

MUSICAL ONTOLOGY AND THE ARGUMENT FROM CREATION

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I. INTRODUCTION

MUSICAL ontology discusses issues related to the ontological status of musical works. In this essay, I focus on a particular approach to musical ontology, which I call the *structuralist* view (or *structuralism*). On this view, a work of music is identified with a certain pattern, that is, with a structurally complex item, which determines the class of events acceptable as correct performances of that work. As the defenders of structuralist views are willing to grant, their approach bears a *prima facie* problematic relation to an initially plausible requirement, namely the notion that musical works come into existence as a result of the relevant acts of composition. However, a multitude of responses have been presented in the attempt to argue that, on closer analysis, structuralism (or at least some version of it) is able to deal with issues of composition and creation in a theoretically satisfactory manner. In this paper, I argue that none of the replies typically provided by philosophers of structuralist persuasion suffices as a solution to the problem of creation.

Metaphysical debates occasionally originate from irreconcilable alleged intuitions regarding some aspect or other of the topic being discussed. This is not the case with the problem addressed in this essay, since the *querelle* on musical creation is characterized by a remarkably widespread agreement regarding which stance intelligent but unbiased individuals are inclined to take on this issue. What is disputed is whether these initial intuitions survive closer scrutiny, and thereby deserve to be incorporated in a theoretically adequate account of musical works, or whether, when suitably analysed, they are indeed incompatible with the structuralist approach. But it is undeniable that, in this respect, the burden of proof lies squarely on the structuralist's side: for, in the absence of an independently plausible explanation of our intuitions on creation, structuralism remains, at best, a controversial and incomplete hypothesis on the ontological status of musical works. Admittedly, my criticism of the available structuralist treatments of musical creation does not suffice as a conclusive proof of the unsuitability of any consistent version of that view; if convincing, however, it casts serious doubts on the ultimate tenability of this approach to the metaphysics of music.

II. STRUCTURALISM AND THE ARGUMENT FROM CREATION

The structuralist view is a version of the approach to musical ontology which interprets musical works as universal entities, exemplified by certain sound-events. This universalist programme has typically been pursued by arguing that musical works share their ontological make-up with certain other instantiable entities, such as, for instance, complex properties, kinds, or types of some variety or other. By themselves, these suggestions present at best a reduction of the problem of musical ontology to other metaphysical questions. In particular, one needs to know what sort of objects types or kinds may be, before one may assess the claim that musical works are ontologically on a par with them. Often, the motivation behind the proposed analogy between musical works and certain other instantiables lies in an interpretation of the latter in terms of the conditions regulating the relationship between them and their exemplars. In this spirit, for instance, a word-type may be understood as an abstract pattern, that is, as a set of (phonetic and/or graphic) requirements which define the class of items acceptable as its tokens. Similarly, a natural kind may be interpreted as the collection of (presumably non-superficial, biological) properties required from any normal exemplar of it. If the alleged analogy between musical works on the one hand, and kinds or types on the other, is developed in this vein, one is led to the structuralist identification of a musical work and the set of criteria regulating its performances. A work of music, in this approach, is an abstract pattern of some kind or other, which encodes the standards that select, among sound-events, those we recognize as correct performances of that work.

The structuralist programme may be developed in a variety of manners, depending on one's favourite account of the pattern with which a given work is supposed to be identified. Perhaps the most straightforward version of structuralism identifies musical works with so-called *sound-structures*, that is, with sequences of indications regarding 'standardly specified audible features'—for instance, structures 'including not just melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic ones, not even just timbral, dynamic, articulatory ones as well, but also *tempo*'.¹ As will become apparent later, the thesis that musical works are sound-structures is by no means the only option viable to the structuralistically inclined ontologist; moreover, even structuralists of the sound-structure sort disagree among each other as to which audible features a work's pattern is supposed to address.² In its general

¹ Jerrold Levinson, 'What a Musical Work Is', *Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 77 (1980), reprinted in Jerrold Levinson, *Music, Art, and Metaphysics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell U.P., 1990), p. 88.

