hegel refers to 6/8 time as having two dominant beats, “the double accent emphasizing the precise division into two halves” (LA: 917; W15: 168). Again, within the regular repetitiveness

of the bar, syncopation provides a further “counter-thrust between the rhythm of the bar and the melody” (LA: 918; W15: 170), allowing music to escape the “barbarism of a uniform rhythm,” enjoying “freedom from the pedantry of meter” and its “dullness” (LA: 918; W15: 170).

Harmony and melody further enact the lively oscillation at the heart of rhythm and beat, the vibration between the subjective aspects of order and temporal freedom, which now are presented in the more general aesthetic terms of freedom and necessity. Indeed, while harmony tends to be governed by the quantitative “laws of harmony” (LA: 919; W15: 171) and the “inner necessity” of the scale with its “keynote” and the harmonic elements of the “third and fifth” or the more “contrasting” notes of the “second and seventh” (LA: 925; W15: 180), melody, “in its free deployment of notes does float independently above the bar, rhythm and harmony” (LA: 930; W15: 186). Melody is the “free sounding of the soul in the field of music” (LA: 930; W15: 186). As in all expressions of *schöne Kunst*, beauty in music arises from the playful collaboration between freedom and necessity, that is, between thought as the free ideal, and heteronomous nature. Just as Schiller’s playful (*Spieltrieb*) idea of beauty involves the interplay between freedom (*Formtrieb*) and necessity (*Stofftrieb*), Hegel’s music presents the concept of *real* freedom as the beautiful marriage between the two: “The close link between harmony and melody does not forgo its freedom at all... For genuine freedom does not stand opposed to necessity as an alien and therefore pressing and suppressing might; on the contrary, it has this substantive might as its own indwelling essence” (LA: 930-31). It is this “indwelling essence” that I am presenting as the meaning (*Sinn*) of music, its essential content.<sup>17</sup>

Let us further reflect on the question of musical content as it pertains to meaning. We have followed the production of sound, from the oscillatory nature within subjectivity itself, between unbridled temporal positing and the unifying, ordering activity of selfhood. It is the

lively vibration between these elements that sounds out through tones/notes, rhythmic structures and then in harmony and melody. Although these notes and the music that they produce do occur in the vibrations of vocal cords, strings, wood, drum skins or in confined columns of air, they are performed there by the subject *qua* musician. This is a crucial point. While sound and notes arise in instruments of music, including in the vocal cords themselves, their source lies elsewhere, in the ideal depths of the subject, which Hegel refers to as the soul (*Seele*) or the heart (*Gemüt*). So, while Hegel may refer, in the *Philosophy of Nature*, to the sound produced from the struck object as “the plaint of the ideal” (PN: 139; W9: 174; *Encyclopedia* §300 Z), it would be a mistake to see music as arising from within nature itself and its things. It is the musical self that strikes the drum, which, as a natural thing is itself devoid of subjective voice. Thus, for Hegel, birds may produce pleasing sounds, even notes, but these are never music because they are missing the subjective content of soul or heart, which, as we have seen, involves temporal ideality.<sup>18</sup>

## V. Music and Soul

In the Knox translation of the Hotho *Lectures*, both *Seele* and *Gemüt* are rendered as “soul.” This is problematic because in Hegel the German terms have distinct technical meanings. Briefly, “Seele” is the object of Hegelian anthropology, as presented in that section of his *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit* (PSS) within the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*. In that context, *Seele* is presented as the seat of subjective “ideality” (PSS: 92; W10: 122; *Encyclopedia* §403). As Hegel remarks in the *Zusatz* of the previous *Encyclopedia* section, “we have finally arrived at the individual soul which posits its determinateness as an ideal moment” (PSS: 88). Or again, “Nowhere so much as in the case of the soul... if we are to understand it, must that feature of ‘ideality’ be kept in view, which represents it as the negation of the real...” (PSS: 92).<sup>19</sup>

In fact, the discussion of the *Seele* in music best refers to the *Anthropology*'s sections on "The Feeling Soul" (1830) or "The Dreaming Soul" (1827).<sup>20</sup> There, Hegel discusses the feeling soul (*fühlende Seele*) in the mature conscious individual, who has learned to draw upon and refer to their unconscious mind (*Seele*). Still, the contents of the soul "belong not to [the individual's] actuality or subjectivity as such, but only to their implicit self" (PSS: 93). Thus, Hegel continues, "under all the superstructure of specialized and instrumental consciousness that may subsequently be added to it, the individual always remains this single-souled inner life [*Innerlichkeit*]" (PSS: 93). Similarly, it is the unconscious soul as "object-free inner life" that "alone is fitted for expression in music" (LA: 891). Likewise, it is the feeling soul that is affected by music, the "inner life" that music stirs, where "what it claims as its own is the depth of a person's inner life [*Innerlichkeit*]" as such (LA: 891). Recognizing the *Seele* in the context of the PSS's Feeling Soul as a pre-conscious, object-free instance allows us to comprehend its relation to the *Gemüt* (heart, soul) which is also presented there, and which is significant in the context of music.

