

What Is It to Compose a Musical Work?

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Introduction

In this paper I deal with a question rather frequently discussed in analytical aesthetics, a question which is often formulated this way: "Are musical works created or discovered?"¹

In principle, there are two competing positions to be considered here which I call "Creationism" and "Platonism", respectively. The common ground shared by the opponents is the assumption that composing is a certain mental activity and thus that musical works are introduced into a culture by certain acts or processes of consciousness.

Roughly, the core of the debate can be sketched in the following way:

Platonist: "Musical works are pre-existent and necessary entities. Thus, they must be discovered or selected rather than created. (For it is impossible to create something which already exists.) Thus, composing is discovering. The composer does not bring into existence what she composes."

Creationist: "Musical works are created. Thus, they cannot be pre-existent and necessary entities. (For it is impossible to create something which already exists.) Thus, composing is creating. The composer brings into existence what she composes."

In what follows, I shall try to clarify the problem, I shall consider critically some rather well-known arguments, and finally I shall sketch a way to reconcile the competing views on the matter.

The paper is divided into five sections:

In section I, I shall make explicit some ontological presuppositions concerning the nature of the musical work which lay behind the whole debate.

After these preliminaries, in section II, I shall outline in more detail the Creationist and the Platonist view, respectively.

¹See, for example: Renée Cox, "Are Musical Works Discovered?" In: *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 43 (1985), 367-374; Gregory Currie, *An Ontology of Art* (New York 1989); Harry Deutsch, "The Creation Problem". In: *Topoi* 10 (1991), 209-225; Donald Walkout, "Discovery and Creation in Music". In: *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 45 (1986), 193-195; Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Works and Worlds of Art* (Oxford 1980).

In section III, I shall distinguish the psychological concepts of creation and discovery from their ontological counterparts, and I shall argue that only the ontological ones are relevant in the present context.

After that, in section IV, I shall consider and reject some current Creationist arguments which, on my view, fail to prove the point in question.

Finally, in section V, I shall argue that there is not necessarily a conflict between the positions of the Creationist and the Platonist, if they are construed in an appropriate manner. The Creationist view that to compose is to create is compatible with the Platonist view that to compose is to discover, at least if creation is understood in a quite natural and common sense way.

I. The Ontological Status of the Musical Work

What kind of entity is a musical work? Although this question is rather controversial, there is at least a certain agreement among philosophers of art on what a musical work is surely *not*. Thus it is widely accepted that a musical work is neither a score nor a particular performance.² But what else can it be? Roughly, there are three positions with regard to this question which are discussed seriously in contemporary philosophy of art:

1. The musical work is a *class of performances*.³
2. The musical work is an *object of consciousness*.⁴
3. The musical work is a kind of *abstract object*, a sort of *type*, that is an entity which is neither physical nor mental and which can be *instantiated* in particular performances.⁵

²Some, however, do not share even this. For example: Jay E. Bachrach, "Type and Token and the Identification of the Work of Art". In: *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 31 (1970-71), 415-420, and Richard Rudner, "The Ontological Status of the Esthetic Object". In: *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 10 (1949-50), 380-388.

³See Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art. An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (Indianapolis 1976). One must consider Goodman as an upholder of the class-view of the work of art, although Goodman himself remarks (in a footnote) that his talking about classes is just an "informal parlance admissible only because it can readily be translated into more acceptable language." (Footnote 3, p. 131.) But Goodman is treating works of art as classes throughout the whole book, and nowhere does he make an attempt to work out "a more acceptable language".

⁴See, for example, Renée Cox, "The Defence of Musical Idealism". In: *British Journal of Aesthetics* 26 (1986), 133-142. Nicholas Wolterstorff mentions R. G. Collingwood as an advocate of this position. See Wolterstorff, *Works and Worlds*, p. 42f.

⁵See, for example, Wolterstorff, *Works and Worlds*, and Richard Levinson, "What a Musical Work Is". In: *The Journal of Philosophy* 77 (1980), 5-28.

