

MUSICAL WORKS AS ETERNAL TYPES

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I. TYPES, SOUND STRUCTURES, AND THE ARGUMENT FROM CREATABILITY

ON 27 May 1992 the Wynton Marsalis Septet premièred Marsalis's *In This House, On This Morning*. Their actions brought about a *sound-sequence-occurrence*: a datable, locatable occurrence of a pattern of sounds. This sound-sequence-occurrence was an occurrence of the work. Yesterday I produced another sound-sequence-occurrence of *In This House, On This Morning* when I placed a compact disc in my compact disc player and pressed 'play'. But what sort of thing is the musical work which was both performed by the band and played on my compact disc player?

One thing is certain: there exists no concrete particular with which the piece can be plausibly identified. The relation holding between a work and its occurrences cannot be that of identity. Identity is a one-one relation, so the single work cannot be identical with two or more occurrences; and, in any case, the work endures beyond the end of any such occurrence. But neither can musical works be identified with their original scores. For one thing, some pieces do not have a score. For another, musical works have properties that original scores do not: works, but not scores, can be heard; and, as Jerrold Levinson reminds us,¹ one can be familiar with a piece of music but have had no contact with its score.

In the wake of such reasoning, it has become customary to regard works of music as *generic entities*:² abstract objects which have sound-sequence-occurrences as instances. And once this move has been made, it is compelling to go on to construe a musical work as a particular sort of generic entity: 'to wit, a structural type or kind' (*MAM*, p. 64). The identity of a type depends upon 'the *condition* which a token meets or *would have to meet in order to instantiate it*';³ and it is for this reason that the construal of a musical work as a type of sound-sequence-occurrence is preferable to an account which identifies the work with another species of generic entity: the set of its occurrences. Sets, unlike types, are *constructed* out of their instances, from which it follows that a set has its members

¹ Jerrold Levinson, *Music, Art and Metaphysics* (Ithaca: Cornell U.P., 1990), p. 63. Hereafter *MAM*.

² This way of putting it is found in Richard Wollheim's *Art and its Objects* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1970), p. 91.

³ Ian Rumfitt, 'Content and Context: The Paratactic Theory Revisited and Revised', *Mind*, vol. 102 (1993), p. 448.

(or lack of them) essentially;⁴ and it is this which tells against the set-theoretical approach to the ontology of musical works. For while a set of sound-sequence-occurrences has its occurrences essentially, *In This House, On This Morning* does not: the piece could have had a fewer or greater number of occurrences than it has in fact had.⁵ Because types are not similarly constructed out of their tokens, they are immune to this objection.

That *In This House, On This Morning* should be regarded as a type whose tokens are sound-sequence-occurrences is something which Levinson and I agree upon (*MAM*, p. 64). But what *type* of type is it? A simple view has it that the work is what Levinson has christened ‘a sound structure’: a structured type whose constituents number nothing but sound-types (*MAM*, p. 64). According to the simple view, then, *In This House, On This Morning* is “‘this complex sound [-type] followed by this one, followed by this one,” that is to say, a specified *sequence* of sound [-type]s, with all audible characteristics comprised’.⁶ Neither the historico-musical context in which the piece was composed, nor any particular means of sound-production (i.e. instrumentation), are essential to the work. To put the point imprecisely but nonetheless helpfully, what makes *In This House, On This Morning* that work is that it sounds like *that*. Period.

As Levinson recognizes, the construal of musical works as sound structures is ‘[t]he most natural and common proposal’ concerning the ontology of works of music (*MAM*, p. 64). Indeed, someone unencumbered by too much philosophical theory will be inclined to wonder what else *In This House, On This Morning* could be but the sequence of sound (-types) determined by its score and its associated conventions of interpretation. Our intuitions tell us, for example, that the context in which the work was composed, though of technical-historical interest, is not an essential feature of the work. We can, it seems, quite easily imagine a possible world in which *In This House, On This Morning* was composed by Charles Mingus in 1958. Furthermore, the instrumentation specified in a work’s score (if it has one) also seems to be inessential: a performance of *In This*

⁴ As David Wiggins puts it, ‘[i]f there is no other way of identifying such a unity than via its constituents, then its identity is derivative from these in a way in which the identity of a perceptibly demonstrable horse or tree is not derivative from that of any particular cells or sequence of spatio-temporal positions or sequence of paired space-time positions and material components’ (*Sameness and Substance* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1980], p. 113).

⁵ Indeed, there is a possible world in which the work exists and yet has never been performed. According to the conception of musical works as types, such works are untokened types: entities analogous to moves in chess which have not yet been made. Unperformed works pose a particular problem for the set-theoretical approach: all unperformed works come out as identical (since they are all identified with the null set). No such problem afflicts an identification of works with types: two untokened types differ, if the condition a token must meet to be a token of one is distinct from the condition a token must meet in order to be a token of the other.

⁶ The audible characteristics of which a sound structure are composed are ‘not just melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic ones, not even just timbral, dynamic, articulatory ones as well, but also *tempo*’ (*MAM*, p. 88).

