Musical Works: Category and Identity

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to increase our ontological understanding of musical works in two ways. We’ll increase our understanding of their categorial nature and we’ll increase our understanding of what the identity of each musical work consists in.

In chapter 1, I introduce the basic question of the thesis: what are musical works? This question is broken down into four separate questions which guide the structure and argument of the thesis. One question asks if musical works exist, the other asks about the ontological category to which musical works belong. In the first half of the thesis, I argue that musical works exist and that the best explanation of their features is given by assigning them to the category of universals. I argue for this conclusion by elaborating and defending a view according to which musical works are properties. I then show that this conception is superior to the strongest rivals. One rival takes musical works to be historical individuals (Rohrbaugh 2003). The other takes them to be actions of composition (Davies 2004).

In chapter 6, I turn to two questions about identity. One question asks about the identity criteria for musical works, the other question asks for an explanation of musical work identity. In the remainder of chapter 6, I argue by reference to contextualist intuitions that a superficially appealing view, sonicism is problematic. The critique of sonicism is used to draw out certain contextualist assumptions that our ontology of music ought to explain.

In chapter 7, I examine a family of Levinsonian contextualist proposals. I argue that the original formulations (Levinson 1980) give incorrect results, and that attempts to modify them (Davies, S: 2001) slip into obscurity, or undermine the aims of the project (Levinson 1992). I end chapter 7 by presenting the performance theory in a more flattering light. I argue that as a theory of musical work identity, the performance theory is the best on the market because it overcomes the problems associated with the Levinsonian views and deepens our understanding of contextualist intuitions.

In chapter 8, I present an account of the ontology of music which integrates the property theory of category with the performance theory of identity by construing musical works as impure relational properties. I then defend the integrated account against various objections. In this defence, I elaborate a view of compositional actions as belonging to the ontological category of processes.
Declaration

I declare that no portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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Acknowledgments

I am grateful to Jonathan Webber for introducing the topic of the ontology of music in his lectures at the University of Sheffield in 2002. Since then, I’ve had plenty of assistance in developing the ideas and arguments that have made it into this thesis (and in developing some which haven’t).

I give blanket thanks to all staff and graduate students at the University of Manchester, nearly all of whom have given up some time to discuss issues pertinent to this thesis. However, special gratitude is to be apportioned to Julian Dodd, Catharine Abell, David Liggins and Chris Daly, all of whom have been involved in the supervisory process. Stefano Predelli at the University of Nottingham supervised my MPhil thesis and has been very helpful during the writing of the present piece. In addition, I’ve been surprised by the generosity of many philosophers including Ben Caplan, Helen Steward, Aaron Meskin, Georges Rey and Jerrold Levinson who have given up their time to respond to queries via email.
Chapter 1: The Project

1: Introduction

The basic question this thesis seeks to answer is the following:

(Q) What Are Musical Works?

Many projects in different disciplines might be inspired by a question like (Q). Anthropologists, for instance, might want to think about the role of musical works in certain human cultures. A mainstream philosopher of art might take (Q) to be a conceptual question about what makes musical works musical, rather than, say, painterly or literary. This thesis does not aim to answer these questions. It is a project in ontology, the branch of metaphysics dealing with questions about existence. Traditionally, ontology asks whether certain sorts of things exist, which ontological category things of that sort belong to, and the identity conditions for things of that sort. And this characterisation of ontology provides the mould in which this thesis is forged.

The first step of our project is to divide up the basic question into three ontological sub-questions. This allows us to make progress on two fronts. First, it fixes on the ontological nature of the project by specifying ontologically relevant issues. Second, it exposes some of the hidden complexity of the basic question, a useful preliminary to establishing clear and relevant answers to it. Our four questions are:

(Qa) Do musical works exist?

(Qb) Which ontological category do musical works belong to?
(Qc) What are the identity criteria for musical works?

(Qd) What individuates musical works?

To focus the reader’s attention on the direction of this thesis, here’s a brief ‘flash of the cards’ concerning the structure of the arguments it contains and the sub-theses it seeks to defend.

In the first half of this thesis, we’ll be focussing upon (Qa), the existence question, and (Qb), the categorial question. In the next chapter, I’ll argue that the default position we should accept is that musical works exist. There’s a body of apparently true sentences which refer to and quantify over them. This gives a prima facie case for musical work realism. I then examine some views which might be called ‘error theories’. According to these theories, the truth of sentences of musical work discourse may be apparent only. I consider two error theoretic approaches and argue that neither is well motivated. I go on to examine two views which try to eliminate musical works in favour of nominalistically acceptable entities. I argue that extant formulations of these strategies are ad hoc, and suggest examples which indicate they may be inadequate. I then consider a recent form of musical work nihilism which rejects the relevance of the data from true sentences in English which refer to and quantify over musical works. According to this view, musical works are not part of fundamental ontology, but English sentences have truthmakers which are part of fundamental ontology. I argue that the best proposal of this sort is not sufficiently elaborated to be worthy of acceptance.

In subsequent chapters (chapters 2 – 5), it will be argued that the best extant answer to (Qb) is the dominant view, viz., that musical works are types. This view will be found to greatly deepen our understanding of the most important features of musical works. The leading rivals to this theory - two which take musical works to be particulars (chapter 4) and one which takes musical works to be action tokens (chapter 5) – will be exposed as poorly positioned to contribute to improving our understanding of musical works. The dominance of the type theory will be vindicated against its extant rivals.

In the final chapter of the first half of the thesis (chapter 6), it will be argued that a theory which takes musical works to be properties is an improvement upon the type theory, accruing the same explanatory capabilities, but in a more
theoretically virtuous manner. The best answer to the categorial question, I will argue, is that musical works are properties.

The task of answering (Qc) and (Qd) will be the task of the second half of the thesis. In chapter 6, there will be an introduction which elaborates the various interconnections between different projects concerned with musical work identity. A key distinction will be drawn between projects which seek to answer (Qc) and give informative identity conditions and projects which seek to answer (Qd) and explain the identity of musical works. The latter project, as I define it, is more ambitious than the former. After this introduction, Dodd’s sonicism will be considered and rejected because of its failure to capture contextualist intuitions. In chapter 7, several influential Levinsonian proposals will be considered. However, the basic statement of the views have problematic consequences, and attempts to preserve the Levinsonian conception slip into obscurity or an ad hocism that undermines the aims of the ‘identity projects’ undertaken. At this point, the performance theory will be re-presented as an account of individuation which improves upon sonicism and Levinsonian contextualism. In chapter 8, we’ll incorporate an ‘action token’ account of musical work individuation into a property theoretic proposal. We’ll then go on to consider the strongest objection to action token accounts of individuation before offering an account of action tokens as processes.

This introductory chapter has two key functions. The first is to elaborate an effective methodology for answering the categorial question. The second is the introduction of some substantial desiderata that our answers ought to accommodate. One commitment of the methodology proposed will be found to be in conflict with a certain methodological approach called descriptivism (Davies 2004, Kania 2008). The remainder of this introduction will be spent giving reasons to be sceptical about the commitments distinctive of descriptivism.

2: Answering the Categorial Question

Upon approaching ontological questions about musical works, we are apt to find them stimulating and intractable in equal measure. We can be confident in
thinking that satisfactory answers to the categorial question will draw upon two independently established bodies of inquiry. We want to take what we know about musical works and apply to this what we know about ontology. At the outset, however, this seems an overly ambitious aim. We’re likely to be dumbfounded at the range of alternative and often conflicting beliefs held by those investigating both music and metaphysics. Further puzzlement is apt to arise when we wonder how we should conceive of the application of the latter to the former.

We can progress our project by making the sources of puzzlement explicit. We can then elaborate a way of working through the problems that dumbfounded us. I think the sources of puzzlement are most faithfully partitioned into two sorts.

There are two discipline internal problems, one corresponding to each of the key disciplines. The internal problem arises because the disciplines of metaphysics and musical study are each populated by conflicting bodies of belief. There are open ontological debates about what sorts of things there are in the world. There are also rival perspectives about what musical works are like; which judgments about musical works are correct. A survey of leading theories in each discipline is unlikely to present any obviously univocal picture of ontology or of musical works. The second sort of problem is the external problem. The external problem is that of bringing the two disciplines together. The external problem is that of grasping what the application of ontology consists in; what is it to successfully apply ontology to musical works?

Internal and external problems do not have solutions which are both neat and uncontroversial, but we can try to be sensible. First, the music internal problem will be considered. The consideration of this problem will lead to the specification of central judgments about musical works. These will be the chief arbiters of adequacy for our ontological theory. Next, we’ll examine the external problem. Solving this problem will put us in a position to understand the role that central musical judgments will play in our project. Then we’ll look at the metaphysics internal problem. This discussion will be brief because its solution is a current that will run through much of the main body of the thesis.
2.1: The Music Internal Problem

Many philosophers of music present the practices associated with music making, music description and music criticism as if they constituted a unified body of theory. Such philosophers often use the term ‘musical practice’ as a blanket term for this supposed body of theory (c.f. Davies 2004, Kania 2008). This way of looking at things, however, is misleading. Musical practice, whatever it is, does not make up a unified and consistent body of hypotheses about musical works. Indeed, the musical sub-disciplines don’t even have the same aims. Some are concerned with the practical aims of music making; the disciplines of composition and performance, for instance. Some sub-disciplines are concerned with theoretical and appreciative inquiry; music analysis, history, comparative musicology, criticism.

In general, disciplines vary with regards to the hypotheses accepted by their practitioners. And such variations are pronounced when the practitioners have different aims. As such, it is unsurprising that practitioners working in different branches of musical practice endorse various and incompatible hypotheses about musical works. For the purposes of the ontological project we should like a clear body of musical hypotheses which we can try to better understand. We need a principled way of screening out the ‘noise’ that the various sub-disciplines generate.

To filter out the noise, I propose the introduction of a distinction between central and peripheral beliefs about musical works. I think we have a pre-theoretical grasp on the idea. Certain judgments about musical works are more difficult to revise than others. And I think such a notion is in play in much of the extant literature on the ontology of music. However, it’s worth clarifying some of the hallmarks we might look for in identifying the central beliefs.

We might fix upon the notion of centrality in an informal way as follows: The degree to which a given judgment about musical works is central is the degree to which uncovering its falsehood would undermine our belief that musical works exist. A judgment about musical works is peripheral if the discovery of its falsehood would not lead us to question the existence of musical works, but would rather lead us to think that the judgment misrepresents musical works. We can elaborate this thought in terms of a more tangible, positive characterisation of the
hallmarks of central data. The following criteria give us a positive grasp on the notion.

A judgment about musical works is central to the extent that:

(i) It is widely accepted by users of the musical work concept across different disciplines and intra-disciplinary paradigms.

(ii) It applies to musical works quite generally.

(iii) It explains the validity of commonly accepted inferences and the legitimacy of standard methods of inquiring into musical works.

(iv) It enables the concept of the musical work to have the theoretical utility it does in musical practice.

Condition (i) is introduced to block judgments that reflect idiosyncrasies of a given individual, or those imposed by a specific discipline or paradigm. By looking to judgments shared by practitioners of different stripes, we can get an idea of the common thread to thought about musical works. If there is only a small body of practitioners who subscribe to a certain judgment about musical works, finding that it is false would only lead us to believe that their idiosyncratic characterisation was in error.

Condition (ii) serves to filter out judgments which are only made of a small number of musical works. The reason for this is that certain works have very specific features that are apt to arouse philosophical interest. Works like John Cage’s 4’33’’, for instance, by specifying that performers remain silent throughout its performance, might arouse our philosophical interest. Perhaps such a work raises peculiar questions leading us to question the nature of our concept of music.¹ However, that one particular work is judged to have a certain interesting feature shouldn’t distract us from the big picture.

⁻¹ Thanks to Alex Oliver for suggesting an approach that puts ‘problem’ cases first.
To formulate one’s idea about musical works by reference to a couple of puzzling examples is bad practice. For one thing, it develops a conception which is grounded in a very limited body of evidence. The facts about a handful of works can give a very limited source of evidence concerning the nature of the category of which they are examples. For another, it leaves the suggested formulation in a precarious position with respect to the outcome of debates over the correct artistic classification of the works in question. Indeed, we might find good reason to judge that the example under consideration wasn’t even a musical work at all.²

Condition (iii) reflects the fact that we make inferences about musical works and that revealing these inferences gives us a deeper grasp on how we think about musical works. For one thing, we make logical inferences about musical works. Of particular importance are the inferences we make using principles of identity and distinctness. These will become more obvious in the second half of the thesis. Not all of our musical epistemology proceeds by means of deductive inference, however. We also employ empirical means of investigation. Some such methods seem indispensable to all musical inquiry. In the next section we’ll see that one of these is the method of *listening* to musical works. This notion is so ubiquitous that it is easy for it to go unnoticed, but it does place substantive constraints upon our ontological project.

Condition (iv) asks after a characterisation of the function of the musical work concept. The legitimacy of postulating musical works is grounded in the fact that the concept does a certain job in the practices which enquire into music (c.f. Jackson 1998). We need to extract the features of the concept that make it so useful in those practices (Craig 1990). As we’ll see shortly, the concept of the musical work is valuable for appreciative, theoretical and explanatory practices tied up with music and the arts.

There is also a further consideration to be made which doesn’t concern centrality to musical practice *per se*, but which is imposed by the nature of our project. Some judgments about musical works are central in the sense outlined above, and yet aren’t much use to the ontological inquiry. That some musical works are better than others seems to satisfy the criteria above. Pretty much any practitioner is likely to agree and it seems to be highly general because it is a

² Indeed, this is the conclusion that Stephen Davies (2003) and Andrew Kania (2011) reach in connection with the example of Cage’s *4’33″*. 
judgment true of many pairs of musical works. Further, it is a principle implied by certain evaluative judgments and it would appear part of the point of the musical work concept that things in its extension can bear variable degrees of artistic value.

Despite its centrality according to the criteria listed, the judgment that some musical works are better than others isn’t of obvious relevance to answering the categorial question. It would seem the sort of judgment that is compatible with any taxonomic assignment. As such, we ought to add that we formulate our conception of musical works as those which are strategically relevant to deciding the ontological category of musical works.

It’s hard to offer a clear cut proposal about what makes a judgment strategically relevant. Nevertheless, the extant literature concerning the ontology of musical works has implicitly set itself the task of identifying such judgments, according them a strategic role in directing ontological inquiry.

The preceding considerations give us an idea of how to solve the music internal problem: we identify the assumptions employed across the musical sub-disciplines, which apply to as many musical works as possible. Further, we accord greater centrality to those judgments which make sense of the way practitioners inquire into music and which support the theoretical role of the musical work concept. Now we’re in a position to take our first steps in deriving some central judgments of musical practice.

2.2: The Central Judgments Concerning Musical Works

The first central judgment about musical works is that they are *repeatable* rather than *particular* (Dodd 2007: 11).

**Repeatability: Musical works are repeatable**

This judgment is sometimes obscured by the terminology of ‘singular’ and ‘multiple’ which is commonly used to mark it. In ordinary parlance, painterly works and works of carved sculpture are said to fall under the category of the singular art work. Works of poetry, prose, dance and music fall under the category of the multiple art work. This terminology is misleading, however.
Understanding the fundamental difference between a painterly work and a musical work is not improved by thinking of the former as ‘just one thing’ and the latter as ‘many things’ as the singular/multiple terminology suggests. There is, after all, only one *Eroica* Symphony and it needn’t have had any performances. Conversely, a painterly work might consist of more than one thing. Picasso’s *Guernica* is made up of multiple spatial parts. A triptych is a singular painterly work, despite being made up of three distinct canvasses.

The distinction that users of the singular/multiple terminology are really getting at is to be drawn in terms of *repeatability*. Singular works are not repeatable. A painterly work whether made up of one or several canvasses, is not repeated in any of those canvasses. According to common sense, the painterly work is *identical* with or *constituted* by those canvases. What’s distinctive about works of poetry, prose, dance and music is that each such work may be repeated in many things, things we may call its *occurrences*; copies of literary works, performances of works of dance and performances of works of music.

Practical, epistemological and appreciative practices confirm this thought. Composers don’t need to produce a performance to compose a musical work. Rather, they may use any medium which allows the specification of conditions for occurrence. The proper performance of a musical work isn’t a copy of the musical work, as reproduction of Picasso’s *Guernica* is. The musical work itself is repeated in such a performance.

Distinct critics can encounter the same musical work and compare their responses to it. They may justify their aesthetic and artistic judgments about it, and so on, despite having never heard the same performance of it. That they’ve both encountered occurrences which satisfy the work’s occurrence conditions makes their discussion substantive. A critic who attended a performance of the *Eroica* on Thursday and one who only caught Friday’s performance are not merely talking past one another when they discuss the work. They’re talking about the same thing. And what they’re talking about is the musical work that was repeated in those distinct performances.

The assumption of repeatability also underlies certain features of our appreciative practice. We don’t think that the peculiarities of this or that performance bear upon the correct way to appreciate the musical work it is a performance of. Our appreciation of the work *qua* work is an appreciation of the
conditions specified by the composer; it is the appreciation of that commonality shared among the work’s (correct) occurrences.

These considerations indicate that the judgment of repeatability is central in a deep way. Repeatability is a presupposition of our epistemic methods. We suppose that we can find out about the same musical work by encounters with distinct particulars. It also underwrites a distinctive practical function of the concept. Our focal interest in the work is in what is repeated, rather than the occurrence that repeats it.

Another central musical judgment is that musical works are audible, that is, they can be heard.

**Audibility: Musical works are audible**

Performers interpret the specification of the conditions made by the composer and attempt to execute them. An attentive audience listens to the performance of a work and comes to know about that work by auditory perception. Hearing isn’t the only way one can find out about a work. An expert can investigate a work by reading its score. Nevertheless, the key route to the justification of judgments about a musical work is through listening. And undergirding this epistemology requires a metaphysical proposal which helps us understand how it is possible to hear musical works.

However, the audibility of musical works is a less than straightforward matter. We hear a musical work by hearing something else; by hearing one of its occurrences (Wolterstorff 1980: 40-1). We perceive the occurrence, the event which satisfies the work’s repetition conditions in a direct manner. The occurrence event is a causal relatum and one of its effects is the perceptual event which happens to listeners. The work which is repeated enters into this perceptual episode indirectly by its participation in the occurrence; we hear the work indirectly by virtue of hearing this event (Dodd 2007: 14).

This is what yields the distinctive duality we find in the experience of musical works. We hear the performance and the work it repeats simultaneously. And it is a duality we are aware of in our engagement with occurrences of musical works. We become quite adept at shifting our attention between the work and the performance. This is most obvious when we try to understand and appreciate the
interpretation and execution presented in a musical performance; when we see what the performance does with the work.

We get a fairly good idea about what the work is like from hearing a performance. We can hear the features presented by the occurrence and thereby grasp the repetition conditions specified by the composer when she composed the work. Indeed, we can identify errors in performances of works we’ve never heard before. This doesn’t happen by magic. What is exploited in such a process is our tacit background knowledge of the ways in which composers specify repetition conditions for musical works. Often the first few measures can give us strong evidence in favour of the period, style and genre of a work and this can lead us to form certain basic expectations about how the work has been composed. An exposure to a whole performance can, in combination with accurate background knowledge, provide good reasons for thinking that the occurrence of a certain note executed was due to an error on the performer’s part.

That musical works are audible suggests something more general. Hearing is a causal relation. Although musical works are not the primary relata of causal relations, as their occurrences are, the audibility of musical works points to the fact that musical works can figure in causal explanations and predictions.

Causality: Musical works figure in causal explanations and predictions.

Indeed, we see this assumption often betrayed by our behaviour. Perhaps the most obvious cases of this are the emotional and cognitive effects on the individual listener. We know that different works have differing effects with respect to the moods and emotional states they elicit. Indeed, we even characterise works in such terms – ‘relaxing’, ‘melancholic’ and ‘triumphant’, and so on, are predicates primarily employed for the expression of moods and emotional states which have reasonably clear application to musical works. Of course, we are not compelled to feel triumphant upon hearing a work which has the predicate ‘is triumphant’ correctly applied. However, the explanation of the applicability of a certain emotion predicate, ‘triumphant’ say, rather than ‘melancholic’, to a given work, must have something to do with its capacity to elicit such states in listeners.
It seems we exploit this knowledge of psychological effects in certain of our actions. With the aim of relaxing after a stressful day, we’re more likely to choose Satie’s *Gymnopédies* than, Bartók’s *Fourth String Quartet*. However, if it’s intellectual adventure we’re after, the latter is the more likely choice. At least from one’s own case, it seems insincere to deny that differential causal powers are bestowed upon occurrences by different musical works.

Musical works also play a role in causal explanations which extend beyond the states and actions of individuals. Sometimes a work is composed which is highly influential. Perhaps it utilises a new and fertile means of formal organisation. Such works exert influence upon other composers who often aim at incorporating the innovations into their own works. Sometimes a novel instrument is employed to great effect, thus promoting the use of that instrument in other works, and influencing the sales and manufacture of such an instrument. That is, musical works have effects which reach out to music and extra-musical history.

One thing that’s been implicit up to now is the judgment that musical works can have incorrect as well as correct occurrences (Wolterstorff 1980: 56-7).

**Normativity: Musical works may have correct and incorrect occurrences.**

We often judge that a performance of a certain work is incorrect in certain respects. It might feature a few accidentally fluffed notes or perhaps some intended departure from the composer’s instructions. Nevertheless, minor errors or departures from a work’s specifications don’t normally lead us to deny a performance’s status as an occurrence of the work intended. This is quite generally accepted and would appear true of the vast majority of musical works. That musical works have incorrect occurrences is also a strategic desideratum because several promising ontological theories have struggled to meet it (Goodman 1968, Wollheim 1968). It also has a deep significance because of how it interacts with other central judgments. When thinking about the audibility of musical works and how they can figure in causal explanations of emotional states, we often think in terms of correct performances. An error peppered occurrence of the *Gymnopédies* might well bring about the opposite of a relaxed state in the listener.
The importance of correct occurrences is also evidenced in a striking piece of linguistic data. Musical works are uniformly picked out by singular terms, ‘The Festival Overture’, ‘The Eroica Symphony’ and so on. What’s striking is that we often apply the same predicates to musical works that we apply to their correctly formed occurrences. (Wollheim 1968: 93, Wolterstorff 1980: 58-62) And it seems we do so because the satisfaction of that predicate is condition of correctness for a work’s occurrences.

**Predicate Sharing:** Musical works systematically share predicates with their correct occurrences.

When a predicate is true of an occurrence because the occurrence has the property the predicate normally expresses and it is a property required for the (correct) occurrence of the work it is an occurrence of, we find that the predicate is also truly applied to the work. This is so even if it is incoherent to think that the work shares the property normally expressed by the predicate in question. For instance, the predicate ‘lasts about 45 minutes’ applies to correctly formed occurrences of the *Eroica* symphony. And we can apply the same predicate to the symphony itself. However, it seems that we don’t think that the *Eroica* symphony has the same durational property as its occurrences. The *Eroica* has lasted a lot longer than that!

These judgments are the most central. They form a nest of assumptions which underlie some of the most notable features of the practice of making and investigating musical works. Other more peripheral desiderata have played a significant role in extant discussions of the ontology of musical works.

One thing many have found suggestive is a set of intuitions about the existence conditions of musical works. Many have pointed to the intuition that musical works are created when they are composed (Levinson 1980, Rohrbaugh 2003).

**Creation:** The composition of a musical work creates it.
Some have debated what the notion of ‘creation’ really amounts to. What most philosophers of music have thought is that the composition of a musical work brings it into existence. The work doesn’t exist at times prior to its composition, but does exist afterwards. This judgment has some of the hallmarks of centrality. It is widely endorsed and where endorsed is thought to apply generally to musical works. However, it’s far from clear whether it plays an important epistemological or theoretical role in the function of the musical work concept. It’s hard to see whether accepting the falsity of the judgment that musical works are created would significantly undermine the belief that there are musical works, or whether it would impact significantly on the practices associated with music.

Nevertheless, that musical works are created has sometimes been proposed as a judgment with some strategic relevance because many of the most promising answers to the categorical question have found the explanation of creation something of an insurmountable obstacle.

Because of its strategic interest in unseating the dominant views, the extensive discussion of musical work creation has overshadowed two stronger judgments about the temporal profile of musical works. One judgment that seems more central is that the musical work continues to exist once its composition is completed, and it does so for quite some time (Caplan and Matheson 2004:128-31). We might call this judgment the persistence judgment, bearing in mind that this piece of terminology is meant in a non-technical sense appropriate to the task of gathering pre-theoretical judgments about musical works.

**Persistence: A musical work may continue to exist for a while after its composition.**

The belief in musical work persistence is as widely endorsed and as generally applicable as the belief in musical work creation. Indeed, a theory which could accommodate creation, but not persistence, would appear less in keeping with our intuitions. When we talk about a musical work whose composition was completed decades ago, we still ascribe properties to it in the present tense. Indeed, in aesthetic discussions, it is rare for us to talk about a musical work in anything but

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3 Harry Deutsch (1984) denies the following implication of musical work creation, but many have found his suggestion utterly at odds with the concept as standardly used.
the present tense. And this piece of linguistic data just seems to betray how we think. We think of *The Eroica Symphony* as existing, and having various aesthetic properties, right now, several centuries after its composition.

The same sort of linguistic data also suggests that musical work existence at a time is independent of it having any occurrences at that time.

**Occurrence Independence:** A musical work may exist at a time if it has no occurrence at that time.

Just about anyone who discusses musical works will sincerely ascribe properties to musical works in the present tense without making any effort to find out if they are currently occurring. Indeed one can legitimately ascribe properties to musical works when it will never have any occurrences. This strongly suggests that we pre-theoretically assume musical works exist at times when they have no occurrences.

Although widely held, in other respects, the centrality of these last two judgments is less than clear. It strikes one that it would be difficult, but not impossible to revise the judgments of persistence and occurrence independence. One might think our present tense talk about works not currently occurring could be analysed in terms of talk about past, future, or merely possible occurrences. Nevertheless, these strategies would involve some departure from suggestive judgments and the details of such strategies might introduce problems of their own. As such, we should aim at avoiding this sort of departure from common sense.

So, we’ve elaborated the music-internal problem and suggested a sensible way of dealing with it. We look to central judgments; widely endorsed, general judgments about musical works which play an important part in the epistemology of music and the theoretical role played by musical works. Further, we’ve used this method to formulate some explicitly philosophical desiderata which can be used to assess the adequacy of our ontological account. Because the desiderata were selected according to their metaphysical relevance, they will also expedite our task in answering the internal problem for the metaphysical component of the project.

Before moving onto the internal problem for the discipline of metaphysics, we’ll turn to the external problem about the ontology of music. Once we understand
what the application of ontological hypotheses is supposed to achieve, we’ll be in a better position to resolve this internal problem.

2.3: The External Problem

The external problem for the ontology of musical works is that of elaborating what it is to apply our metaphysical hypotheses to the central judgments about musical works. Initially approaching the applied project we have two established bodies of hypotheses from our key disciplines; music and metaphysics. However, it’s not immediately obvious what we should do in trying to apply the latter to the former.

Well, the first thing we can do is to think about what the aim of the application is. I think the answer is obvious. We should be looking to increase our understanding of musical works. This aim of increasing our understanding of how musical works can have the features we take them to is implicit in the extant literature on the ontology of music. Richard Wollheim (1968) wants to understand how abstract musical works can share predicates with their performances. Jerrold Levinson (1980) wants to understand how musical works can be created and individuated more finely than the sonic conditions encoded in their scores. Guy Rohrabugh (2003) seeks understanding of how musical works can come into and out of existence, and exhibit temporal and modal flexibility with respect to their intrinsic properties (an aim I criticise in chapter 4).4 While these theorists vary in their judgments concerning the data which we ought to try and understand, and how that data should be understood, they share the goal of trying to understand data extracted from musical practice.

This consensual aim of increasing our understanding of musical works presents an answer to the external problem. The application of metaphysical hypotheses to the central judgments about musical works is an explanatory project. In answering the categorial question we will be attempting to explain how it is that musical works can be as those judgments indicate.

The implicit aim of the musical ontologist is also to increase our understanding of musical works to the greatest extent. As such, we should aim at

4 By no means are these comprehensive synopses of these philosophers’ projects.
providing the *best explanation* of their nature. This constitutive aim of the project structures our inquiry and gives a schematic account of how to decide between incompatible answers. The content of central judgments of musical practice, judgments which reflect the conceptual competence and exposure to empirical evidence of those who investigate musical works, are the *explananda*. We aim to explain how the content of the central judgments can be true by offering metaphysical hypotheses as *explanantia*. In answering the categorial question, these explanantia will consist of hypotheses which assign musical works to a certain ontological category. Competing explanantia are to be evaluated in terms of how well they contribute to our understanding of musical works; how good they are as explanations of the content of central judgments.

This might appear to be a proposal of such a schematic nature as to be platitudeous. However, we can flesh out the idea by answering the following question: How we are to identify those features of a hypothesis (or collection of hypotheses) which contribute to our understanding? Answering this question should provide us with more decisive criteria by which to evaluate competing ontological theories about musical works.

To answer this question we can draw on an established philosophical literature. In particular, philosophers trying to understand how scientists make inferences have contributed greatly to the identification of the features of scientific theories that contribute to their explanatory value (Lipton 1991). Similar methods have been incorporated into the working practices of metaphysicians (Quine 1953, Sider 2011).

There are debates about the variety of theoretical virtues and the justification that might be offered in favour of each. A foray into those debates would take us on an unacceptable tangent, however. For now, we’ll exploit the consensus on what the virtues, broadly construed, are. We’ll examine nuanced forms of virtue and reasons for thinking they’re virtuous when they arise in the arguments of the thesis.

The explanatory virtues by which theories of musical ontology are to be assessed are the following:
**Scope**: The scope of a theory is the range of true propositions it entails (Daly 2010). We’ve already prefigured the notion of scope for our project in our formulation of the centrality requirement for our explananda. We set the goal of explaining the content of judgments which apply to as many paradigmatic musical works as possible. And it’s no news flash to ontologists of music that a theory which can explain the content of all central judgments about musical works is *ceteris parabus* at an advantage to one which fails to explain some.

There is a further way in which consideration of scope can be relevant. There are repeatable pieces of music which might not be deemed ‘musical works’ in the paradigmatic sense that say, the *Eroica* Symphony, or Bartok’s Quintets are. However, works of jazz, like Gershwin’s *I Got Rhythm* and albums in the pop and rock genres appear to be categorically on a par with the classical examples. If our theory can also provide explanations of entities of these sorts, it will have a greater scope than one which cannot.

In this thesis, this latter line will be at least implicit. The key aim is to secure an answer to the categorial question which naturally applies to works of jazz, pop and rock (as well as other genres). Musical works of these sorts may not have an associated score, and their occurrences may not be performances in any standard sense of the word. They do, however, satisfy many of the other central judgments and so our account which explains these judgments is well positioned to offer explanations of these sometimes neglected examples.

**Simplicity**: There are many different forms of simplicity which contribute to a theory’s explanatory virtue. For present purposes, we might glimpse some of the key distinctions that have been of interest in recent philosophical debates. Some forms of theoretical simplicity are measured by the number of primitive notions required to state a theory (Quine 1951). Other forms of simplicity concern the number of things and number of kinds of entities the theory postulates (Lewis 1973: 87). Other forms concern the number of hypotheses the theory postulates in order to explain the facts it does. Of particular interest is the measure of the number of hypotheses a theory postulates which are superfluous to the explanation of the theory’s target explananda (Barnes 2000). However, where simplicity

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5 The implausibly strong assumption that entailment is the only explanatory relation does not follow from this. It is that theories, sets of propositions, have the explanatory scope they do by virtue of the propositions they entail.
considerations arise in this thesis, there will be more detailed elaboration of the form of simplicity in question and the motivation that might be offered in its favour.

**Epistemic Conservatism:** One virtue that should be mentioned in connection with simplicity is epistemic conservatism. It has been suggested that epistemic conservatism is what underwrites the virtue of employing simpler hypotheses (Daly 2010: 151). One hypothesis is more epistemically conservative than another when it explains the same data, but does so by employing fewer novel hypotheses. A theory can be less epistemically conservative than another by employing a hypothesis which is novel, but which is compatible with our background beliefs. We should prefer one theory to another if it explains the data by the postulation of entities and principles which are already part of our background belief because this will provide a greater improvement in our understanding than a theory which postulates unfamiliar hypotheses.

**Compatibility with Plausible Background Assumptions:** That a theory should be compatible with plausible background assumptions is a consequence of accepting epistemic conservatism as a norm. The postulation of hypotheses which are incompatible with our background beliefs is trivially the postulation of hypotheses which are novel relative to our background beliefs. We should favour explanations whose hypotheses are compatible with well-established background hypotheses. In our project, we should aim to explain the proscribed desiderata without clashing with well-established metaphysical, epistemological, artistic or aesthetic hypotheses. Indeed, where some hypothesis is hotly disputed, it is best to advance a theory which remains neutral on that debate.

The answers to the categorial question and the identity question defended in this thesis are somewhat novel in the literature on these questions. They are, given their explanatory power, surprisingly simple, epistemically conservative and they have a good degree of compatibility with plausible background theory. That musical works can be as (most of the) central judgments indicate is explained with great simplicity by the proposal that musical works are properties instantiated by their occurrences. This proposal is also epistemically conservative relative to its strongest rivals and remains as compatible with plausible background assumptions as we could expect from a philosophical theory about music.

**Fruitfulness:** A further virtue of a philosophical explanation is its potential to open up fruitful lines of future enquiry. Although fruitfulness in scientific
theories is typically understood in terms of issuing novel empirical predictions for scientific theories, there is an analogous notion for philosophy. Rather than issuing in predictions, we might say that a philosophical theory is fruitful to the extent that it connects previously disparate domains of inquiry and suggests new ways of solving their problems.

Demonstrating the fruitfulness of the views advanced in this thesis is not the primary concern. However, the proposal advanced in the final chapter would appear well-positioned for the explanation of the features of things which are not musical works i.e. other culturally important and contextually individuated repeatables. It will also leave us well positioned to answer non-ontological questions about musical works.

3: The Metaphysics Internal Problem

The discipline of metaphysics, from which we will source our explanatory hypotheses is also apt to dumbfound us. Initially we might be uncertain about where to look in finding a good answer to the categorial question. We needn’t be too perturbed by this, however.

As we saw, explanatory adequacy is determined by a combination of factors; the number of central judgments whose content is explained and the degree of centrality those judgments have. As such, the identification of central judgments should steer us on a course towards a theory that can best explain as many of the most central desiderata as possible.

As we’ve just seen, the best explanation of the content of these central judgments, however, will be its degree of conservatism. We’ll understand musical works better if our proposal employs philosophically familiar hypotheses and mechanisms of explanation, rather than hypotheses which are comparatively novel. This suggests that our first port of call is to consider those theories which would, if true, provide conservative explanations of the apparent facts about musical works.

A second thing to note which is part and parcel of the abductive method is that the aim can be a modest one. It is not that we aim to offer the best explanation that could ever be offered. We accept that answering the ontological questions about musical works is an ongoing inquiry and we accept that our current best
efforts might be supplanted in the future. As such, we can narrow our sights to providing an explanation of the central features of musical works which is an improvement upon extant proposals. The aim of this theses is to make available a better answer to the ontological questions than is currently available. And this means our first port of call is to consider not only conservative approaches to the ontology of music, but to consider available conservative approaches to the ontology of music.

These two considerations converge to a significant extent. Most of the dominant approaches to answering the categorial question have been, in outline, conservative. The categories to which musical works have been assigned and the hypotheses which articulate the explanatory workings of these categories are, for the most part, relatively familiar to the philosophically literate.

4: The Opposition to Fallibilist Abduction: Descriptivism

The abductive method appears a natural and fruitful way of conducting our applied project. There is, however, an implication of the abductive method that some find worrying. Many textbook examples of scientific and philosophical explanations postulate hypotheses which are in tension with widely held folk intuitions. In the philosophy of mind, the proposal that mental events are identical with physical events is highly successful on the grounds that it provides a simple explanation of the correlation between mental and physical states. Nevertheless, the very identity claim that makes the mind-brain identity thesis explanatorily appealing, is also one which some have found in tension with widely held beliefs about the mental realm.

