

MUSIC IN RELATION TO WILL AND SELF-PERCEPTION IN SCHOPENHAUER'S PHILOSOPHY: TRACING REPRESENTATIONAL AND BODILY CONTEXTS

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Abstract

Both, in Plato and in Schopenhauer music has been evoked as being revelatory in nature. Plato contemplates music to be an attribute of the world-soul and considers the world as the representation of this musical world-soul. Turning music human-specific, Schopenhauer envisages music as the copy of human will. The will manifests itself in the phenomena of the world characterized by a hierarchy in consonance with the clarity of representation. By virtue of being the copy of the will itself, music transcends this posited hierarchy though. Music, for Schopenhauer, retains the innate potential to express the awareness of willing in the individual. Schopenhauer alludes to three analogies expressing music's relationship with the phenomenal world, namely harmony, melody, and rhythm. These analogies refer to human quest for achieving higher self-consciousness guided by reason and feeling on the one hand and by being aware of the happiness and suffering on the other. In Schopenhauer's philosophy, body operates as the link between the will and the music. Bodily sensibility of music through ear and conception of body as a musical instrument throw light on the significance of body in the discussion on music in Schopenhauer, for whom music was a bodily, philosophical experience unlike Leibniz, who reiterated music as an arithmetic experience of unconscious counting. Schopenhauer emphasis on body found resonance in Nietzsche, who enunciated his conception of music as the restoration of rhythm as opposed to 'de-cadence' (loss of rhythm) by vouching for a deft fusion of music, body, and philosophy.

Keywords: Will, Representation, Hierarchy and Music, Musical-Analogies, Body, Nietzsche

INTRODUCTION

Arthur Schopenhauer occupies a prominent place among a range of German philosophers who devoted their curious attention to examine music. In this respect, his views on music partially touch those of his contemporary romantic philosopher like Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling. Schopenhauer's thoughts on music proceed from the reflection on the question of representation which stirred the metaphysical contemplation of the philosophers since antiquity including Plato. In view of Schopenhauer, the phenomenal world of perception is a reflection of the transcendental will. Music's unique character derives from its potential to represent, to copy the innermost essence of human being, the will. Schopenhauer's further philosophical analysis of music as consisting of harmony, melody, and rhythm as its integral components reinforces music's assisting and exploratory role in uncovering a horizon relating to connected consciousness as well as to profound realm of feelings. In Schopenhauer's philosophy, body enters as a crucial component in philosophical consideration of music as music represents the will of a man, and music is more than an unconscious arithmetic exercise a distinctly philosophical experience of the listening being.

Research methodology: This paper investigates the conjunction between philosophy and music in Schopenhauer's thoughts seeking to address following key questions pertaining to:

- The relation of music with the representational quest of philosophy
- The situation of music in the phenomenal hierarchies
- Schopenhauer's difference from Schelling in his treatment of music
- Schopenhauer's influence on Nietzsche regarding interconnection between body and music

Schopenhauer's ideas on music incorporated in his magnum opus *The World as Will and Representation* along with a thematically guided review of the European philosophy concerning music constitute the source for this research paper based on qualitative inquiry. In line with the research-questions and source delineated above,

the study aims to bring out the quintessence of music for the philosophical cognition of the phenomenal world and the self.

Study area: The study seeks to examine the philosophic dimension of music in Schopenhauer. Issues of music, philosophy, and their interconnectedness in Schopenhauer form the broader spectrum of study in this investigation.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The relationship between music and philosophy can be considered to be as old as philosophy itself. Greek philosophers of antiquity such as Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle viewed music with curiosity and intellectual speculation. On the other hand, acclaimed philosophers of the modern age like Hegel, Nietzsche, and Theodor Adorno also took avid interest in music and wrote profusely on it. Giving an outline of this intimate link between music and philosophy Theodore Gracyk and Andrew Kania (2011) underline, “Music has been an object of philosophical enquiry since the beginning of philosophy. Reading Plato’s Republic for the first time, students are often surprised to find that he devotes so much space to music’s influence on personal character and social harmony. For Plato and his contemporaries, an account of music was important to issues in metaphysics and epistemology, and philosophy of music was intertwined with moral and political philosophy, and thus, in turn, with basic issues in psychology. Ancient Greek speculation about music also encouraged two millennia of exploration of its relationship with mathematics and, perhaps surprisingly, cosmology and astronomy. Philosophy of music was an important concern for most of the major philosophers of the “modern” period that extends from the scientific revolution until the early twentieth century. It is no exaggeration to say that philosophy of music was central to aesthetic debates in the nineteenth century” (p. xxii).