The technical meaning of *Gemüt* refers mainly to a state of mind. Indeed, if music is the art of the soul (*aus dem Gemüte ausprungen ist* [W15: 146]) and is directly addressed to the soul's "mental impressions [*Gemütseindrücke*]" (LA: 900; W15: 146), it is because the *Gemüt* represents a mental state where the conscious attachment to outer objectivity has been suspended (PSS: 94; W10: 124; *Encyclopedia* §404 Remark). In the subsequent section of the PSS, Hegel refers explicitly to this condition as a pathological state of "Herz oder Gemüt" (PSS: 96; W10: 127). Without maintaining that musical feeling is pathological *per se*, it does involve a state where consciousness is suspended. Hegel clearly distinguishes the inner, vibratory content, and resonance of music from everyday consciousness, with its aims, intentions and objects (LA: 900;



W15: 146). In music, we are truly carried away, made “mad”; we become “gemütlicher Menschen” (LA: 900; W15: 146).

The distinction between music as the inner life of the soul (and the mental state that it involves) over against the conscious mind and its considered objectivity again gives rise to the essential ambiguity that we have observed throughout our discussion of music. Indeed, we have witnessed the ambiguous oscillation between the “riotous” temporal positing of the self and the subjective unity and ordering that I likened to Kant’s synthetic unity of apperception, bringing about the production of sound, again in the interplay between the regularity of bars and the aleatory aspects of note lengths and accents, and further in the lively elasticity between strict, quantitative laws of harmony and the freedom of melody.

The content of music, which is what I am addressing in terms of meaningfulness, takes place within the *architectural* edifice of conscious musical theory and practice, a metaphor that Hegel uses at the beginning of his discussion of music in the *Lectures*. While the relation between the inner state of *Gemüt* and the outer structures should best remain oscillating and dynamic, where “a specific sensuous material sacrifices its peaceful separatedness, turns to movement [and] vibrates in itself... [producing] an oscillation vibration” (LA: 890; W15: 134), the two aspects (inner and outer) sometimes occur at odds to one another. Whereas ideally, “what dominates in music is at once the soul and the profoundest feeling, and the most rigorous mathematical laws so that it unites in itself two extremes,” these aspects can “very easily become independent of one another” (LA: 894; W15: 139). In that case, music becomes too formal, acquiring a “particularly architectonic character,” a soulless configuration that is contrived “on its own account, with a wealth of invention, a musically regular construction of sound” (LA: 894; W15: 139). Such music is meaningless, not primarily because it eschews expression (and

reception) of emotional content but because it forgoes the oscillation and vibration that is at the heart of music and its elements, a lively ambiguity between the conscious, architectonic aspects of those elements and the inner content of the soul, which is itself, as we have seen, essentially oscillatory. The “free movements of the heart [des *Gemütes*]” must “move and develop in a freedom made concrete only through that necessity [of musical architecture]” (LA: 911; W15: 162).

Following Hegel’s description in the PSS of *Gemüt* as a pathological condition, where consciousness has been suspended, we might say that the music made where outer (conscious) form and inner feeling are divorced is likewise “pathological.” This is the “musical thinking” Hegel describes in the “Unhappy Consciousness” as the “chaotic jingling of bells or a mist of warm incense” (PhG: 131; W3: 168), which “does not get as far as the Concept,” whose movement reconciles, at least for a time, feeling and consciousness.

## **VI. Music and Absolute Ambiguity**

The vibratory nature of music, at the heart of its generation and appreciation, is only possible because its notes are constantly disappearing, the essential “*Verschwinden*” that brings us closer to the question of music and meaning. Indeed, the “renewed vivication” of musical notes, their reiterated “rebirth,” is only possible through their repeated disappearance (W15: 158). One might take exception to Knox’s translation of “*das Innere*” or “*die Innerlichkeit*” (W15: 159) as “inner life” (LA: 909), but Hegel does indeed insist upon the vitality involved in the production of musical notes, animating the musical forms of rhythm, harmony, and melody. Further, Hegel emphasizes that it is as a “living individual” that the musical artist conveys such

innerness (LA: 909). Of course, disappearance is an essential feature of being alive, a truth that is therefore at play in musical liveliness.