In the ontology of the arts, there’s a popular resistance to the idea that the revision of musical belief could be warranted by explanatory considerations like simplicity, metaphysical conservatism or compatibility with plausible (extra-artistic) background beliefs. The resistance movement construes the project of ontology of the arts as one whose proper aim is that of describing how art works are conceived of (Kania 2008). As such, we might call these theorists ‘descriptivists’.6

6 Andrew Kania traces the origins of this outlook to Jerrold Levinson (1980) and sees it as being developed by Guy Rohrbaugh (2003) and David Davies (2004). However, Kania points out that
A descriptivist methodology will typically have some interesting things to say about how we are to make explicit the conception of musical works; how to formulate a reconstruction of the conception of musical works from the unruly array of beliefs about music. David Davies (2004, 2009) provides a sophisticated suggestion here. His suggestion is that we focus our attention on the beliefs of specialist musical practitioners, those who are apparently competent with respect to musical concepts and who have exposure to empirical data about musical works (2004: 18). Of course, different musical experts hold incompatible beliefs about musical works (2004: 19). The suggestion Davies offers here is to favour the beliefs which best comport with the values we seek in musical practice. Much might be said about this proposal. However, the aim of this chapter is not to put a dent in this phase of the descriptivist methodology.7

One salient aim of the descriptivist is to avoid philosophically motivated revision of this conception. She intends to stonewall the sorts of revision that are sometimes offered when an apparently virtuous philosophical explanation conflicts with widely held beliefs. What’s interesting about the descriptivist is her way of doing this. She doesn’t merely argue that we should, as a matter of contingent fact, be more confident about the beliefs held by musical practitioners than those commitments of well-established metaphysics. She wants to build the obstruction to revision into her methodology. And this leads her to make some poorly judged moves.

The descriptivist wants to secure an epistemic privilege thesis according to which the propositions about musical works entailed by the proper reconstruction of the conception cannot be discredited by conflict with art-external facts like well-
established metaphysical hypotheses or the demands of explanatory virtue. We might formulate the privilege claim thus:

(EP) Musical works are such that the rationally reconstructed representation of them cannot be in error.

This is the distinctive epistemic claim associated with descriptivism. Yet, it might strike us strange to accept that the beliefs of musical practitioners refined in accordance with the proper goals of musical practice cannot be in error. Metaphysical incoherence isn’t always obvious, nor weeded out by the practical concerns often in play in musical inquiry. Even if musical practitioners are authoritative because of their conceptual competence and experience, it still seems plausible that they could err with respect to the metaphysical facts about musical works.

The descriptivist, however, has a response to this obvious objection. She closes the gap between the refined representation of practice and the ontological nature of musical works by advancing a metaphysical determination thesis:

…artworks just are things that play a particular kind of role in a particular kind of practice. (Davies 2004: 21 [my italics]).

In a similar vein, Andrew Kania (2008) says this:

If the best rational reconstruction of the ontological conception of artworks implicit in artistic practice is that they are X, Y and Z then artworks are in fact the kind of thing that is [and is only] X, Y and Z” (Kania 2008: 438).\(^8\)

If these claims were true, there’d be no legitimate metaphysical challenge to the reconstructed conception of musical works. We might formulate the metaphysical thesis as follows:

(MP) The way musical works are represented as being according to the rational reconstruction of practitioners’ beliefs determines that they are that way.

\(^8\) I formulate it as a bi-conditional because this is what Kania really has in mind when he uses it to make his case for musical work nihilism. This will be considered in the next chapter.
If (MP) were true, it would give us a reason to accept (EP). According to (MP), how musical works are is how they are represented by their reconstruction. However, (MP) is no trivial claim and it’s not clear why it should be accepted.

One argument in favour of (MP) is offered by Stephen Davies (2008) and is echoed by Andrew Kania (2008: 437). The idea is that because musical works are created by humans participating in a practice, they are just as the reconstruction of the practice represents them. The argument from *Creation to Metaphysical Determination* might be put like this:

(P1) Musical works are created by participants participating in a practice.

(P2) If something is created by participants in a practice, the way those things are represented by a reconstruction of that practice metaphysically determines how they are.

(C) Musical works are such that the reconstruction of how they are represented by musical practice determines how they are.

It’s worth noting that there are traditional platonists who would reject (P1), and many of those would also take issue with descriptivism (Wolterstorff 1980, Kivy 1987, Dodd 2007). A more obvious response to (EP) is the rejection of (P2). According to (P2), anything created by participants in a practice has its nature determined by how it is conceived of in that practice. This premise is, however, false. There are many practices which produce artefacts, but for which (P2) fails to hold. No plausible reconstruction of the practices associated with dream catchers, Ouija boards or homeopathic remedies could fail to represent the functions they are believed to discharge by the relevant practitioners. Yet, dream catchers do not stop bad dreams entering the sleeper’s mind, Ouija boards do not allow us to contact the dead and homeopathic remedies are not effective in treating medical problems.

This much should be enough to put the descriptivist on the back foot. However, there’s another problem with the argument. The transition from the
premises to the conclusion is invalid. The support required for (MP) and (EP) is more demanding than that offered above. It would need to be the case that the way practitioners represent musical works determines their nature and that the way in which practitioners represented musical works determined that musical works were as they were represented by practitioners. And even for those who might accept (P1) and (P2) it is still questionable whether the connection from the way things are represented in a practice is as tight as is required for (MP) and (EP).

Consider the example of the dollar. One might accept analogues of (P1) and (P2) for this cultural artefact. The existence of the dollar and its properties are determined by facts about communities who use it. This, however, doesn’t entail that the beliefs of dollar users are immune to error. As John Searle (2008) suggests, there may be prevalent misconceptions about the nature of the dollar. One such misconception is the belief that the value of the currency is underwritten by a certain quantity of gold held in Fort Knox. This is false. The value of the dollar is determined by a complicated range of factors, many of which have no more physical basis than the encodings and signals employed in the modern banking system (Searle 2007: 7). Furthermore, Searle suggests that some misconceptions are such that undermining them might lead to the collapse of the currency. Perhaps, upon discovering that gold reserves don’t underwrite the value of the dollar, dollar users would lose confidence in their currency leading to its devaluation and, ultimately, collapse (2007: 17).

Perhaps the same is true for musical works. Even if the nature of musical works were determined by the way they are represented in the musical practice, it might be that some of the beliefs held by practitioners are false, but play a role in supporting the existence of musical works and determine facts about musical works; facts which the practice does not accurately represent.

So, even when interpreted with extensive charity, the argument from creation to metaphysical determination fails to reach the epistemic privilege thesis desired by the descriptivist. This, however, isn’t the only argument for descriptivism.

Recently, David Davies has offered a very different sort of argument for (EP) and (MP). As he puts it
...it is our practice that must be foundational for our ontological endeavors, because it is our practice that determines what kinds of properties, in general, art-works must have...But why is this the case? Because...our philosophical interest in art-works arises out of, and is an attempt to better understand that practice. (David Davies 2009: 162).

Davies’s argument here is not a metaphysical argument which entails that musical works are as (reconstructed) practice would have them. It is rather that the motivation for initiating and maintaining the ontology of art works is to satisfy an interest in artistic practice. His reply to philosophers who’d overturn our artistic judgments in light of philosophical theorising might be that such theorists have lost track of the proper aim of their inquiry, the elaboration of the artistic practice which provokes puzzlement and interest.

Davies’s argument isn’t convincing, however. First, the assumption that the aim of understanding musical works is an aim at understanding musical practice is not something obvious in the face value construal of the questions asked. If we’d heard physicists talking about quarks and we found what was said puzzling in certain respects, this might prompt us to try and understand what sort of thing quarks are. Substituting the aim of understanding quarks with an aim of understanding the practices of scientists who investigate them would surely raise different questions and pervert our inquiry. Perhaps one’s interest in musical works arises out of a seeming incongruence between plausible metaphysics, common sense, and the apparent commitments of musical practice. As such, we need further argument to establish why the aim of the understanding musical works is really an aim to understand musical practice.

Second, even if our aim was that of understanding musical practice, that wouldn’t give us much reason to think that the practice was immune to error, or that how practitioners thought of musical works had determinative force with respect to their ontological nature. It might be that our aim was to understand a practice, but that that practice was in error. Someone might have an aim of mapping the conceptual geography implicit in homeopathic practice, but this would not mean they had any compelling reason to accept its hypotheses.

The problem with David Davies’s argument here is that it aims to motivate descriptivism by methodological stipulation. We’re simply told that the aims of the
ontology of art are to give a reconstruction of practice. And, to be fair, Davies’s approach has been fruitful in drawing out some interesting assumptions made in appreciative practice (see Chapters 5, 7 and 8 of this thesis). However, a methodological stipulation is somewhat toothless when the dialectical context is one in which the very methodology being stipulated is under question.

None of these arguments provide compelling grounds for employing the descriptivist methodology. Until better arguments are advanced, we should retreat from the claim that our ultimate goal is to describe how musical works are believed to be by musical practitioners. We’re aiming to get at the truth about musical works and we aim to do so by inferring the best explanation of how they can be as our central assumptions indicate. This might require that we deny, or in some cases, ‘tweak’ other judgments that would receive unreflective assent from specialists.

This doesn’t mean that we treat the judgments of musical practitioners as completely unreliable, of course. Musical practitioners operating in the various branches of musical inquiry are the experts about musical works. And, on the present proposal, it remains a cost to our ontological proposal if it is incompatible with a widely held musical intuition. However, it is a cost whose significance must be weighed against other factors.

How should we weigh the cost of a proposed revision? One factor is the centrality of judgment with which the explanatory proposal conflicts. Those judgments which have a deep significance in our musical practices are more costly to deny than those which are relatively peripheral. Another factor is how well-positioned the rivals are to explain the content of the judgment in question. It is only when there is a difference in the explanatory adequacy between two available theories that the failure to explain a judgment is relevant to the selection of one over the other.

Finally, when a theory denies a widely held judgment about musical works, there are several strategies that can be employed in order to reduce the severity of the cost. One might cast doubt on the very judgment itself by music-independent arguments. The central judgments of musical practice, well justified though they may be, are not the ultimate arbiters of how things are. There might be well-established hypotheses which conflict with the claims of musical practitioners. If so, it might be the musical belief that must give way. One might alternatively ‘tweak’ the judgment which seems so natural to musical practice. One is still denying that
musical works are as they are represented in practice, but one might offer a subtle variant of the judgment which can, for all intents and purposes, replace the natural belief on the matter.

5: Conclusion

Our conclusion is that we should prioritise the explanation of central judgments extracted from musical practice, and we should do so in the most explanatorily virtuous manner possible. This might lead us to give up on certain widely held assumptions, but if those assumptions are of limited centrality we don’t need to reject our account. Sometimes the demands of good explanations should lead us away from widely held beliefs. In the next chapter, a defence of an affirmative answer to the existence question is offered. Once this is completed, we’ll be ready to employ our central judgments of musical practice and our criteria of explanatory virtue in assessing the best elaborated categorial theories about musical works.
Chapter 2: Musical Works Exist

1: Realism about Musical Works

As we noted in the introduction, the basic question with which this thesis is concerned presupposes that musical works exist. In that chapter we analysed out this presupposition in order to consider its truth. We presented the question:

(Qa) Do musical works exist?

The natural answer is: Yes, musical works exist. This answer to (Qa) I take to be that of the musical work realist. In this chapter, I’ll present the *prima facie* motivation for this answer and defend it against those who deny that there are musical works.

1.1: The Case for Realism

Amongst the meat and potatoes of ontology are questions about what sorts of things exist. The dominant way in which philosophers answer such questions is by way of examining language. A philosopher trying to find out if there any Fs examines sentences seemingly ‘about’ Fs. To make a case for the existence of Fs, or to see what’s required to deny the existence of Fs, such a philosopher will focus on apparently true sentences which apparently refer to, or quantify over, Fs. If the sentences are true and they do refer to, or quantify over Fs, the philosopher has made a good case for the existence of Fs.

We might start with sentences like the following:

(1) ‘There is a musical work in A minor’
(2) ‘The *Eroica* Symphony is magnificent’

(3) ‘The musical work performed at the Bridgewater Hall on Tuesday was the same as that performed at the Sydney Opera House on Friday’

(1)-(3) are apparently true sentences about musical works. In (1), we see an outright affirmation of the existence of a musical work meeting a certain description. In (2), the musical work is apparently referred to by its title, ‘The *Eroica* Symphony’ and the work has the predicate ‘is magnificent’ applied to yield a true sentence. In (3), we see an affirmation of the identity of the work performed on two distinct occasions. The particular sentences here are not especially important, (1)-(3) merely illustrate a whole body of sentences which are believed and asserted by both musical specialists and the lay.

So, we have apparently true sentences which apparently refer to, or quantify over musical works. If things are as they appear, and the strategy is sound, we have a good reason for believing that musical works exist. For the philosopher who denies the existence of musical works there are three ways to respond to this line of argument. One might reject the standard strategy for uncovering our ontological commitments. In section 4, we’ll see Ross Cameron’s ‘truthmaker nihilist’ take on this approach (Cameron 2008). But before we proceed to this novel account, we’ll examine two approaches which accept the standard strategy. Combining the standard strategy with nihilism about musical works presents two routes of response to the argument from apparently true sentences which apparently refer to musical works. One option is to accept the truth of the sentences, but claim that the reference to musical works is apparent only. This is the way of the paraphrase eliminativist and is represented by Jay Bachrach (1971) and Milton Snoeyenbos (1978). We’ll see this approach in section 3.

The other option is to deny that sentences which contain musical work titles are true. That sentences containing musical work titles are systematically untrue, is what we’ll call an *error theory* about musical work discourse. This sort of view is defended in a recent paper by Andrew Kania (2008). In the next section, we’ll examine two variations on the error theoretic approach.
2: Musical Works and Error Theories

According to the error theory about musical works, the sentences asserted in everyday musical work discourse are systematically untrue. There are two obvious ways of arguing for this sort of proposal. One could offer arguments to the conclusion that musical inquiry, at least in the portions dealing with musical works, is faulty, and as such, its associated discourse is not to be trusted. Alternatively, one could offer independent arguments to the conclusion that there are no musical works and thereby give a reason for thinking that the assertions made by practitioners are systematically untrue. This latter is the strategy offered by Andrew Kania (2008).

The first strategy has not been very popular. So far as I am aware it has never been employed, but seeing why it has been neglected allows us to further develop the motivation for realism. Perhaps the most obvious way to develop such a strategy is to look at scientific practice because it is in science that we see the most frequent forms of the outright error theory. Establishing that a scientific theory is in error is often achieved not by establishing independent arguments that a single sort of entity doesn’t exist. In the sciences it is often whole bodies of theory which are dismissed. The entities postulated and hypotheses about their behaviour are swept away in light of accumulating anomalies and the availability of superior rivals.

This strategy doesn’t look like a promising avenue for the opponent of musical work realism. The analogy with the sciences isn’t obviously a poor one; those involved in theoretical disciplines which inquire into musical works do seem to work in a systematic way. They offer various forms of explanation of musical phenomena, and, as we noted in the introduction, certain successful predictions can be made on the basis of our knowledge of musical works. We also find that theoretical branches of musical inquiry aim at making progress in the practical branches of the musical enterprise. Principles of theory and analysis are often elucidated with the goal of furthering the constructive activities of composers and performers. So, we might allow that quasi-scientific considerations may be legitimately brought to bear upon the commitments of musical practice.
What we should reject, however, is the proposal that musical practice is in any way falsified or stagnating. Quite the contrary, it is a thriving creative enterprise. As such, the philosopher looking to offer an outright challenge to the truth of musical work discourse has her work cut out.

This suggests that direct philosophical attacks on musical work discourse are not advisable. There are, however, more convoluted attempts at promoting error theories.

2.1: Andrew Kania’s Error Theory

Kania’s error theory is motivated in a different way. He endorses what appears to be a revolutionary fictionalist proposal (2008: 442). The sentences which presuppose the existence of musical works are literally untrue, but the value of the practice of asserting them is sufficient that we needn’t be concerned about withholding such assertions. The thought would seem to be that one can still assert sentences about musical works and this undercuts the dialectical force of having to deny obviously assertible sentences like (1), (2) and (3).

Kania’s argument for nihilism is, however, inconsistent with its conclusion. It proceeds in two stages.

The first stage is the motivation of descriptivism. Kania does this by employing the argument from creation to descriptivism which we saw in the previous chapter. According to this line of argument, because musical works are cultural artefacts created in a practice, their nature is exhaustively determined by the nature of the practice-embodied conception of musical works (2008: 438). This is then supposed to yield an epistemic privilege thesis about musical works according to which there can be no legitimate correction of the conception implicit in practice by any data sourced from outside of that practice.

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9 Some of the things Kania says are suggestive of hermeneutic fictionalism (see 2008: 444). That is, he might take sentences about musical works to be true, but about something we’d not expect e.g. musical work concepts rather than the extensions of the concept. However, the lion’s share of his paper seems trained on a revolutionary proposal according to which sentences which attempt to refer to or quantify over musical works are untrue. This is why I characterise him as a revolutionary fictionalist. (However, given his failure to engage with this central distinction, we might wonder if he’s just an error theorist using an analogy with fiction).
For Kania, a proper description of the conception of musical works is a theory which tells all about musical works, there’s no way that the entities in the extension of the concept MUSICAL WORK can conflict with, or outrun, the information contained in that concept. The proposed intimacy between the nature of musical works and the way their conception represents them leads Kania to suggest that a descriptivist about methodology need only commit to the musical work concept in order to secure a perfectly accurate characterisation of musical works (2008: 441).

Because of this proposed intimate connection between the concept of the musical work and its extension, Kania thinks that ontological commitment to extensions of those concepts is a needless frivolity. The same explanatory advantages are available to a theory which only commits to the concepts. We can explain why musical works have a certain nature by pointing to the fact that musical work concepts represent musical works as having that nature.

Kania then uses the purported superfluity of musical works to argue for musical work nihilism. He offers a formulation of Ockham’s Razor and applies it to musical works “if we are not required to posit musical works as we conceive them in order to account for the data our ontological theory must explain, then we should not.” (2008: 441). Kania wants to read our not positing musical works as the postulation of the hypothesis that there are no musical works. And we may interpret it this way. On this basis, he concludes that there are no musical works.

We’ve already seen good reason to be sceptical about the descriptivist premise. It is obvious that some practices embody error laden beliefs about the products they are concerned to produce. However, there is a different reason to reject the soundness of Kania’s argument for musical work nihilism: The premises which motivate descriptivism are inconsistent with the nihilistic conclusion.

The motivation Kania offers for thinking that descriptivism is true is that musical works are created by musical practitioners. And if there aren’t any musical works, musical works aren’t created at all. If true, nihilism would undermine the grounds for believing in the epistemic privilege thesis upon which Kania’s argument relies. Further, the acceptance of musical work nihilism makes it difficult to see how one could coherently formulate descriptivism at all. We can’t coherently suggest that if descriptivism is true, then the nature of musical works depends upon the conception, as Kania suggests. The descriptivist believes that there is such a
conception. To deny that there are any musical works is tantamount to denying that
the dependence relations postulated hold. And without these, there’s doesn’t seem
to be a way to state the descriptivist’s defining thesis.

There is some textual evidence that this argument is somewhat uncharitable
to Kania. For much of his paper, he explicitly states the conclusion as a nihilistic
one, arguing that there are no musical works. However, later in his paper, he says,
“…we should conclude that those works have no existence beyond those
conceptions of them.” (2008: 441) and in the concluding paragraph he says that
“there may be no such things as musical works independent of our conceptions of
them.” (2008: 444). Perhaps this is a more charitable reading according to which
musical works are entities akin to concepts, or entities dependent upon shared
mental representations. If this were his aim all along, it does cohere with
descriptivism (although it leaves many things he says somewhat puzzling).
Nevertheless, if this is the conclusion he intended, it is not one that a believer in
musical works need worry about. For this conclusion is just another proposal that
accepts the existence of musical works, but one which says they are dependent
upon mental states.

Neither approach to motivating the error theory is satisfactory. The assault
on the body of beliefs held by musical specialists would appear inappropriate given
the good standing of musical inquiry and practice. Kania’s argument for musical
work nihilism exhibits inconsistency between its premises and the nihilistic
conclusion. Further the conclusion leaves it unclear how the descriptivist premise
can be coherently stated.

3: Musical Works and Eliminative Nominalism

The error theory presented in the previous section involved claiming that
sentences which apparently refer to musical works are systematically untrue. This
leaves another option for the musical work nihilist who acknowledges the force of
the standard strategy for uncovering ontological commitments. She might accept
the truth of sentences like (1)-(3), but argue that their truth does not require that the
musical work titles they contain refer to musical works. This is the approach taken
by Jay Bachrach (1971) and Milton Snoeyenbos (1978). These theorists aim to
eliminate musical works from our ontology by presenting schemes for paraphrasing
the true sentences which appear to refer to, or quantify over, them.

It isn’t always clear why Bachrach and Snoeyenbos embark on this project. However, some of the arguments they employ and the strictures they impose upon their paraphrases indicate that their broad philosophical motivation is nominalistic. This title actually picks out two distinct philosophical theses. One sort of nominalism is a thesis sceptical about the existence of abstract entities. Call this view ‘A-Nominalism’. Abstract entities are things like sets, numbers, properties and types. They are contrasted with concrete entities, things like trees, people and planets. The principled abstract/concrete distinction is a matter of controversy, but it is often suggested that concrete entities are spatially located, whereas abstract entities are not spatially located.

Another form of nominalism is nominalism about universals. Call this view ‘U-Nominalism’. Universals are things like properties, relations and types. Universals are often understood by contrast with particulars, like the mug on my desk, or the tree in my garden. The principled distinction between the two categories is often disputed, but a good way of drawing the distinction is in terms of instantiation. A particular may not be instantiated, although it may instantiate a universal. By contrast, universals are inherently instantiable, the sort of thing that can be had by a particular (or perhaps by another universal) (Oliver 1996).

A committed nominalist is right to be wary of sentences which appear committed to the existence of musical works. If there are musical works, the best explanation of their repeatability is that they are universals, and this will offend the U-Nominalist. The A-Nominalist also has cause for concern. Traditionally, universals are understood as lacking spatial location, which would make them abstract on certain conceptions. And we should note that our pre-philosophical thoughts about musical works suggest that they lack spatial location. Unless we’re in the grip of a distinctively philosophical thesis about universals, the question of where and when the Eroica symphony is, as opposed to distinguishable questions about the location of its composition or performances, will strike us as quite misguided. As such, the apparent reference to, and quantification over, musical works in true sentences of a successful discourse could constitute an embarrassment to the committed nominalist.
The motivation for nominalism as a general philosophical thesis is often missing from the literature on the ontology of music. However, the specific worries about universals suggested by Bachrach and Snoeyenbos fall into two main kinds which are represented in the mainstream literature.  

Bachrach (1971: 417) and Snoeyenbos (1978: 380) both mention an argument due to Richard Rudner (1950). According to this argument, abstract objects are causally isolated, and so, even if abstracta exist, they could not be the musical works we hear and ascribe aesthetic properties to. Causal isolation arguments are especially common in motivating A-Nominalism. Paul Benacerraf (1968) and Hartry Field (1980) have offered similar arguments concerning our knowledge of abstract mathematical objects. They claim that the nature of our connection to abstract objects is puzzling because the mathematical domain, if there is one, is something for which we lack any means of interaction.

In the next chapter, we’ll be tackling this sort of argument head on. We’ll be rejecting the common misconception which makes out that universals are causally and epistemically isolated from us and our perceptual episodes. In this chapter, we’ll merely indicate that the paraphrase nominalism of Bachrach and Snoeyenbos presents a poor positive proposal about the semantics of sentences containing musical work titles.

Another motivation for nominalism resides in the pursuit of simplicity. The realist about musical works doesn’t think she can tell the whole story about musical works without committing to some particulars. She at least wants to admit performance tokens into her ontology. However, the nominalist makes a bold promise. She claims that she can explain the facts just as well, but without introducing abstracta or universals into her ontology. This gives her greater simplicity in several ways. She commits to fewer entities, she commits to extensions of fewer kinds of entities. Further, at least in the case of the U-

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10 I omit several arguments mentioned by Bachrach (1971: 416-7) because they attack an antiquated account of types and universals. Consider, Bachrach’s rhetorical question concerning musical works as types, ‘Are there rules of syntax and semantics which govern the relationships between works of art in order that a group of works may say something? Certainly not.’ (1971: 416). And again, on universals, ‘If “Beethoven’s Fifth” were a general name, we could experience it only when we have heard more than one performance…’ (1971: 417). Types as employed in metaphysics are no longer exclusively bound to the semiotic theories in which they were first introduced (see Peirce 1931). Nor is it current orthodoxy to think that universals are only experienced by the experience of a multiplicity of their instances.
Nominalist, the ideological parsimony of her theory is greater than that of the realist because she avoids the introduction of the theoretical primitive, *instantiation*.

As we’ll see, the bold promise of the nominalist about musical works is more of a pipe dream. In the remainder of this section, we’ll see that the paraphrase eliminativist offers a piecemeal and unsystematic account of the true sentences containing musical work titles. In chapter 4, we’ll see that nominalists who choose to identify musical works with nominalistically acceptable entities propose poorer explanations of the central metaphysical features of musical works than do those who accept that musical works are universals.

Jay Bachrach (1971) thinks that musical work titles are syncategorematic expressions. They fail to refer, but do contribute to the meanings of sentences containing them. He thinks that the contribution made by musical work titles can be elucidated by giving paraphrases of sentences containing the titles. The paraphrases offered, however, do not contain any reference to musical works. They contain reference only to nominalistically acceptable entities such as performances and scores.

The first sample sentence Bachrach paraphrases is apparently about the composition of a musical work:

(4) ‘Bartók composed the *Fifth Quartet* in 1934’,

is equivalent to,

(5) ‘Bartók wrote in 1934 the notation, which (either the ink marks actually made or reproductions from them) serves in performances each of which is call the “Fifth Quartet”’

The paraphrase refers only to the score which was produced in the act of composition, and not to anything which is nominalistically unacceptable, either abstract or universal.

The second sample sentence Bachrach paraphrases is apparently about listening to a musical work (1971: 419),

(6) ‘I am listening to Bartók’s *Fifth Quartet*’,
he takes to be equivalent to,

(7) ‘I am listening to a performance for which Bartók wrote the notation (or a facsimile thereof) during a certain time in 1934.’

This paraphrase makes reference only to a performance which satisfies a certain description, it is a performance for which Bartók wrote the notation in 1934. Again there is only reference to concrete particulars, in this case events.

The final paraphrase provides a striking difficulty for Bachrach. The sentence to be paraphrased makes an apparent reference to a musical work and applies an aesthetic predicate to that work (1971: 419).

(8) ’Bartók’s Fifth is dissonant’,

is interpreted as

(9) ‘Any performance, for which Bartók wrote the notation (or a facsimile thereof) during a certain time in 1934, is dissonant.’

The paraphrase replaces the musical work title with a universal quantification over performances meeting a certain description. According to this paraphrase, if (8) is true, this is because any performance for which Bartók wrote the notation during that time in 1934 satisfies the predicate ‘is dissonant’.

The most obvious problem with this latter paraphrase is pointed out by Milton Snoeyenbos (1978: 381-2). By paraphrasing aesthetic attributions made of musical works into universal quantifications over performances, Bachrach fails to capture the truth conditions of sentences like the following,

(10) ‘The Jupiter is powerful, but this performance of The Jupiter is not powerful’

This latter sentence will be interpreted as (11),
(11) ‘Any performance for which Mozart wrote the notation at a certain time in 1788 is powerful and this performance for which Mozart wrote the notation at a certain time in 1788 is not powerful.’

The original sentence is of a sort that is sometimes true. Indeed, it is precisely the sort of thing a critic will often say in response to a disappointing performance of a musical work. Yet, on Bachrach’s paraphrase it comes out not merely false, but self-contradictory, an unfortunate result indeed.

Snoeyenbos (1978: 382-3) doesn’t think that this inadequacy points to a general problem with paraphrase strategies. The line he takes is that the nominalist needs more paraphrasing options. He agrees with Bachrach in thinking that some sentences containing musical work titles are equivalent to sentences which contain universal quantification over performances. For instance he thinks that,

(12) ‘The Jupiter is a symphony’,

Should be paraphrased as,

(13) ‘Any performance of The Jupiter is a performance of a symphony’

However, for problem cases like (10) which show Bachrach’s paraphrases to be inadequate, Snoeyenbos suggests two additional ways that those sentences can be translated. He suggests that in certain contexts such sentences are to be translated with ‘statistical force.’ (1978: 382). The problem sentence above might then be translated as,

(14) ‘Most performances of The Jupiter are powerful’

However, Snoeyenbos realises that this is of limited use in the case under consideration. If the only performance of The Jupiter work were slack rather than powerful, it would be the case that most performances were slack, and yet it would still be true that The Jupiter was powerful, it’s just that the performance in question had failed to do justice to the work (1978: 383).
Although one suspects that Snoeyenbos envisages some role for statistical translations, he still requires a paraphrase of the problem case. This leads him to present a further style of translation which captures the idea that such sentences are sometimes asserted with a ‘normative force’ (1978: 383). The problem sentence (10) becomes the following:

(15) ‘All correct performances of *The Jupiter* are powerful.’

While an improvement on Bachrach’s proposal, the Snoeyenbos translation strategy is still unsatisfactory. There are obvious worries about the psychological plausibility of the translations given by any combination of schemas offered by Bachrach and Snoeyenbos. Presumably, in most cases, the vast majority of us are unaware of the details of the production of a score, or whether a given work was ever scored, or what all of its performances are like, and it should seem mysterious that the content of our utterances concerning musical works end up being about such entities.

Second, the paraphrase schemas are given in terms of equivalence relations between the original sentences of musical work discourse and their nominalistically acceptable translations. And so, it remains unclear why the acceptance of the translated sentence doesn’t commit us to the musical works apparently referred to in the original sentences (c.f. Alston 1958). Indeed, as Dodd points out, philosophers sometimes use paraphrases as devices of ontological inflation (Dodd 2007: 24-5). David Lewis (1973: 84) employs paraphrases to argue for ontological commitment to possible worlds. Stephen Schiffer (1972) employs equivalences to argue for properties and propositions. Hale and Wright (2009) argue from equivalences to the existence of numbers. As such, Bachrach and Snoeyenbos need to give us some reason to believe that the deflated paraphrases are those which show our true ontological commitments.

The greatest problem with the paraphrase nominalist’s approach, however, is simply the unsystematic nature of the semantic theory proposed. If there is a principle for revealing the real semantic structure of utterances which employ musical work titles, it would appear to be: Preserve the truth value of the relevant sentence, but don’t make reference to abstracta or universals! Beyond this there’s little to go on.
The musical work realist treats musical works as names and explains the truth-value of sentences in terms of whether the entity named by the title has the property expressed by the predicate applied.\(^{11}\) Bachrach and Snoeyenbos seem to introduce nominalistically acceptable paraphrases willy nilly and it remains somewhat unclear what principle is at work in selecting the correct paraphrase for a given sentence.

Snoeyenbos suggests that the sort of paraphrase to be employed depends upon the context of utterance of the sentence in question (1978: 382). However, this is of little help in addressing the lack of systematicity found in the eliminativist proposal. Neither Bachrach nor Snoeyenbos elaborate the contextual features they see as relevant to determining the correct paraphrase schema for a given sentence. A natural thought might be that speaker intentions should determine which paraphrase is to be employed. However, this seems an unlikely way to develop the strategies on offer. The translations offered would appear to replace the face value readings of sentences containing musical work titles with sentences which refer to score tokens, or which introduce quantificational structure of various sorts where there is no obvious reason to think that speaker intentions single out any such interpretation.

Convinced of the truth of nominalism and the truth of sentences containing musical work titles, can’t the paraphrase nominalist simply say that there must be some nominalistically acceptable story about the semantics of the sentences? Perhaps this is all Snoeyenbos is getting at when he concludes that ‘…there are no theoretical barriers to a reductionist [eliminitavist] account of the uses of titles.’? (1978: 385). However, this still leaves the eliminativist in an unappealing position. Even if there’s no theoretical barrier to the eliminativist’s strategy, this doesn’t place it in good standing. There are other theoretically coherent philosophical views which we typically think are unsatisfactory; solipsism, verificationism, and idealism. They’re just not very good at explaining the facts about their respective subject matters.

The same is true of semantic theories like those of our paraphrase nominalist. Semantic theories, no less than ontological ones, are supposed to be

\(^{11}\) A qualification ought to be made here. The predicates applied are often subject to the thesis of analogical predication. The latter is a systematic proposal about the meanings of certain predicates applied to musical works.
explanatory (Williams 2007). They should answer questions like the following: Why would someone assert a sentence featuring a musical work title? What explains the truth value of a sentence containing a musical work title? Even if a nominalist proposal can offer an explanation of the utterance of a sentence, or offer an explanation of the truth of sentences containing musical work titles, her account of these data is beholden to explanatory virtues like scope, simplicity, and the avoidance of ad hoc hypotheses.

In comparison with the realist about musical works, the semantic theories of Snoeyenbos and Bachrach are explanatorily inferior. In explaining the data, many different hypotheses concerning the semantic contribution made by musical work titles are postulated. What’s more, which hypothesis is to be employed for a given sentence is decided on a seemingly ad hoc basis.

We can push this objection further. The worries about the explanatory weakness of the paraphrase strategy have been accrued through the examination of a relatively small sample of sentences. And there are further sentences which don’t seem to admit of paraphrase in accordance with the strategies on offer.

Consider the following sentence:

(16) ‘The Jupiter is not a performance.’

This sentence might be asserted if we wanted to reassure a child or someone unfamiliar with repeatable musical works that they would be able to enjoy Mozart’s powerful work more than once. However, given the suggestions of Snoeyenbos, we might think that it should be paraphrased as one of the following:

(17) ‘Any performance of The Jupiter is not a performance.’

(18) ‘Most performances of The Jupiter are not performances.’

(19) ‘Any correct performances of The Jupiter is not a performance.’
Each of these options is way off the mark. Each takes (16), a true sentence containing a musical work title, and turns it into a contradiction.

There is another class of sentences which appear problematic for the paraphrase strategies so far suggested. The nominalist’s leading idea is to understand the semantics of musical work titles in terms of nominalistically acceptable entities like scores and performances. However, it appears that some sentences in which predicates are applied to musical works have the truth conditions they do independently of the way scores and performances are.

Consider for instance,

(20) ‘The Jupiter is popular.’

(21) ‘The Jupiter was Napoleon’s favourite piece of music.’

The attempt to paraphrase these sentences in terms of scores or performances doesn’t yield intuitive truth conditions. There’s no obvious way to understand these sentences in terms of the paraphrase strategies suggested. A work can be popular independently of the popularity of its performances, or its score (should it be a scored work). Audiences might be impressed by a certain work, despite their disappointment with most, or even all of its performances and in ignorance of the nature of any score token which represents it. Similarly, Napoleon’s favourite piece of music might be so, even if he were unhappy with its extant performances. Indeed, before the proliferation of professional musicians and reliable instruments, such a state of affairs may have been comparatively common. Even if there’s often a contingent connection between preferences for a musical work and preferences for its performances, this isn’t built into the semantics of sentences featuring musical work titles. As such, there is no obvious way in which (14) and (15) can be translated similarly to the schemas offered by Snoeyenbos.

Prima facie, we have here counterexamples to the paraphrase strategies of Bachrach and Snoeyenbos. We have sentences whose intuitive truth conditions can’t be expressed by way of the paraphrases suggested. Now, I think it would be naïve to assume that sentences of these sorts are untreated in the nominalist framework. We have, however, pushed our initial objection further. The paraphrase strategy had a theoretically unappealing complexity in its application to a limited
sample of sentences. By examining further sentences, we see that the unsystematic nature of the proposal will lead to either apparently true sentences resisting paraphrase, and thus providing evidence against the eliminativist view, or it will beget further complexity in the semantic theory, making it even less appealing as a theory which can provide good explanations of semantic phenomena.