House, On This Morning on space-age synthesizers, indistinguishable to the ears from the work's première, would be a no less satisfactory performance of the piece. If such synthesizers were easier to play than trumpet, tenor saxophone, and the rest, we might be less impressed with the achievement of the *band*, but the synthesized performance would not be a less satisfactory performance of the *piece*. How could it be? In the counterfactual situation we are imagining, the two performances sound exactly the same.

Naturally, even the strongest of intuitions are not inviolable. There may turn out to be good philosophical reasons why the most natural answer to a question should be abandoned. It is, nevertheless, a sound methodological maxim that a position which is intuitive should only be abandoned *in extremis*. And what this means is that the simple view of the ontology of musical works is the default position which should only be given up once it is shown to be untenable. Levinson, however, believes that he has shown just this. For Levinson, the simple view is inevitably an *over*-simplification. Although he remains convinced that a musical work is an abstract, structured type, Levinson subjects the simple view to an ingenious battery of arguments which, he contends, illustrate that it needs modification. This paper is about one of Levinson's arguments, an argument I call *the argument from creatability*.

The argument with which I am concerned is expressed, albeit in a condensed form, in the following statement: '[i]f musical works were sound structures, then musical works could not, properly speaking, be created by their composers' (*MAM*, p. 65). It is an argument that we may represent as follows:

- (1) Sound structures exist at all times.
- So (2) If musical works were sound structures, they could not be created (that is, brought into being) by their composers.
- (3) But musical works *are* created by their composers.
- So (4) Musical works are not sound structures.

Levinson takes this argument to be sound, and, as a consequence, argues for a reconstrual of a musical work as a type of a more complex kind, namely 'a contextually qualified, person-and-time-tethered abstract object' (*MAM*, p. 216). According to Levinson, *In This House, On This Morning* is not the sound structure ψ ; it is ψ -as-indicated-by-Marsalis-in-1992, where *indication* typically involves the writing of a score.⁷ The work is thus an 'indicated' structure or type; and,

⁷ Strictly speaking, Levinson regards the work to be an amalgam of ψ and a certain performance means structure-as-indicated-by-Marsalis-in-1992 (*MAM*, pp. 78–79). However, given that Levinson regards performance means structures as eternal existents too (*ibid.*, p. 79), this complication need not detain us. Levinson comes to regard works of music as essentially involving specific means of performance because their scores specify the sounds to be produced as coming from specific instruments. I regard this argument as fallacious, but will not go into it here.

Levinson believes, this means that it is an ‘initiated type’: a type which was brought into being by Marsalis’s act of indication:

When a composer θ composes a piece of music, he indicates a . . . structure ψ , but he does not bring ψ into being. However, through the act of indicating ψ , he does bring into being something that did not previously exist—namely, ψ -as-indicated-by- θ -at- t_1 . Before the compositional act at t_1 no relation obtains between θ and ψ . Composition establishes the relation of indication between θ and ψ . As a result of the compositional act, I suggest, the world contains a new entity, ψ -as-indicated-by- θ -at- t_1 . (*MAM*, p. 79)

I have two rejoinders to make to this. First, the conclusion of the argument from creatability may be resisted since the argument’s third premise is false. As we shall see, Levinson claims that an essential feature of our concept of composition is that composition is a kind of creation. I deny this. In my view, what is essential to composition is *creativity*, not the creation of an entity. My second rejoinder concerns Levinson’s suggested emendation of the simple view. Insofar as we can understand what it is for a type to be ‘tethered’ to a time, such indicated structures exist at all times too; so, strictly speaking, there are no types that are *initiated*. Levinson’s emendation thus fails to allow for the creatability of musical works anyway.

II. THE CREATABILITY REQUIREMENT REJECTED

Let us focus upon the argument’s third premise: what we may call the *creatability requirement*. The first thing that we should be careful not to do is to make its denial seem more outlandish than it really is. R. A. Sharpe puts the case against what he terms ‘musical Platonism’ like this:

[A] frequently aired criticism of such Platonism in music is that it denies creativity. If a work of music is an abstract entity, a sound pattern that exists independently of the composer, then, instead of creating it, he merely selects it.⁸

But such a criticism confuses creation with creativity. While it is true that a denial of the creatability requirement entails that composition is a kind of selection, it is quite wrong to suppose that this need amount to an account of composition as lacking in creativity: a view of composition as the unimaginative tracing of an abstract pattern. In my view, if we are to make sense of composition, we must acknowledge its creativity; but we can do this while denying that composers create the works which they compose.

To see how such a distinction between creativity and creation might be possible, we need merely draw an analogy between musical works and Fregean

⁸ R. A. Sharpe, ‘Music, Platonism and Performance: Some Ontological Strains’, *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 35 (1995), p. 39.

propositions: what he called ‘thoughts’.⁹ Frege famously regarded thoughts as eternal entities: ‘the thinker does not create them’, Frege says, ‘but must take them as they are’.¹⁰ As an account of the nature of propositions, what Frege has to say may not be completely happy, but, to my knowledge, no one has seriously suggested that the eternal existence of thoughts is incompatible with the truism that we may think and speak creatively. The fact that we do not literally create the entities that we think and say does not entail that we are mere dullards. And the reason why this is so is that whether one thinks creatively is determined, not (*per impossibile*) by whether one brings any thoughts into existence, but by the nature of the thoughts one thinks. To think creatively is to grasp propositions that few others can grasp, and to be able to see connections between propositions that others cannot see. Something similar, surely, goes for creativity in the field of musical composition. A composer is creative, not through bringing works into existence, but by having to exercise imagination in composing the works she does. A creative thinker is someone who has the imagination to have thoughts beyond the reach of most people. A creative composer is someone who has the imagination to compose works of music that others do not have the capacity to compose. Composition is, indeed, a form of discovery; but discoveries can be creative.