Before analyzing Schopenhauer, who occupies a commanding place in the gamut of philosophers dealing with the music, it is imperative to appreciate Plato’s ideas about music. In Plato’s conception, music appears to be revelatory in its nature as outlined in his *Timaeus*. The world has been conceived of by Plato as the reflection of the world-soul. Whereas the world is sensible and visible, the world-soul remains located in a sphere invisible to human beings. The significance accorded to music in his philosophy by Plato can be inferred by recognizing his proposition that the structure of the world-soul is fundamentally musical. The sensible world known to human beings is a manifestation of the musicality of the world-soul and hence retains a musical character. Yet, music’s identification with metaphysics and accordingly a metaphysical tenor of music is denied in Plato in so far as the sensible world is viewed merely as an imperfect imitation of the true ideas (Alperson 159).

Schopenhauer’s perception of music also hinges on the notion of copying, but it radically differs from Plato’s conception of music. While dealing with music, Schopenhauer basically concentrates on the question of representation and its role in human perception of the phenomenal world including oneself. For Plato, the sensible world is an imitation of the world-soul, whereas for Schopenhauer the phenomenal world in its organic and inorganic form signifies the representation (*Vorstellung*) of will. What distinguishes Schopenhauer is his belief that this will as replicated in music can be experienced, exemplifying a stance contrary to Plato who termed the world as imperfect representation of the ideas, whereby the notion of representation fails to tackle human’s unbridgeable remoteness to the ideas.

Philip Alperson (1981) quotes Schopenhauer, “We want to know the significance of those representations; we ask whether this world is nothing more than representation. In that case, it would inevitably pass us by like an empty dream, or a ghostly vision not worth our consideration. Or we ask whether it is something else, something in addition, and if so what that something is” (p. 155). Precisely this ‘something else’, the inner nature of all things is what Schopenhauer defines as will. Schopenhauer holds all things to be the manifestation of the will. On account of the will inhabiting man, man is capable of perceiving its representation in the world.



As a man intuitively perceives his personal will, so there exists a realm of objective manifestations of the will in all empirical nature. The will in its manifestation pervades the world in its vast animate and inanimate folds and encompasses gravitation, magnetism, germination, vegetation, personalities, actions of men. As all phenomena do not manifest the will with same degree of clarity, a grade like hierarchy builds itself up. Schopenhauer viewed these grades to be compatible with the Platonic Ideas, which he described as the unchanging forms and properties as well as the universal forces expressing themselves in tune with the natural laws. These Platonic Ideas gain the status of being the object of knowledge in aesthetic contemplation, for example in architecture, painting, and literary arts (Alperson 156-157).

The music obtains a unique status in Schopenhauer's philosophy by virtue of transcending the hierarchy mentioned above. Distinct from other forms of art, music is not a copy of idea. Instead, music is a copy of the will itself. Werner Schulze (1995) defines Schopenhauer's concept of music as a direct copy of the will ("direktes Willensabbild") (p. 15). Music, in its endeavor to copy the will expresses the noumenal sphere and in its effect its power and penetration issue from its orientation to voice the essence of being, and not the shadow. Music in Schopenhauer thus acquires a revelatory dimension, bringing the metaphysical, the thing-in-itself to the awareness of man. Will is another term for the Kantian dilemma of thing-in-itself for Schopenhauer and he conceptualizes music as objectified will as such (Alperson 157). Schopenhauer elevates music to the level of being capable of copying will because the acts of will cannot be subsumed simply by representation as applicable to the world of phenomena. Rupert Wood (1996) notes that the "representation, the *Vorstellung*, can never give us more than a sketch that consists of "images and names"; thus words are subsumed under a general category of "representation," which takes as its model the picture, the artistic representation" (p. 305). The phenomenal world is provided to human being through representation, but the very awareness of willing is given an expression in music. This explains how Schopenhauer postulates an analogy between willing and melody (Wood 313).

Schopenhauer enlists three analogies to elucidate the relationship between music and the phenomenal world including man himself, namely harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic analogies. Harmonic structure of music relates to the entire gradation of Ideas in which the will manifests itself. Speculating a definite structure underlying this harmony, Schopenhauer postulates that everything exists uniformly in conformity with its nature regulated by a fixed law. Musical scale is marked by the intervals corresponding to the differences in grades or species of things in the plant and animal world. These intervals denote additionally to musical discords attesting to the impossibility of the being having a connected consciousness embracing a significant whole (Alperson 157). Harmony has within its fold uniformity as well as intervals, thus characterized by incompleteness and the ceaseless dynamism.