In the next chapter we’ll look more closely at the motivation for nominalism. In the chapter after that we’ll look at a more promising nominalist approach, one which is realist. For now, we’ll consider a different approach to musical work nihilism which doesn’t take arguments from the truth of natural language sentences as determiners of ontological commitment.

4: Musical Works and Truthmaker Nihilism

Our final version of musical work nihilism is, metaphysically speaking, the most cutting-edge of those so far considered. The truthmaker nihilism of Ross Cameron (2008) employs a relatively novel meta-ontological approach to answering ontological questions. He conceives of ontology not simply as the study of what there is and what it’s like as we’d ordinarily understand it. Rather, he sees ontology’s role as the description of what there fundamentally is (2008: 303).

This doesn’t, however, see him trying to paraphrase our claims about musical works into claims about fundamental entities (2008: 302). He is sceptical of arguments like the one of the previous section because both the target sentences and their translations are sentences of natural languages. Cameron cautions us not to, ‘read our ontology off of our [natural] language.’ (2008: 300). As he sees it, the quantificational expressions employed in natural languages are overly permissive. As Ted Sider puts it natural languages have a ‘tolerant quantificational semantics’ (Sider 2011: 171). In natural languages, there are true quantifications over non-fundamental entities, entities which don’t belong in the domain of the ontologist (Cameron 2008: 302).

For Cameron, questions about what there fundamentally is are to be posed in a language called Ontologese – a special language stipulated to be such that its quantifiers capture the fundamental existents; those entities that do belong in the
domain of the fundamental ontologist whose chief concern is with simplicity (Cameron 300-1).

This distinction between Ontologese and English leaves Cameron in an interesting position. Cameron is not disputing the truth of common sense claims in English. Indeed, he accepts the truth of existence claims (in English) about many everyday sorts of entities, musical works included. However, he doesn’t think that English sentences get their truth values by magic. The distinctive claim of his view is that it is the existence and arrangement of the fundamental portions of reality, the facts represented by true sentences of Ontologese, that are the truthmakers for true English sentences about musical works. Further, on this picture, the true English sentences aren’t irrelevant to the fundamental ontological project. The fundamentalist ontological project is constrained by the requirement that it ‘…must make (many of) the common-sense claims of English come out as true…’ (2008: 301).

This is the big meta-ontological picture, but, we might wonder, how does Cameron motivate its specific application to the case of musical works?

Cameron’s strategy is to argue that truthmaker nihilism is better at solving a certain problem than other extant proposals. The first phase of his argument is to put forward an inconsistent triad of intuitive claims (2008: 295).

(1) Musical works are created.

(2) Musical works are abstract objects.

(3) Abstract objects cannot be created.

Realists will have to deny one of the above propositions. To deny (1) or (2) leads one to deny some intuitive thesis about musical works. To deny (3) is, according to Cameron, to depart from received metaphysical wisdom on such matters.

Cameron thinks his meta-ontological picture can be fruitfully applied to our musical work discourse. He thinks that the best way out of the inconsistent triad
above is to accept (3) as true in Ontologese, but deny that (1) and (2) are true in Ontologese (2008: 308). He takes it that musical works are non-fundamental and so denies that we should be ontologically committed to them. He does, however, accept that sentences (1) and (2) are true in English because, like other natural languages, English has tolerant quantificational semantics. So as Cameron would have it:

(1’) ‘Musical works are created’ is true in English

(2’) ’Musical works are abstract” is true in English

(3’) ‘Abstract objects cannot be created’ is true in Ontologese

His explanation of (1’) does not invoke ontological commitment to musical works. On his stated account, the domain over which ontologese quantifiers range contains entities of the following sorts: abstract sound structures, acts of indication (composition) and musical work-roles. The abstract structure is indicated by a composer at the time when she composes. This brings the structure to play a musical work role it previously did not. The structure coming to play a musical work role at a certain time, thinks Cameron, is the truthmaker for true musical work creation claims made in English (Cameron 2007: 305-6). From the fundamental perspective, nothing new comes into being during the composer’s compositional act. There is merely the rearrangement of extant truthmakers.

Cameron thinks that his account is superior to any extant view. Traditional Platonists, who take the view that musical works are abstract and so are not created, will have to deny the common sense claim (1). Those who identify musical works with nominalistically acceptable entities (rather than opting for the elimination strategy canvassed in the previous section) will have to deny the common sense claim (2). Unorthodox Platonists (e.g. Levinson 1980) deny the common metaphysical assumption (3). As we shall see in the next chapter, the unorthodox Platonist view typically fails to offer a convincing account of how abstracta can be created (see also Predelli 2001: 289, Dodd 2007: 68-80 and chapter 3 of this thesis for further discussion).
Cameron thinks that the truth maker nihilist approach to musical works is the best of these extant approaches because it can explain the truth of (1), (2) and (3) while avoiding ontological commitment to there being examples of the category of creatable abstracta. So, ought we to reject the standard method of revealing ontological commitments and adopt a truthmaker nihilist account? The answer, I suggest, is: No.

The truthmaker nihilist proposal is not easy to dislodge by straightforward counterexamples, nor by challenging its premises directly. In comparison with the error theory and the paraphrase nominalist proposals we’ve already seen, one finds that Cameron’s view presents a very slight target. However, this is not because Cameron’s proposal is inherently less objectionable. It is because it is not sufficiently elaborated to warrant acceptance or rejection.

There are three compulsory questions that must be answered by any truthmaker theory of musical works that could warrant acceptance. What are the truthmakers? What is the truthmaking relation? What are the ‘made’ truths?

It might seem that we already have an answer to the first question. The intuitive claim, in English, that a certain musical work is created is, according to Cameron’s stated view, made true by an abstract sound structure and an act of composition which leads the abstract sound structure to play a certain musical work role. Even though these things and their arrangement are stated by Cameron to play a role in making true the English sentences about musical work creation, we should take this with a pinch of salt. It seems out of keeping with the tenets of the fundamental ontologist to include such entities in the domain of the Ontologese quantifier.

Structures of sounds seem like exactly the sort of thing that the fundamentalist ontologist would prefer absent from her special domain of entities. Compositional actions, similarly, seem like the sorts of things that would also be denied access to the fundamental realm. For one thing, it seems that for there to be actions, there would need to be people performing them. Cameron expresses doubts about whether there are fundamentally any people (2008: 311). And one suspects that musical work roles, whatever they are, probably don’t end up in the hallowed domain of the fundamental either.

Cameron is in all likelihood aware that his suggestions provide a stop gap, sitting somewhere in between the truthmakers of Ontologese and the intuitively true
sentences of English. Nevertheless, before we can accept his solution to the inconsistent triad, we ought to have a better idea about what the truthmakers for English claims about musical works are. For one thing, we ought to be quite certain that musical works don’t end up in the domain of the ontologese quantifier, otherwise we have no argument for musical work nihilism. For another, we might want to know if a truthmaker theory can be developed which satisfies our intuitions about creation. Without this, the truthmaker theorist doesn’t have an argument that her account will be an improvement on the extant positions. For all we know, the explanations on offer constitute a ‘just so’ story.

The second compulsory question is even more difficult to answer. Cameron explicitly declines to offer any particular proposal about the nature of the truthmaking relation. His line is that what one finds plausible as an answer to this question is ‘…going to depend on [one’s] metaphysical views elsewhere…’ (2008: 312). As such it would be ad hominem to present the line he develops elsewhere and subject that to criticism (see, for example, Cameron 2008b). His aim is to suggest that truthmaking, whatever it might be, will have fruitful applications to problems in the ontology of music.

There are worries about this ecumenical suggestion. First, on at least one explication of truthmaking, it is to be understood in terms of grounding (see Schaffer 2009). However, on this view, there is no commitment to nihilism about the things which are grounded by the fundamental. On this account, the ontologist’s interest in the fundamental is construed as an interest in what grounds the existence of things like musical works. Obviously, this view isn’t one that can be used to support musical work nihilism.

Second, while there have been many attempts at explicating truthmaking, even by philosophical standards, a pointed lack of consensus on the satisfactoriness of any such attempt. Attempts at defining truthmaking in terms of entailment relations (Bigelow 1988), necessitation (Armstrong 2004), projection (Smith 1999) and essences (Fine 1994) are vulnerable to serious objections and it remains to be seen if any can be saved from the objections, and, if what’s saved has any distinctive philosophical role to play (MacBride 2013). Worries about the difficulty of explicating the truthmaking relation are downplayed by Cameron. And it seems that until this relation has been successfully explicated, there’s no answerable question of whether truthmaker nihilism is the best solution to the problem of
creation. We’ll just have to see what turns up in the future development of this novel approach.

As for the third compulsory question, truthmaker theorists can agree on one thing: If any things are made true, representations are. However, in the case of musical ontology, there is a pressing question concerning which representations are made true. Even if Cameron is right about the existence of a solution to the problem of musical work creation available to the truthmaker nihilist, much of musical ontology does not appear amenable to the truthmaker treatment. Many of the ongoing debates which divide ontologists of music won’t be settled by the suggestion that the true sentences about musical works have truthmakers. Whether musical works are particulars or universals, for instance, doesn’t have any obvious solution from truthmaker nihilism. Indeed, on the important questions of musical ontology, it seems that we need to find out which sentences we need truthmakers for. And the only way to do this, it would seem, is in our natural languages. That is, even if truthmaker nihilism were a satisfactory meta-ontology, pursuing the important questions in a realist vein would appear the best way to go in providing the truths to be ‘made’.

In summary, the slight target that Cameron presents is, dialectically speaking, the greatest weakness of his proposal. The three compulsory questions that ought to be answered by the truthmaker nihilist receive answers which will be unconvincing, even to a truthmaker sympathizer, or they are simply left unanswered. What’s more, even if the truthmaking relation can be satisfactorily elucidated, there’s still a significant role for pursuing ontological questions about musical works in the standard way. The truths arrived at in musical ontology, where arguments are conducted in English, would still place constraints upon the correct way to formulate a truthmaker theory of the sort Cameron envisages.

5: Conclusion

The affirmative answer to the question of whether musical works exist can be maintained. The error theory is not well motivated. The various attempts to paraphrase true sentences about musical works are distinctly ad hoc. The truthmaker nihilist approach may have promise, but its strongest formulation is
more of a promissory note than a theory. And even if the promise is met, proceeding in English, for now, is the best strategy for achieving progress in settling which sentences ought to be made true.

In this chapter, however, we have accumulated some debts. We need to say more about how musical works, construed as universals, can participate in causal relations. We also need to elaborate the ambiguity thesis which plays such an important part in the semantics of everyday assertions about musical works. We’ll pay off these debts in the next chapter where we’ll consider the dominant approach to musical works: The Type/Token theory.
Chapter 3: The Universalist Theories

1: Introduction

With realism about musical works defended, we’re now going to examine the dominant realist proposal which construes musical works as abstract universals. Our first aim is to sketch the motivation for universals in mainstream philosophy. From this sketch, we’ll find that the role universals play in philosophical explanations has direct application to many of the central judgments about musical works.

The current popular view is one which identifies musical works with universal entities called ‘types’. On the dominant views, types are distinct from properties, but bear an intimate relation to them; types and properties stand in a one to one correlation with each other. We’ll examine a prima facie problem with the type/token theory. The problem is that on certain conceptions, types cannot be created. I’ll present some accounts of types according to which they can be created. However, it will become clear that the matter is somewhat uncertain, turning on bigger issues in mainstream metaphysics. For this reason, I will argue that the type theorist ought to not advertise explanations of creatability amongst her explanatory successes. I’ll then consider alternatives to attempting the explanation of creation. We’ll find that there isn’t much more than a brute intuition about musical work creation, and that alternatives to the creation view of musical composition are available.

Finally, I’ll be arguing that construing musical works as properties has the same explanatory capabilities as one which takes them to be types. Further, I’ll argue that construing musical works as properties is more theoretically virtuous, and so, we ought to accept what I call ‘the property theory’.
2: Universals and Nominalist Concerns

The dominant answer to the categorial question is the type/token theory. (Wolterstorff 1980, Dodd 2007). According to this theory, a musical work is a type and its occurrences, its performances and playings, are its tokens. On this view, the musical work is an abstract entity because it has no spatial location. It is also a universal because it is something that can be instantiated. The connection between a work of music and its occurrences is, on this view, taken to be one of instantiation. These are the key claims of the type/token theory, and, as I shall argue in the remainder of this part of the thesis, they are part of the best available answer to the categorial question.

In chapter 2, we examined the paraphrase nominalist accounts due to Bachrach (1971) and Snoeyenbos (1978), and we were introduced to the considerations which motivate A-nominalism and U-nominalism. In that chapter our aim was to reject the paraphrase proposals on offer. However, we’ve left the nominalist master arguments untouched. In this chapter, however, we’ll be arguing for a theory which takes musical works to be both abstract and universal. Therefore, we must now face the nominalist arguments head on. This will involve presenting the key roles for universals in mainstream philosophy, the offices in which they earn their keep. Of course, the topic of universals is vast and this thesis is not primarily concerned with providing a defence of realism about universals. However, the reason for considering the mainstream roles for universals is that the roles universals fill in mainstream metaphysics have salient parallels with our quarry: the categorial question about musical works.

So, to open the discussion, let us return to the nominalist’s concerns. One concern we saw is that there are *prima facie* worries about our epistemic connection to abstract entities. Here’s how a nominalist might object to the realist’s postulation of abstract entities:

> The realist about abstracta has postulated entities which are not located in space. As such, there’s no way they could be involved in the ‘pushing’ and ‘pulling’ distinctive of causal interactions. Abstract entities, if there are any, are *causally*
isolated from us. If abstract entities are causally isolated from us, we ought to be suspicious about the realist’s claim to knowledge of them. This is because entities which don’t have any effect on us are things which we cannot know about; they are epistemically isolated from us.

There are two phases to this argument. The first is the argument for causal isolation. The nominalist finds the idea of entities which aren’t spatially located exerting causal influence to be unintelligible. If there are any abstracta, thinks the nominalist, they have no bearing on the causal world, a world that includes us. The second phase takes the conclusion of the causal isolation argument and invokes a premise that the only knowable entities are ones which are causally efficacious (c.f. Benacerraff 1973, Field 1980). The causal theory of knowledge upon which the second phase is premised is dubitable and some have argued that the inability to account for our knowledge of mathematical objects is a greater problem for the causal theory of knowledge than it is for mathematical inquiry, while weakened versions of the causal theory fail to rule out our ability to know about abstracta (Burgess and Rosen 1997). With this I agree. And the abductive method makes no presupposition in favour of a causal theory of knowledge. If hypotheses which posit abstracta better contribute to our understanding of the world, then the abductivist swallows them.

Whatever its independent merits, such a line is not satisfactory for the argument of this thesis. Even if a restrictive causal theory of knowledge can be rejected, we’re still in need of elaborating how musical works have the causal powers they do. That we have perceptual access to musical works, and that we can cite them in successful explanations and predictions of personal, historical and economic phenomena is a fact that our ontological theory ought to explain.

The other source of motivation for nominalism concerns the additional complexity of a theory which posits universals and abstracta. It might go like this:

By postulating abstract entities in addition to concrete ones, the realist’s theory postulates more entities, and entities belonging to more kinds. This makes it more quantitatively and qualitatively complex than a theory which does without abstracta. What’s more, instantiation which is said by the realist to tie universals to the particulars which have them is introduced as a theoretical primitive. So, theories which countenance universals are more ideologically complex than those which
simply postulate particulars. If we can explain the same facts (just as well) without abstract universals, we should.

This sort of concern hits out at both abstract objects and the primitive notion of *instantiation* postulated by universalist theories. There’s no snappy response to this sort of objection because the important point is less than explicit. The antecedent clause of the final sentence is where the action is. And it’s this clause that the realist about universals is likely to take issue with. She admits that the extra complexity of her theory incurs a cost, but she thinks that there are facts requiring explanation which can’t be explained just as well by a theory which postulates only concrete particulars. The realist ‘pays the cost to be the boss’. So, we need to look at the realist’s reasons for thinking that we should pay the cost. What work is there for a theory of universals to do? How does that help us explain the nature of musical works? In the next section, we’ll give answers to both of these questions.

### 2.1: The Mainstream Work for Universals and the Musical Application

Most of the contemporary discussion of universals has centred on questions about the existence of *properties* (Oliver 1996). However, types are a sort of universal often understood as standing in a correlative relationship with properties. We’ll return to this issue later, but for now let’s assume that there are two sorts of universals motivated by the philosophical arguments.

One reason that philosophers believe in universals is that they believe they provide the best solution to a basic philosophical problem. This problem is that of the one over the many. It is a Moorean fact that distinct particulars, two electrons, two trees, two people can be *the same* in certain respects. Two electrons have the same spin, two trees have the same colour, two people have the same height, and so on. When two objects are the same in a respect, let us say that they *resemble* one another in that respect.

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12 This phrase is, of course, due to James Brown.
In many cases, we’ll be compelled to think that these resemblances are objective, not depending upon the judgments of any particular individual, nor being grounded in arbitrary linguistic or classificatory practices. The analysis of objective resemblance is one of the longstanding roles that universals have had in philosophy. Universals provide the simplest and most successful answer to the question: How can distinct particulars share a certain nature?

For the realist about universals, the answer couldn’t be simpler. The resemblance between two trees of the ‘same’ mass construes the ‘same’ to express strict identity. The trees’ mass, that respect in which they resemble one another, is a universal. They resemble each other with respect to mass because they both instantiate a single universal (Armstrong 1989: 7).

This view is not only straightforward, it also appears to be the best option on the table for explaining resemblance. Standard U-nominalist alternatives are beset by problems with explanatory adequacy which completely overshadow any simplicity benefits that might be advertised in their favour. There are many different nominalist options for trying to explain how it is that particulars resemble one another. Because the current project is one in applied ontology, the following list of nominalist options is not comprehensive. I refer the reader to the arguments David Armstrong’s (1978a) and (1989) for fuller defence of universals. Below I sketch some of the options available to the nominalist and outline their problems.

Perhaps the neatest theoretical option is to understand the resemblance of particulars in terms of their membership of a common set. The idea is that any resemblance between \( a \) and \( b \) is to be explained by the fact that \( a \) and \( b \) are members of a common set, \( \{a, b\} \). Some sets do stand in a one to many relationship with their members – the set of trees, for instance, is many-membered. And so, fundamentally, the set-theoretic account gets at least something right. Further, although sets are abstract, they are particulars. A set-theoretic account of resemblance would, therefore, appease the U-nominalist, but not the A-nominalist.

There are, however, two notable problems with the set-theoretic approach to resemblance. There are sets which don’t plausibly correspond to any objective resemblance between their members. The following set, \{The Eiffel Tower, The Number Seven, \{The Battle of Stalingrad\}\}, which contains a material particular, an abstract object, and a set containing an event, isn’t one which we’d take to
capture any resemblance at all. The set theoretic approach generates more resemblances than we ought to countenance.

Second, because identity of the membership of a set suffices for the identity of the set, we find that the set theoretic account fails to explain genuine resemblances we’d like to countenance. The set of cordate creatures is identical to the set of renate creatures. So, on the set theoretic analysis, they cannot be distinguished. However, being cordate and being renate are different respects in which things can resemble one another. As such, the set theoretic approach generates both too many and too few resemblances to qualify as a satisfactory way of analysing the resemblance between particulars.

An alternative to the set-theoretic analysis of resemblance is to locate the facts of resemblance in facts about language, or in our concepts. Linguistic nominalists locate the phenomenon of resemblance at the linguistic level; holding that the genuine resemblance is not the language-independent commonality of particulars out there in the world. The appearance of objective resemblance is engendered by our linguistic practices of applying the same predicate to distinct entities. And, thinks the linguistic nominalist, there’s no more to resemblance than that. The conceptual nominalist takes a similar stance, although her view is one on which it is mental entities, concepts, which are satisfied by distinct particulars that give the appearance of mind-independent resemblance.

The problem with such views may be obvious. Predicates depend upon our linguistic practices. Concepts depend upon our cognitive make up. Had there been no intelligent life, there’d have been no predicates and no concepts. Yet it is primitively compelling to think that under such conditions, things would still have resembled one another (Armstrong 1978b: 2). Electrons can resemble one another with respect to their spin independently of our linguistic practices and cognitive make up. Electrons were a certain way before there were any of us, and they’ll be a certain way when we’re all gone.

This should put the U-nominalist on the back foot. Explaining the objective resemblance between particulars, as central a metaphysical task as any, is done better with the postulation of universals than it is with the nominalist’s resources.

13 Although, Fregean ‘concepts’ might be thought to an exception. These are characterised as independent of our cognitive make up. Nevertheless, their characterisation as abstracta which are satisfied by objects, makes them the sort of thing that the nominalist is concerned to reject.
What’s more, this ‘unifying’ role of universals has obvious application to the explanation of the repeatability of musical works. For one who sees musical works as universals, repeatability has an obvious explanation. The repetition of a musical work in its occurrences is given a metaphysical explanation by the hypothesis that the musical work is a universal which is instantiated by its occurrences. It is the universal which binds the occurrences together into groups which resemble each other in the ways especially important to musical practice.

The second motivation for postulating universals provides a solid response to the A-nominalist’s causal isolation argument. According to the common wisdom about universals, they are right at the heart of causation and have a distinctive contribution to make to the explanation of law-like connections. When a material object acts causally, it does so in virtue of the universals it instantiates. ‘The object depresses the scales in virtue of its mass; the fire makes the water boil by virtue of its temperature…’ (Armstrong 1989: 28). To make typical causal explanations, we need to cite the properties that the object in question has; we need to specify the type of object it is.

Such considerations lead David Armstrong to suggest a certain view about nature’s causal laws (Armstrong 1978b: 148-157). He thinks that the causal laws are, ultimately to be identified with relations which hold between universals. These higher order relations include necessitation and probabilification. And it is by virtue of instantiating universals which bear these higher order relations to one another that objects behave in the patterned law-governed way that they do. This theory of causal laws avoids what many have found counterintuitive in Humeanism; that causal laws are just regularities, with no deep metaphysical connection between causes and effects (see e.g. Tooley 1977). Because the higher-order account postulates relations like necessitation and probabilification which hold between actual properties, it can account for the intuition that where there’s cause and effect, there’s a special link which holds them together. So, there are two ways in which we can see universals at the heart of causation.

We can go further in our response to the A-nominalist. We can also allay the A-nominalist’s puzzlement over how a spatially unlocated entity could participate in causal interactions. Perhaps the first thing to mention is that it is events, rather than material objects, which are normally taken to be the primary relata of causation (Lewis 1986, Bennett 1988). There are several views about the nature of
events (see Simons 1997 for a summary), but the vast majority of them hold that the instantiation of a property by an object is constitutive of such entities. (We’ll be looking closely at the most popular view which does not in chapter 8). This is suggestive of the mechanism by which abstract objects participate in causal relations. They do so indirectly through being instantiated by spatially located concrete entities which participate in events. Universals make a causal difference by way of their spatially located instances. And, analogously, concrete particulars make the causal difference they do by virtue of the universals they instantiate.

That musical works are universals suggests a plausible explanation of two of our central desiderata. One thing we want to explain is the audibility of musical works. We want to understand how it is that they can be heard. If musical works are universals, the explanation is simple. One may hear a musical work by hearing something which instantiates it. And the things which instantiate musical works are its occurrences, the performance and playing events which stand in a direct causal relation to our perceptual episodes.

We’ll also find that philosophical common sense about universals and causation dovetails with the hypothesis that musical works are universals. We can explain our cognitive and emotional responses to musical works by the citation of the universal instantiated by each of a work’s occurrences. We can make predictions about the likely effects of an occurrence by the same route. And, a higher order account of causation might go, the systematic patterns of cognitive and emotional responses are grounded in the underlying structure of causal laws. The universals which are instantiated by the occurrence of a musical work stand in higher order relations to universals instantiated in us – properties of our experience, emotional responses, and so on.

The assignment to the category of universals fits nicely with two things we’re already disposed to think about musical works and their causal role. First, we’re already accustomed to the thought that musical works act indirectly through their occurrences. If musical works are universals, we see that this natural thought is explained. The universal produces its effects through being instantiated by particulars. In the musical case, the causal influence of the work is mediated by its instantiation by an occurrence.

Second, when we make causal explanations and predictions which properly employ musical works, we’re concerned with what we might call ‘occurrence
generic’ features; features which don’t vary between (correct) occurrences. When we correctly apply a perceptual predicate like ‘is loud’ to a work, or apply an emotional predicate like ‘is melancholic’ we’re concerned with the perceptual and emotional events which are elicited by the work. In a sense, the causal powers of the work - the contribution the work makes to our experience - don’t require a sparkling performance, a competent one should do just as well.

The final source of motivation we’ll consider is the semantic motivation for postulating universals. As with the other sources of motivation, discussion has centred upon the semantic motivation for properties. Predicate expressions make a distinctive contribution to the truth values of sentences in which they occur. Some predicate expressions are applicable to a multiplicity of particulars, and so the thought goes, they should denote semantic values which have multiplicity built in to them as standard. Such entities are typically construed as properties. Some, like the predicate nominalist we considered earlier, might resist this line of argument by responding that if we take the fact that a predicate applies to something denoted by a singular term as primitive, we can avoid the seeming commitment to universals (c.f. Quine 1948, Devitt 1980).

This line of resistance is futile, however. Predicate expressions can also be nominalised to yield singular terms. For instance ‘is round’ is nominalised to give the singular term ‘roundness’. Given that such nominalisations yield singular terms, it has been thought natural that their semantic function is to refer. Further Arthur Pap (1959) and Frank Jackson (1977) have offered problem cases involving such singular terms which resist standard nominalist treatments. As such, the postulation of universals serves to explain the semantic contribution made by predicates and predicate nominalisations. And it isn’t obvious how a nominalistic theory is supposed to replace them.

Now, the reader may have noticed that the expressions taken to refer to types are of a different linguistic nature. They also have a different semantic function where predication is concerned. For this reason, it is now time turn away from a general defence and characterisation of universals. We turn to the semantic phenomena which have given the type/token theory its special appeal as an answer to the categorial question.
3: Types and Tokens

As we saw above, mainstream arguments for universals have typically been arguments for the existence of properties. Now, although philosophers who construe musical works as types think that there is an intimate connection between types and properties, they don’t believe that the relation is one as intimate as identity. That is, they postulate types as a category of entities distinct from properties. The most common style of argument is that we need to admit types in addition to properties because types have a distinctive semantic profile (Dodd 2007: 17).

The argument is a subtle one, and later in this chapter I will be arguing that its most plausible interpretations are unsound in their attempt to reach the conclusion that types form a class distinct from that of properties. Nevertheless, for the purposes of elaborating some interesting linguistic phenomena, I present the idea behind the type theorist’s argument for the ontological distinction between types and properties.

I think the best way to get a handle on the type theorist’s position is to say that when we think of a type, like The Polar Bear, we think of it as if it were a token polar bear, albeit an especially paradigmatic token. In contrast, when we think of a property, like being a polar bear, we don’t think of that entity as if it were a token (cf Wollheim 1968: 67). The two distinctive features of the semantics bear this out.

One thing that the type theorist points out is that the expressions typically taken to contribute properties to propositions are predicates like, ‘is square’ or systematically related predicate nominalisations, like ‘squareness’. Type referring expressions, on the other hand have a different linguistic form. ‘The Square’, for instance, is neither a predicate, nor a nominalisation thereof. We have the

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14 Julian Dodd has suggested, in conversation, that this is misleading. And I admit it appears a somewhat confused position that I present. However, in my view, the postulation of types as distinct from properties is confused, and it is this which is responsible for difficulties in formulating the metaphysical difference between types and properties. Dodd’s suggested amendment is that we think of The Polar Bear as ‘like a token Polar Bear, but repeatable.’ However, the problem with this way of fixing on the conception is that the expression ‘a token Polar Bear’ only seems plausible if we suppress the ‘token’ part of the expression. Otherwise, we ought to wonder ‘which polar bear is it that we’re thinking of?’
impression that this is the name, a name of an individual, rather than a concocted singular term applying to each of a plurality.

Another semantic phenomenon also serves to distinguish type-referring expressions from their property-referring counterparts. This subtle semantic phenomenon is called ‘predicate transmission’ and homing in on it will require a little elaboration. First, let’s just indicate what predicate transmission is not. Sometimes a predicate may be shared by both a type and its tokens. And the same is true of properties and their instances. The predicate ‘was thought about by Plato’, for instance, might be truly applied to a particular circle, the type The Circle, and the property circularity. This is because the property being thought about by Plato, is one whose instantiation is transcendent of the ontological category of its instances. Entities which are abstract or concrete, universal or particular in nature may all be thought about by Plato. There’s nothing surprising here.

There is, however, a sort of predicate sharing found when the subject is picked out by a typal expression, but which does not apply when nominalised predicates are employed to refer to a property. This phenomenon is predicate transmission. It is a pervasive feature of type talk and one which fits with the informal characterisation of the difference between properties and types. Not only do we think of types as individuals, a sort of abstract counterpart of the physical particulars which instantiate them, we also speak of them as if they instantiated the properties that are really only instantiated by their tokens. We say things like, ‘The Square is four-sided’, for instance.

Richard Wollheim (1968: 92-3) presents the principle that governs predicate transmission: The predicates true of a token of a type by virtue of which it is a token of that type are predicates which apply to the type itself. Importantly, this phenomenon of predicate transmission is not one which holds for nominalised predicate expressions like ‘squareness’.

This interesting semantic phenomenon calls out for explanation. Why is it true to say that the abstract type, The Polar Bear is a mammal? Wollheim’s metaphysical explanation of this phenomenon is perhaps a natural one on which the predicates transmitted are univocal in meaning (Wollheim 1968: 98). On this view, predicate transmission reflects a metaphysical phenomenon of property transmission. The type to which the predicate is transmitted instantiates the property normally expressed by the predicate in question. ‘The Polar Bear is a
mammal’, when construed as a predication to a type, is true because the type denoted has the property being a mammal. According to this view, the property is transmitted. This option is, however, unsatisfactory. The type, The Polar Bear, is not itself a mammal, although each particular polar bear is. The thesis of property transmission gives even stranger results when musical work predications are interpreted in light of it. Sometimes we’d say that a musical work ‘is loud’, for example, yet, abstracta surely can’t have the property normally expressed by this predicate.

A better explanation of predicate transmission is given by Nicholas Wolterstorff’s thesis of analogical predication (Wolterstorff 1980: 58-62). On this account, the predicate which applies to the token and the type by way of predicate transmission is not one which is univocal. When applied to a particular polar bear, the predicate ‘is a mammal’ expresses the property being a mammal. However, when applied to the type The Polar Bear, the predicate ‘is a mammal’ expresses the property is such that something cannot be an instance of it unless it is a mammal. That is, when applied to the type, transmitted predicates express systematically related requirement properties. And this seems more satisfactory. It needn’t be that predicates transmitted are univocal, reflecting property transmission. Rather they reflect the requirements that a type places on its tokens.

There is, however, a further amendment to this semantic thesis. With cases of both biological and cultural types, we find that the requirement properties aren’t requirements for all tokens of the relevant type, but only those which are correctly formed. Consider, for instance, ‘The Polar Bear is four-legged’. Intuitively, this is true. And its truth is compatible with there being polar bears which, due to accident or birth defect, are not four-legged. Rather, it is a condition on correctly formed polar bears that they have four legs (1980: 59). And much of our discourse about musical works follows a similar pattern. As we saw in dealing with nominalist paraphrase strategies, ‘The Jupiter symphony is powerful’ can be true, even if some malformed occurrences are slack. That is, when we’re dealing with biological and cultural kinds, we’re dealing with norm-types which lay down requirements for correctness. It is the predicates that express properties required for correct occurrences that are transmitted to norm-types.

This doesn’t mean, however, that anything whatsoever can be an incorrect occurrence of a norm-type. There are properties which are essential within a norm-
type too. For instance, *being a mammal* is essential within the type The Polar Bear. Nothing can be a token (correct or incorrect) of that type unless it is a mammal. It isn’t entirely clear how to determine the difference between an incorrect token of a type \( K \) and something which simply fails to token \( K \). According to Wolterstorff (1980: 78) incorrect tokens meet the essential conditions by being “close enough” to meeting the conditions for correct occurrence. Dodd (2007: 32) suggests that incorrect tokens must not lack “too many” of the properties normative within the type. Neither, Wolterstorff nor Dodd offer any explicit or uniform account of what might determine whether a given performance is close enough or not. Indeed Wolterstorff expresses scepticism about the prospects of even counting the number of departures made by an incorrect performance (Wolterstorff 1980: 78).

This seems fair given the general aims of those who intend to promote the application of norm types to musical works. They don’t intend to present a detailed account of *why* certain performances are incorrect while others just miss their intended target. Rather the norm-type is a means of modelling a phenomenon accepted by practitioners: musical works have incorrect occurrences. The norm-type theory remains silent on the many questions often provoked by the mention of correctness of performances. It doesn’t tell us how to work out a general recipe for deciding, for a given work, how to determine the limits on the class of correct and incorrect performances. Nor will it answer other questions that spring to mind; is a correct performance always artistically superior to an incorrect performance? If so, why should this be the case?

Some might find this unsatisfying, after all, many philosophers of music think that these questions are where the action is. However, this would seem an equally good reason to remain silent. The location of the action in an aesthetic debate is often the issue which the ontologist should avoid until the dust settles. For now, I think we can accept the norm-type proposal. I leave the reader to plug in their own views about what constitutes correctness and any axiological consequences which seem plausible.

The thesis of analogical predication for norm-types can be summed up in the following semantic thesis:
(APN) If ‘is $F$’ is a predicate transmitted to a type $K$, it expresses the property *is such that something cannot be a correctly formed token of $K$ without being $F* (Wolterstorff 1980: 61).

The point of this principle is a sensible one. It would be a mistake to allow that all predicates satisfied by incorrect occurrences be transmitted to the type. Some of those predicates would be satisfied by virtue of the features of the performance which made it incorrect; features the work excludes from its correct performances. The point of (APN) is that one’s predicate transmission not be subject to the vicissitudes of incorrect performance, but be tethered directly to what it is to accurately execute the work in question.

So, we’ve seen how the type theorist thinks that properties and types differ. We think of types in a different way to how we think of properties. The evidence that brings this out most clearly is in the grammatical category of type denoting terms and that they accept predicates in accordance with the doctrine of analogical predication. We’ve also seen that the phenomenon of normativity which we find with musical works is an instance of a more general phenomenon of normativity amongst a certain class of norm-types.

### 3.1: Type Existence Conditions

Shortly, we’ll be examining attempts to discover the ‘holy grail’ of musical ontology – the successful theory of creatable types. As a preliminary to this, however, it is time to see why it has proved so elusive. As a starting point we ought to examine the nature of the connection between types and properties.

In his classic exposition, Wolterstorff makes the plausible claim that there is a one: one mapping of properties onto types, and of types back onto properties. This is the associate function. We can express it as follows:

(AF) Type $K$ exists if, and only if, the property *being a $K$* exists.

On the left hand side of the bi-conditional we have an assertion of type existence. On the right hand side we have an assertion of the existence of a
corresponding property. In particular, it is what we might call a ‘particularising’
property. The presence of the article in the predicate which expresses the property
signifies that it is a property which ‘divides its particulars’ (see Armstrong 1978a
116-7). In the terminology of the type/token theorist, the type is said to be the
property’s ‘type associate’, while the property is said to be the type’s ‘property
associate’. Intuitive though the principle seems, Wolterstorf doesn’t offer much in
the way of direct argument for the principle.