I choose the third of these three positions. As will be seen shortly, only within this ontological framework can the problem of creation versus discovery arise, at least in this particular form. Some brief remarks about the reasons for my decision may be justified:

If the musical work could be identified with its performances, then all musical works which were never performed would be identical with the null-class. There is just one null-class. Thus, all unperformed musical works would be identical. This is an extremely counter-intuitive consequence.⁶

Actually, if musical works were classes of performances, it would not make much sense to speak about "the performance *of* a musical work". For it is hard to imagine how the "performance of a *class*" would sound. But I take it that it is part of the very core of our concept of a musical work that a musical work is something which can be performed. If we drop this, we get a fundamentally different concept of the musical work, and as a consequence, presumably we have to give up almost all (if not all) of our ordinary beliefs about works of music. And as far as I can see, the class-view has no advantages which could be worth such a high price.

If we want to identify the musical work not with a class of performances but with some object of consciousness (whatever this exactly is supposed to be), then we have in principle two candidates: an object of consciousness of the composer while composing the work in question or an object of consciousness of some listener while listening it. The main objections against this "mentalist" view hold for both of these alternatives: since objects of consciousness are ontologically dependant on mental acts in such a way that they exist only while a certain mental act is performed, they have to be very transient entities.⁷ If the existence of the musical work depended on the mental acts of the composer during the process of composing, then the work would perish exactly in that moment in which the process of composing is finished. If we, however, identified the work with the objects of consciousness of the listeners of a particular performance, then we would have to say that the work ceases to exist in that very moment in which the last sound fades out. (In this latter case a further complication arises: actually, we have not just one work but as many works as listeners.) But we are used to considering works of music as something which continues to exist at least for a certain time, if not forever. We are convinced, for example, that it is possible to perform one and the same musical work twice. Of course, this is not possible if

⁶ See Kingsley Price, "What Is a Piece of Music?" In: *British Journal of Aesthetics* 22 (1982), p. 326, and Wolterstorff, *Works and Worlds*, p. 44f.

⁷It seemed to me appropriate to name Renée Cox as an advocate of the mentalist view (see footnote 4), although Cox denies that a musical work must be actively considered or experienced for its existence. According to Cox, it is sufficient that some people are able to remember it. Thus, her "Mentalism" is immune to this objection. But this move is somewhat obscure, at least as long as the ontological status of mental entities which exist in "unconscious minds" is left wholly in the dark.

musical works are objects of consciousness. Objects of consciousness are usually considered as unique and unrepeatable. Strictly speaking, it does not make much sense to speak about the "performance" of an object of consciousness. Objects of consciousness seem not to be the sort of entities which can be performed.⁸

Only the last of the three views mentioned above remains, according to which musical works are *types*, that is entities which are neither mental nor physical and which can be *instantiated*. In the case of those types which are musical works, the instances are of course particular performances. Naturally, one and the same type can be instantiated many times; many different performances can be instances of one and the same musical work.

Of course, there is much more to say about the ontological peculiarities of types, especially about their relation to their instances. But this would go beyond the scope of this paper. Thus, it must be sufficient to convey some intuitive grasp of what sort of thing a type is.

II. The Platonist and the Creationist View

The Platonist and the Creationist, though they are opponents in important respects, have an ontological background in common.⁹ Both of them hold that musical works are types, both of them consider types as neither physical nor mental entities which can be instantiated in performances. Furthermore, both of them agree that musical works are introduced into a culture by certain mental acts of the composer. What we usually call the "composing" of a musical work consists essentially in such mental acts. This, too, is not a matter of dispute between the Platonist and the Creationist. Nevertheless, they disagree with respect to the question of what it is exactly to compose a musical work. And their different opinions upon this matter have great impact on their ontologies of the musical work. Let me explain this in more detail.

The Creationist maintains that to compose a musical work is to *create* it, in the full sense of the word. But one can only create what does not yet exist. Therefore, according to the Creationist view, the composer brings the musical work into existence. Thus, musical works are contingent entities.

⁸For a more detailed criticism of the mentalist view see Wolterstorff, *Works and Worlds*, but also Roman Ingarden, *The Literary Work of Art* (Evanston 1973).

⁹A full-fledged Platonist theory of works of art has been developed by Wolterstorff. (See *Works and Worlds*.) A Platonism of a very similar kind, though not applied to works of art, is to be found, among others, in Terence Parsons, *Nonexistent Objects* (New Haven 1980), and Edward N. Zalta, *Abstract Objects. An Introduction to Axiomatic Metaphysics* (Dordrecht 1983). One of the upholders of the Creationist view is Jerrold Levinson whose arguments I shall discuss in section V below.