Another analogy should help. Einstein’s discovery of the facts which comprise the Special Theory of Relativity required him to be hugely inventive and imaginative. Although he did not bring these facts into existence, Einstein’s discovery of them was the result of undeniably creative thinking. Well, the same goes, according to a sensible Platonist, for the composition of *In This House, On This Morning*. This sound structure has always existed, but it took a composer with a huge musical imagination and sensitive feel for the history of jazz to discover it and score it. *Creativity* can coexist with the simple view; it is only the *creation* of musical works which is ruled out.

Having said this, although Levinson grants that discoveries may be creative, he nonetheless insists that it is *creatability*, not simply *creativity*, which is required for a satisfying account of the nature of composition (*MAM*, p. 228). Why is this? First of all, he charges the thesis that composers do not create their works with being starkly counterintuitive. According to Levinson, the way in which we talk about composers and their compositions embodies the thesis that works are brought into being by composers, not discovered by them:

The whole tradition of art assumes art is creative in the strict sense, that it is a godlike activity in which the artist brings into being what did not exist beforehand—much as a demiurge forms a world out of inchoate matter. The notion that artists truly *add* to

⁹ G. Frege, ‘Thoughts’, reprinted in S. Salmon and S. Soames (eds), *Propositions and Attitudes* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1988).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

the world, in company with cake-bakers, house builders, law makers, and theory constructors, is surely a deep-rooted idea that merits preservation if at all possible. (*MAM*, pp. 66–67)

Moreover, Levinson suggests, we take there to exist what he terms an ‘I–Thou’ relation between an artist and her work: ‘a relation of unique possession’ in which a work belongs to an artist ‘in no uncertain terms’. This intuition, argues Levinson, can only be captured if the work an artist possesses is literally created by her (*MAM*, p. 218).

Two further arguments against the eternal existence of musical works are recoverable from Levinson’s work. First, he suggests that the cause of theoretical unity is furthered, if we treat musical composition, like sculpture and painting, as involving the literal creation of a work.¹¹ And, finally, Levinson claims that the status we attach to musical composition is dependent upon works being created by their composers. ‘If’, he says, ‘we conceive of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony as existing sempiternally, before Beethoven’s compositional act, a small part of the glory that surrounds Beethoven’s composition of the piece seems to be removed’ (*MAM*, p. 67).

But what are we to make of these considerations? When it comes to the claim that we hold composers to ‘truly *add* to the world, in company with cake-bakers, house builders, law makers, and theory constructors’ (*MAM*, p. 67), I feel that Levinson is moving a little too quickly. For the things which cake-bakers and house builders uncontentiously create are not types, but *tokens*: token cakes and token houses respectively. Of course, there may be a person whom we may wish to call ‘the inventor of the chocolate éclair’, but our use of this definite description does not commit us to there having been someone who literally created the *type*. How could it? We have no conception of what it would be for a person to do this. As we shall see in Section III, the idea that abstract objects can be literally created is of dubious coherence. This, however, does not entail that any claim of the form ‘*A* was the inventor of the chocolate éclair’ is false. For our everyday use of ‘the inventor of ψ ’ does not embody the thesis that the people we describe as ‘inventors’ bring types into existence. ‘The inventor of the chocolate éclair’ is used to refer to the person whose act of conceiving of such a confection was responsible for the type’s first being tokened. The type has always existed; the person we call its ‘inventor’ was the (ingenious) individual who first had the idea of such a thing and whose imaginative act started the process which led to the creation of the type’s first token.

But let us return to the case of musical composition. When we talk of composers having ‘added something to the world’, I doubt whether this is

¹¹ ‘Shall paintings, drawings, etchings, sculptures, palaces, dances, films and so on all be truly creatable, in the full sense of the word, and only symphonies and novels denied this possibility? There would be little profit, and false economy, in that’ (*MAM*, p. 220).

intended to imply that an entity—namely a musical work—has been literally created. Let us consider what we mean by ‘addition’ in this context. The idea, surely, is that the composer of a great work can add *value* to our lives. This she does by giving us the chance to enrich our experience in some way by listening to the work; and she gives us this chance by discovering the work, (typically) scoring it, and thereby making it possible for us to listen to it and get something from it. No assumption of creation need be made. Indeed, the discovery of the Victoria Falls, or the tomb of Tutankhamen, ‘added something to the world’ in a similar sense. Such discoveries made it possible for us to appreciate the things discovered.