Dodd, does, however, offer an argument for the associate function. Dodd
formulates the identity conditions of types by what allows them to discharge their
function as ways of “binding together tokens.”(Dodd 2007: 49). The way a type
does this, according to Dodd, is by grouping tokens by virtue of their meeting a
certain condition: Types are identical precisely when the conditions by which they
bind their tokens are identical. The identity of a condition required for tokening a
type is in turn determined by the property (or properties) which must be instantiated
by tokens meeting that condition. The condition to be met by something in order
that it tokens a given type $K$ is precisely that it instantiates $K$’s ‘property associate’
$being a K$. As Dodd illustrates with a zoological example, “It is $being a...polar bear$
– and nothing else – that determines the identity of its type-associate: The Polar

Dodd uses this argument to secure the identity determination thesis
represented by (AF). And this provides the material for an argument according to
which the existence conditions of types are determined by the existence conditions
of properties (2007: 60). The thought is this: A given type, $K$, exists on the
condition that there is a condition to be met by its tokens. This condition is that
there is a property associate, $being a K$. So, according to Dodd’s type/token theory,
the existence of a property to be instantiated determines the existence of a condition
for tokening a corresponding type. If there is such a condition, something it is like
to $be a K$, thinks Dodd, there is a type which could bind tokens in accordance with
it.

Now, (AF) is atemporal, but much of the musical debate concerns the
temporal profile of types, and in particular, the temporal profile of the types

\[15\] Indeed, the traditional association between types and criteria of counting suggests that
perhaps all property associates are particularising in this sense (see Helen Steward’s ‘A Little Token
Resistance’ MS).
identified with musical works. It’s relatively easy to see how to supplement (AF) to include a temporal index:

\[(TAF) \text{ Type } K \text{ exists at } t \text{ if, and only if, the property being a } K \text{ exists at } t.\]

Here we have a clear statement of, and principled explanation of, type existence conditions. Because the identity of a type is determined by the identity of its property associate, type existence is tied to the existence of the property associate which determines its identity. This allows the type/token theorist to flesh out her existence conditions for types in a non-arbitrary manner; she can tie it to the developed literature on properties and their existence conditions.

So, it is the temporal profile of properties which determines the temporal profile of the types they determine. So now we may ask after the temporal profile of properties. The temporal profile of properties hasn’t really been at the centre of debates about them. However, there are several popular proposals about the existence conditions of properties. Perhaps the most influential contribution has been David Armstrong’s *Principle of Instantiation* (1978a: 113). This ties property existence to the existence of actual instances. We might formulate this principle as follows:

\[(PI) \text{ Any property } F \text{ exists at } t, \text{ if and only if, there is a time } t^* \text{ such that } t^* \text{ is before, after, or simultaneous with } t \text{ and } F \text{ has an instance at } t^*.\]

We might initially wonder why he thinks that a property exists at a time if it has no instances at that time. The key reason is that he thinks the causal laws which hold do so at all times. And because he takes universals and the higher order relations they stand in to underwrite those laws, the universals must exist at all times too.

Some, however, find this proposal too restrictive. This is because Armstrong’s conditions deny the existence of contingently uninstantiated properties. If, in the complete history of the actual world there’d never been a maroon triangle, the property of *being a maroon triangle* would be denied existence. Some (Levinson 1992: 658-9, Howell 2002: 114, Dodd 2007: 62-3) have taken this to be
too extreme. As Levinson suggests, a property is ‘a way something can be’ and it thus seems natural to adopt existence conditions which yield a more abundant stock of properties. Dodd formulates his account thus:

(MPI) Any property $F$ exists at $t$ if, and only if, there is a time $t^*$ such that $t^*$ is before, after or simultaneous with $t$ and at which it is (metaphysically) possible for $F$ to be instantiated. (Dodd 2007: 61).

The aim here is to keep properties tethered to particulars, but allow the Platonistic thought that the existence of properties is independent of actual instances (see Dodd 2007: 61-5). If either of these two principles is accepted, the type theory of musical works appears to be committed to the eternal existence of musical works. This does have some benefits. It would explain why musical works persist after their composition and why they can exist at times when they are not being instantiated. All properties exist at all times, and, therefore, so do the types the type theorist identifies with musical works. Obviously, it also raises a problem for construing acts of musical composition as acts of musical work creation. We’ll consider this issue shortly, but before we do, it’s worth a brief summary of the benefits of the type/token theory of musical works.

First, we have a familiar explanation of repeatability and one which trades upon well-established metaphysical hypotheses. Second, we have a well-motivated account of how musical works are involved in perceptual and other causal relations. And it is an account which can be supplemented with Armstrong’s theory of causal laws to yield a promising picture of how musical works legitimately enter into explanations and predictions. Third, typal expressions function in the same way as musical work names do – they are singular terms and are subject to predicate transmission. Fourth, there is an independently motivated category of norm-types which can model the phenomenon of incorrect performance while remaining conveniently silent upon the controversial issue of the nature of correctness and incorrectness and any axiological issues which may be connected to these notions. Fifth, the type/token theory, sometimes maligned for failing to account for creatability, nevertheless succeeds in explaining the persistence of musical works, and their ability to exist independently of their occurrences.
So far, so good, but we now have to face what is typically taken to be the greatest problem for the type/token theory: if musical works are types, it is difficult to see how they could be created by their composers.

4: Creatable Types: Jerrold Levinson’s Initiated Type Theory

Combining the type theory of musical works with the accounts of property existence conditions recently presented rules out the intuitive thought that musical works are created by their composers. If musical works exist at all times, they predate the activities of composers.

In the literature, there are two basic responses to this situation. Some philosophers accept the eternality of musical works and make efforts to downplay the importance of musical work creation (Kivy 1982, Wolterstorff 1980, Dodd 2007). This is the option of the standard type theorist. Other philosophers aim to challenge the eternality of types. The main contribution to this project is made by indicated or initiated type theorists. Both sorts of theorist do valuable work. Indicated type theorists have given at least some reason to doubt the eternality of types. Standard type theorists, on the other hand, have given us reason to question whether the literal creation of a musical work is actually important for our musical practices. First, I consider the view of the indicated type theorist. I conclude that her most promising option is ‘live’, but that we can’t be sufficiently confident about it to warrant the claim that types are creatable after all.

In recent discussions about the ontology of musical works, a successful theory of creatable types has been something of a holy grail. Levinson’s initiated type theory is perhaps the most influential attempt at explaining how a type could be created. Levinson accepts that there are types which are not brought into being by the activities of intentional agents. These types are ‘implicit types’ and they, ‘…include all purely abstract structures that are not inconsistent – e.g., geometrical figures, family relationships, strings of words, series of moves in chess, ways of placing five balls in three bins,’ (Levinson 1980: 80). As Levinson puts it, ‘[implicit types’] existence is implicitly granted when a general framework of possibilities is given…given that there is space, there are all the possible configurations in space;
given there is the game of chess, there are all the possible combinations of allowed moves.’ (Levinson 1980: 80).

According to Levinson, there are musically important implicit types. The complex sound-sequences specified by composers are taken to be implicit types. Given the general framework of individual sonic elements and means of organising them into sequences, it follows that all such sequences exist. Indeed, it’s necessary that these implicit sonic types pre-exist the composer’s acts of specifying them (1980: 80-1).

Levinson, however, denies that musical works are implicit types. He believes that musical works are ‘initiated types’. Initiated types have more demanding existence conditions than the implicit types they incorporate. For an initiated type to come into existence, an implicit type must be singled out by an intentional act which Levinson calls “indication”. Indication is achieved when an agent performs an act of exemplification or representation of an implicit type (Levinson 1980: 81). The type initiated by such a procedure is a structured entity constituted by three elements. The implicit type represented is brought into the relation of indication with two separate elements; the composer who is representing the implicit type and the time interval over which she performs her compositional acts. The indicated type comes into existence by virtue of the constitutive elements – the sound-structure, the composer, and the time of composition - coming to stand in the relation of indication.

This explanation of creation is, in broadest outline, familiar. With a composite material object our common sense intuition is that its constituent parts exist before it does and it is by bringing those parts into a relation of a certain sort that a new material object comes into existence. One brings a new wardrobe into existence by assembling the flat pack components in the correct manner.

Of course, types aren’t material objects and Levinson has a special proposal about the conditions under which an indicated type comes to exist. A principle Levinson assumes is that a type only exists at a time on condition that that time is one at which it may have tokens (1980: 80-1). The reason that implicit types aren’t brought into existence by intentional actions is that the possibility of their being tokened obtains before any particular human actions.

Initiated types, however, are such that it is only possible for them to have tokens at times after their constitutive elements have come to stand in the relation
of indication. Because one of the constitutive elements of an indicated type is the
time of its composition, nothing can be a token of the type before that time. This
suggestion about type existence conditions is significant, but it will become more
interesting when we’ve cleared up some problems with Levinson’s presentation.

There are two broad problems with Levinson’s proposal. One thing that
some commentators have seized upon is that indicated types have a certain ‘dreamt
up’ quality to them (Currie 1989) (Dodd 2007). One such objection is offered by
Gregory Currie. His worry is that while indicated types are supposedly made up out
of independently respectable metaphysical entities, the types themselves appear ad
hoc, cross-categorial inventions. As it stands, this objection is something of an
incredulous stare, and such responses have a less than conclusive track record in
philosophy. However, I think we can sharpen Currie’s thought by reference to the
methodology presented in the introduction of this thesis. What we might say is that
Levinson’s explanation of type creation lacks the sort of conservatism at which we
ought to aim. We can understand a phenomenon better when the mechanism of
explanation is familiar to us. Levinson’s postulation of novel philosophical entities
constituted by an abstract object, a material object and a time co-ordinate which are
united by a stipulative ‘creating’ relation should make us suspicious about whether
the theory presented really does increase our understanding of how a type can be
created. An alternative angle on this sort of criticism is found in Predelli’s objection
presented below.

Dodd (2007:245) offers an objection related to Currie’s. However, rather
than take the outright alien nature of Levinson’s types as the basis for criticism,
Dodd suggests that Levinson may have unwittingly characterised entities which
don’t deserve the name of ‘types’ at all. Because Levinson’s inventions are
constituted by a universal, an object and a time, they bear a strong resemblance to
token events as characterised by Jaegwon Kim’s influential theory (Kim 1978). On
this view, an event token is characterised as an-object-exemplifying-a-property-at-a-time. However, I think it is premature to claim that Levinson has unwittingly
characterised musical works as events. After all, on Kim’s view an event is an
exemplification of a universal by an object at a time, rather than an indication of a
universal by an object at a time. And Levinson does give at least some basis for a
distinction between exemplification and indication.
Nevertheless, there is a sharper objection suggested by Dodd’s line here. The entities postulated by Kim’s account are supposed to be event tokens. And the motivation for including a temporal index in the characterisation of such entities is the explanation of the fact that event tokens are unrepeateable. The particularity of a given event, such as 2012’s London Marathon, is (in part) secured by the fact that it occurred at a certain time. Anything which takes place at a different time is, by virtue of that fact, a distinct event. This should elicit a certain concern about Levinson’s theory of indicated types. If the type identified with a musical work features an index referring to a particular time i.e. the time of composition, it is unclear how that work, rather than the implicit type it incorporates, can be repeated by future performances. It doesn’t seem to make any difference that the relation binding the constituents together is exemplification or indication here. If Kim’s events are particulars, so are Levinson’s indicated ‘types’. Taken at face value, then, Levinson’s proposal misses one of the crucial motivations for endorsing a type theory of musical works; the explanation of repeatability by way of the instantiation relation.

A final objection questions the adequacy of Levinson’s proposal with respect to the very proposition it is supposed to explain; that musical works are created. As Predelli (2001: 289) notes, indication is just a relation which holds between an abstract structure, a person and a time when the person exemplifies or represents that abstract structure at a time. We don’t think that in general such a performance brings a new entity in the world. No one would think that by drawing a square, they are bringing into existence a new entity, the square as indicated by X at t.

A similar fate befalls James Anderson’s (1985) attempt to unify Levinson’s explanation of creation with Wolterstorff’s norm-type account. Anderson suggests that we can explain the creation of a musical work by the hypothesis that indication is an act whereby a descriptive type is ‘made normative’. Anderson’s idea is that it is by virtue of being represented as a condition for correct occurrence that an implicit type is initiated and that the corresponding indicated type comes into existence. Predelli’s response is analogous to his objection to Levinson’s original proposal (2001: 290). To consider an implicit type as a condition of correct occurrence is merely to hold the former in a certain sort of normative regard. And
again, it is unclear why treating holding an abstract entity in such a regard brings a new entity into existence.

### 4.1: Robert Howell’s Good Proposal

Robert Howell (2002) has taken Levinson’s suggestions as a prototype and he makes substantial progress in developing and clarifying Levinson’s proposal. In particular, he overcomes the concerns recently raised over the apparent metaphysical obscurity of Levinson’s proposal. Perhaps the most useful thing he does is provide a property associate which incorporates the elements of Levinson’s indicated types. In the following example he uses Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, but I think we can see how his suggestion could be generalised. He specifies the following property associate for Beethoven’s work:

(BV) having the basic S structure and also being produced in a way that is properly connected to Beethoven’s 1804-1808 acts of indication. (Howell 2002: 112).

We can understand the basic S structure as the abstract entity prescribed by Beethoven, the universal which is the determined by the content of Beethoven’s score. It is initially difficult to see how the entities defined in the face value construal of Levinson’s account could be instantiated. This was because the way indicated types were initially characterised gave the appearance that they are particular rather than universal. In Howell’s formulation it is clear that the repeatability of a work in its occurrences is to be explained by their instantiation of a sonic structure and a causal relation to the compositional act (see Levinson 1980: 86). No longer need we worry that indicated types are entities of an obscure and unrepeatable sort. They’re types of an ontologically conservative sort which are repeated by virtue of the instantiation of their respective property associates.

Howell uses this explication of Levinson’s view to develop an argument for creatable types. One thing Howell thinks is particularly important about the property associate (BV) is that it does not comprise only “wholly general” entities, like being red or being loud. It makes reference to a particular, Beethoven’s act of composition. As such, we can see that the property associate of the indicated type
theory is an impure relational property. Relational properties, like being 2 miles from Mars, or being a son of Abraham Lincoln are said to involve, or be partly constituted by, particulars (Humberstone 1996). They have a wholly generic relational component, like being a son of, but also have one of their “slots” filled to give a monadic property (Howell 2002: 115) (see also Humberstone 1996).

Howell claims that the particulars involved in these relational properties are involved essentially, there can be no property being a son of Lincoln if there is no Lincoln. Presumably this is because the identity of the relevant property is determined by the identity of its particular constituent.

Howell proceeds to offer conditions for property existence according to which relational properties come into existence. He claims that “a property can be taken to exist just in case it is a logico-metaphysical compound of existence base properties or else is itself such a base property” (Howell 2002: 114). Base properties, Howell claims “exist when any entities they essentially involve exist…” (Howell 2002: 114). What Howell seems keen on securing is the following principle:

(H) Property $P$ exists at a time only if any entities $P$ essentially involves exist at that time

Applied to the musical case, what Howell seems to have in mind is the thought that the sequence and arrangement of various sounds prescribed by a composer is a ‘logico-metaphysical compound’ of basic sounds. And the work is a logico- metaphysical compound of these sounds and the property of bearing a certain relation to a particular compositional act. This latter relational property essentially involves Beethoven’s total act of indication, call this ‘$a$’. Because the property essentially involves $a$, it cannot exist at times when that constituent does not exist. Hence, according to Howell, a new property is brought into existence by that compositional act and a new type comes into existence.

This is problematic, however, for surely the musical work exists at times after the compositional act has run its course. According to this formulation of Howell’s proposal, at times when that act no longer exists i.e. at times when it is no longer occurring, the musical work passes out of existence. And this is more counterintuitive than eternalism about musical works (Caplan and Matheson 2004:
This suggests that we need to dig a little deeper into Howell’s motivation for the view. As it turns out, a better reading of Howell’s account is one which sees the essential constituent premise drop out of the proceedings.

The independent motivation Howell offers involves intuitions about the existence of signature types. Because a person’s signature is an impure relational type involving a relation to that particular inscriber, Howell thinks that it’s obvious that the signature type must come into existence. He asks rhetorically:

How can [Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony] already have existed in, say, 1600 – or at the moment of the Big Bang - when the specific concrete entities to which it essentially relates had not yet themselves come into existence? To suppose that it can would be like supposing that your signature - not just ink marks geometrically congruent to it, but actual marks that attest to you, to your own personal identity - could exist a million years before you do… (Howell 2002: 112-3).

This line of argument, without further development doesn’t succeed. As Dodd (2007: 71) points out, even if a type essentially relates certain entities there’s no reason presented to force us to accept that the type itself cannot exist, it merely shows that it cannot be instantiated. Dodd’s thinks Howell erringly confuses the existence of a type with the possibility of its tokens. And this is understandable. However, I think there’s an alternative reading of the argument which indicates that it’s not confused, or, at any rate, not in the way Dodd suggests.

It strikes me that Howell is following Levinson’s suggestion that the existence condition for a type resides in the possibility of its being tokened. If this were Howell’s intention, the final sentence of the quote needn’t be one which manifests a confusion. It’s not that Howell has confused questions of whether a type can be tokened at a time with questions of whether it exists at a time. Rather, like Levinson, Howell has accepted that a token can only exist at a time if it is possible that it can be tokened at that time. And in the final line, he is presupposing this principle and suggesting on its basis that if your signature were to exist a million years before you do, it would be possible for your signature to have tokens a million years before you do, which is absurd.

The principle which drives the arguments of Levinson and Howell does, however, require further elaboration (see Rohrbaugh 2003: 194).
(HT) Type $K$ exists at $t$, if, and only if, at $t$ it is possible that $K$ is tokened.

The corresponding property associate would be:

(HP) Property $F$ exists at $t$, if, and only if, at $t$ it is possible that $F$ is instantiated.

Unlike the more familiar accounts of property existence (PI) and (MPI), (HP) doesn’t directly imply the eternality of properties and types. On the right-hand side of the bi-conditionals in (HT) and (HP) we see that the ‘at $t$’ index takes wide scope over the possibility operator. But surely, if something’s metaphysically possible at one time, it’s possible at all times, right?

That’s a fairly common intuition. However, on what’s sometimes called the ‘branching times’ conception of modality, what’s metaphysically possible changes over time. Facts about the state of the actual world at a time determine certain metaphysical possibilities for the actual world. However, as the state of the actual world changes, so does the range of possibility branches available. On such a conception, it might be legitimate to think that before Socrates exists, it isn’t possible for anything to be a son of Socrates, but after Socrates comes into existence it is, and according to (HP), the property being a son of Socrates comes into existence, bringing with it the type correlate The Son of Socrates.

So, are we to accept that some types are creatable after all? Well, that would be premature. For one thing, we saw that Armstrong’s reason for accepting the eternality of properties has independent motivation. The insightful account of causal laws appears to require that any universals exist at all times. Further, the ‘branching times’ conception of modality is independently controversial (Rohrbaugh 2003: 198). So, there are worries about (HP), but as far as one can tell, nothing that can be decisively settled within the present thesis. Perhaps the real problem is that there seems no positive reason, besides trying to guarantee the creatability of types, to accept it. But to accept a principle of property existence in order to explain why properties are created seems like the wrong way to go. If we want a principled explanation of creatability, we need some independently attractive account of property existence which also explains creatability. As such, it
would be wise for type theorists to remain silent about type creation when advertising the benefits of their view. This isn’t difficult since, as we saw earlier, the type theorist already has plenty to shout about.

What’s more interesting about Howell’s suggestion, and something that will become more salient throughout the remainder of the thesis, is the employment of impure relational properties, properties in which a particular is involved. They might not secure the creatability of musical works. However, we will find that impure relational properties are of great value when we examine the modal profile of musical works in the next chapter and, relatedly, when we consider the identity conditions for musical works in the second half of this thesis. That was the most promising option for the type/token theorist to explain creation and it’s less than compelling. Ultimately, it turns on major issues in the metaphysics of properties and modality. However, as we’ll see in the next section, it might be easier to remain silent on type creation and simply question the intuition that musical works are created.

4.2: Robert Howell’s Bad Proposal

Howell does, however, have a different option which accepts properties as eternal, but denies that the associate function holds; he denies that the existence of a given property or condition determines the existence of a corresponding type-mate. He offers a tripartite distinction between properties, patterns and types. Properties, he claims are ‘predicative features of objects’ (Howell 2002: 116). Patterns ‘…in turn are specified by properties,’ being ‘an arrangement of parts or features possessed by anything having the associated property’ (2002: 116). Patterns, for Howell, automatically exist if the corresponding property exists. In his discussion, it seems that Howell’s patterns are the same as the ‘types’ of the standard view, at least in so far as the associate function is true of them.

Howell accepts that the existence of a type does entail the existence of a corresponding property associate (and, presumably pattern thereby specified). However, he does not think that the existence of a property associate entails the existence of a type. He attempts to motivate this claim by way of two
counterexamples to the claim that type existence is determined by property associate existence.

His first argument is that ‘…types, or kinds in nature…are not taken by the sciences to actually exist because the relevant properties and patterns exist.’ His thought is that there exist logico-metaphysical compounds of base properties that specify a plenitude of patterns which could be instantiated by chemical elements, protein chains or biological organisms etc. Yet, he thinks that the types specified by these properties do not exist because, ‘Nothing in biology [or chemistry] requires such claims, and any legitimate needs of metaphysics seem met by accepting the existence just of the properties and abstract patterns.’ (Howell 2002: 117). He adds ‘We appear to accept the actual existence of genuine types or kinds in nature…only when the relevant patterns find a stable, law governed place in one or more actual causal chains or natural systems’. (2002: 117).

His second counterexample concerns linguistic types, in particular, words. He imagines a word, ‘glank’ meaning joyful jeep and argues that “glank” does not exist as an actual word type in English, despite the fact that the inscription pattern and the meaning pattern are specified by existent properties of permissible English phonemic and semantic components. However, rather than thinking in explicitly causal terms familiar to the scientist, Howell thinks that the relevant linguistic analogy for finding a home in a law governed system, involves a community establishing a practice of producing and recognising such linguistic patterns (the geometric and phonemic features shared by instances of the word-pattern) and using them to carry information and meanings (Howell 2002: 118).

Howell thinks that cultural types, like musical works, are similar insofar as their existence presupposes not only a pattern (the sound sequence prescribed by the composer), but also a practice adopted by a community for recognising and producing instances of the pattern to carry meanings, or perhaps to just present its attractiveness to an audience. The adoption of this practice by the community, according to Howell, does not just yield the same pattern with the property of being used by the community to carry meanings accidentally attached. Rather, Howell proposes that this property of functioning in a community in a certain way is an essential property of the type. The pattern in question does not have this property essentially, this much seems to be implied by the sound-sequence pre-existing its employment to serve that function. It is a plausible principle that, if anything x
differs in its essential properties from something y then x and y are distinct. On this basis, Howell argues that the pattern and the type are distinct entities.

Dodd (2007) offers a response to Howell’s independent motivation for the creatability of musical works, the proposed explanation of word existence. He argues that one can maintain the eternal existence of word/meaning types, but argue that they only enter into a language under the conditions Howell states for creation (2007: 77). Dodd’s response is nuanced, but perhaps it is an instance of a more basic thought. If one’s principled metaphysical account of types says they are eternal, one probably doesn’t have a greater degree of confidence in the creatability of word types than one has in the creatability of musical types. As such, the independent motivation for creatable musical works is going to be question begging.

My response is of a different nature. I think that the initial motivation for dropping the associate function is problematic. Howell wants to accept an abundant conception of properties according to which there are uninstantiated properties and even inconsistent properties like *being a square circle*. His reason for adopting this maximal account would appear to be that we need to postulate properties for any predicate that might be used in a language, be it in normal use, or in fictional contexts (c.f. Wolterstorff 1980: 48). That is, the motivation for the maximal conception of properties is semantic. His starting point in arguing for a restricted theory of types, however, is that natural scientists are restrictive when it comes to the types they postulate, only postulating types that have instances, or are in some sense nomologically possible. And implicit in his brief comment is the proposal that we ought not believe in types which fail to meet these nomological (or, analogously for words, cultural) strictures. That is, his argument for the minimal conception of types is naturalistic.

However, this style of argument proves too much. Consider the following argument.

There are more types than there are properties. We need to postulate types to play semantic roles in everyday talk and to give the meanings of sentences in fiction. Some of these roles require the existence of types corresponding to far out possibilities, and even impossibilities. However, natural scientists don’t postulate properties if they are never instantiated, nor if they don’t correspond to law-governed regularities. So, we should accept more types into our ontology that we should properties.
This argument seems just as legitimate as Howell’s. That is to say, it’s not legitimate at all. To argue that the associate function doesn’t hold, Howell makes an about turn in meta-ontological outlook. He takes semantic considerations to decide property existence conditions and naturalistic (or, in the case of cultural entities, quasi-naturalistic) considerations to decide questions about type existence.

Prima facie, properties and types are of the same fundamental ontological kind – they are instantiables and play very similar roles in the explanation of resemblance, the account of causation and, in many cases, in semantic role. This degree of ontological similarity makes it puzzling why it would be suggested that their existence conditions differ.

So, neither attempt at explaining type creation inspires enough confidence for us to advertise it. Perhaps it’s time to turn to the type theorist’s contingency plan. The standard type theoretic response: downplay the significance of creation.

5: Accepting Eternalism

Before we consider the acceptance of eternalism, it’s worth considering an independent argument for the literal creation of musical works. Will we miss out on something important if we don’t accept the creatability of musical works?

In his classic paper, Levinson (1980) does offer two arguments in favour of musical work creation. One argument is simply an appeal to how widespread creation intuitions are (1980: 67). This is hard to deny, but as we mentioned in the introduction, that a judgment is widespread doesn’t make it sacrosanct, nor even central to understanding musical works. What’s more, it isn’t clear that the initiated type proposals aimed at explaining creation actually work.

Levinson’s other argument is, one suspects, intended at adding weight to the brute intuitions about musical work creation by linking creation to the value of composition. We might call it ‘the value argument’ for creation.

As Levinson puts it, ‘…some of the status, significance and value we attach to musical composition derives from our belief in [creation]’ (Levinson 1980: 67). So, the idea is that in musical practice we presuppose that compositional activities
literally bring musical works into existence and that our estimation of the value of such acts is affected by their being acts of creation.

This argument seems weak. Consider the eternalist, she might just propose that, to the extent we value musical composition because it creates musical works, we’re wrong. However, what should really make us question the line of argument is whether the dependence relation really holds. I think we assume that musical works are created and I think that we value acts of composition. However, there’s nothing especially compelling about the thought that the degree to which we value composition hinges on the assumption that it creates musical works. Participants in the philosophical debate, it would seem, can agree on everything composers do, and what they achieve in performing their acts, short of whether those acts create a musical work. For the creationist, what the composer does creates a musical work easily (perhaps too easily). For the eternalist, there’s no possibility of such an act creating a musical work. And it strikes me that the somewhat esoteric philosophical debate about the possibility of type creation is unlikely to have any decisive representation in our everyday evaluation of the value of compositional acts. Indeed, I doubt that there’s any systematic difference in the degree of value that those occupying different sides of the philosophical debate ascribe to the value of compositional acts. What matters to our evaluation of compositional acts is not whether a musical work is created, but rather, the creation-independent value of the composer’s achievement in performing the act of composition. If the layman was aware of the problems that type creation posed, he might drop his creationist intuitions, but, I suggest, he’d still think that what composers do is just as valuable.

Levinson’s ‘value argument’ is weak and it seems that the creationist case is to rest on brute intuitions. The question is: can the eternalist about types explain away these intuitions. We turn now to this issue.

In the literature, a standard line on composition has emerged for the standard type theorist. Because she denies that composition brings a new entity into existence, she presents a picture of composition according to which composition changes our epistemic position with respect to musical works. Compositional acts are construed as acts of creative discovery (Kivy 1982, Dodd 2007). This account of composition is compatible with eternalism, and allows standard type theorists to account for the value of compositional acts in a way which compares with other valued discoveries in the natural sciences and mathematics (Dodd 2007:113-115).
We may value acts of composition not simply because they create the things composed, rather, we value acts of composition because they are creative.

And I’d like to add to these accounts a different and philosophically familiar idea. At the heart of the problem of creation is the mismatch between the purported eternal existence of types and the purported temporally asymmetric existence of musical works. We might say ‘There was no Eroica symphony in 1750, but in 1810 there was’. However, compare this to the situation when one looks in the refrigerator and sees only a jar of gerkins and a packet of out of date ham. One might say ‘There’s nothing we can eat in the fridge,’ and after a trip to the supermarket, one might say, ‘there’s something in the fridge to eat’. Now there was something that could be eaten in the fridge. Ignoring the out of date ham, there was a jar of gerkins, and they can be eaten.

Our assertion about there being nothing to eat is the result of an implicit ‘domain restriction’. What one is trying to say when one says ‘there’s nothing in the fridge that we can eat,’ is that there’s nothing in the fridge that we can eat subject to some further condition. In this case, it is presumably something to do with it being desirable and edible. Our trip to the supermarket enables us to satisfy the latter condition and we assert the existence of edible food in the fridge. The phenomenon of domain restriction is incredibly pervasive. Indeed as normal language users, we hardly notice how frequently we do it, and how easily we understand others doing it.

And we might wonder if the idea has some application in the case of the temporally asymmetric existence claims about musical works. I take it that, from an everyday point of view, we have little interest in musical works which are unavailable to us i.e. works which cannot yet have tokens. Our concern is with works that have been made available and musical works are made available by the activities of composers. What we might think is that our denial of the existence of a musical work at one time, and the affirmation of its existence at a later time does not track the existence of the work, but rather betrays the fact that our assertions and beliefs are subject to domain restriction.

When we say that there was no Pierrot Lunaire in 1807, but that there was in 1950, we’re performing implicit domain restrictions. The proposition we try to express is something like <In 1807, W did not meet condition C and in 1808, W did
meet $C >$ where $C$ is a condition concerning the availability $W$, perhaps that its tokens were made possible.

There are two good things about this approach. First, domain restriction is a pervasive phenomenon, and so, if musical works weren’t created, it wouldn’t be surprising if it was the basis of assertions about the temporal asymmetry of musical work existence. Second, it is an account compatible with any story about what really happens when musical works are composed. This might be useful if one wanted an account which held that composition didn’t create or discover musical works, but rather, thought that musical works stood in an essential dependence relation to acts of composition (c.f. Fine 1995, Lowe 1995, Correia 2008). And this is perhaps the most plausible way to understand the relationship between impure relational properties and their involved particulars in concert with our creation intuitions.

In summary then, even if musical works aren’t created the type/token theorist still has a range of responses to the creation intuitions which are often levelled against it. In the next section, we’ll see an alternative to the usual type/token theory. It is one which takes musical works to be properties and, as I shall argue, it provides a more virtuous explanation of the content of central musical judgments.

### 6: Musical Works as Properties

An alternative to the type/token theory is one which identifies musical works with properties whose examples are those performances which instantiate them. Call such a theory *the property theory*. One might obtain the details of a property theory of musical works by extracting it from the type/token theory. The property theorist replaces the identity determination hypothesis with an identity hypothesis; the associate function is simply identity. Given that properties and types are very similar, in being instantiable, sharing existence conditions and, so on, the property theory looks like as promising an answer to the categorial question as the type theory. Perhaps the key opposition to the property theory is Dodd. He offers two arguments against it, they are, however, uncharacteristically obscure. Further,
what appear the most obvious interpretations of them are unsuccessful in their aim to show that musical works are not properties.

6.1: Resistance to the Property Theory: The Categorial Unsuitability Argument

Dodd’s first argument aims to establish the claim that properties are categorially unsuitable for identification with musical works. Call this the categorial unsuitability objection to the property theory. I think there are two subtly different arguments aimed at concluding that properties are categorically unsuitable to be identified with musical works. Here is the key premise of one argument:

‘In This House, On This Morning’—like other type-names…is itself neither a predicate nor a singular term systematically related to such a predicate (as ‘happiness’ is to ‘[is] happy’). (Dodd 2007: 17).

The denial of the existence of a systematically related predicate for the musical work name ‘In This House, On This Morning’ is not argued for and it’s not clear how to argue for it without straying into controversial territory. Answers to questions about predicate existence conditions don’t seem to be the sort of things we can simply help ourselves to. The truth of what Dodd says here is perhaps more transparently rendered as the claim that predicates systematically related to expressions designating musical works don’t have any instances, or aren’t employed by language users in their discourse about musical works. It does not follow from this that there do not exist such predicates. The conclusion he draws from this piece of linguistic data is the following:

…properties are categorically unsuited to be musical works. In This House, On This Morning is not a mere feature of a performance of it: a respect in which performances or playings can be alike or differ. It is, by contrast, the blueprint for such performances and playings: a thing in its own right. (Dodd 2007: 17).

16 Dodd (2007: 77-80) argues that linguistic types like word/meaning pairs may exist independently of ever being explicitly tokened, or even thought about. What one might confuse for a change in which words exist is, according to Dodd, which words have entered into a given language. If this is so, we might well accept that there is a systematically related predicate expression for the singular term ‘In This House, On This Morning’, but allow that it is not in use in our language.
The first argument proceeds from the linguistic data to the categorial unsuitability of properties via an implicit premise. Presumably something like the following:

(IP) If “n” designates something and “n” isn’t a predicate expression and no systematically related predicate expression “n-ness” exists (or, less controversially, no such predicate is in use in discourse about n), then “n” does not designate a property.

This would provide a valid argument against the property theory. Its soundness, however, is dubitable. For it simply isn’t obvious why anyone should accept the implicit premise. The facts about the ontological category of an object referred to by an expression are not determined by facts about the grammatical category of the referring expression, neither are they determined by facts about whether certain sorts of expressions systematically related to that expression are in use. We could, it seems, introduce such predicates like ‘Eroicity’ for the Eroica Symphony, but wouldn’t thereby refer to different works of music. Facts about our linguistic usage can serve as guides to ontological distinction, but they must be backed up by a metaphysical clarification, if they are to warrant acceptance. Is there a metaphysical account of the distinction between types and properties?

Dodd does offer such an argument for the ontological distinction. The argument would seem to go: Properties are respects in which things can be alike or differ, while musical works (and types) are things in their own right. Therefore, musical works are not properties. However, it is unclear why being a respect in which performances and playings are alike or differ would make properties a category unsuitable for the assignment of musical works. Two performances of distinct works do differ with respect to the works they are performances of. Two performances of the same work are alike in that respect.

Perhaps we might move to the proposed positive characterisation of musical works (and types) which is not satisfied by properties. This too is unclear. The suggestion that a type is “a thing in its own right”, while a property is merely a feature of a thing isn’t pellucid either. Presumably, being a thing in its own right isn’t simply determined by the grammatical category of the expression used to refer to it. This would lead us back to the first non sequitur.
Another interpretation might be that musical works - ‘things in their own right’ - are particulars, while properties are mere features of such things. If so, musical works being things in their own right, rather than features of such things would be a good argument against the property theory.

This, however, cannot be Dodd’s intention. One thing distinctive of the ontological category of particulars is that they are not instantiable (Oliver 1996: 21). It is the supposed to be the fact that types are instantiable that makes them a good candidate for explaining how musical works are repeatable and audible. If types don’t have instances, then, whether they are ‘things in their own right’ or not, properties, because instantiable, look like a more suitable category to assign musical works to.