According to the Platonist conception of the world, however, there are exactly two fundamental categories and everything belongs to one of these: on the one hand, there are the concrete particulars (physical things, events, mental states...), and on the other hand there is the domain of abstract objects such as properties, propositions, numbers, classes and so forth. The entities of the first category are contingent and temporal, those of the second are necessary and non-temporal. Clearly, types cannot belong to the category of concrete particulars, for they can be instantiated. Thus, within the framework of the ontology just sketched, there is only one possibility left: types (and thus musical works) are necessarily existing and non-temporal entities, on a par with properties, propositions and so forth. This, in turn, leads the Platonist to the conclusion that musical works cannot be created in the proper sense of the word. For one cannot create what already exists. Rather, the Platonist maintains, musical works are *discovered* or *selected* by the composer.

One can flesh this out in the following way: There is an infinite domain of type-like entities, a logical archive, as it were, which contains a music department which, on its part, contains an infinity of musical types of all degrees of complexity: very elementary ones, like single notes, single chords, single bars, pitches, keys, simple melodies, but also whole songs and symphonies, piano sonatas, fugues etc., as well as, for example, the movement of a piano sonata, the rhythm of a song and so forth.

The "creative" activity of the composer consists in roving through this domain of the logical universe, trying to find the more interesting or beautiful ones within this vast pile of musical types. And if she succeeds, she usually makes this types accessible to us by producing scores or performances of them.

Iii. Ontological and Psychological Concepts of Creation and Discovery

What should have made clear by the above draft of the Platonist view (if it was not clear right from the beginning) is that the "discovery" of a musical work is rather different from the discovery of, say, an island or of a treasure hidden somewhere in a garden or of an old violin in the attic. One of the main differences is this, I suppose: if we say, in the ordinary sense, that a person discovered a thing *x*, then we presuppose that at least the "discoverer" himself did not know of the existence of *x* or at least was not sure about it until he discovered it.¹⁰ Roughly, we can say: if someone discovered *x* (in the ordinary sense of discovering), then it was at

¹⁰Ordinary language, however, is not so rigorous: in some cases it is allowed to say that a person discovered a thing *x*, even if it already knew of the existence of *x*, but did not know where *x* was to be found. But it would be useless to take into consideration this ramification here, for musical works (considered as types) surely cannot be discovered in this sense for they cannot be found anywhere.

least for the discoverer himself doubtful whether *x* exists until he discovered it. A mariner, for example, cannot discover an island which is already marked in the chart which he uses all the time, nor can I discover an old violin in the attic if I know for certain that my deceased aunt's violin must be up there.

But since musical works, according to the Platonist view, are necessarily existing entities, there can never be any doubt about the existence of a musical work, whatever the work in question is like. This could lead one to the conclusion that musical works cannot be discovered at all, or at least that the discovery of a musical work would be a rather trivial matter.¹¹ But both of these conclusions are not justified. Admittedly, if musical works are discovered, they are discovered in a special sense. But this sense of discovery is not so unfamiliar as it seems to be at first sight. We are used to saying, for example, that a chess player discovered a new move or that a mathematician discovered a proof for a certain theorem. Such discoveries are often not at all trivial and they may even require a considerable amount of "creativity" (in the sense of originality or ingenuity). Discovery in music seems to be similar to discovery in mathematics rather than to discovery in geography. Thus, the Platonist thesis does not at all amount to the claim that composers are not "creative" in the sense of original or ingenious.¹²

If we furthermore take into consideration that the discovery of musical works (as well as that of mathematical proofs and chess moves) surely consists in mental acts of a certain sort and that this holds also for the *creation* of abstract entities, then the Creationist and the Platonist views suddenly seem to be fairly close to each other, such that one might wonder whether there is any conflict between them that goes beyond a mere question of terminology. Yet there is such a conflict. For the Platonist claims that the musical work exists before it was composed, and this is exactly what the Creationist denies.