In the reiterated disappearance of musical notes, their “significance [*Bedeutung*]” arises (LA: 909; W15: 159). If notes did not end, they would not be notes at all. There would be no bars, no rhythm, no harmony, no melody, so no music. There would only be one tone, an endless indistinguishable monotone. Such a monotonous sound is devoid of determinate meaning because it does not vanish. To be a note and not simply an undifferentiated sound, the tone must pass away. For only in dying is it reborn as other notes, bringing forth the possibility of music within greater musicological structures (of bar, phrase, melody, song, aria, sonata, concerto, opera, symphony, etc.). In greater contexts, vanishing notes become *musically* meaningful.

Nonetheless, the very production of pre-tonal sound itself involves a degree of vanishing, through the oscillatory nature of subjectively generated sound, which arises through the reiterated, disappearing “nows” of temporal *self*-positing and annulling. The “uniform stream [of] inherently undifferentiated duration” that we discover in sound itself (LA: 913) presents indeterminate meaningfulness. We might say that the endless note, produced by the inner vibration of temporal self-positing and self-negating is pure *Sinn*, a kind of *Ur-tone* or “Grundton [tonic note]” (SL: 355; W5: 421) on which the scale of musical determinacy is based. Consequently, we discover a grounding meaningfulness in sound itself, before it is configured into the determinate musical figures of tones, notes, rhythms, harmonies, etc.

Crucially, however, while vanishing or disappearing allows us to grasp how meaning appears in music, it does not tell us *what* that meaning actually is or might be. In fact, the grounding indeterminacy of meaning qua sound ensures that whatever meaning we discover in music will remain indeterminate and hermeneutically open. The endless note of ideality thus

appears as the horizon of sound upon which all musical art must play. Consequently, we can just as easily say that the undifferentiated sound, the monotonous, endless “note,” is a continual vanishing (the suppression of the temporal ‘now’) as we can say that, in its continuity, it eschews vanishing altogether. Indeed, such ambiguity remains a constant feature of musical art despite the most determined programmatic efforts (*the Pastoral Symphony, the Rite of Spring, Afternoon of the Faun, Les Gymnopédies, the Military, etc.*). Indeed, beautiful music evokes a palette of feelings, associations, and images in the mind of the listener. It is felt as deeply meaningful without determining what that meaning is, haunting us with the thought that it may, in fact, mean nothing.

We have seen how the purely temporal, pre-tonal Ur-tone of sound is associated with the “ideal,” and it is this term that best enables me to conclude with the revelatory dimension of music, introduced above. My concluding hypothesis is that the Ur-tone of indeterminate meaningfulness, the sonic ground for any further determinate meanings, may be conceived as the agency of the Absolute, and thus as revelation, the breath of the ideal, the very possibility of making sense. Put differently, in musical art, the Absolute or the Idea’s revelatory agency may be conceived as an “inaudible,” even “silent” (W2: 563), pre-tonal vibration, the background radiation upon which any human tonal conditioning configures itself, first as music, then in words. This is perhaps why our musical experience is so tinged with the ineffable and opens so readily onto feelings of the Absolute, even while those feelings remain necessarily ambiguous.

Nonetheless, the rich, diverse scales of feeling that we actually experience in music are derived from the determinate forms that humans give to it. Our feet tap out its rhythms; we hum its notes, revel in its harmonies, are moved by its melodies. These determinate features are what makes music human, an art best performed and witnessed in settings that bring human beings

together in what I described above as a form of worship: where the Absolute and the human comeingle in a celebration of ambiguous meaningfulness, a celebration that is experienced through the determinate vanishing of musical notes. In the realm of music, the revelatory agency of the Absolute can be heard as the indeterminate background hum or Ur-tone, with neither measure nor beat, the vibratory ideality of *absolute* subjectivity itself. On this sonic background, configuring it into actual music, conscious human selfhood marks its time, producing the architectural features of rhythm, harmony and melody.<sup>21</sup>

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## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> See also Billeter 1973 and Dahlhaus 1983.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Dahlhaus 1988: 239.

<sup>3</sup> The later post-Hotho discovery of other student transcripts, for example, from the 1828/29 series of Hegel lectures, further nourishes the debate. See, for example Olivier 2017.

<sup>4</sup> I can do no better than quote the pertinent words of a helpful anonymous reader of the present article.

<sup>5</sup> Hegel's modest comment on his musical knowledge is perhaps drawn from the 1828/29 series of lectures, attended by Hegel's young friend and musical prodigy, Felix Mendelssohn (Sallis 2011: 372). Hegel's disclaimer might then be understood as a recorded "viva voce" expression of justifiable humility. The above-mentioned anonymous reader informs me that the Heimann transcript of the 1828/29 series shows very little humility from Hegel but rather blames music itself for requiring such a detailed, technical understanding of its "abstract" nature. "*Ich bin mit dieser Kunst am wenigsten vertraut, weil das musikalische Element etwas so Abstraktes ist, so daß, wenn zur Angabe des Bestimmten fortgegangen werden soll, nur durch die technischen Angaben gesprochen wird*" (Heimann: 178). This statement does not deny the possible Mendelssohn reference.