### 6.2: Resistance to The Property Theory: The Predicate Transmission Argument

Dodd’s second argument points to an interesting phenomenon found in the repeatable arts. We often speak of a repeatable work as if it exemplified the properties required of its occurrences. We would, for instance, say of any accurate performance of Tchaikovsky’s Festive Overture that it is loud. Interestingly, we would also say that the work itself is loud. That is, it appears that the predicates true of a work’s performances by virtue of which they are correct performances of that work are transmitted to the work itself. Here’s how Dodd puts the argument against the property theory:

...works and their occurrences exhibit a pattern of shared predication characteristic of the type/token model rather than the property-instance model. The following thesis...holds good at the level of predicates: if a predicate ‘is F’ is true of a token in virtue of the token's being a token of a type $K$, then ‘is F’ is also true of $K$. Hence, ‘is coloured’ and ‘is rectangular’ are both true of The Union Jack in addition to being true of its tokens. Significantly, the analogous principle concerning the transmission of predicates does not hold for particulars and their properties: as Wollheim points out (1968: 93), we do not describe redness as itself being red. (Dodd 2007: 17)
We saw earlier in this chapter that Richard Wollheim claimed that the predicates transmitted from token to type were univocal and that the *properties* expressed by those predicates were transmitted to the type. His thesis of property transmission allows the employment of a common style of philosophical argument against identifying musical works with properties. One might interpret the argument as an argument from the Indiscernibility of the Identical, sometimes called *Leibniz’s Law*. In common use, this principle may be glossed as:

\[(II) \forall x \forall y (x = y \rightarrow \forall F (x \text{ exemplifies } F \leftrightarrow y \text{ exemplifies } F)).\]

One can use this principle to argue that certain things are distinct. One can argue that something exemplifies a certain property and something lacks that property. Employing modus tollens, one can infer the distinctness of the two.

Applied to the example of Tchaikovsky’s Festive Overture, the Wollheimian argument might run as follows:

(P1) The Festive Overture is loud

(P2) *Being a Festive Overture* is not loud

(II) \(\forall x \forall y (x = y \rightarrow \forall F (x \text{ exemplifies } F \leftrightarrow y \text{ exemplifies } F)).\)

(C1) The festive overture is not identical with the property *being the Festive Overture*

(P1) is the sort of thing we could legitimately say about the Festive Overture. For Wollheim, (P1) is true because the work itself exemplifies *loudness*. (P2) denies that *loudness* is exemplified by the property associate, *being a festive overture*. These premises and the principle of the Identity of the Indiscernible licence the conclusion that the musical work is not identical with the property associate.
This argument, however, is sound only if the thesis of property transmission is true, i.e. that the predicates transmitted express the same properties when applied to types as when applied to tokens. As we saw earlier, however, Wollheim’s thesis of property transmission is difficult. In this case it appears to ascribe a property possessed by sounds of high amplitude to an abstract entity. This is unappealing: types are not the sorts of things which can be loud (c.f. Dodd 2007: 45). Indeed, it is this sort of consideration that leads the contemporary type theorist away from Wollheim’s doctrine and towards the analogical predication thesis. According to the latter thesis, predicates like ‘is loud’ may be truly applied to a work’s performances with their standard meaning, the property of loudness. When truly applied to the work itself, however, the predicate ‘is loud’ expresses a systematically related property: being such that something cannot be an instance of it unless it is loud.

Because the analogical predication explanation entails that a predicate a type shares with one of its tokens will express different properties depending upon whether it is applied to the type or the token, it is difficult to see how the Indiscernibility of the Identical argument suggested by Dodd is sound. Consider the analogical predication theorist’s perspicuous representation of the argument above. The festive overture is supposed to be a type which has the property analogue of is loud, namely, the property is such that nothing can be a correct instance of it unless it is loud.

(P3) The Festive Overture is such that something cannot be an instance of it unless it is loud.

(P4) Being a Festive Overture is not such that something cannot be an instance of it unless it is loud

(II) \( \forall x \forall y (x = y \rightarrow \forall F (x \text{ exemplifies } F \leftrightarrow y \text{ exemplifies } F)) \).

(C2) The Festive Overture is not identical with the property being The Festive Overture.
This argument is valid, but unsound. This is because being the Festive Overture, the property required of all (correct) examples of the work, is such that something cannot be an instance of it unless it is loud.

The attempt to argue against the property theory in the manner suggested by Wollheim, then, is misjudged for the endorsers of the analogical predication thesis. In the next section, I examine a different way one might try to employ predicate sharing data to favour the type/token theory over the property theory.

6.2.1: A Second Predicate Transmission Argument

Although the Leibniz’s Law version of the predicate transmission argument fails, the type/token theorist might argue that the type/token theory has the linguistic resources required to explain the linguistic phenomenon of predicate transmission. The property theory, on the other hand, apparently has no such explanation of the distinctive way in which predicates shift their meanings when they are transmitted from occurrence to work.

Although it’s not fundamental metaphysics, and the relation between semantic data and ontology is a delicate matter, the thesis of analogical predication affords an explanation of something, namely, why one may truly apply certain predicates, which are transmitted from tokens, to types. The type theorist might then argue that this linguistic phenomenon receives its best explanation by the type/token theory, while the property theory is not yet out of the starting blocks.

Such an argument is unsound. The type/token theory is an ontological theory and the thesis of analogical predication is a semantic thesis. This gives them a good degree of independence from one another. One might, for instance, endorse a type/token theory, but be an error theorist about predicate transmission. Perhaps what such predications communicate might well just be systematically related requirement properties, although if construed literally, the ascriptions are false. The

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17 Further, the most obvious variants on this style of argument, couched in terms of predicate application and co-referential expressions are also unsound.

18 C.f. Oliver’s (1997: 28-9) concerns that although the semantic data furnished by true sentences about David Lewis tells us there’s some semantic value for ‘David Lewis’, the semantic theory doesn’t uniquely select the man himself over the set of his properties. That is, what sort of thing David Lewis is, isn’t furnished by semantic theory about ‘David Lewis’.
point is that the type theory does not entail the thesis of analogical predication. Both the type theory and the property theory may be combined with an error theory about predicate transmission.

Conversely, an analogical predication thesis is compatible with an alternative ontological theory. The type/token theorist will say that when ‘is F’ truly applies to a type’s tokens by virtue of their being tokens of that type, ‘is F’ can be truly predicated of the type itself because the predicate expresses the property is such that something cannot be an instance of it unless it instantiates F.

Similarly, a property theorist could say that when ‘is F’ truly applies to a property’s instances by virtue of their being examples of that property, ‘is F’ can be truly predicated of the property itself because the predicate applied to the property expresses the property is such that something cannot be an instance of it unless it instantiates F. However, it seems inadvisable for predicate expressions and their nominalisations. After all, there are many sentences about properties which don’t seem to conform to the analogical predication thesis. Consider this example:

(S1) Being a Polar Bear is four-legged.

This sentence, for example, looks like the expression of a category mistake.19 Whereas, our type/token theorist would have it that,

(S2) The Polar Bear is four-legged,

is true and that this is because ‘The Polar Bear’ names a type and because of this the predicate expression’s meaning shifts to pick out a different property from that it usually expresses, namely, being such that something cannot be an instance of it unless it is four legged.

Comparison of (S1) and (S2) illustrates something that the property theorist needs if she wants to adopt the doctrine of analogical predication (and deny the truth of (S1)). What she needs is a specification of the conditions under which the predicates applied to a property e.g. being a polar bear are subject to an analogical shift in meaning in accordance with the doctrine of analogical predication.

19 Although, it is open for the property theorist to claim that (S1) is true. Thanks to Julian Dodd for this suggestion.
A theory about such a determinant needn’t be developed from scratch. The type/token theorist needs an account of when an expression is type-referring, rather than referring to a particular example or merely being quantificational. ‘The Polar Bear’ is said to be a type name. Perhaps this is because of the institutional article ‘The’, the capitalised first letters of the expression’s constituent words and facts about its context of use. It’s not clear that this is a complete set of criteria. What’s important is that whatever the criteria are, to avoid circularity, the type theorist can’t simply stipulate that the expression refers to a type. If so, it seems that the property theorist can employ the same type-independent criteria in giving her account of what determines the legitimacy of employing the property theoretic version of the analogical predication thesis.

The property theorist might accept that certain syntactic features of the subject term, the use to which it is put, and so on, indicate that the expression refers to an instantiable entity, but propose that these criteria determine that a property is referred to, but that the syntactic features of the referring expression, context of use, and so on, determine that the predicates applied to the property obey the analogical predication thesis. That is, the property theorist takes the legitimacy of applying predicates analogically to a property to be determined by the features of the way the referent is referred to.

The point is simple. Rather than introduce additional entities into our ontology in order to account for systematic changes in predicate meaning, the property theorist proposes that the differences in predicate meaning are due to linguistic differences in the expression used to refer to the object of the predication. This doesn’t require us to drop type talk, however. The property theorist can reinterpret the associate function, but rather than thinking that it reflects a relation of ‘identity determination’ as Dodd suggests, the property theorist interprets it as ‘identity’. We just need to bear in mind that in our canonical formulation of the universalist proposal about musical works, the entities we normally refer to with typal expressions, like ‘The K’ are to be designated by the terms we use for their property associates e.g. ‘being a K’ (see Chapter 8).

The type theorist might present a query, however. If types just are properties, why would ordinary English speakers use a special category of terms, different from predicates and their nominalisations, to speak of them? My suggestion is that the employment of typal expressions and its attendant doctrine of analogue
predication provide tremendous linguistic economy. We can say and think things using typal expressions that would be cognitively difficult if we were to try and use our canonical form. Expressing even the simple examples encountered thus far in the canonical form would require dauntingly long sentences and cumbersome second order predications. And these difficulties would only be exacerbated if we were to try and express more realistic examples which express differences and similarities of several properties. Far better, it seems to go in for treating properties as if they’re particulars, as if they instantiate the properties they require of their occurrences.

In summary, it appears that the type theory and the property theory are matched on explanatory adequacy. They both offer explanations of the same phenomena. However, I advocate the property theory because it has greater theoretical virtue. I make this case in the following section.

7: The Superiority of the Property Theory

As presented so far, there would appear to be an explanatory tie between the type theory and the property theory. There is, however, a cluster of considerations which would appear to favour the property theory over the type/token theory.

One cluster of considerations concerns the simplicity of the property theory. The property theory explains the same explananda as the type/token theory, but employs only a proper subset of its resources to do so, as such it is the simpler theory of the two.

We might consider the type theory and the property theory from the point of view of the Quinean distinction between ideological and ontological simplicity (Quine 1953). Although, the type/token theory offered by Dodd gives the identity conditions of types in terms of their property associates, it does not define types in terms of their property associates. If this were so, any of the arguments elaborated above would appear confused in the extreme. As such, types are an ideological addition in the type/token theory, a theory which also committed to properties (c.f. Daly 2011: 133). As such, the property theory is ideologically simpler than the type/token theory.
Forms of ontological simplicity can be divided into two families. Some think we should aim at satisfying the ‘anti-quantity principle’. This principle urges that in theory construction we ‘posit as few hypotheses as possible to explain the phenomena.’ (Daly 2011: 135-6). These hypotheses might involve the postulation of entities as well as the ascription of certain properties to those entities (Barnes 2000: 354). The property theory is superior here too. According to the type/token theory there are properties which serve to determine the identity and the existence of corresponding types. For the type/token theory, then, for each hypothesis positing the existence of a property, there’s an additional hypothesis positing the existence of a type.

There is also the source of these additional hypotheses, the proposed identity determination hypothesis. The property theory does not posit any such hypotheses in order to explain the repeatability and audibility of musical works. As such, the property theory contains fewer hypotheses than the type/token theory and explains the same data. Therefore the property theory better satisfies the anti-quantity principle than the type/token theory.

Some also think that there is a distinct principle at work in some cases of scientific enquiry, this is the ‘anti-superfluity principle’ (Barnes: 2000). This principle urges us to avoid positing superfluous hypotheses, hypotheses which do not play any role in explaining the data under consideration. As I have argued, the postulation of types in addition to properties is explanatorily superfluous. Similarly, the identity determination thesis which entails the existence of a type for each property is superfluous to the explanation of the data. Thus, the property theory better complies with the anti-superfluity principle.

This latter point about the superfluity of the postulation of types is important, especially for those sceptical about the value of simplicity considerations. The evidence for the type/token theory of musical works is that it provides an explanation of how musical works can be repeatable and audible. However, because the postulation of types and the hypothesis that they stand in an identity determination relation to their property associates is superfluous in the explanation of repeatability and audibility, the postulation of types receives no evidential support from those putative facts about musical works (Barnes 2000: 358, 363). As such, the proposed evidence for the type theory of musical works, namely, that
musical works are repeatable and audible, does not provide any evidence for that theory.

8: Conclusion

So, there we have it. There’s good reason that the type/token theory has occupied the dominant position for much of the contemporary debate about musical works. However, we can see now that an improvement on that form of universalism is the property theory. From here, we’ll be defending universalism against its best rivals. One view, the historical individuals theory, construes musical works as similar in some respects to material particulars, this view will be the topic of the next chapter. The other view construes musical works as token actions of composition, this view will be considered in chapter 5. Neither view, I argue, is as good as universalism. However, there are features of both views which will play a significant role in the development of our proposal about musical work identity to be presented in chapter 8.
Chapter 4: Musical Works as Particulars

1: The Desiderata: Rohrbaugh’s Trio

Guy Rohrbaugh (2003) agrees with several of the central judgments presented in the introduction of this thesis. Of particular note, he agrees that musical works are the sort of thing that have occurrences (2003: 198). He also agrees that they are involved in an indirect manner in causal relations (2003: 200). However, he argues that thinking of musical works as universals is mistaken. His stated motivation for departing from the universalist view is not a subscription to nominalism, however. Rather, his motivation is derived from intuitive judgments he takes to be manifested in everyday artistic practice. In particular, he thinks that a certain trio of judgments derived from practice tell against the thought that musical works are universals.

The judgments Rohrbaugh cites; that musical works are temporal, modally flexible and temporally flexible, have a dual purpose. They are supposed to provide a damning indictment of the dominant universalist answer to the categorial question. They are also intended to serve as desiderata which can be met by the novel answer to the categorial question that he proposes: musical works are historical individuals.

First, Rohrbaugh argues that musical works are temporal. They come into existence at a certain point in time and last a while before passing out of existence (2003: 199). We’ve already met with the thought that musical works come into existence at a certain time. And although we found little motivation beyond the brute intuition that musical works are created, we may still have some lingering respect for it. The thought that a musical work exists for some time after its composition is also intuitive, a fact betrayed by our present tense ascriptions to works whose composition has been complete for quite some time. However, the temporality desideratum is more demanding. It requires that musical works pass out of existence. Although Rohrbaugh is keen to point out the intuition that photographs may be destroyed he offers no explicit motivation for accepting that musical works are similar in this respect (2003: 195).
Second, Rohrbaugh argues that musical works are modally flexible. If something, \( x \), is modally flexible, this means that \( x \) could have had properties different to those it actually does. Rohrbaugh (2003: 181) makes two qualifications about what modal flexibility amounts to. First, it is a \textit{de re}, rather than \textit{de dicto} notion. The possibility of a work, The \textit{Eroica} Symphony, say, is a possibility of that work itself, not the mere possibility that sentences featuring ‘The \textit{Eroica} Symphony’ which are actually true could have been false. ‘The \textit{Eroica} symphony is magnificent’, which is actually true, could have been false in possible worlds where the sentence didn’t mean what it actually does (2003: 181).

It’s quite plausible to think that the face-value interpretation of ascriptions of modal flexibility to musical works are to be interpreted in \textit{de re} fashion. Musical work names function as proper names and this gives a \textit{prima facie} evidence that, along with other proper names, like ‘David Cameron’, they designate the same entity in every possible world at which they designate anything at all (Kripke 1980: 48-9).

The second qualification Rohrbaugh makes concerns the sort of properties relevant to modal flexibility. Suppose that the tree in my garden could have been taller than The Eiffel Tower. This doesn’t make it modally flexible because its being taller than The Eiffel Tower would be one of its \textit{extrinsic} properties. Whether the tree in my garden is taller than The Eiffel Tower is determined by something beyond the tree itself viz. the height of The Eiffel Tower. Modal flexibility, on the other hand, concerns an object’s \textit{intrinsic} properties. According to Rohrbaugh, an object’s intrinsic properties are those it has ‘in and of itself’ (2003: 181). The tree in my garden, for instance, is fifty kilograms in mass and intuitively this is a property it has in and of itself, it is intrinsic. Because that tree could have had a different mass, in a \textit{de re} sense, it is modally flexible.

It is more difficult to identify clear cases of intrinsic properties had by musical works than it is to find them for material particulars. In an effort to identify such properties, Rohrbaugh (2003: 188) quotes Gregory Currie’s claim that “What is partly constitutive of a given work is its pattern or structure. No theory of art works that made the structure extrinsic…to that work could hope for acceptance” (Currie 1989: 64-5). ‘Structure’ here means, roughly, the content specified by the composer, the sequence of sounds required for correct occurrence that are often cited in our aesthetic discourse about musical works.
To support the claim that musical works are modally flexible with respect to their structural features, Rohrbaugh offers up some intuitions. He claims that ‘Hank Williams’ *Honky Tonkin’ could have had somewhat different lyrics and chord changes. Here the thought is that the very same work could have been different in its structural features – Hank Williams could have made different decisions about the harmonic and lyrical content, without having composed a work distinct from *Honky Tonkin*. Rohrbaugh also suggests that, ‘Bruckner’s Ninth Symphony might have been finished, had he lived longer, while some complete works might not have been so.’ (2003: 182). The expression of this point is a little obscure. The property *being finished* is not a structural feature in Currie’s sense. Indeed, ‘incompleteness’, in the relevant sense, applies primarily to *actions* of composition and only derivatively to the content the relevant action specifies. However, the idea would appear to be that Bruckner’s *Ninth* Symphony, had he lived longer, would have been longer, it would have had the additional movement that Bruckner had planned. That very work would have been longer than it actually is.

The third feature of Rohrbaugh’s trio is analogous to the second, but it deals with the temporal modality. He claims that musical works are *temporally flexible*. By this he means that they may undergo change in their properties over time. Again, temporal flexibility is not to be understood as concerning change in extrinsic properties over time. That a work may be unpopular with its original audience, but increase in popularity later on is not the sort of flexibility with which Rohrbaugh is concerned. The temporal flexibility of an object is the capacity to undergo change with respect to *intrinsic* properties.

Again, Rohrbaugh’s suggestion is that the intrinsic properties are ‘structural’, those properties the composer prescribes for the work’s correct occurrences. He suggests that temporal flexibility is exhibited in cases of revision when he says, ‘The history of music is replete with examples of composers who revise their works, sometimes long after the initial versions were released and familiar to audiences.’ (2003: 189). The thought here is that the commonplace phenomenon of musical work revision, properly considered, is to be explained as one in which the musical work revised has undergone a structural change. He also offers an argument concerning a similarly commonplace phenomenon in pre-notational folk works when he offers the rhetorical question, ‘How are we to
describe the fact that a song…is sung…differently as it is passed down from person to person if not as a change in its structure?’ (2003: 188).

So, we’ve clarified Rohrbaugh’s trio of desiderata and presented some *prima facie* reasons for thinking that they faithfully reflect our conception of musical works. We can also add to the trio a desideratum already discussed, namely, that musical works have occurrences, performances and playings which repeat them. Rohrbaugh does admit that there are further explanatory goals for an ontological proposal about the repeatable arts. That musical works have correct and incorrect occurrences (2003: 185), and are involved in causal relations (2003: 200). However, because his remarks on these issues are so brief as to be of little use in assessing the overall theory, I omit their examination.

The reason Rohrbaugh goes to the trouble he does in elaborating these desiderata is that he thinks they both knock universalism off the top spot and promote his historical individuals theory as the new best explanation. We might summarise his master argument as follows:

(P1) Musical works are repeatable, temporal, modally flexible and temporally flexible.

(P2) No universal is repeatable, temporal, modally flexible and temporally flexible.

(C1) Musical works are not universals

(P3) Historical individuals are repeatable, temporal, modally flexible and temporally flexible.

(C2) That musical works are historical individuals is a better ontological theory than that they are universals.

We’ve already seen the trio and in the next section, we’ll see how Rohrbaugh hopes to explain them by assigning musical works to the category of historical individuals. After this we’ll return to the desiderata for two reasons. First we’ll examine whether they are legitimate constraints to place on an ontology of
music. Second, any which are legitimate can serve to direct our attention to how they might be explained by the universalist.

2: Historical Individuals

As we’ve seen, Rohrbaugh advertises a bold array of explanatory capabilities for historical individuals. They are temporal, modally flexible, temporally flexible and repeatable in their occurrences. This all sounds very exciting. So, we might ask, what are historical individuals?

I think we can acquire the clearest idea about historical individuals by seeing how they fit into the theory. There are two sorts of particular which turn up in Rohrabugh’s ontology of art. There are the artworks themselves which are historical individuals. Rohrbaugh construes these as ‘higher level’ abstract particulars; abstract because they lack spatial location, particular because they don’t admit of instances. There are also low-level concrete particulars called ‘embodiments’. An embodiment for a musical work is characterised as anything that ‘preserves what [the work] is like and leads to new performances.’ (2003: 191). So, for instance, the score Beethoven produced for his *Fifth Symphony* would count as an embodiment of the work, as would recordings and memory traces that play that role in preserving what the work is like. Amongst a work’s embodiments are the occurrences, the performances and playings which serve to repeat the musical work. According to Rohrbaugh they are embodiments which also serve to display the work ‘in a manner relevant to aesthetic appreciation’ (2003: 193). These embodiments are physical particulars which are denizens of this ‘ultimately physical world’ and which supply the ontological basis for the abstract particulars (Rohrbaugh 2003: 200).

So far, this is nothing remarkable. The theory postulates abstract artworks and concreta which serve to represent them. The action in Rohrbaugh’s account is in the relation between the embodiments and the works. This relation is *embodiment* and it is a form of *ontological dependence* (Rohrbaugh 2003: 191-2). Such notions have their roots in aristotelian metaphysics, in particular, in the distinction between primary and secondary substances (c.f. Fine 1995, Lowe 1995).
In recent literature there has been a frenzy of interest in such notions (Correia 2008). Predictably, this has been accompanied by a proliferation of different concepts of ontological dependence designed to serve different purposes in contemporary metaphysics.

As such it’s understandable that Rohrbaugh isn’t that explicit about which of the notions he has in mind. He does, however, give us some clues. For one thing he specifies the work to be done by presenting his trio of desiderata. For another, he elaborates an account of *constitution*, the relationship in which material parts stand in to the wholes they compose, and adds that ‘…both the relation of constitution and the relation of embodying may be seen as species of generic relation of ontological dependence.’ (2003: 192). This allows us to narrow down the exegetical options.

Take two entities: a statue and the lump of clay it is actually made of at a given time. There are familiar philosophical reasons for thinking that the statue and the lump are distinct. Nevertheless, it’s natural to think that they stand in an intimate relation. Philosophers sometimes say that the lump constitutes the statue, but is not identical to it.

There are some plausible thoughts about the relationship philosophers express when they say that the lump constitutes the statue. There is a relationship of ontological dependence which holds between the lump and the statue. This relationship is one of *existential* dependence. If there were no portion of matter to do constitute the statue, there’d be no statue. The existence of something depends upon the satisfaction of a certain condition, in this case a condition which specifies that there’s some clay, the clay is arranged in a certain way, and so on.

We might formulate such a claim generally as:

\[(D) □ (Ex → …).\]

Where ‘□’ interpreted as ‘necessarily’ and ‘E’ interpreted as the predicate ‘exists’ and the ‘…’ to be filled in by a condition appropriate to the x in question. (Correia 2008) .The aim here is to give some schematic idea about the sort of

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20 There are too many debates about whether the understanding of constitution elaborated is correct. I think it has intuitive pull, but the important thing is that it serves to illustrate the notion of embodiment which is central to Rohrbaugh’s account of musical ontology.

21 See Gibbard (1975).

22 These formulations are taken from Correia (2008).
condition which is to replace ‘…’ in Rohrbaugh’s theory of constitution, and ultimately, musical works.

One thing, we’ll notice about the example of constitution is that it doesn’t seem plausible to think that the statue ontologically depends upon that portion of matter which actually constitutes it. It is possible that the same statue could have been constituted by a somewhat different portion of clay. It’s hard to deny that the statue’s left index finger, for instance, could have been made up of a slightly different portion of clay. As such, the dependence relation of which constitution is a species is a generic ontological dependence relation. The statue depends upon the clay for its existence, but does not depend upon that particular lump of clay at every possible world at which it exists. Rather, it depends on some lump of clay which meets a certain condition:

\[(GD) \Box (Ex \to \exists y \ F_\gamma y)\]

Now let’s introduce the temporal dimension. The statue’s existence depends upon its constitutive matter at every time it exists. It stands in a relation of constant ontological dependence to its constitutive matter.

\[(CD) \Box \forall t (Et \to \exists y \ F_{\gamma t}y)\]

It is also natural to think that a statue undergoes changes in its intrinsic properties over time. One (perhaps the only) way this happens is by virtue of changes which take place in the portion of matter of which it is constituted. The loss or addition of clay to the statue will change its size and shape. Rearranging the same constitutive matter can also alter the statue, as happens during the sculpting process. Further, qualitative changes to the matter of which it is constituted, discolouration, for instance, may produce changes in the statue it constitutes. If the clay constituting the left leg of the statue is exposed to the sun while the remainder is covered, the discolouration of the clay will determine changes in the properties possessed by the statue.

These features of constitution, taken in conjunction with the work Rohrbaugh sees embodiment performing in our ontology of art, allow us to resolve
the apparent obscurity in his account and locate the embodiment relation in the contemporary debate over ontological dependence.

First, Rohrbaugh’s view is a form of ‘entity’ dependence. The entities it relates are ‘things’ rather than proposition-like, or fact-like, entities as some accounts of ontological dependence propose (c.f. Rosen 2010, Sider 2011). Second, it is not a relation of identity dependence, as we find in some neo-Aristotelian accounts (see Fine 1995). Rather, it is an existential dependence relation. There are good reasons for accepting this reading (c.f. Dodd 2007: 164). First, the temporality intuition is presented explicitly in terms of the existential profile of artworks and identity dependence doesn’t entail existential dependence (Dodd 2007: 164-5). Indeed, its most significant proponent, Kit Fine (1995, 2009), doesn’t think that existence questions are the paradigm ontological questions at all. Second, the relation between a historical individual and its embodiments is generic, and given the necessity of identity, this is incompatible with embodiment being a relation of identity dependence.

Third, implicit in the constitution example and explicit in parts of Rohrbaugh’s essay is the suggestion that the ontological dependence relations in question are asymmetric. The clay constitutes the statue, but not vice versa. An artwork ontologically depends upon parts of ‘…this, ultimately physical, world.’ (2003: 200). Presumably the reference to the ultimately physical world serves to remind us that the dependence relation is one which relates the non-fundamental historical individuals to their concrete bases in a specific order. The historical individual depends upon its embodiments, but not vice versa.

With these clarifications in place we can see how snugly the proposal fits with Rohrbaugh’s trio. The temporality of musical works is explained by the temporal and generic nature of the embodiment relation. The work exists at a time on condition that there is some, but no particular, embodiment of it. Any of the things which preserve what the work is like will suffice for the work’s existence. Musical works are not, however, constituted by their embodiments; their embodiments are not their parts (2003: 192). The condition to be met in order that something can embody a given musical work is that it is causally connected with other embodiments ultimately leading back to the work’s first embodiment, that which brought the work into existence.
The modal flexibility of the work, that it could have been otherwise, is to be explained by the fact that its embodiments could have been otherwise, and that these modal variations in embodiments would have yielded a work with different intrinsic properties. As we saw earlier, Rohrbaugh proposed that Bruckner’s Ninth Symphony might have been completed, had he lived longer. Presumably he would have composed a fourth and final movement for the work as he’d planned. On Rohrbaugh’s view, this is explained in terms of possibilities for the work’s first embodiment. Because it was possible for Bruckner to complete his inscribing of the score, the work could have been completed; its first embodiment could have been different in certain respects and according to Rohrbaugh, this would supply the ontological basis for that work being longer.

Similarly, the temporal flexibility of a musical work is explained by the temporal flexibility of the work’s embodiments. There are two ways in which this might happen. One way for this to happen is parallel to the statue case. There’s a single particular which embodies the work and when that undergoes a change of the right sort, the work undergoes a change. It’s easiest to imagine this with a work which has a single embodiment in the composer’s memory. Perhaps the composer fails to accurately preserve the information originally composed and as her memory of the work changes, according to Rohrbaugh, so does the work. However, it might have application to notated works. Perhaps when Bruckner was composing his Ninth Symphony the work was changing intrinsically, as he added more instructional content, until his untimely death.

Rohrbaugh, by employing the example of change by revision also suggests a different sort of basis for change. According to Rohrbaugh the musical work doesn’t need to change by virtue of changes in a specific embodiment in a given world. For musical works typically exhibit ‘embodiment redundancy’. Unlike the constitution case, there may be more than one embodiment within a world, each of which suffices for the existence of the historical individual. In this case of embodiment redundancy, Rohrbaugh thinks that changes to the historical individual can come about by virtue of changes in the collection of embodiments upon which the historical individual depends. Presumably, the thought is that the production of a revision is the production of a new embodiment which satisfies the causal

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23 This term is not Rohrbaugh’s, but marks a distinction implicit in his work.
condition. And that new embodiment, should it have different structural content, will serve to change the work.

2.1: Objections to the Historical Individuals Theory

At first sight, the argument for the trio and Rohrbaugh’s explanation are appealing. However, there are reasons to be wary. I have two sort of response. One sort of response we might call ‘metaphysical worries’. The other sort of response concerns the view’s ‘explanatory inadequacies’.

In the esoteric realm of metaphysics it’s difficult to find decisive objections to a theory. However, what we can do is show that a certain seemingly innocuous view would put its proponents in something of an unpleasant position. This sort of response we may call a metaphysical worry.

The first metaphysical worry concerns the ontological dependence relations Rohrbaugh wants to use. As we saw earlier, every possible world at which an embodiment exists is one at which the historical individual exists and every possible world at which the historical individual exists is one at which an embodiment exists. However, the ontological dependence relation which is said to hold between such entities is asymmetric. In jargon the relation would be said to be ‘hyper-intensional’. The difference between the fact that $a$ embodies $b$ and the fact that $b$ embodies $a$ cannot be explicated in familiar, well-understood modal terms. Some philosophers are willing to countenance such fine-grained dependence notions. Others, however, worry that we don’t have a sufficiently clear understanding of what it is that we’re trying to express with these notions and how to evaluate competing dependence claims (see Hofweber 2009: 273-4).

What adds to this worry is that even amongst those friendly to ontological dependence, Rohrbaugh’s position is suggestive of a particularly unpopular approach. As far as can be seen, the only notion of ontological dependence with the features Rohrbaugh requires is the ‘entity’ grounding view of Jonathan Schaffer (2009). This is something of a leftfield option, most theorists preferring a conception which takes grounding to be a relation between facts, or propositions. And they do so for good reason. The existence of an entity or entities is not the only
thing that a mainstream ontological dependence theorist wants to ground. She also wants to ground facts. And for this she needs grounding to relate not just the existence of a certain thing to the existence of another. She needs something more specific than the existence of \( a \) to ground the fact that \( b \) is \( F \).

The same is true of Rohrbaugh. The relation of embodiment isn’t merely invoked to explain the existence of musical works. It is also supposed to explain facts about how musical works could have been and the changes they may undergo. And this involves more than the mere existence of the work, but its having a certain property. And the grounds for this must be not just the existence of an embodiment of the work. After all, it’s part of Rohrbaugh’s motivation that a musical work could lack a property it actually has because its embodiments could have been otherwise. A musical work changes with respect to its properties because of a change in the properties of its embodiments.

The only obvious option for capturing this requirement is that Rohrbaugh takes the grounds for musical works to be something more esoteric than ‘objects’ of the common sense conception. It seems he must commit to states of affairs. A state of affairs is not a proposition, or fact-like entity, it is a philosophical invention of a specific sort. A state of affairs is, roughly, a particular having a property (Armstrong 1978a: 80-1). And the commitment to states of affairs is a similarly unpopular option. These are just worries, but it seems that we’d like our ontology of music to keep us as neutral on such issues as possible. And commitment to entity grounding and states of affairs is far from neutral.

The next objection concerns a certain theoretical obscurity in Rohrabugh’s account, and one that is significant, given the purposes that historical individuals are meant to serve. Again, a lack of theoretical content isn’t decisive and different philosophers have different propensities in their response to such objections. As we’ve seen the way Rohrbaugh motivates his view involves the citation of musical works varying counterfactually and temporarily in their intrinsic properties. The failure of universals to satisfy this intuition is one of the main reasons for endorsing the historical individuals theory.

However, we might wonder, what intrinsic properties do historical individuals have? General views about the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic properties seem to have limited application to historical individuals characterised by Rohrbaugh. A standard condition of intrinsicality for a property of
an object is that that object has that property in virtue of no distinct entity. However, this, it seems, can’t be met by the historical individuals theory. Historical individuals have the properties they do by virtue of the properties had by their embodiments. And this makes it difficult to see what could count as an intrinsic property of a historical individual.

Perhaps an obvious response is to drop the ‘intrinsic’ focus of his argument for the case of musical works. He might say that we are to just take the structural features, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, these are properties of a work which undergo modal and temporal variation. However, again, we’re confronted by a considerable uncertainty over what those properties might be. According to the type/token theorist, the structural component of a work is a universal whose specification is provided by the score of a work. The universal doesn’t have that structural feature, rather it has higher-order requirement features. With historical individuals, however, there is no indication of what their ‘structural’ features are, nor how their structural features are supposed to be related to the properties possessed by their embodiments. Perhaps their structural features are to be given by a succession of conditions which hold at different times, but then the worry is that ‘historical individual’ is nothing more than a misleading way of talking about a series of types.

Perhaps the most decisive problem with the historical individuals theory is that it fails to explain the repeatability of musical works. Rohrbaugh does succeed in elaborating a theory according to which a musical work stands in a one to many relationship to certain particulars. However, this isn’t enough. We want musical works to be repeated in their occurrences and there’s no presumption in favour of the idea that embodiment satisfies this. After all, most of the cases of embodiment Rohrbaugh cites are not cases of repetition. The statue isn’t repeated by its constitutive matter. And there are embodiments of a musical work which do not repeat the work; a score token, for instance, isn’t a repetition of a musical work. It merely represents the work’s repetition conditions. And this should make us suspicious that one can simply add a further restriction to the embodiment relation in order to turn convert it into one which explains repeatability. We don’t think that set membership, or constitution relations can be restricted with such a fortunate result.
So we might wonder, why does Rohrbaugh think that his historical individuals have *occurrences*? One suspects that he’s understands the notion of an occurrence in an unfamiliar way. He thinks that something can have occurrences when it is not repeatable in those occurrences. Although, there isn’t anything to prevent him commandeering the term, there remains a problem. As we noted in the introduction, that musical works are repeated in their occurrences underlies several central features of musical practice. It underwrites several fundamental features of our epistemic and appreciative approach to artworks. That the same work can be encountered in distinct performances is an essential presupposition of musical epistemology which has a proper explanation on the universals theory – the work is identical across the distinct occurrences. Second, when we evaluate the work correctly, we filter out the idiosyncrasies of a particular performance and the work invariant features become the focus of our interest. This is especially important when we assess the interpretation and execution of a work. The universalist story makes sense of this. We aim to assess the repeatable entity specified by the composer against the performers’ determinate execution of it. Rohrbaugh’s unfamiliar conception of occurrences, on the other hand, leaves us none the wiser.

### 3: Rohrbaugh’s Trio and Universals Reconsidered

Rohrbaugh advances his trio of desiderata because he thinks that certain features of everyday musical practice demand that musical works are temporal, modally flexible and temporally flexible. We’ve already considered the intuitive aspects of temporality in chapter 3. We found that there’s something of an impasse over the question of whether any universals are created. Different conceptions of properties lead to different positions on the matter and it isn’t clear what can break the deadlock. Perhaps more importantly, we found that the belief in musical work creation is something of a brute intuition. There seem no independent arguments to support it. The temporality desideratum advanced by Rohrbaugh is distinctive in that it asserts the destructibility of musical works. And it seems that we don’t have any strong intuitions about this. Works for which all notations, memories and recordings have been destroyed are typically said to be ‘lost’ rather than ‘destroyed’,
and so perhaps there’s the suggestion that we think of them as continuing to exist, but being outside of our epistemic range (Levinson 1990c: 262).