In melody, man and his consciousness itself attain their articulation. Melody forms the pivotal aspect in Schopenhauer's philosophy of music as he identifies conscious life of man with the highest grade of will's objectification. Melodic voice is endowed with the capacity to render the significant and intentional connection of the whole from the beginning to the end. It testifies to individual's incessant striving toward the realization of his endless intellectual possibilities as a rational being. Constant digressions from tonal center allude to the satisfaction at achieving its goal and yet again beginning anew for a new goal. These two dimensions of the will in melody keep it in a dynamic state of continuous self-realization. Melody, in its endeavor to portray every agitation and everything conceived under feeling seeks to lend expression to man's sensibility beyond mere rational intellectual realm (Alperson 158). Schopenhauer's conception of the melody as an expression of both reason and feeling betrays the impact of enlightenment and romanticism as two most powerful intellectual heritages that he inherited and integrated into his philosophy.





For Schopenhauer, rhythm in music testifies to man's perpetual strivings towards happiness and also his ineluctable encounter with suffering. Rhythm, in accompaniment with dance and music, contains within it both short and long phrases. In short phrases of rhythm, man's ordinary and intelligible happiness becomes discernible, whereas in the longer phrases of rhythm, in *allegro maestoso*, the happiness at the attainment of some faraway goal crystallizes into expression. A relentless tension inheres the rhythm for it also immaculately gives vent to the suffering of the man alongside his ecstasy of happiness. The man guided by adagio represents a noble soul seeking to convey his suffering through rhythm of the music by forgoing all the meretricious happiness (Alperson 158). Happiness and suffering, two focal dimensions of human existence characterize rhythm as a key philosophical analogy in music. Viewed in this backdrop, rhythm aims to relate music to the conscious individual in the midst of his unflagging efforts to experience happiness and suffering as two intertwined parts of self-realization.

It is instructive to briefly peruse Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling's ideas on rhythm, melody, and harmony to figure out his distinction from Schopenhauer during the age of German romanticism. Schelling proceeded from the conviction that music reveals the Absolute. Thus, rhythm for him signifies not only the succession of tones, but something unforeseen not subject to time—in other words, time in its absoluteness itself. Melody for Schelling denotes distinctly man's absorption into contemplation and imagination, though Schopenhauer included the sphere of feeling into melody too. Schelling raises harmony to a category representing a realm of man's strife and longing characterized by its allegorical nature. The finite human being's yearning for the eternal and his failure to reach the same underpins the allegorical character of harmony. Guided by his vision to explore motion in the Absolute and applying that to music, he deciphered rhythm as the centripetal force and harmony as the centrifugal force. Schelling was beholden to Pythagoras who had first interpreted the heavenly motions in themselves in terms of music (Schueller 471-474). For Schopenhauer, music serves as a mode of encountering the self, but for Schelling rhythm, harmony, and melody refer to the sublime form of motion in universe. Whereas Schopenhauer's philosophy of music hinges on the centrality of man, that of Schelling focuses on the cardinality of Absolute.

Schopenhauer assigns significant importance to the elucidation of the interrelationship between music and self in his philosophy. Self becomes aware of music through the cognizance of his body as the will objectifies itself in the form of human body. For Schopenhauer, the will is conjured up in human body and the actions of this body signify the acts of the will objectified. Body is the will that has become representation and, in this way, human body and human will refer to the two ways of being acquainted with the same thing (Alperson 156). Body stands in the center of Schopenhauer's philosophy of music, in so far as he seeks to highlight the philosophical dimension of music with its affiliation to human bodily sensibility. Leibniz had emphasized the arithmetical element of music and declared it to be an unconscious act of counting. Eugene G. Bugg (1963) notes that Leibniz's references to harmonics in his *Principes de la Nature et de la Grâce, fondés en Raison* hold that "the beauty of music "consists only in the agreement of numbers and in the counting of the beats or vibrations of sounding bodies"" (p. 468). Moreover, in Leibniz's philosophical exposition on music, the "soul is unaware of this counting which it nevertheless performs" (Bugg, 1963, p. 468). By implication, Leibniz's conception of music as unconscious arithmetical activity exhibits an affiliation with Pythagoras. Pythagoras had found out the regularity of the aliquot division of the vibrating string and accorded to the notes of the scale a numerical value. Frequencies of tones were acknowledged as the basis of consonance, but the active mind as the entity distinguishing between consonance and dissonance did not gain adequate consideration in this scheme of music. Leibniz also insisted that during music mind refrains from any analyzing activity and unconsciously calculates the ratios of the vibration frequencies (Bugg 468-469). Schopenhauer's thoughts on music inaugurate a pathbreaking departure from his predecessors like Leibniz and Pythagoras. Schopenhauer argues that music represents a philosophical experience, in which body is the immediate participating agent.