² See for instance Peter Kivy, 'Platonism in Music: A Kind of Defense', *Grazer philosophische Studien*, vol. 19 (1983), reprinted in Peter Kivy, *The Fine Art of Repetition* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1993); *idem*, 'Platonism in Music: Another Kind of Defense', *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 24 (1987), reprinted in *The Fine Art of Repetition*; *idem*, 'Orchestrating Platonism', in T. Anderberg, T. Nilstun, and I. Persson (eds), *Aesthetic Distinction: Essays Presented to Göran Hermerén on His 50th Birthday* (Lund: Lund U.P., 1988), reprinted in *The Fine Art of Repetition*; Levinson, 'What a Musical

form, however, this version of structuralism provides a useful starting point for my considerations here, precisely because it raises questions of creation with undeniable urgency. For, as friends and foes of that view recognize, it appears, at least at first, that sound-structures do not have the same temporal profile as musical works: for instance, it seems that the collection of features associated with the *Jupiter* symphony (being a middle *C* played *forte* by certain string instruments, followed by . . .) must have pre-existed 1788, when Mozart composed that work.

In other words, then, the following *Argument from Creation* seems to provide at least initial evidence against the structuralist approach to musical ontology. Given a musical work *m* and a structure *s*, such that, according to structuralism, $m = s$,

Premise 1: *m* is created (by *m*'s composer).

Premise 2: *s* is not created (by *m*'s composer).

Conclusion: *m* is not identical to *s*.

Since this argument is valid, the structuralist may resist its conclusion only by challenging at least one of its premises. Accordingly, the responses provided by the defenders of the structuralist view fall into two groups. Some reject the claim in premise 1, and argue that the widespread tendency to regard musical works as created objects is ultimately untenable. The other option available to the structuralist focuses on premise 2, and proposes an account of the relevant structures as creatable entities. In the next section I deal with the challenge to the apparent requirement of creatability; I discuss proposals to the effect that musical works are creatable structures in Section IV.

III. AGAINST PREMISE 1: CREATIVITY AND TWIN BEETHOVEN

The *prima facie* problem with the denial of the first premise in the Argument from Creation is that it seems to conflict with 'one of the most firmly entrenched of our beliefs concerning art.'³ Defenders of the structuralist view who intend to pursue this strategy must opt for one of the following options: (i) insist that our 'firmly entrenched beliefs' need not be taken into account by an adequate philosophical theory of musical works; (ii) deny that our pre-theoretical views actually include the claim that musical works are created; (iii) claim that our beliefs about creatability clash with even stronger intuitions, that is, present an argument from such irremovable intuitions to the conclusion that musical works are not created.

Clearly, a position which merely ignores widespread pre-theoretical intuitions,

Work Is' and 'What a Musical Work Is, Again', in *Music Art and Metaphysics*; Stephen Davies, 'The Ontology of Musical Works and the Authenticity of their Performances', *Nous*, vol. 25 (1991).

³ Levinson, 'What a Musical Work Is', p. 66.

such as (i), may not be presented as a satisfactory solution of the problem at hand. Thus, it is the latter two options which have typically attracted a structuralist interested in challenging premise 1 in the Argument from Creation. In particular, working in the spirit of strategy (ii), some have argued that the denial of this premise is compatible with our intuition that a composer's accomplishment is of a *creative* kind.⁴ Writing on literary works, Gregory Currie presents a similar point of view:

We can all agree that artists are creative; the question is whether their being creative means they create. . . . Whether authorship is creation is another question we should look to the best theory to settle.⁵

But the distinction between creation and creativity cannot be enough to justify the rejection of premise one above. It is surely true that, in our pre-theoretical view of the matter, artists are creative. It may also be correct to point out that the artists' being creative does not entail that they create. The fact remains that our intuitions on this subject do not rest satisfied with the claim that artists are creative: we also unequivocally believe that they create. Few beliefs about artworks are as strongly embedded in our pre-theoretical views as the notion that, for instance, the *Jupiter* symphony did not exist when Caesar crossed the Rubicon or, for that matter, in the spring of 1788.⁶