The fact that our talk of composers ‘adding something to the world’ does not imply that their works are created by them is further evidenced when we attend to what ‘the world’ means in this setting. When we say that a composer has added something to *the world* we are saying that she has added something to *our culture*; and this latter way of talking does not embody the doctrine that her composition has literally been brought into existence by her. In composing *In This House, On This Morning*, Marsalis certainly added the work to our culture, but adding a work to our culture is a matter of introducing it to our cultural life, of placing it within our culture and opening it up to appreciation. And Marsalis did this, not by bringing the work into existence, but by first scoring it, first tokening it, and hence bringing it to the notice of the jazz world. To do this, he need not have actually created the piece. Adding something to *our culture* is not a matter of creating something that did not exist before; it is placing something within our culture that was not there before.

At this point, however, Levinson may argue that other ‘creation’ locutions are central to our current musical thought. Levinson draws our attention to the fact that we speak of musicians ‘making’, not ‘finding’, music; that we talk of pieces being ‘composed’, not ‘described’ or ‘registered’; and that musical works are commissioned ‘on the understanding’, Levinson claims, ‘that something will be brought into existence as fulfilling the commission’ (*MAM*, p. 219). But, once more, these locutions do not make an unambiguous commitment to the thesis that musical works are created. To begin with, the fact that we speak of *musicians* making music is irrelevant to the question of whether *composers* bring their compositions into existence. When musicians make music, what is brought into existence is a *performance* of the work, not the work itself. Furthermore, Levinson makes a huge, and unjustified, leap from the fact that composers are commissioned to compose works to the conclusion that we need regard such works as brought into existence by their composers. For it is composers, not works, who are, strictly speaking, commissioned; and they are commissioned to compose works. No particular account of the nature of composition is presupposed.

However, Levinson is quite correct to say that we speak of works being ‘composed’ rather than ‘described’ or ‘registered’. But I suggest that this fact

about our discourse concerning music does not tell against the idea that works of music pre-date their composition. For the upholder of the simple view need not suppose the composition of a musical work to be a matter of mere *description*. As we have noted already, the fact that composition is a kind of discovery does not entail that the process is a sort of unimaginative copying out. A composer does not apprehend the sound structure and just, so to speak, transcribe it. This turns composition into an occult process: such ‘apprehension’ is nothing but a myth. Composition, by contrast, is a process of evaluative selection. The composer evaluates which combination of sounds, once performed, will achieve the effect she wants to achieve and, as a result, comes to indicate a certain sound structure. Of course, the end result of this evaluative process is that the composer scores (or otherwise indicates) something which already exists. She lights upon just one of the infinite number of sound structures that there are. But the process of coming upon a particular sound structure is nonetheless creative and evaluative. The creative act *is* the discovery of the work.

Levinson’s mistake is to suppose that the discredited conception of composition as description is the only alternative to the account of composition as the creation of an entity. But he must be wrong about this, if only because the latter conception is no more satisfactory than the former. For the question that Levinson must answer is this: what would it be for a human action to bring into existence an abstract entity such as a musical work? Levinson cannot simply state, as he does, that creating a musical work is a matter of ‘selecting and assembling sound and other patterns to create specific musical meanings’ (*MAM*, p. 218). For it is quite unclear what it could be for someone to *assemble* an abstract, structured type out of similarly abstract constituents. As Stephano Predelli has noted, it is a plausible prima-facie maxim that abstract objects cannot be created.¹² And the reason why this principle is so intuitive is this: the creation of an abstract object would have to be a kind of causal interaction between a person and an abstract object or objects; and abstracta cannot enter into such interactions. That this is so is reflected in the fact that statements seemingly reporting causal relations between abstracta can always be paraphrased in such a way as to reveal that the relata of the causal relation are really concrete. As Michael Dummett has made clear, to give a cause of some occurrence, we must cite some contingent fact; but

no contingent fact about an abstract object can be cited that cannot more naturally be construed as a fact about concrete ones, for instance, the concrete object which the abstract object is ‘of’: and hence we do not regard abstract objects as being themselves causally efficacious or the subjects of causal effects.¹³

We may well say, for example, that the bitter taste of a certain substance is caused

¹² Stefano Predelli, ‘Against Musical Platonism’, *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 35 (1995), p. 340.

¹³ Michael Dummett, *Frege: Philosophy of Language* (London: Duckworth, 1973), p. 493.

by the shape of its molecules, but in saying this we do not commit ourselves to the idea that an abstract object—a certain shape—causes the bitter taste; what causes the bitter taste is the presence of a molecule of that shape. Likewise, it is not an abstract entity—bitterness—which is causally produced but a substance's bitter taste.

When it comes to the nature of composition, it thus seems that the boot is on the other foot. Far from its being obvious that the composition of a musical work is its creation, this view has turned out to be based on a mistake. Given that musical works are abstract entities, they cannot enter into any causal relations, and hence certainly cannot be 'assembled' by composers out of their abstract parts. Composition must be a kind of creative discovery.