Perhaps more interesting is what the universalist can say about the modal flexibility and temporal flexibility desiderata. As we’ve already seen, the suggestion that it is *intrinsic* properties which undergo change is something of a red herring when we consider musical works. On Rohrbaugh’s conception of musical works as dependent entities, there would seem to be no obvious way to cash out the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic properties, and so the universalist is under no compulsion to understand the desiderata in these terms. But what of the data that suggests structural flexibility?

The musical work *qua* universal, whether type or property, has its identity determined by the conditions it lays down for its instances. In the case of the type, this is because its identity is determined by those conditions. For the property theorist, it *just is* the condition required for its instances. Such entities are intrinsically fixed and unchanging (Dodd 2007: 53-6). So what is the type or property theorist to say about flexibility?

Perhaps the best extant response is due to Dodd (2007: 90-1). He accepts that musical works are structurally inflexible over time and across possible worlds. However, when it comes to the purported temporal flexibility of musical works, he offers a telling response supported by features of everyday practice. Dodd takes Rohrbaugh’s argument from revision as a starting point to show that the argument for structural flexibility over time leads to paradoxical conclusions (2007: 149).

Rohrbaugh’s idea is that works standing in the *revision* relation are numerically identical. We start off with a work which is structurally *F*. At a later time, the composer revises the work in such a way that it is non-\(F\). With material objects, this is fine. We might start off with a mug at one time. At a later time we drop it on the floor and its handle breaks off. The mug has undergone a change in its shape by being de-handled in the accident.

However, it is typical in musical practice to compare originals with their revisions. For instance, we might consider whether the revision is as *bold* as the original, or whether it is more *dainty* than the original piece. And given that nothing can be more bold or dainty than itself, it seems we need to recognise the distinctness of the entities the properties are being ascribed to so that they do not end up possessing incompatible properties at the same time. Ultimately, the same
paradox threatens Rohrbaugh’s description of change by ‘passing down’. The new embodiment of a folk tune which is non-$F$ may exist simultaneously with the version which is $F$. If one is $F$ and the other non-$F$ at the same time, we can conclude that they are non-identical.

There is, arguably, one sort of case in which versions don’t exist simultaneously and where the suggested paradox does not threaten. The case in which a composer is composing a work is perhaps more like the constitution case. Suppose there’s only one embodiment, a score token, say, which is changing as the composer adds more note-inscriptions. Ought we describe this sort of case as one in which the work is undergoing structural change as the composer adds to the embodiment?

I think this case is questionable. We should be cautious when we consider ‘incomplete’ works because it is easy to slip into thinking of the embodiment as if it really was something that represented what the work is like, structurally speaking. However, this isn’t really so. During composition there is a process of composition going on, there are inscriptions on the page, but the work itself is, structurally indeterminate. The facts about the work’s structure are not settled and there are no obvious answers to questions about whether it is undergoing structural change at all.

So, although it isn’t prima facie obvious that musical works are unchanging, a little excavation of Rohrbaugh’s motivation shows it to be either paradoxical or just unconvincing. And perhaps this betrays something deeper about our conception of musical works. Perhaps it is part of the point of the musical work concept as it is employed by composers and critics that each musical work is an entity which remains the same over time and, thereby, give a stable aesthetic and artistic content to be understood and evaluated. This is, perhaps, part of the special value of musical works that doesn’t accrue to unrepeatable performances: their repeatability and stability allows their perceptual features to be enjoyed over and again.

The same response, however, cannot be made against the argument that musical works are modally flexible. The paradoxical conclusions only concern the same object having incompatible properties in the same world. And it seems unlikely that part of the point of the musical work is that merely possible audiences have access to the same structure. Further, the thought that a given musical work could have been otherwise with respect to its structural features does have some intuitive pull. We already have Rohrbaugh’s example of Bruckner’s Ninth
Symphony. And I think there’s another group of considerations which might suggest that musical works are modally flexible with respect to their structural features. Sometimes a musical work contains one certain determinate structural feature, rather than another, but its possession of that structural feature strikes us as arbitrary; and this might suggest that having that very feature is inessential to the work.

One generic example of this would seem to be the phenomenon of shapeless transitional passages: parts of a work’s sound sequence which are composed as a means rather than ends in themselves. These represent a method of getting from A to B, joining two independently interesting passages by way of harmonic or metronomic modulation. What is of import in the present context is that the particular selections of structural features in these cases are, within certain functionally prescribed bounds, artistically arbitrary. Other ways of achieving the same end would have had little import upon how the work is understood and this might lead us to suspect they are not essential structural features of the work. It is perhaps natural to think that the very same work could have been composed with different sequences substituted for the ones actually selected by the composer.

A second putative example that concerns another sort of arbitrariness is due to Aaron Ridley (2004). In 1906 Charles Ives composed Central Park in the Dark. The work is supposed to evoke the sonic landscape of an evening walk through the park. It presents some quotational material of popular ragtime music intended to give the impression that it spills over into the walker’s acoustic environment. The works quoted are Hello! Ma Baby and the Washington Post March, and it also features several pieces of “nocturnal murmuring”. Aaron Ridley asks rhetorically “…could you really say it had to be just those parps, just that particular little wobble on the piano?” (Ridley 2004: 42). Further, I think it would be right to question whether the particular works quoted were really essential to the work. After all, it seems that, for Ives’s purposes, those particular tunes aren’t essential. What might be essential is that Ives has some contemporary music spilling into the walker’s sonic environment with some atmospheric murmuring. What might not be essential is that it is those particular works quoted in the particular manner actually exhibited in the work.

What should a universalist say about the purported flexibility of musical works? Julian Dodd offers a response, and I think it is one many type theorists will
be sympathetic to. He treats both purported cases of flexibility in the same way. The line is a tough one: Different structural content, distinct musical work. Any purported case of a structural change in the same musical work is a distinct work. I think this is a good response for temporal flexibility intuitions because there are independent problems engendered by describing them as cases of change in the same entity. Dodd’s denial of modal flexibility, however, doesn’t have the same independent basis. Rather, it is based on the claim that type identity is determined by the identity of a modally inflexible condition to be met by a token. And the modally inflexibility of the condition means that the type, and so, the musical work, are modally inflexible.

There is, however, an alternative to Dodd’s line. Dodd’s reason for thinking that musical works don’t change with respect to their structural features is not because it follows from the type/token theory directly. Rather, it is because he endorses the type/token theory in conjunction with a view according to which the identity of a musical work qua type is determined by the identity of a sonic or acoustic condition to be met by its occurrences. And although this view about musical work identity is one which has a longstanding history with the universals theory, it is not compulsory. Indeed, in the second half of this thesis, we’ll offer good reasons to reject it.

If one doesn’t subscribe to sonicism, or some related view according to which the work is identified with the content (or some part of the content) of the score, one doesn’t need to worry about structural flexibility objections. Although the musical work is still inflexible, and perhaps inflexible in its intrinsic respects (whatever these might be), it can still be flexible with respect to certain of its structural properties, and that’s all that required to meet Rohrbaugh’s structural desideratum. To put it another way, a universalist can think of musical works as modally inflexible with respect to the conditions they require of their correct occurrences and accommodate structural flexibility by denying that those conditions include every structural feature possessed by a musical work.

We’ve already considered a kind of property which can allow modal variations in a musical work’s tonal make-up. We saw that the best attempt at providing a theory of creatable types was due to Howell’s general specification of impure relational properties. Howell’s suggested specification of impure relational properties (e.g. having structure S and being properly causally connected to
A compositional act, however, doesn’t give musical works structural flexibility because structures are built into their specification. However, that isn’t essential to construing musical works as impure relational properties. In the second half of the thesis, we’ll drop the specification of structure and instead allow the structure to  be determined, world by world, by the act of composition. Before we can develop such a theory, however, we need a better understanding of the nature of compositional actions. In the next chapter we’ll meet a theory which construes musical works as compositional action tokens. That theory, we will find is lacking as an answer to the categorial question. It will, however, present us with some interesting considerations about the importance of compositional actions and will help furnish a component of an ontology of musical works that can explain how musical works can be modally flexible with respect to their structural features.

4: Conclusion

The historical individuals theory is no improvement on the universalist view presented in chapter 3. Not only does it force us to pick up some unappealing and radical metaphysics, the explanation of musical work repeatability is unsatisfying. And the repeatability of musical works is a desideratum more central than any of those advanced in support of the historical individuals theory. We have, however, been prompted to consider the question of musical works’ structural flexibility. And I think we can concur with Rohrbaugh in thinking that this is a genuine feature of musical works, albeit one that is to be explained by answering questions about the identity of the universals we take to be musical works. We’ll return to this in chapter 8.
Chapter 5: The Performance Theory

1: Introducing the Performance Theory

In everyday talk the term ‘work’ is subject to something of a product/process ambiguity. In the musical case the ambiguity persists. A composer may do work while composing her piece and we might think that the result of her compositional actions is a work. It is common to think of a musical work like The Eroica Symphony as being, in some sense, the product of the composer’s activities. We’ve already seen several views – versions of the universals theory and the historical individuals view – which are founded on such an intuition. In this chapter, we’ll be considering the novel proposal that musical works stand on the process side of the distinction. More specifically, we’ll be considering the idea that musical works are actions of composition, rather than entities which are the products of such actions. Call any theory which identifies musical works with actions an action theory of musical works.

Expressions designating actions are subject to a type/token ambiguity. There are action types and there are action tokens. As such, there are two natural ways to develop an action theory of musical works. One view due to Gregory Currie (1989) is the action type hypothesis. Although the formulation and the argument of Currie’s book have been influential, limitations of space force us to pass over the action type hypothesis here. Unfortunate though this may be, much of what’s interesting about the action type hypothesis is to be found in a more recent version of the action theory of musical works. This view is due to David Davies (2004) and it is called the performance theory. According to this version of the action theory, musical works are action tokens: datable, locatable acts of composition. On the performance theory, the Eroica symphony just is the particular action of composition performed by Beethoven when he specified the work’s structural content. We’ll be revisiting Davies’s view later in the thesis when we consider questions about the identity of musical works and so we’ll spend a little time elaborating the interconnecting notions he employs.
In his overarching ontology of artworks, Davies introduces notions of *generative act* and *focus of appreciation* to play the roles of process and product respectively (2004: 26). Generative acts are the creative performances of the artist whereby she manipulates a *vehicular medium* to produce an *artistic vehicle* (2004:60). She does so informed by certain shared understandings (conventions) about the *artistic medium* in which she intends her work to be understood (2004: 61-2). These shared understandings constitute the artistic medium and determine that certain manipulations of the vehicular medium are to be understood as articulating an *artistic statement*.

One interesting feature of Davies’s proposal as it concerns musical works is that it postulates two product/process pairs. There is a product and a process for the composer’s work, the *performance-work*. There is also a product and a process for the performer’s work, the *work-performance*. Davies sees the composer’s manipulation of a notation (or other representational device) as the manipulation of a *vehicular medium* (2004: 61-2). This manipulation results in the production of an artistic vehicle, a score, for instance. The artistic vehicle represents a set of constraints by virtue of the conventions constitutive of the artistic medium in which the composer was working during her compositional activity (2004: 58-9).

The conventions operative in the medium employed determine that a certain artistic statement is articulated by the artistic vehicle in which the composer’s manipulations terminate. Artistic statements are not limited to the expression of proposition-like entities. They also include other broadly meaningful expressive and representational features rightly cited in appreciative and critical discourse (2004: 53). Grasping the artistic statement articulated, however, is not the terminus of artistic appreciation. For Davies, artistic appreciation also turns upon *how* the artistic statement is articulated, the manner in which the artist employs the resources available to the artistic medium in order to articulate her artistic statement (2004: 54). Davies calls the work’s completed artistic vehicle which realises the artistic statement in its distinctive manner its *focus of appreciation* (2004: 50).

In what are traditionally considered the singular arts, the work’s focus of appreciation is what is usually thought of as the work itself: the pigmented canvas or singular sculpture. For the musical case the focus of appreciation which articulates the artistic statement is, in part, a “set of constraints on legitimate performance” (2004: 213). However, because Davies thinks that the proper
appreciation of such an art work focus is necessarily mediated by performance events, the sound-event generated by performance is also a part of the work’s focus of appreciation (2004: 214).

Davies also considers performances of musical works as artworks in their own right. He applies his distinction between generative acts and focuses of appreciation to what he calls work-performances, the manifestations of the composed work. The performer’s generative act consists in (typically) ‘prior manipulations of the vehicular medium that guided the performer in her decisions as to how the performed work should be presented to receivers motivating the “performative interpretation” of that work.’ (2004: 221). Also included are ‘the more general theoretical motivations that ground the interpretations of performed works by particular performers,’ (2004: 221). The generative act of the work-performance may include rehearsals, study of contextually salient performances as well as historical information about performative conventions associated with the work in question.

A work-performance may present a work by intentionally exemplifying the constraints determined by the composer’s act of specification (2004: 216). For Davies, an auditor of a work-performance hears two works at once. She hears the event qua focus of appreciation of a work-performance. She may also attend to the constraints required of a correct example, those constraints specified by the composer. If successful, the listener may discern the two correctly by correctly judging which properties are composed-work constraints and which are characteristic of the performer’s artistic statement.

This is all very interesting, but this doesn’t detract from the action theory’s ability to attract incredulous stares from the musical specialist, the layman and the philosopher of music alike. The action theorist is aware of this and aims to show that, when one conceives of the ontology of the arts correctly, one will find the incredulous stares harmless.
2: Arguing for the Performance Theory: Methodology

Both Gregory Currie (1989: 11-12) and David Davies (2004: 18-23) subscribe to methodologies which give a prominent place to pre-philosophical intuitions concerning musical works in deciding answers to the question of which ontological category works of art belong to. And this seems surprising. How could a methodological perspective rooted in pre-philosophical intuitions reach such pre-philosophically counterintuitive conclusions?

The answer, in embryonic form, is found in Currie’s suggestion that our categorial proposal should respect the ‘ways in which works are to be judged and appreciated’ and can only be developed in light of ‘an overall aesthetic theory which describes and analyses the sorts of relations that hold between us as critics and observers, and the works themselves.’ (Currie 1989: 11-12). Although not entirely pellucid, we can see that the wording suggests that our categorial assignment ought to be one formulated in light of distinctively evaluative aesthetic and artistic judgments.

David Davies (2004, 2009) goes to some trouble to clarify and elaborate such an approach. His methodology is formulated in what he calls epistemological arguments which are summarised as follows:

(P1) “An epistemological premiss. Rational reflection upon our critical and appreciative practice confirms that certain sorts of properties, actual or modal, are rightly ascribed to what are termed “works” in that practice, or that our practice rightly individuates “works” in a certain way.” (Davies 2004: 23).

(P2) “[A] methodological premiss – the pragmatic constraint. Artworks must be entities that can bear the sorts of properties rightly ascribed to what are termed “works” in our reflective critical and appreciative practice; that are individuated in the way such “works” are or would be individuated; and that have the modal properties that are reasonably ascribed to “works” in that practice.” (Davies 2004: 18).

(C) “[A]n ontological conclusion. Either (negative) artworks cannot be identified with Xs, or (positive) artworks can or should be identified with Ys.” (Davies 2004: 23).
Now, it might appear that almost anyone in the contemporary debate could assert that their arguments, including those intended to reach product theories, obey this standard of reasoning (c.f. Dodd 2007: 183-4). However, there are several important nuances and details Davies elaborates.

We’ve already examined the methodological premise in chapter 1. We found that there was no reason to accept the radical descriptivist’s claim that diligent reconstruction of musical practice is immune to error with respect to the nature of musical works. However, an action theorist could argue that her theory warrants acceptance without the epistemic privilege thesis. She could argue that we have better reason to believe in an action theory than we have to believe in any product theory. This would involve the citation of data from practice which are explicable on an action theory, but not on a product theory.

The content of a particular epistemological premise will be garnered from observation of the sorts of properties ascribed to musical works in the discourses associated with musical inquiry and appreciation. And we might add, as Davies suggests, that an epistemological premise can be furnished through observing the way that musical works are ‘treated’ in their associated practice (2004: 22). Although the epistemological premise itself must be some sort of linguistic representation, the evidence for it may include non-linguistic activities of practitioners. This much, it seems, might be accepted by anyone engaged in the ontology of music. There are, however, a couple of distinctive elements to Davies’s method in drawing epistemological premises from the data of critical practice.

The notion of ‘reflection’ used in the above formulation is important in Davies’s project and has a specific interpretation that might not be obvious. Davies shares the concerns raised in the introduction of this thesis when he acknowledges that musical practice is, “almost certainly inconsistent, reflecting the various incompatible quasi-theoretical or explicitly theoretical assumptions of receivers and critics.” (2004: 19). Our solution was to rank musical judgments in terms of their centrality. Davies, however, offers a different ‘filtering’ device: rational reflection.

Rationally reflecting upon the data furnished by critical practice involves us taking the raw data of actual critical practice ascriptions and comparing it with a putative representation of “right” practice; a conception of the norms that should govern our critical judgments. Where a putative representation of right practice
diverges from actual practice we should reflectively assess whether we would accept such a revision. His proposal about the standards that should govern our critical judgments is that they are determined by “conceptions of the goals of our critical practice, the values sought in such practice, and the values offered by the works such practice takes as its objects.” (2004: 20). Davies thinks that proceeding in such a manner, weighing conceptions of right practice against actual practice and the goals sought in that practice should eventually lead to reflective equilibrium: an optimal point of coherence between our general appreciative principles and specific judgments. Importantly, Davies’s approach is artistically insular. The attainment of reflective equilibrium is achieved through practice internal judgments and a topic neutral notion of logical consistency. 24

A second qualification we might add in understanding Davies’s epistemological arguments is less than explicit, but has a significant contribution in Davies’s selection of particular epistemological premises. Consider the following:

...in reflecting upon our artistic practice in this way, the intuitions that are strongest will be those that relate to practical aspects of that practice itself – judgments made, ways in which entities are treated etc., - rather than intuitions about what works are, ontologically speaking. I hope I speak for the reader in suggesting that, to the extent that I have pre-theoretical intuitions about the latter, they are grounded in my intuitions about the former. (2004: 22).

The affirmation that epistemological arguments will give greater weight to intuitions that relate to practical aspects of musical practice than those concerning what musical works ‘are’ in the ontological sense is a little unclear.

One reading, however, I think, makes best sense of the direction of Davies’s arguments. It would appear that Davies’s aim is to undermine the evidential force of judgments which appear to ascribe what we might call ‘ontological’ or ‘metaphysical’ properties and centralise what we might call ‘appreciative’ properties.

Davies doesn’t offer any clear way of delineating the two, but we might think we can get a grip on paradigm cases. Predicates like ‘is a substance’, ‘is

24 Worries about whether this is satisfactory were raised in chapter 1. In particular, it seemed puzzling to think that where we have differences in opinion about musical works’ properties, there will always be aims of artistic practice shared by disputants which will allow us to decide which opinion is correct.
causally efficacious’ and ‘has temporal parts’ are the sorts of predicates which abound in metaphysical discourse. Predicates like, ‘is syncopated’, ‘is serene’ and ‘is original’ are the sorts of predicates we find employed in musical discourse in the interpretation and evaluation of musical works. And perhaps Davies’s thought here is that practical ascriptions of the latter kind trump the former when it comes to deciding on the correct ontological classification of art works.

This thought, or something similar, is instrumental in motivating action theories. Expert practitioners appear to think of musical works as products rather than compositional acts. However, this sort of judgment lacks evidential force. Expert practitioners’ judgments about matters metaphysical are significantly less reliable than their judgments about matters of musical understanding and appreciation. So, our action theorist might argue, when we subtract the ontological intuitions had by practitioners from the totality of their beliefs, we’ll find that the remaining portion strongly suggests that musical works are actions. This remainder is supposed to be more reliable data, and so, we ought to assign musical works to the category of actions.

If correct, this methodological thought might undermine the line taken so far in this thesis. Perhaps Davies might argue that the ‘strategic’ desiderata which have motivated the acceptance of a universals theory stand on the side of ontological intuitions. As such they are intuitions of limited force in deciding answers to the categorial question. And, it might be argued, this is particularly salient when the action theorist unveils her desiderata derived from ground-level appreciative considerations.

There are two good reasons for resisting this line of thought, however. First, it isn’t entirely clear how the distinction between practical and ontological intuitions is to be drawn. Although we have a grasp on paradigmatic ascriptions in both cases, the desiderata advanced for the universals theory aren’t clearly ‘ontological’ in the sense required. The repeatability, audibility and causal efficacy of musical works may have their best explanation by way of certain metaphysical hypotheses, but it’s an open matter what sort of ontological category might be offered in attempts to explain them. What’s more, although repeatability and the like aren’t typically mentioned in explicit evaluative discourse, this is because they’re normally taken as a given and, as we’ve argued they are presuppositions of some of the most basic features of our practices of enquiring into and appreciating
musical works. That musical works are repeatable, audible and causally active are central assumptions in our musical epistemology.

Second, the subtraction of ontologically strategic desiderata will, in all likelihood, lead not to a situation in which we must accept the action theory, but to a situation in which neither the rivals, nor the performance theory prevails.

Davies seems to think that the ‘properties ascribed’ to musical works in our reflective practice will indicate that musical works could only be actions of composition. However, there are two reasons to be sceptical about this. First, as Davies is aware, there are plenty of reflective practical judgments about musical works which couldn’t possibly be about actions (2004: 178). Second, as everyone in the debate acknowledges, we can’t just assume that every apparent ascription of a property to a musical work is to be taken at face value. All extant theories are involved in some sort of semantic tinkering, and Davies’s view is far from an exception to this rule (2004: 179). And the result of course is that the talk of ‘properties ascribed in practice’ must be taken with a pinch of salt. The data is that there are apparently true sentences in which predicates apply to whatever musical work names name. We want, of course the smoothest connection between our ontology and our semantics, but without some strategic metaphysical desiderata, one suspects that the range of possible explanatory options would proliferate interminably.

If this is the methodological suggestion which is supposed to turn the tables on product theories, it is unconvincing and we may retain our confidence that the employment of strategic ontological desiderata is a sensible idea.

2.1 Appreciative Considerations for the Performance Theory

The categorial theory developed in this thesis is what Davies would call a contextualised product theory. We’ve already seen one contextualised product theory, namely, that offered by Levinson (1980). Our view is clearer and better than Levinson’s, but it is similar in certain respects. First, it’s a product theory because it identifies musical works with products rather than processes. Second, our theory is
contextualised because it aims at individuating musical works by reference to their respective contexts of composition.

As Davies sees it, the problem for contextualised product theories is that there are practical judgments made which cannot be accommodated on the contextualised product theory. These judgments fall into two sorts. One concerns the role of authorial intentions in our appreciation and evaluation of musical works (2004: 80). The other concerns intuitions concerning how musical works differ from each other with regards to the aspects of context which enter into their proper appreciation (2004: 105). I present these arguments in turn.

The first argument Davies makes concerns the relevance of failed semantic intentions to appreciative practice. He originally makes this argument in connection with the semantic properties of literary works, but he also mentions it in passing as bearing upon musical works (2004: 83, 221). Although Davies’s central examples involve the intentions of performers performing a musical work, we can also see some intuitive examples where failed intentions are relevant to the appreciation of musical works. A composer may, for instance, aim to realise some broadly meaningful statement by specifying conditions for its occurrence. She might aim to realise expressive properties, like melancholy, triumph or joy. She might intend to quote the work of another composer with an aim at passing some sort of musical comment upon it. In these sorts of cases, it seems natural to assume that a composer’s failure to realise such aims could be relevant to the proper appreciation of the work in question.

Davies argues at length that the meaning properties of a literary work have a metaphysical independence from the author’s actual semantic intentions in writing the piece (2004: 84-96). That is, semantic properties that the author tries to realise and what she actually realizes can come apart. And so, a work’s focus of appreciation can have meaning properties distinct from those the author tried to articulate. Nevertheless, thinks Davies, it is perfectly legitimate to take facts about the failed semantic intentions of the author as relevant to the appreciation of the work (2004: 95). These appreciation relevant features are taken to be artistic properties of the work which are determined by facts about the generative act which have no significant bearing on the nature of the work’s focus of appreciation. Davies employs these observations about appreciative ascriptions in a reductio ad absurdum argument against the contextualised product theory.
P1) The proper object of critical evaluation of a work is what the author achieves, not what she tries to achieve;

P2) What the author achieves is the product of her creative activities, the “work-product.”

P3) If the proper object of critical evaluation is the product of the author’s creative activities, then her actual semantic intentions can affect the critical evaluation of her work only by determining meaning-properties of the work product.

P4) For any type of meaning-property P for which [Davies’ analysis of meaning properties] is correct, actual authorial semantic intentions with respect to P do not determine the P-type meaning properties of the work-product.

C) For any type of meaning property P for which [Davies’ analysis of meaning properties] is correct, actual authorial semantic intentions with respect to P are irrelevant to the critical evaluation of works. (2004: 97).

The conclusion is inconsistent with the intuition that failed semantic intentions are relevant to the appreciation of works. I grant Davies the supposition that both P1 and P4 are true. The obvious choice is between P2 and P3. Davies (2004: 99) argues that the contextualized product theorist will need to hold onto P2 and so be forced to reject P3. However, Davies argues that for the contextualized product theorist there is no way to explain why semantic intentions not realized in the work-product bear upon its meaning properties. Because P2 claims that what was achieved, the proper object of critical evaluation, is the work-product it appears that the contextualized product theorist, by P1, is forced to ascribe any meaning properties not realized in that product not to what the artist achieves, but rather to what the artist tries to achieve and these, Davies thinks, are more aptly implicated in the evaluation of the artist (2004: 99). For the performance theorist, however, there is no such problem. The attempt to articulate certain meaning properties is a feature of both successful and failed performances of generating a work focus (2004: 100). And so, on the performance theory, failed semantic intentions can be relevant to evaluation and this is supposed to give it an advantage over the contextualised product theory.
Davies’ second argument is premised upon the *work relativity of modal flexibility*. It is widely assumed that there is an intimate connection between the features of a work which bear upon its correct appreciation and its essential properties. According to Davies, the sorts of features of a work’s provenance which bear upon its counterfactual identification vary from work to work and this implies that the essential elements of a work’s provenance also vary from work to work. If we are contextualists, it seems natural to think that for a given actual work, we can envisage some counterfactual situations for which that work could have been composed and some counterfactual situations for which that work could not have been composed. Take, for instance, Bartôk’s *Concerto for Orchestra*. One of the work’s most notable features is that it makes a satirical artistic statement through quotation of Shostakovich’s Seventh Symphony. Arguably, any work in a counterfactual situation which fails to make such a statement in this manner would be non-identical with the actual *Concerto for Orchestra*.25

Any of the contextualized product theories offered by Levinson (1980, 1990, 1992) can explain the counterfactual dependence of *Concerto for Orchestra* upon Shostakovich’s Seventh Symphony. Although his different proposals have different results in certain cases, they all feature some proposal concerning the factors constitutive of musico-historical contexts which give a pretty fine grained account of context individuation. That is, any of his proposals about musical work identity would be sensitive to the presence or absence of Shostakovich’s Seventh Symphony in the contextual backdrop for Bartôk’s composing of the *Concerto for Orchestra*.

The problem for Levinson is that he specifies contexts as (partially) constituted by very general features, like the ‘total musical development’ at the time of composition. If Bartôk’s work is composed in a context containing the Seventh Symphony, then composers contemporary to Bartôk are also composing in such a context. And this means that Levinson’s contextualised product theory fails to accommodate the intuition that some works composed around the same time as Bartôk’s *could* have been composed had the Shostakovich work not been composed. Classical contemporaries of Bartôk who are unaware and uninfluenced by Shostakovich’s work, jazz composers and folk musicians who composed in a broad

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25 The convincingness of the phenomenon of WRMF should not be thought to rest upon the particular example given here. The reader may choose examples to which she gives greater credence in illustrating the phenomenon.
musical context containing the Shostakovich work, might nevertheless have composed the same works even if the Seventh Symphony had never been composed. The uniformity of general contextual specifications for works composed at the same time conflicts with the plausible intuition that, “...aspects of provenance bear upon our modal judgments with a variable force that reflects our overall sense of what is to be appreciated in a given work.” (Davies 2004: 112). We’ll return to this argument when we consider Levinson’s proposal as one germane to identity issues.

3: Contextualised Product Theory Responses

One option for the contextualised product theorist is to simply deny the premises of Davies’s arguments. One might cast doubt upon Davies’s account of how meaning properties of an artwork are determined in order to avoid the argument from unrealised intentions (see e.g. Stecker 2005: 75-6). With regards to the work relativity of modal flexibility, one might try to resist the assumptions about the proper analysis of sentences which purportedly reflect our de re modal intuitions (see e.g. Caplan and Matheson 2008: 497-8).

Such options are, however, strategically unappealing. The prima facie evidence from practice appears in favour of Davies’s considerations. Pre-theoretical appreciative practices do appear to cite failed composer intentions as evidence for appreciative judgments, and it does seem natural to think that musical works differ from each other with respect to the sorts of contextual factors they depend upon. And even if these intuitive proposals can be overruled, it looks like the dispute will embroil us in picking up commitments concerning how meaning properties really are determined, or the correct way to analyse counterfactual statements about musical works. We’ll consider Levinson’s options in more detail in chapter 7. I’ll argue that none is especially appealing.

So, what’s the right response? I propose to handle the data Davies presents in less confrontational manner: incorporate generative acts into the impure relational properties identified with musical works. I think Davies has made a good case that compositional actions must be cited in the correct theory of musical work identity and that they determine the sorts of properties that musical works have. But
it doesn’t follow that musical works are, ontologically speaking, generative acts, rather than products contextualised by those acts. Of course, there’s plenty to be said about this response, but we’ll leave it at the schematic level for now. The conception of musical works as impure relational properties which incorporate acts of composition will become unveiled in the second half of the thesis when we turn explicitly to questions concerning musical work identity.

So the methodological suggestion required to turn the tables on the product theory is unconvincing. Further, the features of practice supposedly inexplicable for the contextualised product theory are objections to a specific version of that view only. We’ve located the sort of contextualised product theory to be employed in explaining the relevance of failed semantic intentions and the work relativity of modal flexibility. Indeed, it is the same sort of account which will deflect the suggestion that musical works can vary modally with respect to their ‘structural’ features. We’ll elaborate the proposal more fully when we answer questions about musical work identity. For now, it’s time to go on the offensive against the performance theory.

4: Revisionism Objections

In this section I will elaborate the revisionism objections often taken to indicate that Davies’s proposal doesn’t satisfy the standard presented by the pragmatic constraint. Given that a universal theory can explain the two features of practice Davies presents against Levinson’s view, problems accruing to the performance theory not shared by the universals theory, should lead us to favour the latter sort of account. The most obvious objections to Davies’ theory he calls revisionism objections (2004: 178). They are claims entailed by the performance theory which look to force a revision or unwarranted addition to our practice embodied conception of musical works. He divides revisionism objections into two types.

Earlier we mentioned the incredulous stares likely to be evoked by the performance theory. However, incredulous stares are one thing, objections another.
Davies elaborates what he sees as the reasons that such incredulity might be warranted. Here’s one sort of complaint about the performance theory:

**(Type 1 objections)** We say all manner of things about artworks that cannot be sensibly said about generative performances (2004: 178).

We might put this objection in a more direct form: musical works, as typically understood, have properties which are not possessed by actions of composition. The acoustic and formal features typically associated with critical and appreciative practice are of this sort. Discussions about musical works almost invariably cite some acoustic features upon which certain formal, expressive or representational properties depend. And these properties often play a crucial role in justifying *prima facie* correct judgments about works. If, however, works are identified with generative acts, it seems that such ascriptions and the judgements grounded in them should be revised.

Here’s another sort of objection that might make the performance theory seem counterintuitive:

**(Type 2 objections)** The performance theory...commits us to the coherence and possible truth of claims about works that violate standards of accepted linguistic usage.” (2004: 178).

Again, we can offer a more straightforward reading of this formulation: actions of composition have properties that musical works lack. Properties had by acts of composition, but not by musical works include like *being interrupted by bouts of tuberculosis*, and properties which admit of general classification such as ascriptions of instrumental rationality, or ethical properties. It seems that even if we thought that predicates characterizing interruptive or ethical features of works could be rightly ascribed to musical works, we’d probably think that the propriety of doing so would be grounded in features of the work’s focus of appreciation. That is, if we did think a work was interrupted, instrumentally rational or ethically praiseworthy, it would not be because simply because the act of its composition possessed such properties.

Are these objections exhaustive? Well, not quite. We also have temporal intuitions about musical works which don’t fit neatly into either category. We
appear to think of musical works as persisting a while after their composition. The *Eroica* exists now, we seem to think, and it is non-standard to ascribe it properties in the past tense. One expects that the considerations of tense will be dealt with by Davies in parallel to his response to other type 1 revisionism objections.

We might elucidate Type 1 objections by slotting their content into an epistemological premise:

\[(EP^*)\] Reflection on our critical and appreciative practice confirms that certain properties are rightly ascribed to what are termed “works” in that practice. These properties include *repeatability* and *having* (certain) *sonic*, *formal*, and *expressive* properties. Musical works continue to exist and bear such properties once their generative acts have reached completion.

Action tokens do not have those properties (seemingly) rightly ascribed in practice and so type 1 objections can be employed in epistemological arguments to the conclusion that works cannot be identified with action tokens. Even a believer in the performance theory as the best explanation of the relevance of failed semantic intentions and the work relativity of modal flexibility should question whether those advertised explanations are really worth the cost suggested by type 1 objections. The data cited in (EP*), in contrast to data from Davies’ two sources, are more uniformly manifested in practice and appear more central to our conception of musical works, being widely manifested in the way we speak about musical works and the way we inquire into them. As such, it seems that an endorser of the style of argument Davies advocates should at least examine the possibility of offering an alternative explanation of putative features of right practice cited before endorsing the performance theory over the type/token theory.

### 4.1: Davies’s Response to Type 1 Objections

Davies’s response to the type 1 objections is to bite the bullet. He admits that generative acts do not possess properties ascribed to what we actually call ‘works’ in practice, but claims that insofar as such ascriptions are correct, they are elliptical descriptions of a work’s focus of appreciation (2004: 179). Presumably,
this move might be employed to deal with the tense data too. Because Davies thinks that many of the ascriptions made in practice are elliptical ascriptions to focuses of appreciation, he might argue that the tense selected to make the ascriptions will reflect the fact that one is ascribing properties to something which currently has the property ascribed.

Davies’ argument for why the elliptical ascription treatment of type 1 properties is preferable to this intuitive alternative proceeds in two stages. The first stage invokes a ‘partners in guilt strategy’. The contextualised product theorist and the performance theorist are alike in that they must both introduce hypotheses to accommodate the fact that the entities each identifies with musical works don’t bear the properties ascribed in everyday musical practice (2004: 180-1). This is supposed to level the playing field. Then, Davies goes on to argue that identifying musical works with action tokens provides a better fit with the aims of musical understanding (2004: 187-8).

I object to both of these latter components of Davies’s strategy. First, the partners in guilt strategy Davies employs fails because the performance theory is more revisionary of the face value construal of musical ascriptions than is universalism. Second, I will argue that Davies’ argument to the conclusion that the performance theory provides a better fit with the aims of musical understanding trades upon a poorly motivated analogy with scientific understanding, as well as an unnecessarily restrictive account of what scientific understanding amounts to.