When it comes to musical activity, Currie himself correctly points out that it is not only the case that many of us regard artists as creative, but also that 'the overwhelming majority of us think that works are created.'⁷ Thus, against strategy (ii), Currie grants that our intuitions do include the thesis that musical works are created. However, in the spirit of an approach of type (iii), Currie proposes an argument which aims at disposing of this pre-theoretical conviction. That is to say, he aims at convincing us that, once certain allegedly unassailable premises are accepted, we are compelled to relinquish the (admittedly initially attractive) tenet that musical works are created by their composers. I devote the next paragraphs to an analysis of Currie's reasoning against creatability. A caveat is in order before I begin: the relationship between Currie's own views on musical ontology and the structuralist approach is complex, and it is by no means obvious that his analysis of musical works as action types commits Currie to the view that such objects may not be created by their composers. However, Currie's reasoning against

⁴ Kivy, 'Platonism in Music'; David Woodruff, 'Creation and Discovery in Musical Works', *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 77 (1996); Julian Dodd, 'Musical Works as Eternal Types', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 40 (2000).

⁵ Gregory Currie, 'Work and Text', *Mind*, vol. 100 (1991), p. 328.

⁶ See also John A. Fisher, 'Discovery, Creation, and Musical Works', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 49 (1991).

⁷ Gregory Currie, *An Ontology of Art* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1989), pp. 63–64.

creatability is independent of the details of his action-type theory; if sound, it would provide the structuralist with an important challenge to the Argument from Creation.

From a general methodological point of view, Currie's strategy is unobjectionable: although our pre-theoretical intuitions on a given topic may not be dismissed without a convincing reason, they may eventually be 'argued away,' that is, they may prove to be incompatible with other, less debatable views we accept. On the other hand, the success of arguments of this kind depends upon an adequate ranking of the alleged intuitions involved in it, according to the centrality they play in our pre-theoretical views. In particular, in the case under consideration, Currie's argument must be grounded on claims stronger and even less negotiable than the thesis that musical works are created; otherwise, the approach he intends to employ would at best indicate the incompatibility of Currie's premises with our firm commitment to creativity, without providing any reason against it. It is this crucial methodological *desideratum* that Currie's argument fails to satisfy: as I explain in the following paragraphs, his reasoning against creativity employs at least one controversial philosophical claim regarding the identity criteria of musical works, that is, a thesis by far less 'firmly entrenched' than our conviction that musical works are created.

Currie's argument is of the Twin-Earth variety. On Currie's Twin-Earth, musical and cultural history is exactly parallel to the musical and cultural history here on Earth. In particular, on Twin-Earth, there exists an individual in all relevant respects similar to Beethoven (let us call him Twin-Beethoven), who composes a piece for piano with exactly the same sound-structure as Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* sonata. The important difference between the events on Twin-Earth and their parallels on Earth consists in the fact that, while 'our' Beethoven composes the *Hammerklavier* in 1817, Twin-Beethoven composes his work at an earlier date. Given that the twins 'solve the same musical problems in the same way, under the same influences and with the same degree of originality', it follows for Currie that they independently compose the same work.⁸ But, barring intervening destruction, it appears that an object cannot be created and then later created again. Thus, according to Currie, the best a creationist may conclude is that the *Hammerklavier* has been created by Twin-Beethoven, and that it has later been discovered by Beethoven. Currie then concludes that, since for the creationist composition is an act of creation, the creationist is committed to the incredible conclusion that Beethoven did not compose the *Hammerklavier* sonata in the envisioned scenario.

Currie's argumentative strategy may be reformulated as a *reductio* reasoning against the creationist thesis that, when someone composes a certain musical work, he creates it. Let t' be 1817, the time when Beethoven ('B') composed the

⁸ Currie, *Ontology of Art*, p. 62.