What complicates the whole controversy further is the fact that sometimes advocates of the Creationist position give the impression that it is simply an *empirical* truth that composers *create* their works instead of discovering them, a truth which may be verified by means of introspection. If this were the case, then saying that a person *x* creates something must amount to saying that *x* performs mental acts of a certain sort. For what is given to us in introspection are acts and states of consciousness. To bring more light into the whole matter, I propose to distinguish the psychological concepts of creation and discovery from the

¹¹See Deutsch, "The Creation Problem", p. 218f.

¹²I mention this just to avoid the arising of the misleading impression that the Platonist account leaves no room for artistic creativity. (This impression sometimes may be the cause of an intuitive aversion to Platonist theories in aesthetics).

ontological ones.¹³ (I use, in this section, the indices 'o' and 'p' for 'ontological' and 'psychological', respectively.) I start with the concept of creation.

(1) At t_1 : x created_O y

implies

(2) y did not exist (immediately) before t_1 .¹⁴

(1) is equivalent with

(3) At t_1 : x brought y into being.

In contrast,

(4) At t_1 : x created_P y

does not imply (2). For (4) is just a statement about x 's mental state at t_1 . Similarly, we can distinguish the psychological concept of discovery from the ontological one.¹⁵

(5) At t_1 : x discovered_O y

implies

(6) y existed immediately before t_1 .

¹³I owe the distinction between the psychological and the ontological concept of creation to Harry Deutsch (see "The Creation Problem"): Deutsch emphasises that there is a difference between "creating a thing" and "bringing a thing into being" (see p. 210), and it is rather clear that Deutsch has a psychological concept of creation in mind when he talks about the "creation of a thing".

¹⁴Perhaps my inserting 'immediately' here is superfluous, and it would be sufficient to say simply that (1) implies that y did not exist before t_1 . Indeed I tend to think that this is the case. For it seems to me that a temporally existing entity must have what we could call "temporal continuity". With "temporal continuity" I mean this: it is impossible that a thing perishes at a time t_1 and that *the same thing* comes into being once again at a later time t_2 . To put it another way: a thing cannot be "temporally scattered". But perhaps this principle of temporal continuity is not wholly uncontroversial. That's why I have decided to make the qualification.

¹⁵Of course, I'm talking about discovering here in that special sense outlined above in which mathematical proofs and chess moves may be discovered.

(7) At t_1 : x discovered_p y

does not imply (6). Like sentence (4) above, (7) has no ontological implications at all. For (7), as well as (4), is just a statement about x 's mental state or activity at t_1 - and nothing over and above that. And x may be in this particular mental state whether y exists or not.

Notice that, according to these explications, it is possible for two composers to create_p one and the same musical work independent of each other at different times. It is even possible for one and the same composer to create_p one and the same musical work twice. For why should it be impossible that a composer performs certain acts of consciousness more than once? In contrast, it is impossible that a work is created_o twice, according to the principle that one cannot bring into being what already exists.¹⁶

One might ask whether there is any difference at all between creation_p and discovery_p. This is a question to be settled by empirical psychology. Psychologists may induce artists and theorists to describe their experiences during their "creative" work (composing, writing, searching for mathematical proofs), and then they may look whether it is convenient, on this empirical basis, to distinguish two categories of such creative activities (more or less passive receptions of an "idea" in contrast to active constructions, for example). And if they decide that it is indeed convenient, then they may call the one "creation" and the other "discovery". But this does not have any ontological impact.¹⁷ The question whether works are created_o or discovered_o is not an empirical question but a metaphysical one, and thus it cannot be settled by empirical investigations. The scrutiny of the processes in the mind of a composer, interesting as it may be, can never help us to answer the question whether musical works exist independently of and prior to such processes or whether they come into being through them.

IV. Some Creationist Arguments and their Refutation

¹⁶As I have noted above (see footnote 14), some may hold that a thing may be temporally scattered. According to this view, of course, a thing may be created_o more than once.

¹⁷A similar point is made by Peter Kivy in "Platonism in Music: Another Kind of Defense". *American Philosophical Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (1987), p. 249: "Whether we are talking about the bright ideas we get as creations *or* discoveries, the introspective reports of their comings are on all fours with one another; inspirations if you like, or just plain 'poppings,' as I prefer. In other words, nothing about the mental process that gives rise to a creative achievement can give us any clue to whether we want to call that achievement a creation or a discovery."