In the wake of this, it is of no use for Levinson to claim, as we have seen him do, that 'if works are to *belong* to artists in the full sense—to be theirs in no uncertain terms—then creation rather than discovery seems to be called for' (*MAM*, p. 218). And, what is more, we are entitled to probe what this 'full sense' of belonging could be. Levinson would seem to be confronted with something of a dilemma. If a work belongs to an artist in this sense only if the artist has created it, then we have turned in a very small circle indeed, and the proponent of the simple view will just *deny* that works belong to artists in this way. If, on the other hand, Levinson tries to resist characterizing the 'full sense' in which a work belongs to an artist in question-begging terms, he runs the risk of prompting an obvious reply. For, as Levinson himself recognises (*MAM*, p. 218), it looks like an intimate relationship can likewise exist between a discoverer and the thing she discovers. Just such an 'essential intimacy' exists between, say, Pythagoras and the theorem that bears his name. The theorem is *Pythagoras's*: he was the creative genius who first discovered it, and it will always be associated with him.

To a case such as this, Levinson can only say the following:

Of course, the *discovery* is theirs—their act—if that is all that is going on, but what is *discovered* is not in the same way theirs. Columbus's America wasn't in this sense logically his in virtue of his discovering it. But Ives's symphonic essay *The Fourth of July* is irrevocably and exclusively his, precisely in virtue of his composing it. (*MAM*, p. 218)

But this move does not get Levinson anywhere since it sees him returning to the dilemma's other horn. For what else can it be for Ives's work to be 'logically his' other than its having been created by him? If, as seems to be the case, this is the only content which can be assigned to a work's being 'logically' that of a composer, the supposed fact that musical works logically belong to their composers cannot provide an independent reason for supposing that composers are the creators of their works. The putative 'logical' sense in which a work of music belongs to its composer is what Simon Blackburn would call a piece of

Pentagonese:¹⁴ merely an important sounding way of formulating the very claim which Levinson is supposed to be arguing for.

So much for the supposedly distinctive 'I-Thou' relationship existing between a composer and a composition. But what of Levinson's claim that theoretical unity demands that we regard musical works as being, like paintings and sculptures, created entities? To this, we can make one of two replies, depending on the view we take of the ontological nature of works of art such as paintings and sculptures. First of all, if we assume that the standard view is correct and that the artworks produced by painting and sculpture are concrete, physical particulars, it is by no means obvious that the level of theoretical unity Levinson craves is necessary. For if there really is such a great difference between a symphony and a painting (the former being a type, the latter a particular), it is far from clear that we should expect features we associate with one kind of entity to be instantiated by the other. Indeed, given that types appear, by their very nature, to be eternal entities, we should certainly not expect the types that are symphonies to be akin to paintings and etchings in actually being brought into existence by an artist. The second reply is that it may well be the case that any theoretical unity is, so to speak, from the other direction. Levinson, as we have seen, supposes the artworks of painting and sculpture (artworks which he presumes to be concrete particulars) to be created by an artist; he then seeks to bring pressure to bear to treat works of music as created also. But, as P. F. Strawson has argued,¹⁵ it is by no means absurd to regard novels and works of music as the paradigmatic artworks, and then to assimilate paintings and sculptures to these. On this kind of view, paintings and sculptures are just as much types as are works of music, and hence the claim that they (as opposed to their tokens) can be created is rendered as obscure as we have seen it to be when applied to the case of works of music.

But if Levinson is mistaken in thinking that his argument from theoretical unity cuts any ice, he is equally mistaken in supposing that the status we assign to composition is dependent upon compositions being literally created. The status and value of composition would, indeed, be undermined if composition were a Gradgrindian matter of pure description. But this is not the view I am recommending. The simple view, as we have noted, is compatible with a recognition that composition is a creative, imaginative act. Consequently, it is easy to see that it matters not one jot whether or not the composer is credited with bringing an abstract entity into being. Our opinion of Einstein's genius would not be any greater if we were to regard the facts stated by his Special Theory of Relativity as created by him rather than discovered by him. What staggers us is how someone could have the creativity, rigour, and imagination to make such a discovery. And

¹⁴ Simon Blackburn, *Spreading the Word* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1984), p. 225.

¹⁵ P. F. Strawson, 'Aesthetic Appraisal and Works of Art', reprinted in his *Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays* (London: Methuen, 1974), pp. 183–184.

the same can be said for the composition of great works of music. We may marvel at a great piece of music, according to the simple view, not (as Levinson supposes [*MAM*, p. 67]) because its composer brought it into existence, but because only someone extremely gifted could have come across it. There is indeed a 'special aura that envelops composers' (*ibid.*), but we need not read an anti-Platonistic message into this. For the aura exists, not because composers are 'true creators' (*ibid.*), but because they are truly creative. What matters, when it comes to the question of judging the status of a scientist, writer, or composer, is the originality, importance, and value of their work; and this is an evaluative question, not an ontological one.

All in all, much of the support Levinson offers for his argument's third premise has crumbled. Far from being 'central to thought about art' (*MAM*, p. 66), as Levinson supposes, the idea that works of music are created by their composers appears to be misconceived. It violates our intuition that abstract objects lie outside all causal chains, and, what is more, the value which we attach to musical composition does not depend upon it. All that Levinson has left is an observation concerning ordinary language: namely, that we tend to describe musical works as 'composed', but not 'discovered'. But such an appeal to ordinary usage can only get Levinson so far. It may well be that composers are commonly viewed as literally bringing their compositions into existence, but we have just seen that this thesis is inessential to our concept of composition, and, what is more, looks to be incompatible with the view of musical works as abstract, structured types: a view that is well-motivated and intuitive. This being so, we should treat the untheoretical belief that musical works are created as just one more example of how a supposedly 'common-sensical' point of view gets the facts wrong.