Hammerklavier, and let t be the time before 1817 when Twin Beethoven ('TB') composed the sonata with identical sound-structure. Currie's argument may then be summarized as follows:

- (1) TB composes at t the same work W that B composes at t' (premise)
- (2) If someone composes a work W at t , then he creates W at t (creationism)
- (3) TB creates at t the same work W that B creates at t' (from 1 and 2)
- (4) $t' > t$ (premise)
- (5) if someone creates an object x at t , nobody creates x at $t' > t$ (premise)

Besides the assumption of the creationist thesis on line (2), Currie's argument employs a straightforward description of the Twin-Earth scenario on line (1), a premise stating that objects may not be created twice on line (5), and a premise regarding the identity of musical works on line (3). Since (3), (4), and (5) are incompatible, at least one of the premises must be rejected. Currie opts for the creationist account of composition on line (2).⁹

The most urgent problem with Currie's reasoning lies in premise (1), that is, in the claim that Beethoven and his twin composed the same musical work. It is questionable that this premise expresses well-established intuitions regarding twin sonatas. I suspect that, in cases such as this, most philosophically unbiased individuals do not have clear intuitions one way or the other. More importantly, I have no doubt that, regardless of one's inclinations with respect to premise (1), one's commitment to the account of the Twin-Earth scenario it presupposes may not be sufficiently firm to counter the strong role which the creationist stance plays in our pre-theoretical views. Premise (1) is of course irresistible to those who conceive of musical works as sound-structures, available for cognitive access from Earth and Twin-Earth alike. Given that Beethoven and Twin-Beethoven indicate the same sound-structure, it is an immediate consequence of the alleged identity between works and structures that the *Hammerklavier* and the Twin-*Hammerklavier* are one and the same sonata. But this kind of theoretical support is question begging in the present context, where the traditionalist's ontology is being challenged on the basis of apparently irreconcilable intuitions.

Incidentally, I for one am quite firmly attracted to the negation of premise (1), independently of its alleged incompatibility with the creationist thesis. I am also confident that my antipathy to this premise is not merely the result of my opposition to the structuralist approach in musical ontology: for, as I indicate in Section IV,

⁹ An analogous reasoning grounded on the idea of independent composition is presented by Woodruff, 'Creation and Discovery'.

important exponents of that approach share my attitude in this respect. What seems incredible, independently of one's stance on the metaphysics of musical works, is that two individuals who, *ex hypothesi*, bear no interesting relation with each other, may be recognized as composers of the *same* work. This feature of the Twin-Earth scenario is blurred by Currie's allegation that Beethoven and Twin-Beethoven compose the same work, because 'they solve the same musical problems in the same way, under the same influences'. In fact, they don't: Twin-Beethoven has nothing to do with Bach's treatment of *cancrizans*, and Beethoven has nothing to do with the invention of the Twin-Fortepiano. But even if they did, it seems questionable whether such an alleged identity of the setting in which they operate suffices for the identification of the sonatas they compose.

More importantly for my aim here, it must be stressed that, although the comments in the foregoing paragraph might strengthen my criticism of Currie's argument, they are by no means essential to it. In that paragraph, I presented certain (admittedly not decisive) considerations for the falsity of premise (1) in the *reductio* strategy against creatability. But even those who disagree with my reasons for the distinctness of *Hammerklavier* and *Twin-Hammerklavier* ought to concede that, even in the absence of conclusive counter-arguments against Currie's identity thesis, such a metaphysical stance is not pre-theoretically unquestionable to the extent necessary for countering our undeniably strong intuitions on musical creation. On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that the denial of the first premise in the Argument from Creation is of immediate importance only for those structuralists who interpret musical works as non-creatable structures. Other versions of the structuralist paradigm may provide a picture of musical works better suited to the creatability requirement, and may be able to resist the Argument from Creation by challenging its other premise. I turn to responses in this vein in the next section.

IV. AGAINST PREMISE 2: FANCY CREATIONS AND SOPHISTICATED STRUCTURALISM

In this section I focus on those versions of the structuralist approach which identify musical works with creatable structures. I discuss four alternative proposals. The first, unlike the other three, holds that the structures with which musical works are to be identified are eternal (or a-temporal) items; however, it rejects the further thesis that entities of this kind are not creatable. The other versions of structuralism I address aim at developing an ontological account of structures of the appropriate type as non-eternal objects.