If the Creationist position can not be supported by appeal to empirical evidence, how else can it be done?¹⁸ Let's consider the following argument:

1. To compose a musical work is either to create or to discover it.
2. It is impossible to create something twice, but it is not impossible to discover something twice.
3. Therefore, if it is impossible to compose one and the same musical work twice, then to compose a musical work must be to create it.

This, of course, does not yet show that musical works are created. But it could be a first step in that direction if it could be shown that it is impossible to compose one and the same musical work twice. But how can that be shown? There is a current strategy which runs as follows:

1. Necessarily, the musico-historical context of a composer c_1 is not exactly the same as the musico-historical context of another composer c_2 . (Analogously, the musico-historical context of c_1 at a time t_1 is not exactly the same as the musico-historical context of c_1 at another time t_2 .)
2. If a work W_1 is composed in a musico-historical context C_1 such that C_1 is different from the musico-historical context C_2 in which a work W_2 is composed, then there is a property P such that P is a property of W_1 but not of W_2 or vice versa.
3. According to the Leibniz principle of identity, for all x and y : if there is a property P such that P is a property of x but not of y (or vice versa), then x is not identical with y .
4. Thus, if the context in which W_1 is composed is different from the context in which W_2 is composed, then W_1 is not identical with W_2 .
5. Thus, if W_1 is composed by c_1 and W_2 is composed by another composer c_2 , then W_1 is not identical with W_2 . (Analogously, if W_1 is composed by c_1 at t_1 and W_2 is composed by c_1 at t_2 , then W_1 is not identical with W_2).
6. Thus, it is impossible to compose a musical work twice.¹⁹

Together with the conclusion from the argument above

¹⁸In what follows I am concerned with creation and discovering exclusively in the ontological sense. Thus the indices 'o' and 'p' would not have any function anymore. That's why, for the sake of economy, I omit them from now on.

¹⁹Compare Levinson "What a Musical Work Is", p. 10. Levinson intends to show that a work W_1 can never be identical with a work W_2 if the composer of W_1 is not identical with the composer of W_2 .

3. If it is impossible to compose one and the same musical work twice, then to compose a musical work must be to create it,

we can infer from this:

10. Thus, to compose a musical work must be to create it.

What about this argument? First of all, the plausibility of premise 1 depends on what one regards as part of "the musico-historical context" of a composer. If we decide to consider it as a part of the musico-historical context of a composer c_1 that he is, for example, two weeks older than a composer c_2 or that he lives exactly 512.3 miles away from the composer c_3 or that he does not like the favourite meal of his colleague c_4 , and so forth, if we count such things as parts of the musico-historical context of a composer, then we could hardly avoid the consequence that the musico-historical contexts of two composers must be different in some respects. But if we understand premise 1 in such a trivial way, then premise 2 loses a lot of its intuitive plausibility. For one could surely doubt whether it really makes any difference for a work whether its composer is born at the end of May or at the beginning of June. Intuitively, it seems that only *some* aspects of the whole context of a composer impact on the work, but not *all* of them. On the other hand, if we adopt a narrower concept of the musico-historical context, then it is not at all obvious that two composers cannot have exactly the same musico-historical context, as is maintained in premise 1.

But let us accept premise 1 for the sake of argument. Let us instead turn our attention to premise 2: What is claimed here is that every work has some *context-dependant properties*. A series of natural examples of such properties can be found in Jerrold Levinson's influential article "What a Musical Work Is" in which the above delineated strategy is applied extensively. Let's consider some of Levinson's examples:

"Mendelssohn's *Midsummer's Night Dream Overture* (1826) is admitted by all to be a highly *original* piece of music. (...) But a score written in 1900 detailing the very same sound structure as is found in Mendelssohn's piece would clearly result in a work that was surpassingly *unoriginal*."

"Brahms's Piano Sonata Opus 2 (1852), an early work, is strongly *Liszt-influenced*. (...) However, a work identical with it in sound structure, but written by Beethoven, could hardly have had the property of being Liszt-influenced."