III. INDICATED STRUCTURES EXAMINED

If I am right, the flaw in Levinson's argument from creatability lies with its third premise. We should deny that works of music are literally brought into being by their composers. But at this point, Levinson is likely to make the following protest: however much my replies may have drawn the sting from his objections to the idea that musical works pre-date their composition, it is surely desirable to have an account of the nature of musical works which allows for their creation; and does not Levinson's own account of musical works as indicated structures do precisely this? In my view it does not. If Levinson's indicated structures are, as he himself stresses, types (*MAM*, p. 64), they too will end up being eternal existents.

Levinson, I suggest, misconstrues the nature of types; and this misconstrual can be traced back to his explanation of why sound structures exist eternally. Seeking to explain the first premise of his argument from creatability, Levinson says that the eternal existence of sound structures is

apparent from the fact that they—and the individual component sound types that they comprise—can always have had instances. . . . Sound structures predate their first instantiation or conception because they are possible of exemplification *before* that point. (*MAM*, p. 65)

These are very revealing remarks. The suggestion being made is that sound structures exist at all times because they can have instances at all times. More precisely, Levinson seems to think that a type *K* exists at *t* only if it is possible for *K* to have instances at *t*, and, hence, that if it is impossible for *K* to have instances at *t*, then *K* does not exist at *t*.

Of course, it is easy to see how this explanation of why sound structures are eternal invites Levinson's suggested emendation of the simple view. If Levinson's diagnosis of why sound structures exist at all times is correct, then, if we wish to allow for the fact that a musical work was created by its composer, we need to identify the work with a type which could only have had tokens from the time *t* of its composition. And the most obvious way of generating the sort of type which we need would seem to be by tethering the type to *t*: that is, by treating the work as the sound structure-as-indicated-by-*X* (the composer)-at-*t* (*MAM*, p. 79).

Having said this, Levinson's claim that sound structures exist at all times *because they can have instances at all times* just strikes me as a *non sequitur*. The identity of a type, remember, is fixed by the condition which a token must meet in order to be a token of that type. Given that this is so, *pace* Levinson, there seems no reason to say that a type *K* which cannot be instantiated at *t* does not itself exist at *t*. After all, we still know what condition a token would have to meet at *t* in order to be a token of *K*: it would have to be a *k*. It is just that it is impossible for anything to be a *k* at *t*. A concrete example may help matters. Consider the type: child born in 1999. Clearly, this type could have had no tokens in 1066; but the point, surely, is not that the *type*: child born in 1999 did not exist in 1066, but that the condition something must meet in order to be a token of that type—namely be a child born in 1999—could not have been met by anything in 1066. The condition something has to meet in order to be a token of the type was the same in 1066 as it is today; it is just that in 1066 nothing could meet it.

Why, then, is it true to say that sound structures exist at all times, if it is not because they can have instances at all times? The reason why this is so is not that they are types of a *certain kind* (that is, types which can have instances at all times), but that they are types of *any kind*. Types, *any* types, are eternal existents. The identity of a type is determined by the condition a token meets, or would have to meet, in order to instantiate it. Such a condition is, of course, a *property*; so it follows that a type's identity is determined by the property a token must have in order to be a token of that type. The identity of type *K* is determined by what we may term, following Nicholas Wolterstorff, the property of which it is the *type-associate*: namely, *being a k*.¹⁶ Given this dependence of a type upon the property of

which it is the associate, the type K exists just in case its associate, *being a k* , exists.¹⁷ And at this point, we may note an intuitive theory concerning the existence of properties. The theory in question, simply stated, is that the property *being a k* exists if and only if it is instantiated now, was instantiated in the past, or will be instantiated in the future.¹⁸

Why is this account of the existence of properties intuitive? The reason is that it enables us to steer between a Scylla and a Charybdis. Scylla is the doctrine of transcendent properties: the view that the question of whether a property exists is utterly independent of the question of whether it is instantiated. Properties, thus conceived, are not intrinsically *of* particulars at all, and it thus becomes hard to conceive of how a particular could come to have a property. Charybdis, on the other hand, is the idea that properties only exist when instantiated: a view which has properties switching in and out of existence as they come to be, and then cease to be, instantiated. According to the view I am recommending, a property *is* essentially a property *of* something: properties are not to be located in Platonic heaven, and instantiation is not a queer relation that crosses ontological realms. Crucially, though, this consequence is achieved without having to hold, with Scylla, that properties come in and out of existence.

It is this latter result that is important for us. For, given the relation between properties and types, the fact that properties do not come in and out of existence entails that their type-associates do not do so either. Sound structures exist eternally, not because they can have instances at any time, but because they are types, and a type, if it exists at all, exists at all times. At which point, Levinson's notion of an initiated type—a type which is brought into being by an intentional action—begins to look misconceived. It appears to be in the nature of *any* type that it exists eternally, and hence it looks like musical works, if they are types of any kind, pre-exist their composition.¹⁹

With this in mind, let us now focus on Levinson's proposed account of the ontological nature of a musical work such as *In This House, On This Morning*. According to Levinson's account, this work is not the sound structure, ψ , but an

¹⁶ Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Works and Worlds of Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 47.