In his essay 'The Problem of Creation,' Harry Deutsch argues that the claim that *x* is created at *t* does not entail that *x* comes into existence at *t*.¹⁰ He supports this non-entailment thesis by presenting a particular account of creation as

¹⁰ Harry Deutsch, 'The Creation Problem', *Topoi*, vol. 10 (1991). Cited in text by page number hereafter.

selection. Thus, in this view, musical works, conceived of as eternally existent structures, may nevertheless be said to be created by their composers, in conflict with the second premise in the Argument from Creation. This response succeeds in incorporating our intuitions on musical creation within a traditional structuralist position only if (i) the account of creation to which it appeals is independently plausible, and (ii) such an account is consistent with those intuitions. In the next two paragraphs, I argue that the strategy under discussion fails on both counts.

Most of Deutsch's paper is devoted to his views on the creation of literary characters; he does, however, provide explicit indications to the effect that they are to be extended to *melodies* (p. 221). Clearly, it must be the case that Deutsch's considerations on melodies are intended as directly applicable to the sound structures with which musical works are allegedly to be identified; otherwise the resulting account of melody creation would be of no relevance for Deutsch's view that 'a musical work can be identified with the abstract sound structure' indicated in the score and exemplified by correct performances (p. 209). The central premise in Deutsch's account of the creation of literary characters, melodies, and sound structures in general concerns their alleged ontological abundance. In particular, we are told that 'for any *consistent* set of properties appropriate to melodies, there is a melody . . . that possesses those properties . . .' (p. 221). This presumed ontological plenitude guarantees that, given any consistent stipulation that a melody have certain properties (of the appropriate kind), an actual melody can be found which satisfies that stipulation. For this reason, Deutsch concludes, the selector's choice is free and unconstrained, and may thus correctly be described as an act of creation.

This last step is worthy of closer consideration. Focusing on the parallel case of literary characters, Deutsch writes that the unconstrained character of artistic selection is the source of 'the essential creative freedom storytellers enjoy' (p. 220). But even if this were correct it would not suffice as a solution to the issue at hand, for reasons parallel to those discussed at the beginning of Section II: what is needed as a response to the problem of creation is not an explanation of artistic creativity, but an account of the notion that works of art are created. Leaving aside the creativity red-herring, Deutsch presents two theses on the relationship between unconstrained stipulations and artistic creation. According to the *strong* thesis, 'to create is to freely stipulate' (p. 220); according to the *weak* account, free stipulation is a sufficient condition for creation:

[Artists] can be credited with having created something, if, in the appropriate sense, it was *up to them* which properties entered into the description, and *open to them* to choose any such properties whatsoever. (p. 219)

In the absence of convincing considerations in its favour, the strong thesis that

creation *is* free stipulation appears to be untenable: uncontroversially, there are instances of creation that do not consist in acts of stipulations—Deutsch himself explicitly agrees that artists create copies of a score, painted canvases, etc. The weak thesis does not seem to rest on stronger independent plausibility: for it is simply not true that the allegedly guaranteed satisfaction of the relevant set of properties makes it legitimate to describe its selection as an act of creation, on any sense of the term relevant for the debate at hand. Any freely chosen consistent collection of arithmetical properties, for that matter, may be guaranteed to correspond to a class of numbers, without it being appropriate to credit the selector with the power of having created that set-theoretic item.

In the foregoing paragraph, I argued that Deutsch does not provide reasons why unconstrained selection ought to provide a plausible analysis of (at least one sense of) ‘creation’. The present paragraph addresses a further, independent problem with his proposal: even if one accepts Deutsch’s account of creation, and his claim that an object’s creatability does not entail its non-eternity, such a conclusion does not suffice as an account of our inclinations regarding the ontological profile of musical works. We do not typically rest satisfied with the claim that, say, the *Jupiter* symphony has been created by Mozart; we are also unambiguously convinced that Mozart’s last symphony did not exist in the Jurassic period or when Caesar crossed the Rubicon. That is to say, independently of the alleged admissibility of a sense of ‘creation’ consistent with eternity, it appears to be the case that our pre-theoretic intuitions regard musical works as created, in the stronger sense that they have come into being as a result of the relevant acts of composition. Undeniably, this stance may eventually be challenged by arguments grounded on independently incontrovertible tenets: in the absence of such arguments, however, the alleged availability of a sense of ‘creation’ compatible with eternity does not suffice as a response to the anti-structuralist challenge under discussion.