"One of the passages in Bartok's *Concerto for Orchestra* (1943) satirises Shostakovitch's *Seventh Symphony* ('Leningrad') of 1941. (...) But notice that if Bartok had written the very same score in 1939, the work he would then have composed could not have had the same property of satirizing Shostakovitch's *Seventh Symphony*."²⁰

I see no reason to deny that musical works can have such context-dependant properties as being Liszt-influenced or being a pastiche of Shostakovitch's *Seventh Symphony*. Nevertheless, something is wrong with premise 2.

Let me use one of the quoted examples from Levinson's article to make the point clear: Let W_1 be the work Mendelssohn's *Midsummer's Night Dream Overture* which has the property of being original. Suppose another composer c_2 had written almost 80 years later a work W_2 which is identical in sound structure with W_1 . According to Levinson, W_2 lacks the property of being original, because of its different context of origin. To apply premise 5 from above: W_1 was composed in the context C_1 of 1826, W_2 in another context C_2 . Different contexts of origin yield different context-dependant properties (in this case: the property of being original or the property of being unoriginal, respectively). Therefore, W_1 is not identical with W_2 .

One could raise the following objection to this example: Maybe W_1 was original in 1826, but it was not original anymore in 1900. The property of being original is one of those properties which a thing may exemplify for some time but not necessarily *forever*.²¹ Analogously, a dress may be fashionable now and old-fashioned next year, and we would hardly conclude from this that the dress is not the same anymore. Thus, from the fact that a work W_1 was original in 1826 and a work W_2 was not original in 1900, we cannot conclude that W_1 is not identical with W_2 .

But this objection, though legitimate, is not so serious. For it is aimed against this particular example and not against the strategy in general. Furthermore, the example can easily be repaired. Let us replace the property of being original with the property of *having been original at the time of its origin*. (I shall abbreviate this to *having been original at t_o* .)

²⁰"What a Musical Work Is", p. 12f.

²¹A similar objection to an analogous example is raised by Peter Kivy in "Platonism in Music", p. 247. Kivy also makes the general point (which I agree with) that the intuitions on which Levinson's examples rest are somewhat flimsy and wobbly: "We might say that our intuitions go both ways, or we might say that they go nowhere at all." ("Platonism in Music", p. 248.) In a reply to Kivy, Levinson admits "that there is some truth" in this criticism; nevertheless, he holds on to the creation thesis, mainly because of the alleged firm entrenchment of the notion of creation in discourse on music. (Levinson, "What a Musical Work is, Again". In: Levinson, *Music, Art, and Metaphysics. Essays in Philosophical Aesthetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 214-263.)

Then the example goes like this: W_1 has the property of having been original at t_0 (that is: at the time when it was composed) and W_2 lacks this property.

To this version of the example the above objection does not apply. But there is another Platonist objection which hits not only the particular example but the strategy in general. It goes as follows: How can we assume that the "contexts of origin" (that is the contexts in which the works were composed) of W_1 and W_2 are not the same? In fact, against the background of the Platonist view there is no reason at all for this assumption - on the contrary: the Platonist consequently must deny that the contexts of W_1 and W_2 are really different, and he can deny this coherently. For the Platonist picture of the situation is this: Indeed W_1 was composed in the context C_1 , and W_2 in the context C_2 , and C_1 is different from C_2 . But since W_1 and W_2 have a common sound structure, W_1 is identical with W_2 . From this it follows, by Leibniz's law, that W_1 and W_2 must have exactly the same context-dependant properties. Accordingly, they must be composed in the same contexts. And indeed they *are* composed in the very same contexts: W_1 is composed in C_1 , but not only in C_1 but also in C_2 . Correspondingly, W_2 is composed both in C_1 and in C_2 . Thus, W_1 and W_2 have the same contexts of origin and consequently they share all of their context-dependant properties. In other words, there is no property which is a property of W_1 but not of W_2 (or vice versa). It is simply not true, for example, that W_1 has the property of being original at t_0 but W_2 lacks it. Either both of them have that property or both lack it.

The Platonist view is perfectly coherent, because, according to him, to compose a musical work is to discover it, and there is no incoherence in the view that one and the same work is discovered twice. Thus, the Platonist can assume coherently that one and the same work is composed in different contexts C_1 and C_2 by different composers c_1 and c_2 at different times t_1 and t_2 . Thus, according to him, a work may have more than one "time of origin" t_0 . Thus, a work may have the property of having been original at one time of origin t_{01} and lack the property of having been original at another time of origin t_{02} . Moreover, if we want to accept properties like "being unoriginal", we can say that the same work may have the property of having been unoriginal at t_{02} and lack the property of having been unoriginal at t_{01} .