¹⁷ In this I am in agreement with Wolterstorff (*ibid.*, p. 51).

¹⁸ See D. M. Armstrong, *Universals: An Opinionated Introduction* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989), ch. 5. I follow Wolterstorff (*Works and Worlds of Art*, p. 51) in holding that type K exists if and only if the property *being a k* exists. However, I differ from Wolterstorff in denying that there can be properties which never have nor will be instantiated.

¹⁹ As Wolterstorff agrees (*Works and Worlds of Art*, pp. 88–89). However, Wolterstorff suffers a failure of nerve over this issue, for he also says that composition is a matter of 'bring[ing] it about that something becomes a work' (*ibid.*, p. 88). Whatever Wolterstorff (thinks he) means by this, he cannot succeed in reconciling the simple view with the doctrine that works of music are created. For it follows from the simple view that musical *works* are eternal entities, and it is impossible for something to become what it already is. (This point is well made by James C. Anderson, 'Musical Kinds', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 25 [1985], p. 43.)

indicated structure: Ψ -as-indicated-by-Marsalis-in-1992.²⁰ In Levinson's opinion, while Ψ exists at all times, Ψ -as-indicated-by-Marsalis-in-1992 did not exist before 1992. But given what has just been said about the existence conditions of types, it follows that even this indicated structure is an eternal existent. Let us see why.

Given that a type exists if and only if its corresponding property exists, the indicated type Ψ -as-indicated-by-Marsalis-in-1992 exists just in case the property *being an instance of Ψ -as-indicated-by-Marsalis-in-1992* exists. Now, by our account of the existence conditions of properties, this property exists if and only if something has it, has had it, or will have it. But it follows from this account that the property in question has always existed and always will exist. That the property has at least one instance at some time means that it exists at all times. And since this is so, and since the existence conditions of a property's type-associate are inherited from those of its corresponding property, it follows that Levinson's indicated type is an eternal existent too. To be sure, the indicated type with which Levinson identifies *In This House, On This Morning* could not have had any instances before Marsalis composed it in 1992. But the point is that whether a type exists at a time is determined, not by whether it can have any instances at that time, but by whether its property-associate exists at that time. And the property-associate in question—*being an instance of Ψ -as-indicated-by-Marsalis-in-1992*—is an eternal existent.

But perhaps all this has been a little too cavalier. For it might be suggested that the thesis that all types are eternal existents has an obviously absurd consequence, namely that no one ever truly invents anything.²¹ To take an example, if the type: the jet engine has always existed, then Frank Whittle could not have invented the jet engine; and this just looks like a *reductio* of the conception of types which has been deployed against Levinson. But not so fast. At this point, we can reiterate a conclusion reached in Section II: 'the inventor of ϕ ' (where ' ϕ ' names a type) is used, not to refer to the person who supposedly brought an abstract object—the type ϕ —into existence, but to the person who first conceived of ϕ , and whose grasp of its concept was responsible for the creation of its first token. Frank Whittle, brilliant as he was, could not have brought into existence the *type*: the jet engine. Types are not the sorts of thing that can be brought into being by anyone. Nevertheless, Frank Whittle counts as the jet engine's inventor because his creative act was the origin of the process which ended with the creation of the first (token) jet engine.

²⁰ As I explained in n. 7 above, Levinson believes works of music to be rather more complicated indicated structures than this. They are, he claims, composite structures comprising a sound structure and a performance means structure. But, as I remarked in n. 7, we can harmlessly abstract from this detail because Levinson takes performance means structures to be eternal existents along with sound structures.

²¹ Peter Lamarque voiced this concern to me.

It is thus my contention that Levinson has misread our concept of invention. However, in Levinson's defence, it must be said that he does not simply *state* that indicated structures only exist from the time at which they can be tokened. Rather, he seeks to make the case for this conclusion in two ways: first of all, by discussing examples which he takes to support the principle that a time-tethered type only comes into existence at the time to which it is tethered; and second, by drawing an analogy between the individuation of indicated structures and the individuation of propositions.²² However, as we shall now see, an examination of these considerations merely reveals how muddy Levinson's notion of an indicated structure really is.

The chief example that Levinson uses to shed light on his conception of an indicated structure or type is the type: the Ford Thunderbird. This type is, according to Levinson, a metal/glass/plastic structure: γ -as-indicated-by-the Ford Motor Company-in-1957 (*MAM*, p. 81). And Levinson holds that it follows from this conception of the Ford Thunderbird that it is an initiated type: 'It beg[an] to exist', Levinson claims, 'as a result of an act of human indication or determination' (*ibid.*). But when it comes to the question of why we should therefore suppose that this type did not exist in, say, 1900, Levinson only says, once more, that 'there could not have been instances of the Thunderbird in 1900' (*ibid.*). In other words, the reason why the type: the Ford Thunderbird did not exist in 1900 is that it was impossible for there to have been any tokens of it in 1900. But we have met this view before, and we can make the same reply to it now that we made then. Whether a type can have any tokens at *t* is irrelevant to the question of whether the *type* exists at *t*. The type's identity is determined by the property which a token must have in order to be a token of that type: *being an instance of γ -as-indicated-by the Ford Motor Company-in-1957*. This property is an eternal existent. Hence, the type must be an eternal existent too. This being so, it is better all round simply to say this: in 1900 the type which is the Ford Thunderbird, the abstract entity, existed, but could not have had any tokens at this time. And if this is so for this time-tethered type, then it is the same for any other. Our conclusion stands: if musical works are time-tethered types, they too exist eternally and hence cannot be initiated.