I now turn to a different kind of attack against the second premise in the Argument from Creation: according to the views I discuss in what follows, the structures with which musical works are to be identified are not eternal (or a-temporal) objects, and may thus allegedly cope with the requirement of creatability in an adequate manner. The first suggestion I consider may (though need not) agree with some of the structuralist proposals I discussed thus far that musical works are to be identified with sound-structures, that is with sequences addressing ‘standardly specified audible features’ of some kind or other. However, in this view, features of this sort should not be interpreted on the model of everlasting properties, but as resulting from the establishment of certain appropriate conventions, or from the emergence of certain relevant conditions. For instance, according to a position in this spirit, features such as that of being a middle-C or of being played by a violin, come into existence only as the by-product of, respectively, the establishment of the tonal system or the

development of certain musical instruments.¹¹ If suitably developed, this suggestion may be of independent interest, and may yield a promising alternative to a more traditional analysis of the ontological status of those properties. In this paper, however, I need not pause on more precise versions of the hints I provided because, even on the assumption that they may be developed into a satisfactory philosophical account, the resulting ontological picture does not suffice as a structuralist solution to the problem of creatability. Even if it is granted that the structure allegedly identical to, say, Brahms piano trio in C major did not always exist, the foregoing considerations at best justify the notion that such a structure emerged with the establishment of a certain musical vocabulary, or with the development of certain musical instruments. In all plausibility, when coupled with the identification of trio and structure, either suggestion entails the counter-intuitive claim that the trio already existed before Brahms's compositional activity in 1882.

What is necessary, if the structuralist view is to be reconciled with the premise that musical works are created by their composers, is a more direct rejection of premise 2 in the Argument from Creation, that is, a conception of a musical work as a structure created (in the sense of 'brought into existence') by its composer. Such a conception apparently requires the abandonment of the view of musical works as traditional sound-structures, and the development of a novel ontological analysis of the universals with which works of music are to be identified. Operating in this vein, Jerrold Levinson has presented a sophisticated view, according to which musical works are structures importantly related to, but not identical with, traditionally conceived sound-structures. More precisely, in his essay 'What A Musical Work Is', Levinson argues that a work is a structure-as-indicated-by-a-composer-*c*-at-a-time-*t* (for short *S*c*t*).¹² The principal motive for Levinson's view stems from his desire to respect the intuitive distinctness of musical works that share the same sound-structure (such as the *Hammerklavier* and the *Twin-Hammerklavier* in Currie's imaginary scenario). However, he also cites as an advantage of his position its alleged ability to cope with the requirement of creatability.

Levinson's notion of a structure as indicated by a composer at a certain time is *prima facie* easily understandable. Seemingly similar 'as'-locutions are after all part and parcel of everyday English: I may say, for instance, that I approve of Smith as the mayor, but would strongly dislike him as a father-in-law. When used in this way, 'as'-locutions appear to denote, roughly, an individual presented in a certain manner, as the bearer of the properties at issue, or the occupier of a suitable role. In this sense, then, 'as'-locutions may not introduce items whose ontological

¹¹ For a discussion of this issue, see Renée Cox, 'Are Musical Works Discovered?', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 43 (1985).