Thus, the given example does not force us to accept the view that it is impossible to compose one and the same musical work twice.

The other two examples are to be analysed analogously: Let W_1 be Brahms's Piano Sonata Opus 2 and W_2 be an assumed work with the same sound structure, but written by Beethoven. W_1 has the property of being *Liszt-influenced*. Seemingly, a work of Beethoven can hardly be influenced by Liszt, because Beethoven died when Liszt was only 16. Let me use in what follows 'c₁' for 'Brahms', 'c₂' for 'Beethoven', and 'c₃' for 'Liszt'.

Let me ask: What does it exactly mean to say that a work is influenced by a composer? What does it mean that W_1 of c_1 is influenced by c_3 ? I propose something like the following

analysis: The *composer* c_1 was influenced by the composer c_3 through some of the works of c_3 , and W_1 of c_1 reflects this influence. In other words, in the primary sense it is the *composer* who is influenced by his colleague, not his work. A work can be influenced - in the proper sense of the word - as much as a stone. I take it that the property of being influenced (in the rather special sense in which the word 'influenced' is used in the present context) is a relation which involves at least the influencing composer, the influenced composer and the work which reflects this influence. Now, if a work has two (independent) composers, it may well be that one of them was influenced by a third colleague and the other was not. Thus, we cannot conclude from the fact that W_1 was composed by c_1 who was influenced by c_3 and W_2 was composed by c_2 who was not influenced by c_3 , that W_1 is not identical with W_2 . For it may well be that W_1/W_2 is just one work which is composed both by c_1 and c_2 .

Finally, the pastiche-example: W_1 of c_1 has the property of being a pastiche of Shostakovitch's *Seventh Symphony*. I take it that the property of being a pastiche of something involves necessarily the intentions of the composer such that ' W_1 of c_1 is a pastiche of Shostakovitch's *Seventh Symphony*' implies ' c_1 intended W_1 as a pastiche of Shostakovitch's *Seventh Symphony*'. If W_1 is composed twice (namely in 1939 and in 1943) by two composers c_1 and c_2 , then W_1 is intended by one of its composers as a pastiche of Shostakovitch's *Seventh Symphony*, but not by the other.

I have argued against all three examples along the same lines: I tried to show that the crucial assumption, namely that W_1 and W_2 are composed in different contexts, presupposes the assumption that a work cannot be composed twice. And the only reason for *this* assumption is, as far as I can see, the view that works are created rather than discovered. But since the whole argument is intended as an argument for exactly this view, it cannot legitimately be used to support the premises. Thus, the whole contextualistic reasoning cannot provide us with a valid argument for the Creationist view.

V. Platonism and Creationism Reconciled

Is there any argument at all for either of the two competing views? Is there a way to settle the question without begging it?

There is one point which hasn't been taken into consideration yet: Independently of all arguments involving identity-conditions and other ontological matters, the Creationist view has its basis in the very concept of a *work*. Let me put it this way: a work is something which *has an author*. Specifically, a work of music is something which has a composer. Having an author is essential for being a work. As far as I can see, this point is generally accepted, even among the advocates of the Platonist view. One of the most brilliant of them, Nicholas

Wolterstorff, for example, emphasises that "a work is always a work *of* somebody. Nothing is ever a work of music without (...) being a work of some person or persons."²²

Thus, the contention that a work of music necessarily has a composer seems not to be a matter of dispute between the Creationist and the Platonist. The matter of dispute is rather, whether the author is a discoverer or a creator, or, to put it another way: whether to compose is to create or to discover.

Let us grant, for the sake of argument, that the Platonist is right in thinking that the composer's activity consists in choosing or selecting certain types among an infinity of necessarily and non-temporally existing entities. This seems to be the very core of the Platonist position. But from this it doesn't follow that it is the work itself that is discovered. On the contrary, it is not and cannot be the work itself which is discovered by a composer. For a work is something which *is* already discovered. A still undiscovered type is not a work. Until a type is not discovered, it is not a work. Thus, literally speaking, a *work* cannot be discovered.