If the music is inseparable from the will, so human body is too inalienable from the will. Hence, direct experience of music through body and reflection on music in Schopenhauer is intelligible. Suggesting that in Schopenhauer, music undergoes a conspicuous shift from counting to philosophizing, Alexander Rehding (2021) argues, “The vibrations emitted by the “human monochord” may still be the same as those that Leibniz wanted to count, but they no longer matter as frequencies; they only matter as tones that reach the ear and that form part of a piece of music” (p. 34). Accentuating the bearing of body in Schopenhauer’s philosophy regarding music, Alexander Rehding (2021) adds, “Simply put, what makes music so special to Schopenhauer is that its experience is not located in the world, but is felt diffusely in the body” (p. 34).

In Schopenhauer, the onset of an obliteration of the gap between the body and music had been embarked upon and, as if summing up music as a philosophical experience of body, Schopenhauer had confessed, “We ourselves are now the vibrating string that is being stretched or plucked” (Rehding, 2021, p. 33). Schopenhauer’s awareness of body as musical instrument influenced later generation of German philosophers, particularly Friedrich Nietzsche, who visualized human body dancing to the tune of the dithyrambic music as symbolically performing the rhythmic realization of the Dionysian essence of being (Higgins 670). Bridging the distance between body and dance by enlisting music, Nietzsche liberated philosophy from its sheer speculative attribute and set it on the course of applied physiology. Nietzsche’s philosophy epitomizes the fusion of music, body, and philosophy. Commenting on how Schopenhauer’s legacy bore upon Nietzsche’s view of music and dance, Alexander Rehding (2021) points to the Nietzsche’s embracing of applied physiology alongside the abandonment of philosophical aesthetics and remarks, “As applied physiology, the gap between the medium of music, working directly on the body, and that of aesthetics is closed, though at the expense verbal philosophizing about art. Whereas Kant excluded music from philosophy because it does not use words, Nietzsche decided to give up philosophy altogether in favour of dance” (p. 34). More than that, Nietzsche also accentuated the ontological core of music by incorporating body and aligned it with the task of overcoming the decadence imperiling Europe at the dawn of modernity. Nietzsche had grasped decadence particularly as ‘de-cadence’, i.e. loss of rhythm (Benson 28-29). In music he discerned the potential force to overcome this civilizational crisis. More than being simply the musically attuned pantomimic stirring of body, such dance resonates with man’s endeavor to reclaim the lost rhythm with life. Referring to the ensuing healing of man, Nietzsche had asserted, “When one had lost the proper tension and harmony of the soul, one had to dance to the beat of the singer-that was the prescription of this healing art” (Benson, 2007, p. 31). Schopenhauer invoked body as a means of self-perception in musical experience and Nietzsche extended it to an experience of the restoration of rhythm, which represents a sharp break from conceiving music as catharsis or emotional discharge among ancient Greeks (Lippman 189).

CONCLUSION

Located in the phenomenal world of representations, man stands in the center of Schopenhauer’s considerations on music. Harmony, melody and rhythm of the music suggest the quest of individual for achieving self-consciousness as well as fathoming the inner layers of happiness and suffering. The sensibility for music denotes a conscious activity in which man is able to connect with music through the acts of body like listening by the ear, and accordingly musical experience as sensed in the body foreshadows the inauguration of a philosophical turn of music as distinct from its unconscious arithmetic experience as professed by Leibniz. The involvement of the body in the musical experience denotes simultaneous involvement of the will in music because Schopenhauer postulates the body as the will objectified. Music constitutes thus an undifferentiated awareness of body, will and the self that remains engaged in exploring its consciousness. Schopenhauer’s proposition about body as an instrument to be musically experienced foregrounded Nietzsche’s emblematic fusion of music, body, and dance. Whereas Schopenhauer finds an alignment in Nietzsche, he remains distinctly at variance with Leibniz. Schopenhauer’s reflections on music



rest on a holistic understanding in which music, body and conscious self are intertwined, mutually resuscitating each other. Reinforcing a holistic and perceptual conception of music, and bequeathing it thus to the posterity constitutes a glorious legacy of Schopenhauer in the history of the modern western philosophy of music.

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