¹² See Levinson, 'What a Musical Work Is', pp. 78–82.

make-up is importantly different from that of the object denoted by the noun they qualify: whether considered as the mayor or as a father-in-law, Smith remains the old flesh-and-blood fellow he has always been. If interpreted along these lines, then, Levinson's S^*c^*t items would be sound-structures of the traditional kind, even though they would now be considered in the light of their having being indicated by c at t . But since, in the absence of independent considerations to the contrary, a traditional sound-structure does not appear to be a creatable individual, it follows that a Levinsonian S^*c^*t , interpreted along these lines, is likewise in no better ontological shape *vis-à-vis* the requirement of creatability.¹³

What this shows is that Levinson's sophisticated universals may satisfy the requirement of creatability only if they are not interpreted on the familiar model of everyday 'as'-locutions. The problem is that, besides this negative conclusion on how *not* to interpret S^*c^*t items, no explicit hint is provided as to how they ought to be understood. One constraint for any interpretation of Levinson's proposals seems, however, to be clear, if his suggestion is to be of any help in the solution of the problem posed by the Argument from Creation. What needs to be the case, if one accepts the premise that a musical work is created at a certain time t by its composer c , is that as a result of c 's act of indication of a structure S at a time t , a new *object* emerges, the S^*c^*t item with which c 's work is allegedly to be identified. What seems problematic for Levinson's strategy is that it does not appear to be true *in general* that, whenever an agent a enters in a relationship R with an object o at a time t , a novel entity comes into existence, one which may be denoted by an expression of the form ' o -as- R 'd-by- a -at- t '. For instance, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, it does not appear to be the case that, if you show me the tallest building on campus, you thereby bring into existence a new object, that is, the building-as-shown-by-you. It must, then, be a special feature of the relationship of indication, allegedly holding between composers and sound-structures, which is for Levinson responsible for such ontological peculiarity. Thus, what is needed is an independently plausible account of musical composition, one according to which composers relate to sound-structures in a manner conducive to the emergence of a novel object of the appropriate type. In this respect, Levinson sympathetically cites a proposal by James C. Anderson as complementing his own views:

[M]y vagueness on the relation of 'indication' is usefully redeemed by [Anderson's] discussion of making normative. . . . Making-normative certainly at least helps explain what indicating consists in, and differentiates it from other activities of an intentional nature directed on abstract structures.¹⁴

¹³ See also Dodd, 'Musical Works as Eternal Types'.

¹⁴ Levinson, 'What a Musical Work Is, Again', pp. 260–261.

It is thus to Anderson's idea of indication as 'making normative' that I devote the concluding paragraphs of this section.

Anderson's treatment of the problem of musical creation is formulated within the framework of Nicholas Wolterstorff's theory of musical works as norm-kinds (that is, as kinds whose instances may be improperly formed). That a position of this kind is a *prima facie* target of the Argument from Creation is explicitly recognized by Wolterstorff himself, who points out that his view has the consequence that 'musical works exist everlastingly'.¹⁵ Anderson disagrees. His solution to the problem of creatability is grounded on the idea of the *descriptive kind* corresponding to a norm kind: for each norm kind K_n defined by properties P_s normative within K_n (that is, such that every properly formed exemplar of K_n has them), there corresponds a kind K_d , also defined by the P_s , but such that the P_s are not normative within it. K_d is distinct from K_n : for instance, in this view, a sloppy performance of the *Hammerklavier* is an instance of the relevant norm-kind (albeit an incorrect one), but not an instance of the corresponding descriptive kind. Although all descriptive kinds exist everlastingly, Anderson claims that

some norm-kinds are created by human beings from descriptive-kinds by the activity of stipulating that the properties of some descriptive-kind be treated as normative properties. . . . the best way to understand the activity of creating a norm-kind is as an intentional operation on a previously existing descriptive-kind. . . . A humanly created norm-kind, then, is a descriptive-kind made normative by a person at some time.¹⁶

In other words, on this view, musical works are conceived of as norm kinds, that is, as universals which, unlike traditional sound-structures, are allegedly brought into existence by the composer's indication of certain properties as normative.

The initial plausibility of Anderson's proposal trades on an important ambiguity pertaining to the assignment of normativity. In one sense, we can think of such an assignment as the establishment of a certain relation between an individual, the composer, and a pre-existing entity, 'just as we can think about, describe and show favouritism towards properties and their corresponding kinds. . . .'¹⁷ In this sense, the attribution of normativity is an event, taking place at a particular time, and involving the composer's intentional activity: at t , the time of composition, he indicates (or selects, picks out, etc.) a certain set of properties, the descriptive kind K_d , and decrees that these properties play a normative role, that is, that they select the sound-events that qualify as correct performances of the work at issue. However, when attribution of normativity is interpreted in this manner, it is far from clear that it results in the production of

¹⁵ Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Works and Worlds of Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 88.