At first sight, it looks as if this is a problem for the Platonist: Obviously, authorship is a matter of contingent facts. It is a contingent fact that certain types have been discovered and others not. Thus, seemingly, the existence of a work must be a contingent fact too. But the gist of Platonism is the claim that works are necessarily existing entities. Let's see what is proposed as a solution by Wolterstorff:

"What the composer does must be understood as consisting in bringing it about that a pre-existent kind becomes *a work* - specifically, a *work of his*. To compose is not to bring into existence what one composes. It is to bring it about that something becomes a work."²³

How are we to understand this? It seems that the composer is supposed to turn a "pre-existent kind", that is a necessarily and non-temporally existing entity, into a work.

But this view is, as far as I can see, compatible with the claim that the composer *creates* a work. We can say simply that to create a musical work *is* to discover a pre-existent type. In other words: *By discovering* a pre-existent type, a composer *is creating* a work. In describing a composer's activity as a *creation of works by discovering* and selecting *pre-existent types*, we can match both the intuitions of the Platonist, according to which the activity of composing involves somehow an element of discovery and selection, and of the Creationist, according to which the existence of musical works is a contingent matter, dependent on human activity.²⁴

²²*Works and Worlds*, p. 67.

²³*Works and Worlds*, p. 88f.

²⁴The idea that we can say that composition somehow involves discovery without thereby being committed to the view that the work itself is discovered is also to be found in Currie,

There is, however, an obvious objection against this proposal: Creation in the ontological sense, one might argue, involves (as has been pointed out in a previous section of this paper) the coming into being of something that didn't exist before. Now, granted that we might say in some sense, that a composer transforms a Platonic type into a work, this surely doesn't amount to the coming into being of a new entity. At best, we can say that a previously existing entity has got a new property (namely the property of having been discovered). Perhaps we can say that the composer has brought it about that the pre-existent type became a work; but to bring it about that something becomes a so-and-so is not to create anything.

Let me draw an analogy from another area of artistic activity: If an artist models a statue out of a lump of clay, wouldn't we say that she *created* the statue (created, of course, in the ontological sense)? We would, I suppose, and there seems to be good reason for this. For there is a very straightforward sense in which the statue did not exist before the artist's modelling the lump of clay. But obviously, the artist did not create the statue "out of thin air". Rather, she created it by giving the clay a certain shape. In other words, she created it by bringing it about that the lump became a statue. Thus, it seems that we have to make a further distinction, this time between two senses of 'creation₀'. Let me call creation "out of thin air" *creation ex nihilo*, and creation by bringing it about that something becomes a so-and-so, for lack of a more appropriate term, *creation by transformation*. Even if we are fully conscious of this distinction, this would hardly prevent us from saying that the artist created the statue in a very straightforward sense.

I take it that the creation of a statue is one of the paradigm cases of human creation. Presumably, most (if not all) of the paradigm cases of human creation are creations by transformation. That is: human creators do nothing else than bring it about that something becomes a so-and-so.

True, it is not compatible with the Platonist's framework to say that a composer creates a work in the *ex nihilo* sense. But the Platonist may accept that composers are creators in the transformation sense.

Admittedly, the pure discovery and selecting of something is a borderline-case of transformation. But the history of art (especially the history of art of our century) provides us with a

An Ontology of Art, though Currie develops in this book an ontology of art works which is rather different from those which I discussed here. He writes: "Part of what this event [i. e. Beethoven's composition of the *Hammerklavier Sonata*] involves is that Beethoven discovers a certain sound structure." (p. 67) However, Currie denies that works of art are created. (pp. 61-64) A weaker version of the discovery thesis is accepted even by Levinson in his reply to Kivy: "One could say that selecting and assembling sound and other patterns to create specific musical meanings (...) *is* creating musical works." ("What a Musical Work Is, Again", p. 218.)

variety of such cases which are treated as creations of works by historians and theorists of art. (Of course, one may think of Duchamp's *objet's trouvés* here, for example.)

The remaining question is, of course, whether there is any need for the Platonist assumption of a realm of pre-existent types. Couldn't we do as well without the ontological commitment to an infinite number of abstract objects? But this is another story, and I think it can be better discussed when it is not intermingled with the creation-discovery problem.