<sup>6</sup> For example, Lydia Moland, "The development of music after his lifetime, however, suggests that Hegel's vision was especially limited as regards music." Particularly damning is Hegel's failure to appreciate or even mention Beethoven and Schubert (2019: 16).



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<sup>7</sup> Robert Pippin (1989) and Terry Pinkard (2013) are probably the two most influential English language scholars in this Neo-Kantian vein. Of course, one should also include the so-called Pittsburgh Hegelians, like Robert Brandom (2019).

<sup>8</sup> Surely, this affirmation could be made about Hegel's approach generally, which he opposed to the deathly "mechanical" treatment of the *Verstand* (understanding). Besides, it is well known that Hegel's oral delivery, in his lectures, was notoriously ineloquent and stuttering, as he sought to give clear voice to his difficult, *speculative* ideas.

<sup>9</sup> For example, as Hegel writes in the Preface to the second edition of his *Science of Logic*, "Forms of thought are first set out and stored in human language [...] In everything that the human being [...] has made his own, there language has penetrated." SL 2010, 12 (W5: 20).

<sup>10</sup> Kant: 172-84, 229. Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature, Encyclopedia* §§ 254-61.

<sup>11</sup> Recall that at Hegel's time it was often the composer who was the performer. Similarly, the non-composing, expert performer-soloist was generally chosen by and worked with the composer.

<sup>12</sup> Making this crucial distinction, I am assisted by John McCumber's remarkable chapter in Jere Surber's book, *Hegel and Language* (2006: 111-125). While McCumber's aim is to show how subjective thinking comes to express itself in words, as the real but transient embodiments of spirit, the homonymous nature of "Ton" leads him to consider the question of music. On the relationship between vanishing and meaning in Hegel, see Reid 2021.

<sup>13</sup> A striking illustration of this is John Cage's *Organ ASLSP*, calling for a note played every few years. Following Hegel, each single note, as performed on the Halberstadt organ, is only meaningful within the completed work, over a 639-year period, concluding in 2640! The concept of the piece is its framework of meaning.

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<sup>14</sup> Moland (2019) concentrates on the centrality of feeling in musical experience, and the fact that temporality in Hegel implies the suppression of spatiality.

<sup>15</sup> For the pathology of *Gemüt*, see the chapter on Novalis in Reid (2014: 73-83).

<sup>16</sup> The term is derived from the Latin “*tactus*,” which has been adopted by contemporary musicology to indicate the subjective experience of beat perception, which can be further qualified as passive “entrainment” or as active “beat induction,” a specifically human faculty. See Rogers and Ogas (2022: 144-53).

<sup>17</sup> Within harmony itself, we find the same oscillatory ambiguity between the different vibratory characteristics of individual instruments and voices, over against the rigorous laws of harmony (LA: 919-229). Of course, Schiller’s *Spieltrieb* is derived from Kant’s idea that judgment of the beautiful involves a free play between the imagination and the understanding, as elaborated in his *Critique of the Faculty of Judgment* §9.

<sup>18</sup> A recent experiment in AI involved having a computer generate Beethoven’s “10<sup>th</sup> Symphony”, having been programmed to compose Beethoven-like outcomes from massive data inputs from his works. The result, as reviewed by both musicologists and music-lovers, has been generally described as meaningless.

<sup>19</sup> This “ideal” element of the soul (*Seele*), which I have been associating with the temporal production of tones, is sometimes obscured in the Knox translation of the *Lectures*, where, for example, music is presented as “the manner in which the inmost self is moved to the depths of its [...] conscious [*ideellen*] soul [*Seele*]” (LA: 891; W15: 135). In fact, the ideality of music (“the negation of the real”) frees the self from its conscious bond to objectivity. The soul as *Seele* is pre-conscious.

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<sup>20</sup> Between the 1827 and 1830 editions of the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel changed the section heading at §403 from “The Dreaming Soul (*Die träumende Seele*)” to “The Feeling Soul (*Die fühlende Seele*).” See Reid 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Hegel expresses these ideas in aphoristic form in his peculiar “Wastebook Fragments,” from his pre-*Phenomenological* Jena musings. There, a pagan form of “divinity” infuses itself into the tribal community as an immediately bacchanalian expression of “life.” However, this celebration of “arbitrary subjectivity” calls out for “measure through the cadence (*Masse durch den Takt*)” so that the “jubilation becomes harmony.” Whereas in the immediate feeling of life, we feel the revelatory “shower of divinity” (W2: 63), the measuring restraint of cadence and harmony appears as the manifestation of human reason, through the working of the *Verstand*.