¹⁶ James C. Anderson, 'Musical Kinds', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 25 (1985), p. 47.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

a new entity, as required by Anderson's desire to satisfy the requirement of creatability. For, in this interpretation, although the composer invites us to consider K_d in a certain manner, and although such an invitation may not have been issued before, it must still be the case that, in the absence of independent considerations to the contrary, the object in question, the descriptive kind, is blessed with eternal (or a-temporal) existence. In this reading, then, Anderson's focus on normativity does not dispel the problem associated with the interpretation of Levinson's proposal I discussed above: no matter what particular attitude one wishes to take (at a certain time t) with respect to an apparently everlasting object, it does not in general seem to be the case that a novel entity is engendered in the process.

The attribution of normativity may be associated with a kind distinct from the relevant descriptive kind K_d only insofar as the normativity of the properties in K_d participates in that kind's identity criteria. In this understanding of Anderson's proposal, composers do not merely prescribe that a pre-existing descriptive kind K_d be considered in a certain manner: they rather deal with a distinct item, the corresponding normative kind K_n , which is obtained from K_d by adding the normative aspect to the list of properties included in K_d . Imagine for instance that K_d contains the property of being a middle-C pitch: that is, that K_d is instantiated only by events involving exemplars of such a pitch. Then, in this view, a composer's indication of normativity is associated with an object distinct from K_d , insofar as the corresponding norm-kind K_n now includes the property that it be normative that the appropriate pitch be a middle-C. This reading, unlike the one discussed in the foregoing paragraph, concedes that a composer's activity is importantly associated with an object distinct from the indicated, everlasting descriptive kind. However, it provides no hint as to how such an object might be *created* by that composer on such an occasion: for a collection of normative properties appears to be an entity with the same temporal profile as its non-normative counterpart, at least unless an independently plausible, non-*ad hoc* account of the ontological make-up of normativity is defended. For instance, if, according to the traditional view of properties, the property of being a middle-C is understood as existing eternally (or a-temporally), independently of the existence of its actual instances, there seems to be no plausible reason for attributing a different temporal profile to the property that it be normative that the pitch at issue be a middle-C.

It may be objected that what is at issue with the norm-kind identified with, say, the *Hammerklavier*, is not the property of normativity *simpliciter*, but the property of having-been-sanctioned-as-normative-by-Beethoven. If it could also be argued that such a property fails to exist at those times when Beethoven himself does not exist, this reply may block the inference to the eternity of the norm-kind at issue. However, a strategy of this kind is of little help with respect to the problem under discussion. On any account of property-existence, the property of having been

sanctioned as normative by Beethoven must exist before the time when the sonata has been written. Thus, even on such a relatively unorthodox understanding of the properties involved in the norm-kind at issue, the position under discussion entails the claim that a musical work pre-dates the time of its composition. This, of course, is not a conclusion that could satisfy our pre-theoretical intuitions about musical creation.

V. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I presented the Argument from Creation against the view that musical works are universal structures, and I discussed certain responses proposed by the defenders of the structuralist view. I argued that none of the views I discussed succeeds in either challenging our pre-theoretic commitment to creatability, or in presenting an independently plausible account of musical works as creatable structures. The considerable variety of the proposals I considered lends plausibility to the suspicion that, when it comes to the problem of creation, no stone has been left unturned by the structuralists. I cannot substantiate this suspicion with the claim that the alternatives I discussed exhaust the range of options compatible with structuralism, and I am aware that my criticism of the views I discussed does not suffice as a knock-down argument for the untenability of that approach. But it is not I who need to prove structuralism's unsoundness: it is the structuralist who must provide a satisfactory solution to the apparent clash between his position and certain uncontested *prima facie* inclinations. In the absence of such a solution, the structuralist standpoint, far from deserving the relatively central position it plays in the debate on musical ontology, must be regarded as a dubious metaphysical hypothesis.

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