When it comes to the intended analogy between indicated structures and propositions, Levinson has this to say:

We allow that a given sentence can make different statements when uttered in different circumstances. Similarly, we realize that a given sound . . . structure yields different indicated structures, or musical works, when indicated in different musico-historical contexts. (*MAM*, p. 82)

But the distinction between a sentence and a proposition cannot help Levinson to

²² Levinson calls them 'statements' (*MAM*, p. 82).

explain that aspect of the distinction between ‘pure’ (that is, non-indicated) structures and indicated structures which is troubling us: namely, how an indicated structure, unlike a pure structure, can be brought into being by an action. For although we can think of a proposition as what would be said by a speaker *A* uttering a sentence *s* at time *t*, it does not follow that the proposition thus individuated comes into being at *t*. Frege is very clear on this point. The time-specification that may be contained in the sentence only belongs to the *expression* of the proposition; the proposition itself is eternal and unvarying.²³ In other words, propositions can be tethered to times in the following sense: to express such a proposition, one must take up a certain temporal perspective; and to grasp such a proposition, one must know when the utterance expressing it was made. But this is not the kind of tethering to a time which is of any help to Levinson since it precisely does not commit us to the proposition’s coming into existence at the time to which it is tethered. The question of why an *indicated* structure should be an *initiated* structure remains mysterious.

The way in which propositions are individuated cannot shed any light upon the way in which Levinson takes musical works to be tethered to times. So perhaps, in saying that musical works are indicated, time-tethered structures, Levinson is working with another model of what it is for a type to be tethered to a time. The problem, however, is that no alternative model readily presents itself. One remark is, however, revealing. Indicated structures are, Levinson claims ‘things *in which* a particular person and time figure ineliminably’ (*MAM*, p. 82). This remark suggests that Levinson regards the time to which an indicated structure is tethered as a *constituent* of it; and, with this thought in place, we can perhaps go to some way towards explaining why Levinson takes indicated structures to come into existence at the time to which they are tethered. The thought might be this: an indicated structure cannot exist until all of its constituents exist; and, hence, it cannot exist until the time which is one of its constituents has arrived.

What are we to make of this? The first thing we should say is that, if indicated structures are things with times as constituents, they cannot be types. For the time to which a type is tethered cannot a *constituent* of the type. Types, so it seems, only have other types as constituents. Sentence-types, for example, are composed of word-types; and works of music, if types, would similarly seem to be things with types, not times, as constituents. The time to which a type is tethered, rather than being a constituent of the type, is a part of the specification of the *condition* which a token must meet in order to be a token of that type. We should not slide from this truth to the misconceived claim that the time of indication is literally a part or constituent of the type.

Of course, there *are* entities which have times as constituents, but such entities

²³ Frege, ‘Thoughts’, p. 53.

are not types. If Jaegwon Kim is right about events, the time at which an event occurs is indeed a constituent of the event.²⁴ An event, according to Kim, is a complex which has a substance *a*, a property *F* and a time *t* as constituents, and which exists just in case *a* has *F* at *t*. To be sure, if Levinson's indicated structures were Kim's events, Levinson would have no difficulty in explaining why it is that an indicated structure only comes into existence at a certain time. Events only exist from the time at which they happen. But, whether or not Levinson thinks of indicated structures as items akin to Kim's events, such a conflation can be of no help to him. For works of music are not themselves events. *In This House, On This Morning* is not an event: it is something which certain events are instances of. The end result is that we cannot come up with an account of what it is to tether a type to a time which *both* respects the intuition that works of music are types *and* has it that such types only come into existence once they are composed. If indicated structures are genuine types, they cannot be created; and if they have times among their constituents, they look like being events rather than types.

IV. CONCLUSION

Levinson rightly believes (though, as we have seen, for the wrong reason) that musical works, if construed as sound structures, cannot be created by their composers. Largely because the simple view has this consequence, Levinson comes to reject it in favour of his own account of musical works as indicated structures. But his reasoning is defective in two respects. First, as we saw in Section II, it is by no means clear that we should regard works of music as being truly brought into existence by their composers. Second, Levinson's own proposed emendation can no more account for the creatability of works of music than can the simple view. If a work of music is a type of *any variety*, it cannot be created. So my conclusion is this: unless there are other, more convincing, objections to the simple view of musical works as sound structures, we are entitled to stick with it.²⁵

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²⁴ Jaegwon Kim, 'Events as Property Exemplifications', reprinted in C. MacDonald and S. Laurence (eds), *Contemporary Readings in the Foundations of Metaphysics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), p. 311.

²⁵ An early draft of this paper was read to the Centre for Philosophy Research Seminar at the University of Manchester. Many thanks to all those who attended.