Although Davies is primarily concerned with Levinson’s contextualised product theory, he offers an argument against a conception of types similar to that offered by Dodd and Wolterstorff. His aim is to show that just as the performance theory is vulnerable to type 1 objections, the dominant conception of musical works as types is equally vulnerable. Here’s how Davies puts it:

As [Woltersorff] acknowledges (1975) it is a consequence of his account that musical works do not possess many of the properties we regularly seem to ascribe to them – for example containing a C# in the seventh measure…but rather being such that any correct performance [of it] contains a C# in the seventh measure. (Davies 2004: 181 n.1).
Wolterstorff’s contention here is that correct performances, rather than the musical works they are performances of, instantiate the tonal properties ascribed. This is meant to parallel Davies’s claim that it is not works but their focuses of appreciation which bear many of the properties ascribed in practice. For Wolterstorff, it is not the case that the subject of the ascription varies, it is that the predicate should not be interpreted as expressing the property it is used to ascribe in non-analogical contexts. According to the analogical predication thesis, in the ascription of acoustic properties to musical works, the predicate stands for a systematically related property. This, it must be admitted is revisionary of the face value construal of musical discourse. Nevertheless, just because two theories have revisionary consequences does not mean they are equally revisionary. And to the extent we want to minimise revision, we should, ceteris paribus, opt for the theory which is least revisionary. As it happens Davies’s proposal is the more revisionary of the two.

On the performance theory, the focus of appreciation of a composer’s generative act has two parts. One such part is a set of constraints (2004: 213) The other part is the sound-occurrence which manifests the work (2004: 214). It seems unlikely that the mention of sets of constraints plays any major role Davies’s thoughts on the matter. However we might interpret his suggestion as one on which the focus of appreciation of a musical work is simply some constraints on correct performance.

The notion of a constraint on correct performance of a work is not made pellucid. Nevertheless, we can be confident that it is not generally true that a constraint for being a legitimate F should also be F itself. This is to confuse the content of a constraint with the constraint itself. This seems obvious in the musical case. The constraint that a performance be issued from a saxophone need not be issued from a saxophone. As such, the performance theorist should acknowledge that her proposal incurs the same revisionary consequences as Wolterstorff’s. That something is a constraint on being a legitimate F does not entail that that thing instantiates the condition it demands. As such, the constraint that a work qua focus of appreciation contains a C# in its seventh measure, will not also have a C# in its seventh measure. If Davies wants to avoid revising the intuitive truth values of such ascriptions, it appears that he will have to employ something like a thesis of analogical predication. This means that Davies, so far as constraints on correct
performance are concerned, will require the employment of something like the thesis of analogical predication.

One might suggest a rejoinder to this objection premised on Davies’ proposal that the sound-event which is the focus of appreciation of the work-performance is also a proper part of the focus of appreciation of the performance-work (see section 1 above). Davies might contend that the focuses of appreciation of performance-works do instantiate the properties which Wolterstorff claims must be dealt with by analogical predication because performance work focuses of appreciation have parts which instantiate them.

There are a number of objections to this sort of move. First, it commits us to bizarre gerrymandered entities. We will be forced to countenance entities which have, as parts, constraints and acoustic events. An entity which has as parts constraints demanded of correct performances and parts which are the entities instantiating those constraints upon correct performance seem bizarre. Whatever they are, the postulation of such entities would require some elaboration and motivation.

In addition, it would seem that musical works, as understood in practical contexts, don’t require performances in order to satisfy the sorts of predicates applied to them in appreciative contexts. It is perfectly natural to discuss a work which was never performed in the same sort of terms as those of works which have been performed. When a work has just been composed the sorts of tonal predicates at issue still apply. That is, there needn’t ever have been a performance, and need never be a performance, of a work \( W \) to secure the truth or falsity of a statement like “\( W \) contains a C# in its seventh measure”, just so long as \( W \) lays down the relevant condition. If Davies were to claim that the performances which are parts of a performance-work’s focus of appreciation were those which bore the tonal ascriptions like ‘contains a C# in its seventh measure’, unperformed works would not be able to satisfy those predicates, and this would be far more revisionary than the analogical predication thesis.

So, without further elaboration, which Davies never supplies, the performance theorist should accept that her explanation of the application of acoustic predicates to musical works’ focuses of appreciation requires the postulation of an analogical predication hypothesis. The additional problem for the performance theorist is that the performance theorist must also face additional
revisionism objections, namely, type 1 objections with which we began. Her explanation of how everyday predications of acoustic properties to works and their performances isn’t even about works themselves, rather such an ascription is to be made to a theoretical surrogate: the focus of appreciation. So, she needs the postulation of the analogical predication hypotheses and she requires that it be applied to entities distinct from musical works. This, as far as one can tell, leaves the performance theorist more guilty than the universals theorist. Can the performance theorist dig her way out of this mire? One route she might follow is that mentioned earlier. The performance theorist might argue that the project of musical understanding demands that we accept the additional costs of her theory because of its tight fit with our aims of musical appreciation.

This brings us to the final leg of Davies’s strategy in arguing for the performance theory. The idea is that that the identification of musical works with compositional actions is preferable because it fits better with our aims in musical understanding.

What Davies thinks favours the performance theory is that “talk of appreciating works is properly analogous to talk of studying or understanding natural phenomena…” (2004: 188). According to Davies, scientific enquiry into phenomena where there is a process and a product, like the investigation of sunburn, is typically directed towards the process which causes the product, rather than towards the product itself. Davies thinks the conjunction of these two claims should lead us to understand musical understanding as the elaboration of the process which leads to the generation of a focus of appreciation. However, the argument is somewhat obscure and neither claim, made pellucid, is particularly plausible.

First, Davies doesn’t make the crucial assertion that musical enquiry and scientific enquiry are properly analogous in the relevant respects. His claim is that scientific understanding talk and musical work understanding talk are properly analogous. However, a respect in which between talk about Fs and talk about Gs is similar doesn’t, without further assumptions, entail that Fs and Gs are the same in those respects. This crucially obscures what should be held true about musical enquiry given purported facts about scientific enquiry. The analogy should surely hold between scientific enquiry and musical work enquiry, not talk about them.

So, we ought to construe the analogy as holding between musical and scientific understanding instead. However, on this reading, it is not clear exactly
why we should understand musical enquiry as properly analogous in the relevant sense. Indeed Davies himself accepts that it is controversial to hold that artistic understanding and scientific understanding have the same goals (2004: 188). However, in passing, he suggests that the appearance of controversy is benign because of the plausibility of the claim that artworks have their provenance essentially (2004: 188). It’s not clear how this suggestion provides a reason for accepting Davies’s option, however. For one thing, one might buy into the distinction between a work’s associated generative act and its focus of appreciation, but identify a musical work with the focus of appreciation which has its provenance essentially, as Levinson does, for instance.

More important, however, is that Davies’ claim about scientific understanding, as a general proposal about scientific understanding, is false. To restrict scientific understanding and explanation of a fact to a description of the processes leading to its obtaining is a matter of stipulation. Scientific theory sometimes affords understanding of phenomena by way of constitutive explanations. We can understand why diamonds are hard by understanding the nature and configuration of their constitutive molecules. This is not an explanation of what causes a diamond to be hard in the sense Davies requires i.e. one which identifies historical events which lead to the diamond being hard.

Similarly, we can understand why a musical work is boring, or logically structured by an analysis in terms of the properties that musical work includes. Intuitively, this seems to provide a better analogy with musical understanding. It is explanation in terms of constitution that would seem to be at issue in a great many debates about the correct appreciation and understanding of musical works. One natural way to justify one’s judgment concerning a composition would seem to be to point to its constitutive features, rather than indicating the causal path by which such features ended up as parts of the composition.

In conclusion, attempts to argue that the performance theory is less revisionary than the type/token theory fail. Any revisionism objections applied to the Wolterstorffian theory appear to have a parallel in the performance theory. The performance theory, however, has an additional revision cost owing to the identification of musical works with generative acts. The suggestion that is supposed to favour the sort of revision Davies envisages doesn’t work. Davies’s claim that the aim of musical understanding is analogous to scientific understanding
trades upon a controversial analogy and a misrepresentation of scientific explanation.

4.2: Davies’s Response to Type 2 objections

While type 1 objections express the worry that generative acts are lacking properties we think of works as having, type 2 objections express the worry that generative acts are abundant in properties we don’t typically think of works as having.

A brief survey of the sorts of features correctly ascribable to action tokens reveals an abundance of features rarely, if ever, attributed to works by experts or the lay. Action tokens have a specific bounded spatio-temporal location and are frequently interrupted by various episodes of the composer’s life. A particular generative act, for instance, might have occurred when and where the composer was occupying at the time of composition. It may have been interrupted by a holiday, sickness or the composition of more lucrative works. The act of composition might have been morally permissible or obligatory, perhaps depending upon its intrinsic nature, or due to its consequences. Finally it might be the recipient of judgments concerning whether it was, given the composer’s beliefs and desires, a rational thing to do.

On the descriptivist assumption that rightly reconstructed practice yields an exhaustive description of the attributes rightly ascribable to musical works, entities which have properties not ascribed by right practice should not be identified with works. It seems pretty difficult to envisage a situation in which we would reflect on our practice, in light of its goals and so on, and deem the properties which figure in type 2 objections as attributable to works in a representation of right practice. And so, on the descriptivist methodology Davies envisages, it would seem that type 2 objections are forceful.

In chapter 1, I expressed scepticism about the descriptivist methodological proposal. In particular, I denied that the intra-artistically justified ontological characterization of works’ should be considered exhaustive. So, the same epistemological argument is not available to me. Indeed, given that what can be
garnered from critical discussions is somewhat quiet on the matter of a work’s spatio-temporal location, its possession of ethical or instrumentally rational features and so on, it seems that we shouldn’t automatically reject that works can have such properties. After all, it might just be that musical works do have features not entailed by a practical artistic understanding of them, just as a wedding ring might have properties of which the jeweller is ignorant.

However, I do think that the unmotivated imparting of properties not required by a representation of right practice should be construed as a cost to a theory, albeit one which can be offset by other benefits. The situation is this: where critical practice falls silent about whether works possess or do not possess some property whose possession is entailed by a given categorial assignment, we should not automatically conclude that works do not have such properties. There might be properties musical works possess which are not entailed by critical and appreciative practice, just as there might be properties of paintings qua persisting material objects not entailed by the best critical theory we have about them. Nevertheless, we also want to say that the unmotivated ascription of properties by an ontological theory should be considered costly. How is this balancing act to be achieved?

The best way of giving type 2 objections a role in assessing the adequacy of a given ontological proposal is to consider the role that the deliverances of critical practice play in developing an ontological theory. Critical practice, properly refined, will be a theory about what works are like and it will be a theory which is informed by the richest data and authoritative experts on musical work matters. As such, the apparent commitments of this theory can be understood as evidence for propositions concerning what musical works are like. The proper explanation of the force of type 2 objections is to consider the gratuitous additions, like ascriptions of a particular spatio-temporal location, as costly because theories which entail works have features which no evidence points toward are to that extent superfluous. They entail hypotheses about musical works for which no evidence independent of the ontological proposal in question has been adduced. This is not to say that any ascription of a property critical practice is silent on results in an end game situation for the ontological theory in question. Like other theoretical virtues, we must assess the cost of gratuitous hypotheses of rival theories and consider possible lines of independent motivation for the seemingly gratuitously ascribed properties. Nevertheless, this understanding of the force of type 2 objections seems to place a
burden upon the performance theorist of finding independent motivation for the
ascription of the properties which feature in type 2 objections. With this in mind we
can consider Davies’ response to the type 2 objections in a way which doesn’t rely
on the thought that musical works should be characterised only by reference to the
features ascribed in right practice.

Davies’ response to type 2 objections is that they are premised on
ignorance about the subtleties of *doings*, the complex action tokens he identifies
with artworks. Doings, according to Davies, are complex actions constituted by
sub-actions which are their parts. Doings differ from basic actions according to
Davies in that they are identifiable only relative to an *adequate representation* of
the composer’s compositional activity, what the composer did understood in
artistically relevant terms (2004. 116-7). Davies thinks that some of the type 2
objections cite properties which would not be accepted as properties of those
generative artistic acts, but rather would only be correctly ascribable to ‘what the
artist did understood in different terms,’ (2004: 178). This is how Davies sees
features like *being interrupted* and presumably would extend this treatment to
ethical properties and ascriptions of rationality. His thought is that these are features
of the relevant events under a different description. Perhaps my extending my arm
in such and such a way might be the same event as my depositing money in the
charity box. Under the first description, however, there seems no ethical praise
warranted. Under the second description, however, it seems there is.

With regards to the actions’ bounded spatio-temporal location, Davies’s
response is more sophisticated. He thinks that in some cases very specific spatio-
temporal features of the generative act might require citation in the adequate
representation of the work, and thus may be constitutive of the artistic doing that is
the work. However, he thinks that in many cases those specific features have no
mention in an adequate representation of the generative act. In such cases, Davies
claims that although the work qua doing has those spatio-temporal features, it has
them only contingently because they do not number amongst the work’s
constitutive properties. As he says “the precise temporal location of the work is
among its properties, and may even be among its constitutive properties, qua doing,
if such a temporal location is entailed by the nature of the doing in question.
Otherwise, it is a contingent property of the work having no bearing upon its proper
appreciation. Similarly, the spatial location will be relevant to the artistic
appreciation only insofar as ‘it is entailed by features of the cultural context that enter into the identity of the work qua doing.’ (2004: 179). That is, whatever spatio-temporal location of the work’s generative act is demanded by the adequate representation of the doing is the spatio-temporal location of the work.

I am suspicious about the nature of the doings posited by Davies and their seemingly intimate relationship with adequate representations. The claim that works have whatever spatio-temporal location is required by their proper appreciation should strike us as somewhat unprincipled. It looks like doings are stipulated so that their natures get around apparent counterevidence. We’ll consider this sort of objection to doings in chapter 8 and we’ll be replacing this component of Davies’s view.

For now, it seems that there are less involved ways to reinforce the type 2 objections against Davies’ response. Davies’ response just seems to miss the point. First, even when we do think that an adequate description of a work requires mention of very specific spatio-temporal parameters, we still don’t think of the work as being spatio-temporally located within those parameters. Indeed it is typically a work’s composition which is explicitly cited as taking place in the relevant region and it’s unclear why we would do this if we identified the work with the compositional act.

Second, it’s not clear that the problem is dissolved once we are informed that those properties are possessed by works contingently. What we find counterintuitive is that works should be attributed a bounded spatio-temporal location at all. Understanding type 2 objections in terms of parsimony considerations brings this out. It doesn’t seem to be a deliverance of any critic or receiver that the *Eroica* symphony occupied Vienna at the beginning of the 19th century. A theory which entails that it did, is proposing a hypothesis about properties actually (if only contingently) possessed by the work which floats free of independent evidence. This isn’t an outright refutation and it could, for all that’s been said, be the case that works do have a spatio-temporal location, even that of the act of their composition. What we should bear in mind, however, is that a theory which entails works have such type 2 features and which offers no independent motivation for this is a theory which entails unjustified hypotheses about works. This implies that such a theory, ceteris paribus, would have less evidential support than a theory which does not entail such hypotheses (see Daly
And so the burden is again on Davies to offer independent motivation for the claim that works actually have spatio-temporal locations associated with their compositional acts.

5: Conclusion

So, despite the ingenuity with which it is set up, Davies’s argument for the performance theory still leaves it in a worse position than the universalist theory we’ve been arguing for. This is not to say that the theory is to be junked. There is something deeply compelling about the thought that the identity of a musical work is determined by the identity of the act by which it is composed. The crucial problem is that the performance theorist exaggerates the significance of this compelling thought about musical work identity conditions and identifies each musical work with its compositional act. In the second part of the thesis, we will see that, with a little tweaking, one can accept the performance theorist’s proposal about identity conditions while maintaining a better account of the legitimate desiderata presented in the introduction of this thesis.

We now turn away from the categorial question and look to increasing our understanding of musical work identity. We’ve already prefigured some of the themes that will become important in the next half of the thesis. We’ve been introduced to impure relational properties, and we’ve seen some evidence that some musical works are structurally flexible. We’ve also examined the performance theory which will, ultimately, form the basis for our account of musical work identity. However, identity issues require special handling and the next introductory section will introduce the assumptions and projects that we will consider.
Part 2: Identity

Chapter 6: Identity Criteria, Individuation, and The Rejection of Sonicism

1: Introduction

The overarching aim of this thesis is to increase our understanding of the ontological nature of musical works. In the first half of the thesis, we’ve tried to increase our understanding along the categorial axis by explaining the fundamental ontological features of musical works. We found that we achieve the best understanding of these features by the hypothesis that musical works are universals which are instantiated by their occurrences. However, we can also increase our understanding of musical works by inquiring into musical work identity. There are different projects with different aims which concern musical work identity. I’ll be separating these out shortly.

Before I elucidate these different projects, it’s worth saying a little about the assumptions I make about the relation of identity. In particular, I want to briefly present some standard assumptions which will be important in the arguments presented in the remainder of this thesis.

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26 I omit discussion of the question of whether identity really is a relation. The present elucidation of the logic of identity is philosophically neutral on the matter.
2: Identity

First, identity is an equivalence relation. As such, it is reflexive, symmetric and transitive. However, there are other equivalence relations which have these logical properties, but which are not identity. The property of being the same height as, for example, is a relation which is reflexive, symmetric and transitive. The law which is distinctive of the logical behaviour of the identity relation is that of the Indiscernibility of The Identical, sometimes called ‘Leibniz’s Law’.

\[(II) \forall x \forall y (x = y) \rightarrow (\forall F) (Fx \leftrightarrow Fy)\]

It is the governance by (II) that distinguishes identity from other equivalence relations. It says that when any ‘pair’ stand in the identity relation, they exemplify precisely the same properties. The contrapositive of this principle says that if a pair differ with respect to the properties the exemplify, they are distinct. The contra-positive is especially useful in constructing counterexamples to claims of musical work identity.

As well as these assumptions about the behaviour of the identity relation, we’ll be employing certain assumptions about the semantics of musical work designating expressions. These assumptions are influenced by Saul Kripke’s discussions of the relation between naming and modality (Kripke 1971, 1980). These assumptions are often made in the literature about the ontology of music, and I won’t be challenging them here (see Levinson 1980: 70 n. 17, David Davies 2004: 105, 123-4, 216).

The first assumption is that musical work titles, ‘The Eroica Symphony’, ‘Concerto for Orchestra’, ‘Shostakovich’s 14th Symphony’, and so on, are proper names which function semantically as rigid designators. Rigid designators designate the same entity at all possible worlds at which they designate anything (Kripke 1980: 48-9). This is of special significance when combined with a certain standard view about the semantics of identity claims which relate rigidly designated...
entities. Where we have an identity statement with rigid designators flanking the identity sign, as in,

(BIII) Beethoven’s 3rd Symphony in E flat Major = The Eroica Symphony,

the truth of the sentence, if it holds at any possible world, holds at all possible worlds. If it is false, it is false at all possible worlds (Kripke 1971: 136-8, 1980: 105-13). This leads us to accept two principles which are instrumental in our examination of musical work identity. The first is the necessity of identity. Where ‘a’ and ‘b’ are rigid designators the following principle holds:

(NI) a = b → □ (a = b)

The second principle is the necessity of distinctness:

(ND) a ≠ b → □ (a ≠ b)

These assumptions are pretty standard in mainstream philosophical discussions about identity, and in the literature on the ontology of musical works.27 Despite their conservativeness, however, they will prove useful when we come to answer our questions about identity. These were introduced in chapter 1 as:

(Qc) What are the identity criteria for musical works?

And,

(Qd) What individuates musical works?

In what follows I elaborate these two sorts of project and suggest some connections between them that will be relevant to the development of the second half of the thesis.

27 See Currie (1989: 80) for the proposal that musical work names are disguised descriptions, rather than rigid designators.
3: Identity Criteria

We’re now ready to consider our two projects. First, we’ll consider the project of supplying an identity criterion for musical works. In general, an identity criterion is a specification of necessary and sufficient conditions for the truth of identity statements for entities of a certain kind. Where ‘Φ’ is a kind or sortal term for musical works, we may give an identity criterion which ranges over a domain containing all musical works as follows:

\[(IC) (\forall x) (\forall y) ((\Phi x \& \Phi y) \rightarrow (x = y \leftrightarrow Rxy))^{28}\]

An identity criterion, then, gives a condition by which Φs, in this case musical works, count as identical or distinct in terms of whether they stand in R to one another. The correct interpretation of R for musical works is the relation we’ll be looking to elucidate in this half of the thesis. Not just any R satisfying the schema will do, however. It’s not permissible to simply interpret R as the identity relation. The condition must be informative and non-circular. This is because identity criteria are formulated with an eye to demonstrating what our grasp of the entities falling under Φ consists in, to defend the intelligibility of them.\(^{29}\)

This schema is pretty basic. It lacks the resources for the formulation of modal identity conditions. And modal arguments about musical works have been important in the various debates about musical work identity, where two particular sorts of issues have arisen.

Perhaps the most discussed issue is that of identity and distinctness within each possible world. That is, those trying to give identity conditions for musical works have sometimes aimed at formulating criteria adequate to capturing the identity and distinctness of entities which co-habit the same possible world. Many philosophers have understood this as the question of what individuates musical work. However, I reserve the terminology of individuation for a more ambitious

\(^{28}\)The following sort of schema is also satisfactory: \((\forall x) \ (\forall y) \ ((\Phi x \& \Phi y) \rightarrow (x = y \leftrightarrow Cx \& Cy))\)

\(^{29}\)It should be noted that I’m not using the notion of criterion which makes the requirement that the right hand side must give some sort of empirically verifiable condition. Some might call the project I’m elucidating, the project of giving identity ‘conditions’.
project to be elaborated in the next section. I call the following an *intra-world* identity criterion:

$$\text{(ICM)} \square (\forall x) (\forall y) ((\Phi x \land \Phi y) \rightarrow (x = y \leftrightarrow Rxy))$$

By preceding (IC) with the box operator, we have a schema which, if correct, will hold at every possible world, but may only hold ‘internally’ to each of those worlds. How, it might be wondered, could there be any more demanding criterion?

Well, sometimes our interest in an actual entity’s identity might extend to questions about how that entity could have been. We might illustrate the difference between intra-world and trans-world issues by the consideration of enduring material particulars. Each enduring material particular occupies a unique spatio-temporal path and enduring material particulars necessarily exclude one another from spatio-temporal regions they occupy. Therefore, these entities may be given satisfactory intra-world identity conditions in terms of the spatio-temporal regions they occupy. Within a given world, such a criterion would identify and distinguish such particulars satisfactorily. However, this would fail to answer trans-world identity questions. The Eiffel Tower, for example, can be distinguished from anything else at a given world by the unique spatio-temporal path it occupies. Still, it’s perfectly coherent to suppose that the tower *could* have occupied a different spatio-temporal path, being constructed slightly earlier, or later, perhaps occupying a region a couple of centimetres to the south (c.f. Caplan and Matheson 2008: 503).

These varieties of identity criteria have been presented in order of their logical strength. Trans-world identity criteria are the strongest, actual world criteria are the weakest, while intra-world criteria are intermediate. If a condition on the identity of $x$ and $y$ holds across possible worlds, it holds within each possible world. If a condition on the identity of $x$ and $y$ holds within all possible worlds, it holds at the actual world.

Metaphysical investigations of identity have taken the project of supplying identity criteria for entities of various sorts very seriously. The reason that such a project is a valuable one is that it helps defend the intelligibility of the entities postulated. It indicates that we have some significant handle on the entities we’re talking about. And this need is particularly pressing when one is confronted by a
sceptic about entities of that kind. Now, we might think that our discourse concerning musical works isn’t in need of such a defence. We might argue that, dialectically speaking, there’s little robust resistance to the postulation of musical works (see Chapter 2).

This may be the case, but there are still reasons for pursuing questions about identity criteria. For one thing, they play a useful role in the examination of more ambitious theories which aim to explain musical work identity (to be considered below). For another, there would appear to be competing artistic and philosophical conceptions of musical works. The distinguishing characteristics of these conceptions have a pellucid representation in the identity criteria they specify. We’ll see that identity criteria specified to capture empiricist theses about musical appreciation look very different from those suitable to capturing the intuitions of those with contextualist leanings. And, as will emerge, there are serious questions to be asked about whether certain influential contextualist proposals are sufficiently informative to defend the intelligibility of the musical works thus conceived.

4: Individuation, Cognitive and Metaphysical

There is another sort of identity project that is more ambitious. This is the project of giving an account, or explanation, of musical work identity. I follow Jonathan Lowe’s terminology in calling of this the project of individuation (Lowe 1997). This is perhaps a controversial terminological decision, as many philosophers prefer to use the term ‘individuation’ in questions about intra-world identity criteria (Rohrbaugh 2005, Dodd 2007). However, I think Lowe’s distinction between giving identity criteria and giving an account of individuation illuminates the debates about musical work identity.  

30 Jerrold Levinson, in correspondence, has suggested that his account is intended to be explanatory in the relevant sense. David Davies presumes a notion of individuation stronger than intra-world criteria when he suggests that a work’s individuating properties give trans-world conditions ‘...the constitutive properties of e* are just the properties that distinguish it as a painting and individuate it from other works of its kind, however, they are presumably the very properties that allow us to make sense of talking counterfactually about one work,...rather than another work...’ (2004: 122-3[my italics]). Julian Dodd, who sticks to giving intra-world identity criteria, still seems to be groping for an explanatory notion of property determination when he tries to motivate sonicism by way of a supervenience thesis connecting sonic properties to aesthetic ones (Dodd 2007: 209).
There are, however, two senses of ‘individuate’ that (Qd) might be understood as involving. In one sense, we individuate musical works, when we correctly discern their identity or distinctness. This sense might be read as an epistemic or cognitive notion concerning how we go about distinguishing distinct entities, and how we identify the same entity on different occasions (Lowe 1997: 75). However, there is another sense of individuation, which asks after what makes those cognitive acts of discernment or identification successful. When distinct entities are successfully individuated, or the same entity correctly identified on different occasions, this is because they are metaphysically individuated. A person can only correctly individuate entities which are already ‘there’, so to speak, to be cognitively individuated (Lowe 1997: 75).

We’ll return to questions about epistemic individuation shortly. First, I’d like to elucidate the metaphysical notion. I think the most vivid way to present metaphysical individuation questions which differentiates them from questions about cognitive individuation claims and questions about identity criteria is to put them as Lowe does. Suppose we have a musical work, \(a\), a question of individuation might be put in this Lowe-inspired fashion: What makes \(a\) the single entity that it is - what makes it one entity, distinct from others, and the entity that it is opposed to any other thing? (c.f. Lowe 1997: 75).

On this picture, questions of individuation have a deep ontological significance. For one thing, there is a rigid essential connection between the individuator and the individuated. If \(a\) is individuated by \(b\), \(b\) determines that \(a\) is the very entity it is, where the ‘makes’ is a strong relation of metaphysical determination. The entity \(b\) doesn’t merely individuate \(a\) at the actual world, nor does \(b\) distinguish \(a\) from entities at any world it co-habits. \(a\) is individuated at every world at which it exists, and \(b\) is responsible for making this so at every possible world (Lowe 1997: 92). This is why I describe the metaphysical account of individuation as the ambitious one. Supplying a trans-world identity criterion is the most ambitious project of its family, but the correct metaphysical account of individuation will yield necessary and sufficient conditions for the truth of trans-world identity statements, making it logically stronger.

The ontological relation between individuator and individuated is an objective explanatory relation between those entities (Lowe 1997: 92-3). While there’s a pragmatic sense in which an explanation is something which renders a
certain fact intelligible to a certain audience, the individuation relation in play here is one which picks up on the objective explanatory order sought by the metaphysician. Construing individuation in this way brings an important consideration. If $b$ individuates $a$, $a$ does not individuate $b$. That is, individuation relations are anti-symmetric (Lowe 1997: 93). This is a standard view about explanatory relations which sometimes seems implicit in the literature on musical work individuation, but which isn’t a necessary constraint on the project of specifying identity criteria. That those conditions must be informative and non-circular, thus elucidating our grasp of the entities, doesn’t entail that they must capture the correct explanatory order.

Motivating identity criteria and accounts of individuation requires reflective engagement with the facts about cognitive individuation. It is through the examination of direct and indirect judgments of sameness and difference amongst musical works that we supply a standard of adequacy to be met by our criteria and excavate explanantia to be accounted for by our individuative proposals. So, one part of our project is to characterise the cognitive individuation of musical works.

We do have some Moorean facts about musical work identity and distinctness. We know that The *Eroica* Symphony and Beethoven’s Third Symphony are identical. We also know that Beethoven’s Third Symphony and Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony are distinct. And we could generate an expansive list of such Moorean facts. Although such a list could be employed to sift philosophical blunders from live options, it is unlikely to be adequate to the selection of mature philosophical theories. The theories we’ll consider in this thesis, despite their striking differences, would all appear quite adequate to capturing a Moorean list of actually true identity and distinctness statements.

Fortunately, there’s a richer source of well-founded judgments that we can employ. The various disciplines associated with musical study are our best source of data about musical works. They are our guide in categorial matters and in matters of musical work identity. And these disciplines aren’t merely sensitive to ‘brute’ facts of identity and distinctness. In the practices of describing, explaining and evaluating musical works, a rich array of properties may be ascribed to musical works. Reflection on the sorts of properties that are ascribed to musical works will tell us the sorts of properties our appreciative practice is sensitive to, and, thus, give
us a picture of how musical works are cognitively individuated in the practices associated with musical works.

The attributions made enable us to test our hypotheses about actual and intra-world identity criteria. If it is proposed that $R_{xy}$ is an identity condition for musical works, we can try to construct scenarios in which two musical works, $a$ and $b$, were related by $R$, but in which there were a divergence between $a$ and $b$ in respect of some attribute to which our appreciative judgments are sensitive.

Such testing won’t be guaranteed to lead us to identity criteria which are correct. There might be attributes to which appreciation is sensitive, but which our philosophical excavation has failed to catalogue. Further, works might have properties to which our musical inquiries are currently insensitive. Nevertheless, this situation isn’t one unique to the ontology of music. We have to aim at providing the most satisfactory criteria given the evidence. As it happens, the sorts of sensitivity that have been catalogued by ontologists of music already pose a substantial challenge for the formulation of identity criteria.

We might also wonder how the epistemic individuation of musical works bears upon questions of trans-world identity criteria. In the case of intra-world claims, we can use the logical law (II) in conjunction with our grasp of sorts of attributes possessed by musical works to formulate tests to putative identity criteria, but these tests only work within worlds. (II) doesn’t apply to trans-world identity claims. Something can be a certain way at one world, but that very same thing can fail to be the same way at a different possible world. This might make us sceptical of the prospects for making progress in specifying trans-world identity criteria.

Where trans-world identity criteria are involved, I think we do have to rely on our intuitions, but we shouldn’t be too sceptical about this. Of course, we can imagine some pretty far out trans-world identity claims whose truth we’d struggle to evaluate. However, the sorts of considerations I’ll be making here aren’t so far out. The claim that some musical works could have had a different structure, or that a musical work actually composed at a certain time could have been composed at a different time, both seem like intuitions that we can expect many to share.

Although our appreciative engagement with musical works is rarely described in philosophically pellucid modal terms, I follow David Davies in thinking that the modal intuitions we have, ‘…serve as an indication of the sorts of principles that guide us in our actual critical and appreciative practice,’ (Davies
2004: 103). It is a result of our actual competence in using musical work concepts that we may reason about the same thing in counterfactual circumstances and that we may know when an entity in a counterfactual situation is not identical with some actual musical work.

The way in which musical works are cognitively individuated in our appreciative practices also provides the desiderata for our ambitious project, that concerning the metaphysical individuation of musical works. Theories about what makes each musical work the one it is must postulate individuating entities which can accommodate the attribute divergences to which our practice is sensitive. However, the explanatory project is governed by further constraints than the mere accommodation of judgments internal to musical practice. Theories of individuation aim at capturing the musical data in an explanatorily virtuous way. In chapter 1, we saw the general sorts of considerations by which the explanatory virtue of a theory is to be evaluated. However, two specific sorts of considerations are especially relevant to this half of the thesis.

One is the simplicity of the theory of individuation. Although the data to be explained is presented to us by an expressively rich discourse, the ontologist of music seeks to capture the range of nuanced variations between works in as simple a way as possible. She aims to promote an ontologically and ideologically simple account of what determines the identity of musical works. However, one thing especially pertinent to questions about identity is the complexity of the semantic theory required to connect the metaphysical proposal with the face-value interpretation of the ascriptions made in musical discourse.

It seems that the provision of some ad hoc semantic proposal could square pretty much any proposal with the data from our ascriptive practices. Later in this chapter, we’ll find that the examination of a certain proposal aimed at propping up a view called ‘sonicism’ is ad hoc. In chapter 7, we’ll find another semantic proposal designed to prop up a view called mild contextualism is also guilty of the introduction of ad hoc semantic hypotheses.

We can also evaluate simplicity in terms of the conservativeness of its hypotheses. A theory which associates each musical work with a ‘musical spirit’ and explains the identity of each musical work in terms of its associated spirit would lack conservativeness because we’ve no independent reason to believe in musical spirits in the first place. The proposal made here, that musical works are to
be individuated by actions, namely, actions of composition, is virtuous because the actions of composition it construes as individuators for musical works are entities we believe in independently of this theoretical role.

5: Sonicism and Aesthetic Empiricism

There’s a superficially appealing sort of perspective on musical work identity that might be called contentism. The basic idea of contentism is to think of musical works as the content of some canonical representation. The score for the *Eroica* symphony, for instance, is a token in a notational system. That score, interpreted in accordance with the relevant conventions, yields a piece of instructional content – a structure, type or property – with which correct occurrences of the work must correspond, token or instantiate.

The canonical representation of a musical work typically contains lots of information concerning how occurrences of their respective works are to be produced and various forms of contentism can be differentiated by how they delineate the aspects of content thought to be involved in the identity of musical works. One form of contentism is sometimes called tonal structuralism. This sort of view has been offered by Peter Kivy (1982, 1988) and Roger Scruton (1997). This view tells us that the identity of a musical work is to be given in terms of tonal-structural aspects of score content. On this view, the specifications of timbre which are represented in a work’s score, do not enter into its identity conditions. As Kivy puts it a Bach fugue *qua* tonal structure could be instanced by a ’choir of Kazoos’ (1988: 55).

In our discussion, we’ll focus on a particular version of contentism called timbral sonicism which is elaborated and defended by Julian Dodd (2007). Dodd denies the plausibility of tonal structuralism because he thinks that all sonic properties, including timbral properties selected by composers, figure in the identity conditions for musical works. Although I deny that timbral sonicism is correct, I do
think it is the best way to formulate a sonicist proposal.\textsuperscript{31} Further, the arguments which I will be presenting against it apply to any form of contentism.

Consider Dodd’s type-theoretic formulation of a basic sonicist proposal:

A work of music $W$ and a work of music $W^*$ are numerically identical if, and only if, $W$ and $W^*$ are acoustically indistinguishable, that is, they have exactly the same acoustic properties normative within them." (Dodd 2007: 202).

Although he terms his account as one of ‘individuation’, the kind of project with which Dodd is concerned here is that of specifying intra-world identity conditions. There might be ways of developing sonicism to give trans-world identity criteria, or to formulate an account of metaphysical individuation. However, I’ll be tackling the weaker claim that musical works’ intra-world identity conditions are as sonicism proposes.

Dodd’s reason for endorsing sonicism would appear to reside primarily in a certain intuitive pull. He thinks of sonicism as the ‘…face value theory when it comes to the individuation of musical works. It is…the theory that we should accept unless it is defeated.’ (2007: 203-4).

And there is perhaps some truth in this. It’s not often that the layman is asked to say what underpins his judgements of identity or distinctness of musical works, but it seems likely that something about the qualitative nature of the sound of a work would be a natural first up response. What’s more, as Dodd points out, much of the philosophical argument against sonicism and similar tonal structuralist views takes those views as the natural starting point from which to develop an inquiry into musical work identity (Dodd 2007: 204).

\textit{Prima facie} intuitions aren’t the sole basis of Dodd’s attempt at motivating sonicism. He thinks that, ‘…the ontological nature of musical works follows on from the correct account of what it is to listen to them with understanding.’ (Dodd 2010: 37). And what he sees as lying behind the intuitiveness of sonicism about identity conditions is that it, ‘…follows from a highly natural account of musical appreciation.’ (2007: 205).

\textsuperscript{31}I endorse Dodd’s response (Dodd 2007: 213-4) to Scruton’s argument against including timbral specifications as part of the content by which a musical works can be distinguished (see Scruton 1997: 77). Dodd is right to claim that the supervenience base for aesthetic properties includes timbral specifications and he is right to think that a timbral property specified by reference to certain standard causal origins can be instantiated by sounds not produced from those origins.
That theory about musical understanding is a species of a general view about artistic appreciation called *aesthetic empiricism*. Aesthetic empiricism, as a general view about artistic appreciation, has it that an artwork’s aesthetic properties are determined exclusively by how it appears to the senses. For paintings, the aesthetic properties might be said to be fixed by the perceivable configuration of lines, colours and textures visible on the surface of the canvas (For historical precedents, see Bell 1914, Beardsely 1983).

There is a contemporary version of *musical* empiricism championed in Roger Scruton’s *The Aesthetics of Music* (1997). This version of empiricism is called *acousmatic* and it aims at providing an account of musical understanding which is motivated by the apparent difference between episodes of ‘normal’ hearing and the distinctive sort of hearing involved in hearing sounds as music. The way of drawing the distinction suggested by Scruton is that when sounds are normally heard, they are heard as sounds of something, as the sound of some salient cause (Scruton 1997: 2-3). When sounds are heard as music, that is, when they are *heard with musical understanding*, they are heard apart from the causal world (Scruton 1997: 19), we attend to sounds’ intrinsic, qualitative nature. And we hear them, according to Scruton, in their own metaphorical ‘field of force’, our musical expectations tracking not physical relations of cause and effect, but rather, a special set of tonal expectations distinctive of music (Scruton 1997: 19-20, 49-52, 91-2).

I think there’s some intuitive pull to Scruton’s view, so far as musical phenomenology is concerned. This is perhaps true for musical empiricism in general. When one listens to music and feels that one understands it, it doesn’t seem like that understanding requires any more than the perception of the sensuous sonic surface. Nevertheless, phenomenology can mislead. As we shall see later in this chapter, a little reflection on our appreciative practices indicates that the proper understanding of musical works always presupposes facts not determined by the perceptual surface presented to us in our direct experience.

Dodd formulates his view about the determinative relationship between a work’s sonic character and its aesthetic character as a supervenience thesis.

For works $x$ and $y$ and possible worlds $u$ and $w$, 
(ES) \((\forall x) (\forall y) (\forall u) (\forall w) (x \text{ has the same acoustic properties in } u \text{ as } y \text{ has in } w \rightarrow x \text{ has the same aesthetic properties in } u \text{ as } y \text{ has in } w)\). (Dodd 2007: 209).

The thought expressed here is that the aesthetic character of musical works cannot change unless there is some change in acoustic properties. This aesthetic supervenience thesis and the associated version of timbral sonicism are somewhat crude. As Dodd acknowledges in their present form, they are vulnerable to a decisive objection.

6: Categories of Art

Kendal Walton’s classic paper *Categories of Art* (Walton 1970) presents an objection to crude aesthetic empiricist theses like (ES). Given that the motivation for timbral sonicism is derived from its fit with that aesthetic thesis, Walton’s argument also provides reason for rejecting the crude timbral sonicist thesis. Walton aims to show that a work’s aesthetic qualities are (in part) determined by facts about them which are not made empirically available in a manifestation of the work. He thinks that such facts include facts about the category of art to which a work belongs. The category a work belongs to, Walton thinks, is not determined only by its empirically detectable features, but by features of its context of composition. That is, in order to correctly perceive a musical work’s aesthetic qualities, one must bring knowledge of the work’s contextually determined artistic category to one’s encounter.

He illustrates this point with his *Guernica* cases, Walton (1970: 340) asks us to consider the aesthetic character of Picasso’s *Guernica*. This painting is correctly perceived as “violent, dynamic, vital, disturbing…” Our first up reason for saying this would likely invoke the work’s non-aesthetic perceivable features. However, he also suggests that we compare it aesthetically with an empirically indistinguishable picture which belongs to an alien category of art called *Guernicas*. These alien artworks share the two-dimensional design with the Picasso work, but vary with regards to their topological features. By applying varying quantities of paint to a
canvas, alien artists compose works which vary dramatically in their three-dimensional profiles. Perceptually, Picasso’s work qualifies as a Guernica, albeit, of a highly minimalist sort. When perceived as a member of this category, Walton argues, Picasso’s Guernica would not present the same aesthetic properties to a critic perceiving it in this category. When perceived as a member of the alien category of art, our Guernica can be more plausibly ascribed aesthetic properties like “cold, stark, lifeless, or serene” (Walton 1970: 340).

It seems that the aesthetic properties correctly seen in the work when perceived as a Guernica are incompatible with those correctly perceived in it when it is perceived as a painting. Ex hypothesi the art-categorial membership of Picasso’s picture is not empirically available to the perceiver, and so, the aesthetic differences cannot be explained by reference to such features. That an empirically unavailable feature of a work, its category membership, can serve to shift which aesthetic properties are correctly ascribable should lead us to think that (ES) is false, at least as applied to paintings.

The same sort of case can be constructed for musical works too. In Guernica’s place we might substitute Bach’s Cello Prelude in D minor. In place of the alien category of Guernicas, consider an alien culture in which pieces of music which share the same acoustic notational specification as Bach’s Prelude, but which also typically make the requirement that their instances be issued from performers who move around the stage with their instruments. In this art form variations in location of the sound source provide the analogue of the Guernicas’ third dimension. Call works of this category dynamic preludes. As in the case of Guernicas, when perceived in this category of dynamic preludes, our prelude might well lack some of the features it has relative to the category of stationary preludes. For instance, it might well be perceived as boring, austere or minimalist when perceived in the alien category.

Walton’s explanation for this is that the aesthetic ambiguity is resolved by a work’s category membership. As he says,

…a work’s aesthetic properties depend not only on its non-aesthetic [read as sonic for present purposes], but also on which of its non-aesthetic properties are “standard,” which “variable,” and which “contra-standard” for its category (1970: 338).
The distinction between these three groups of features is delineated as follows. A feature is standard for a category just in case the lack of the feature would disqualify, or tend to disqualify a work from belonging to that category. For musical works, it seems that featuring at least some sonic properties is a standard feature. A feature is variable for a category just in case its possession by a work is independent of the work belonging to that category, for instance, the geographical location at which a musical work is performed has no bearing upon its being a performance of a musical work. A feature is contra-standard for a category if and only if possession of that feature by a work tends to disqualify them from membership of that category. Intuitively, essentially featuring pigmented canvases would be enough to disqualify something from being a musical work (1970: 339).

There are lots of arbitrary ways we can describe possible categories of art in terms of a work’s perceptually available features. This has the consequence that a given work’s perceptually available profile can be perceived as of a wide range of categories. However, the aesthetic properties the work genuinely has are not arbitrary. As Walton puts it “The aesthetic properties [a work] possesses are those that are to be found in it when it is perceived correctly.” (1970: 363). By this he means that a work genuinely has those properties it has when perceived as of the category to which it belongs. The important question is: What determines the correct category in which to perceive a musical work?

Walton discusses this issue at some length. He begins by outlining the sorts of facts which we might cite in justifying our assignment of a given work to a certain category. He claims that, ‘there are several fairly definite considerations which typically figure in critical discussion and fit our intuitions reasonably well.’ (1970: 357). He thinks the following four considerations ‘count towards’, in an evidential sense, it being correct to perceive work W in category C.

(i) Possession by W of a relatively large number of C’s perceptually available standard features and a relatively low number of C’s contra-standard features. Given his delineation of categories of art, these perceptual considerations are fairly obvious. Further, perceptual considerations don’t make sense of the cases which prompt scepticism about naïve empiricism. In both Guernica and dynamic prelude cases, perceptually available features are held constant. It is the status of
the perceptually available features as standard or variable within the category which yields aesthetic differences.

(ii) Walton also thinks that categorical assignment is to be constrained by charity considerations. If a work is aesthetically more pleasing or interesting when perceived as a C than other categories for which it is permissible, then it is more likely to be a C.

(iii) Considerations of authorial intention play a part in determining the category to which a work belongs. If the author intended or expected her work to be perceived in C, or thought of it as a C, this counts in favour of it being a C.

(iv) Societal considerations are also deemed relevant. Walton (1970: 358) proposes that C being established in the society in which W is composed counts in favour of W being in category C. Evidence C is established in a society is given by that society recognising works as Cs, consider that the work’s membership in C is worth mentioning, and so on.

Consideration of such facts forms part of how we epistemically determine the category to which a work belongs, there is also a stronger claim about metaphysical determination to be found in Walton’s paper. This is what underwrites the correctness of perceiving a work in a certain category. As Walton says,

> It should be emphasised that the relevant historical facts are not merely useful aids to aesthetic judgement; they do not provide hints concerning what might be found in the work. Rather they help to determine what aesthetic properties a work has; they together with the work’s non-aesthetic features make it coherent, serene, or whatever. (1970: 364).

In addition to the perceptual properties manifested by a work, the metaphysical thesis is based upon the role of societal considerations and/or intentional considerations. Distancing the metaphysical thesis from charity considerations Walton says

> It cannot be correct, I suggest, to perceive a work in categories which are totally foreign to the artist and his society, even if it comes across as a masterpiece in them. (Walton 1970: 360).
Walton largely accepts the role of societal considerations without direct argument (1970: 360), but it seems we should accept it pending a better explanation of the *Guernica* examples. He introduces considerations of authorial intentions to explain cases in which a composer might define their own category in partial isolation from the rest of their society, as in the case of Schoenberg’s early serialist works (1970: 361). Now, it would be premature to say that Walton has given us a detailed account about the nature of categories of art, nor a decision procedure for deciding, in particular cases, whether authorial intentions or societal considerations are to decide a work’s category. Nevertheless, dialectically speaking, Walton has put his finger on something very troubling for the crude empiricist, no matter how we want to work out the details of category identity and determination. Our theory of musical work identity ought to allow that musical works which belong to different categories are distinct, even when, in some crude sense, they ‘sound’ the same.

### 6.1: Moderate Empiricism and Moderate Sonicism

Dodd is aware of Walton’s argument and its force. It leads him to adopt a view called *moderate* empiricism. According to this form of empiricism, a musical work’s aesthetic character is determined by its sonic character and the category to which it belongs. Dodd (2007: 211) formulates this as a supervenience thesis with a more inclusive base than (ES):

\[(MES) \forall x \forall y \forall u \forall w ((x \text{ has the same acoustic properties in } u \text{ as } y \text{ has in } w \text{ and } x \text{ and } y \text{ fall under the same artistic category}) \Rightarrow x \text{ has the same aesthetic properties in } u \text{ as } y \text{ has in } w).\]

In order to preserve the ontological link to appreciation, the sonicist offers an individuative proposal more discerning than that suggested by (ES):

\[(MSon) W \text{ and } W' \text{ are identical if and only if } W \text{ and } W' \text{ lay down identical sonic conditions and } W \text{ and } W' \text{ belong to the same category}.\]
Dodd doesn’t offer much elaboration concerning the introduction of categories into the formulation of his aesthetic supervenience thesis and moderated sonicism. And yet given the tenor of Dodd’s arguments, it seems like something that does require elaboration.

Dodd might accept that we must explain the aesthetic difference made to a work’s aesthetic character by its membership to a category of art and that this cannot be done by reference to only perceptually manifest properties of the work. The natural thought is that suggested by Walton, the context in which the work is composed is a determinant of its aesthetic properties. Following from this, the context in which a work is composed serves to individuate it. However, if works have their aesthetic properties determined by facts about their compositional history and are, therefore, individuated by properties determined by their compositional contexts, we might wonder why this sort of theory should be considered an empiricist one, rather than a form of contextualism.

At a push, it might be argued that this is a mere terminological matter. Perhaps, one can maintain a moderated empiricist position by *minimising* the extent to which context is allowed to enter into the determination of a work’s aesthetic features, without issuing a blanket denial of contextual relevance. Of course, this would leave us with a quandary about exactly what ‘minimising’ the bearing of contextual factors amounts to, and, consequently what exactly the debate between empiricists and contextualists could amount to. But still, it might be that the moderate view suggested by (MES) could still be termed ‘empiricist’ without deforming that view beyond recognition.

What is not a terminological matter, however, is that the resulting moderated aesthetic empiricism, and its attendant moderated timbral soncisism would seem to have lost connection with their motivation. Musical works are repeatable entities and we perceive and appreciate them by way of their occurrences. Yet, the very same considerations that push us to recognise that works have their aesthetic properties determined by their membership of a certain category apply equally to their occurrences. A given occurrence of a musical work has its aesthetic attributes determined (in part) by the category of that work. It is because of the features standard, contra-standard and variable for say symphonic works, that it is
correct to perceive an occurrence of a symphonic work in a certain way, as having variable melodic features, but a standard formal structure.

However, what determines that it is correct to hear a performance of a symphonic work as one whose perceptible features fall into a certain distribution of standard, contra-standard and variable features, it seems, could only be that a performance of a symphonic work stands in some sort of causal relationship to that particular act of composition. At any rate, it’s hard to see how else we could preserve the realist intuition that the category dependent aesthetic attributes of an occurrence are genuine and determinate features of it, and of the work whose requirements it meets.

The acousmatic account of understanding, from which timbral sonicism is meant to follow, has it that understanding music proceeds solely from attention to the qualitative features of sounds *divorced from their causal origins*. Yet there is nothing acoustically qualitative about the sound one hears in the concert hall, nor about the sonic conditions it meets, which metaphysically determines that the work one hears in the concert hall belongs to a certain category of art. It is because the performance is causally connected to a certain act of composition, one which took place in a context which supports the work’s category membership, that the performance is to be heard as bearing the aesthetic attributes it does.

**7: Levinson’s Arguments**

Jerrold Levinson (1980: 68-73) offered several arguments which are aimed primarily against views which take musical works to be sound-structures. Those arguments are equally effective against variant contentist views like Dodd’s timbral sonicism. What’s more, the considerations he makes suggest that the identity of a musical work depends upon an even more intimate connection to its context of composition than do Walton’s arguments.

Levinson’s strategy is similar to Walton’s. He employs thought experiments in order to show that the correctness in our ascriptions of attributes to musical works depends upon more than the instructional content with which they are associated.
Levinson’s conclusions, however, represent a greater departure from sonicism than do Walton’s. For one thing, Levinson thinks that a work’s possession of its aesthetic attributes is determined by a basis more discerning than the work’s sonic content and its artistic category. He thinks that far more precise features of the work’s context of composition are significant determinants of its aesthetic features. For another, Walton’s arguments trade upon differences in attributes which are paradigmatically aesthetic, such as being violent and being serene. Levinson adds these kinds to which appreciative judgments are sensitive, but which are more difficult for the sonicist to deal with.

Sometimes, for instance, musical works are ascribed artistic attributes, those attributes possessed by a work by virtue of relations it stands in to other works of art (Levinson 1980: 70-1). For instance, when a critic claims that a work is original or is influenced by some other work, she is ascribing it artistic properties.

Musical works may also be ascribed representational attributes. Their possession of such attributes depends upon their representing some entity or entities. Sometimes musical works seek to characterise a certain quite specific sort of thing, as in, Rimsky-Korsakov’s Flight of the Bumble Bee. Sometimes purportedly representational works aim to characterise narratives, as in the case of Mussorgsky’s Pictures at an Exhibition or, more ambitiously, Olivier Messiaen’s Vingt Regards Sur L’Enfant Jesus.

Some musical works are ascribed quotational attributes. That a work is quotational involves it including a quotation of another musical works. For instance, the composer might lift some melodic material from another work and employ the quoted material in order to articulate some kind of statement about that work.

Although a little more technical than Walton’s formulation, Levinson’s thought experiments are similar to the Guernica cases. His idea is to present cases where it is plausible to think that we have sonically indistinguishable, but nevertheless distinct, musical works. The distinctness of the works being demonstrable by their possession of divergent aesthetic, artistic, representational and quotational attributes. The basis for the divergence in attributes, are, for Levinson, features of the works’ contexts of composition which are more fine-grained than their category membership.

Levinson asks us to consider a possible world in which two compositional acts result in sonic doppelgangers (Levinson 1980: 70-1). That is, two composers
perform acts in which the same sonic content is determined. One of the compositional acts takes place in a context much like the actual setting. This work, we may suppose, bears aesthetic, artistic and representational properties we’d actually ascribe; it has the same degree of originality, the same influences, it represents anything that the actual work does, it quotes whatever the actual work does, and so on. The other compositional act, however, is one in which the context of composition is altered in such a way as to make the ascription of those attributes highly implausible.

For the case of aesthetic attributes, Levinson suggests that although *Pierrot Lunaire*, composed in 1912, was indeed *eerie* when heard against its actual context, we might imagine that work in a possible world, to have a double composed in 1897. Our intuitions, according to Levinson, would be that such a work would be ‘more *bizarre*, more *upsetting*, more *anguished* and more *eerie…*,’ when perceived against the tradition, styles and oeuvres actually in place just fifteen years earlier (Levinson 1980: 70).

Levinson draws the same point about attributes of the other categories. Sonic doubles of works by Brahms composed in a context lacking the works of Beethoven or Liszt, say, would not stand in influence relations to the oeuvres of those two composers (1980: 70-1). A work which represents an entity might have a sonic double whose context precludes it representing what it does. The sonic profile of a work like Honegger’s *Pacific 231*, a work which we’d take to faithfully represent the sound of a locomotive, for instance, would not bear that attribute if composed in a context lacking such an invention, or one in which the locomotive sounded very different. Levinson applies parallel reasoning to the case of quotational attributes, to be considered in more detail later.

If Levinson is right, the sonic doubles possess different attributes, at the world under consideration. This permits the employment of the contrapositive of Leibniz’s Law. The sonic doubles diverge in their attributes, they are distinct. And because each work is *ex hypothesi* equivalent in its acoustic content, but distinct, their intra-world identity conditions cannot be given by their acoustic content. And
if this is so at the possible world under consideration, it is so at every possible world (Levinson: 1980: 70 n. 17). In the next section, we’re going to look at Dodd’s responses to Levinson’s thought experiments, but before we do, I think it’s worth just drawing out the point of these complicated anti-sonicist arguments. The first up reason for holding sonicism is that it has some phenomenological plausibility. It seems that in our episodes of appreciative musical listening, our attention is directed only at the sensuous surface presented. The thought experiments of Levinson and Walton seem to show that the propriety of our appreciation and our phenomenology is governed in part by features which are not contained in, nor determined by those qualitative features that works present to our senses.

7.1: The Sonicist Responses

Dodd thinks that the best way to defend moderated sonicism against Levinson’s arguments is to offer what he calls a ‘mixed’ strategy for dealing with Levinson’s cases. He stands by the moderated aesthetic supervenience thesis and offers two key kinds of response. For cases like the Pierrot Lunaire example, in which paradigmatically aesthetic attributes are said to diverge, Dodd holds that Pierrot Lunaire’s degree of eeriness, along with its other aesthetic attributes, do not diverge. When it comes to the other attributes we sometimes ascribe to musical works, artistic and representational attributes, for instance, Dodd’s takes the revisionary line that musical works do not possess such attributes.

The first component of the mixed strategy, that which claims that aesthetic properties do not diverge between sonic doubles, I think, leads to a stalemate between Dodd and Levinson. Dodd simply denies Levinson’s intuition about attribute divergence. And while a contextualist about appreciation might claim that

32 Levinson’s original argument is launched against the ontological view that musical works just are sound structures, but, if correct, his reasoning also applies to sonicism as an account of intra-world individuation. We could also make Levinson’s original version of the argument work against Dodd’s combination of the type/token theory and sonicism about musical work identity. On the latter, musical works just are sonic types, and this gives similar results to Levinson’s anti-structuralist arguments. I make the argument in its present form to keep this section focused on issues of identity, rather than category.
Dodd’s failing to have the relevant intuition represents an error on his part, Dodd is likely to respond that he doesn’t have sympathies with the contextualist account of appreciation. From here it’s difficult to see how to proceed without begging the question. For now, I’ll leave this at a stalemate. As we examine Dodd’s efforts at arguing against musical works’ possession of attributes of the other categories, we’ll see a way of responding to the first component of the mixed strategy. So, we’ll first examine the second component.

The second component of the mixed strategy is more complex than the first. Tactically, it is organised into two phases. The first phase sees Dodd presenting arguments which are intended to give us empiricist-independent reasons to believe that musical works do not possess artistic and representational attributes. In the second phase, he sweetens the pill by offering hypotheses about what’s really going on when such ascriptions are made.

Musical works cannot have artistic properties, according to Dodd, because of their ontological category. He claims that, ‘…there would seem to be a serious question as to the intelligibility of attributing properties such as being Liszt-influenced and being original to works of music…it is not clear what it would be for an abstract, eternally existent entity to be itself original or influenced by Liszt’ (Dodd 2007: 257-8). The problem, as Dodd sees it is this ‘For something to be influenced by Liszt is either for its behaviour or its nature to be so influenced.’ (Dodd 2007: 258). And he suggests that neither idea makes much sense. ‘Works of music are not the kind of thing that can exhibit behaviour,’ and ‘…it is impossible for them to differ in their intrinsic properties.’ (Dodd 2007: 258).

Be that as it may, there clearly is an important role to be played by such ascriptions in musical discourse. Every musical work would appear to have some influences and some degree of originality. And it would appear that different disciplines and intra-disciplinary paradigms have a place for such notions. In particular, it would appear that such artistic properties often play a role in justifying interpretive and evaluative judgments about the works which possess them. As such, the argument presented seems to require some supplementation by a suggestion about what we’re really getting at when we ascribe originality and influence.

Although he accepts that the face value construal of our ascriptions of originality and influence has them ascribing such properties to musical works, he thinks that such a construal misleads as to their real logical form (2007: 258). He
thinks that true ascriptions of originality and influence apparently to musical works are only true when we understand them as ascriptions of such properties to *compositional actions*. According to Dodd, if we have an ascription like ‘The Eroica symphony is original’, we should understand it as being true just in case the composition of the *Eroica* symphony was an original act i.e. one in which a work with a certain combination of acoustic properties was first composed (2007 258). The same goes for influence ascriptions. The truth of such ascriptions, thinks Dodd, resides in the truth of ascriptions to works’ associated compositional actions. On this understanding, originality and influence claims can be true, but they do not ascribe the artistic properties to the works themselves. Rather, they are properties of the composer’s acts of composition.

This is still revision, however. As we mentioned earlier in the chapter, these semantic moves can be *ad hoc*, serving to insulate a theory from legitimate counterevidence. In this case Dodd offers independent motivation from his ontological theory. And we might worry that this way of avoiding charges of *ad hocism* threatens to bring down universalism with sonicism.

A preferable option for the universalist, I think, is to provide an analysis of what it is for a universal to be original or Liszt influenced. As I’ve already suggested, I take musical works to be impure relational properties which involve particular acts of composition. And what makes such a property original or Liszt-influenced is roughly what Dodd says. How the act involved in the impure relational property is determines these artistic features of the work. The availability of this less revisionary option would seem to undercut Dodd’s motivation for denying that musical works can have artistic properties.

On the issue of musical works having representational properties, Dodd elaborates two arguments against musical representation. The first trades on intuitions about what is required to understand music. Dodd follows Scruton in thinking that Debussy’s *La Mer* ‘…is such that someone who failed to pick up on its purported representational character at all, or perhaps took it to represent something else…would not be taken to have got the piece wrong.’ (Dodd 2007: 260). This would seem a natural implication of the empiricist account of musical understanding. If there is no need to grasp a work’s purported representational content in order to understand it properly, there would seem to be limited motivation to suppose that works have representational attributes.
The argument, however, is unconvincing. First, it just looks question
begging to assume that representational attributes have no place in understanding a
work of music. The proposed evidence independent of aesthetic empiricism, that we
would not say that someone got *La Mer* wrong if they missed its representational
content or misidentified it, is far from convincing. If a listener were entirely
ignorant of all purported representational content, we might note that missing a
feature of a work does not entail that one is wrong about the work. It merely
suggests that one does not have a comprehensive understanding of the work.

In cases of misidentification of a representational work’s represented content,
whether we thought someone was in error might depend upon the case in question.
If one proposed, in ignorance of the title, that *Flight of The Bumble Bee* represented
a delicious cheese sandwich, one would likely be corrected by one’s peers.
However, it is not merely listeners that can make errors, in some cases it might be a
failing of the composer to articulate her intended representational content
effectively. Just because one thinks some works have representational content
doesn’t entail they think every work with an evocative title does. If one took
musical representation seriously, one might debate cases like *La Mer*. Composers
and listeners do frequently talk about musical works in terms of their
representational content, the claim that understanding musical works requires no
grasp of such content would have to be construed as a normative claim about how
musical works ought to be understood. And it seems that any motivation for
endorsing this latter claim is to be drawn from aesthetic empiricism.

The second argument aims to show that purportedly representational works
do not express thoughts of sufficient determinacy to be counted as genuinely
representational. According to the *determinacy requirement*, to be representational
a work must meet three conditions (Dodd 2007: 260). First, it must pick out its
subject with sufficient determinacy. Second, it must attribute something to that
subject, thereby expressing some propositional content – something like a Fregean
thought. Third, it should express this thought by way of combining elements in
accordance with conventions operative in the medium. For Dodd, musical works
fail on these criteria. Even if music might pick out something quite clearly, a train
say, it often fails to express any determinate thought about that object. Even if it
seems to express some such thought, it appears that the thought is not expressed
because of the arrangement of the elements in the medium, as is the case with
literary works or paintings. The proposed explanation of our error is that there are several things music can do; music can imitate, intimate and resemble things, but none of these is sufficient for genuine representation. The aesthetic empiricist claims that we confuse music's capacity to do these things for its capacity to represent (Dodd 2007: 260-263).

The most obvious objection to this argument is that it’s not entirely clear why we should accept these as necessary conditions for representation. In particular, the third requirement looks too demanding. According to it, before we can accept a medium as being representational, we need to offer a reason to believe that its (presumably truth-conditional, if the second requirement is held constant) content is expressed by way of an arrangement of elements according to a system of conventions. And it really isn’t clear that we have such a worked out account of this for naturalistic or abstract representational paintings (cf Ridley 2004). In addition, it seems there are cases of representation which do not operate according to conventions as such. Surely there are forms of perceptual and mental representation which do not require conventions in order to represent. It seems strange to think that the visual system represents because of shared intentions of sight-users.

So, the independent motivation Dodd invokes for denying that musical works have artistic and representational attributes looks pretty shaky. This being so, the proposals about what’s really going on, whether in the deep logical form of artistic ascriptions, or in our confusion of representation with intimation, are apt to appear ad hoc. However, I think the most decisive challenge to aesthetic empiricism and the sonicist view about individuation can be derived from a sort of attribute Levinson mentions only briefly and which has all but dropped out of the debate concerning musical work individuation. I will consider the case of musical quotation because it appears that the quotational attributes also serve as artistic attributes, their possession being gauged by reference to other musical works, their sources, and they are representational in a sense which satisfies the determinacy requirement.
8: Musical Quotation

Musical quotation is a species of musical borrowing. Musical borrowing involves the reuse of musical material from some extant work in a distinct work. There are many sorts of musical borrowing which have varying aesthetic implications (Burkholder 1994). Musical quotation has a more specific function. A quotational musical work will lift some distinctive features from its quotational source in order to single out that work. Typically, the features most relevant to successfully picking out the quotational source are melodic elements. However, quotations do not function by precise mimicry of their sources. Rather, they manipulate the musical material in certain ways in order to pass some sort of comment on their source. To “get” a quotational passage, it seems we need to know what work it is about and what it is saying about that work (Keppler 1956: 473). Musical quotation is far from rare (see Keppler 1956), but I want to consider the details of a particular case due to Jerrold Levinson (1980) because it illuminates certain aesthetic implications which seem to tell against the empiricist.

Jerrold Levinson (1980: 71) considers the quotation of Shostakovich’s Seventh Symphony (S7) found in Bartok’s Concerto for Orchestra (CO). The Bartok work features a “dim witted” caricature of S7’s “invasion theme” placed in between delicate lyrical passages. The sharp contrast with its surrounding passages and the exaggeratedly imbecilic quotation makes it quite clear that the relevant passages are about S7 and that it makes an aside about the overtly patriotic bombast of the popular work.

The quotation found in the Bartok work, and the very fact that it contains a quotation, plays a role in determining the work’s affective aesthetic and expressive aesthetic character. Even if one has a soft spot for S7, one is still apt to find Bartok’s quotation funny (prima facie, an affective aesthetic property) and, given the sharpness with which the source material is observed, one should go further and say the work is witty and, whether appropriate or not, disapproving (expressive aesthetic properties). The possession of these aesthetic features has as legitimate a role to play in the understanding and critical assessment of the work as the attributions of delicateness to the quotation’s surrounding passages do. If anything,
one sees the surrounding passages as framing the quotation, a device for reinforcing the humorous effect of the quotation.

If this is the correct way of describing the case, it poses obvious problems for aesthetic empiricism. Levinson (1980: 71) asks us to imagine a sonic doppelganger of CO composed in advance of S7’s composition. Call this work “CO*”. Because there is no S7 to quote at the time of CO*’s composition, there is no question of CO* quoting S7. The funniness and wittiness which can be attributed to CO depend upon its being a satirical quotation of S7. Our sonic doppelganger might be aesthetically interesting in certain respects, but the CO*’s counterparts of CO’s quotational passage fail to constitute a witty aside. So, it lacks the funniness and wittiness associated with CO. The same argument can be made mutatis mutandis for the expressive aesthetic properties associated with CO’s disapproving stance towards S7.

8.1: The Sonicist-Empiricist Response

Dodd doesn’t offer any response to the purported quotational properties of musical works. However, his strategies concerning representational and artistic features are suggestive of the line likely to be offered. One line might resemble the response to musical works’ purported representational properties. It might be argued that musical works do not quote at all. He might say that the misidentification of a quoted source in music does not bear upon the proper understanding of a purportedly quotational work. However, this seems even less plausible for musical quotation than it does in the case of musical representation. If one fails to identify the quotational content of a musical work, or at least, what it is a quote of, I think it’s natural to say there is something missing from our grasp of it. If one misidentifies the source of the quote, it would seem that we should say an error has been made. If one takes Bartok to be quoting a work other than the Lenignrad Symphony, one surely has made a mistake. The satirical comment is about that work, and no other.

Another response Dodd might consider is that of introducing conditions upon quotation which cannot be met by the resources of the musical medium. It is difficult to see, however, what conditions might be placed upon quotation which
can allow for indirect quotation in speech, but which rule out musical quotation. And even if such conditions can be formulated, we’re still left with a problem suggested by the fact that there is an error involved in misidentifying the source of a musical quotation: there’s some relation between the ‘quotational’ work and its source which bears upon understanding the former, even if it’s not quotation in some specially defined sense, it’s still a feature of musical works which plays a role in the determination of a work’s aesthetic attributes, and so should be explained by a theory of musical work identity.

Another option might resemble the line against musical works having artistic properties. It might be argued that because musical works are abstract, this precludes them from being quotational. The prospects for this option are dim. It’s natural to think that repeatable sentences are abstract, but it is also natural to think that they can be quotational. Although this is a natural thought about sentences, it isn’t compulsory. Dodd might develop a thought analogous to that of Strawson (1950) concerning referential relations. This thought is that it is a category mistake to attribute properties like refers to parts of sentences themselves. On the Strawson picture it is fundamentally people who perform acts of referring. This might be extended to quotation. This would allow a variation on the strategy employed in the analysis of artistic properties.

In the case of quotation, the story might run as follows: Composers, but not musical works quote, more precisely, composer’s acts are quotational. Bartok’s act of composing CO was what did the quoting, the work itself is merely instrumental to that purpose. The story cannot end here, however.

The problem that arose isn’t just the quotationality of a work, it’s that certain expressive aesthetic properties depend upon the work’s quoting as it does. If the quotation does not “belong” to the work, our empiricist will be forced to deny that the work is witty or funny and must presumably affirm that it is Bartok’s quotational act that is witty or funny. That is, with this option, those quotation-dependent aesthetic properties are properly assigned to the composer’s acts and deemed as of a separate art-historical value. And this is going to get messy.

There is a certain breadth of the revision which is daunting. Musical borrowing is fairly common and often aesthetic properties are ascribed to works on the basis of the borrowing in question. The most severe concern, however, is manifest in the details of particular cases. Consider the *Concerto for Orchestra*. The
quotational passage is explicitly juxtaposed between contrasting passages to frame and reinforce the “dim-witted” comment upon the *Leningrad*. This leaves it utterly puzzling what we should say about the work once we accept that those monotonous, exaggerated passages are not really quotational. *Prima facie* they increase the work’s value. However, if it is only Bartòk who receives the attributions of wittiness, CO’s value is arguably diminished because of its ugly, somewhat ill-fitting section.

Perhaps our empiricist will bite the bullet on this one. After all, her claim about this view of *correct* understanding needn’t be that it reflects how we actually go about evaluating works. Nevertheless, it is difficult to see why this empiricist line should be deemed correct.

There is, however, an additional problem. Presumably, our compositional-act strategist wants to say that some affective and expressive aesthetic properties genuinely *do* belong to musical works. Surely, sometimes musical works are melancholy, witty, exciting or hopeful. Yet, it isn’t clear that the empiricist line under consideration can secure this without employing an *ad hoc* manoeuvre. The situation is this: We have a theory about the properties upon which musical works’ aesthetic properties supervene. That theory faces apparent counterexamples, aesthetic properties which vary independently of those contained in the supervenience base postulated by the theory.

The response is that it is incorrect to suppose works really have the aesthetic properties in question because those properties are really only possessed by the work’s compositional acts. This is supposed to be independently motivated because seemingly natural ways of ascribing the properties in question commit a category error. One who ascribes properties to musical works fails to realise that it is really only the acts of people which possess quotational properties and the aesthetic properties they determine.

The problem now is that we might think that other affective aesthetic properties purportedly ascribed on the basis of a work’s acoustic features are also the result of the same category mistake. It is really only the compositional actions of people which are correctly describable as *melancholy, witty, exciting* or *hopeful*. That is, it is the reasoning process which terminates in the inscription of certain instructions for performance that which really possesses these properties. It is just a category mistake to think that musical works really possess such attributes.
Of course, this isn’t what the sonicist wants to say, but the response prompts a pressing question: Why are some expressive and affective properties correctly ascribed to works themselves? Why, for instance, can we ascribe the *delicateness* of some passages of CO to the work itself, while its *wit* must be ascribed to Bartok’s act? Why can we ascribe *wittiness* to Schostakovich’s *First Piano Sonata* *qua* work but not to CO? If we take the strategy outlined to be well motivated, we should worry that in any case of an ascription of an affective property to a work, the literal truth of the ascription can only concern the composer’s act of composing the work.

To my mind given an acceptance of the compositional act strategy for the quotational ascriptions, there seems nothing blocking the claim that *really* it was Shostakovich’s act of composition of the *First Piano Sonata* that was witty, rather than the work thereby composed.

It appears that any response which proposes that any affective and expressive properties which don’t supervene upon the acoustic character of the work can’t belong to the work itself will be question begging. Aesthetic empiricism is in question because there is evidence for quotational attributes. Appealing again to the truth of aesthetic empiricism at this juncture would appear to have no motivation independent of insulating it from counterevidence.

Whether there is an independent way of explaining why some aesthetic properties would genuinely belong to works while some are possessed by composers’ acts remains to be seen. If no principled explanation is forthcoming it appears the empiricist’s response to the challenge posed by quotation dependent aesthetic properties can only be supported by begging the question.

### 8.2: Analogous Arguments for Artistic and Representational Attributes

The example of quotational properties is the thin end of the wedge. The argument for quotational attributes was that certain of the works’ *aesthetic* qualities depend upon its possession of *quotational* properties. A work’s possession of quotational properties depends upon something beyond acoustic features of the
work itself. While a sonicist is free to respond that the quotational properties really append to compositional acts, we saw that the resulting redistribution of *aesthetic* properties is unexplained and appears *ad hoc*. I think the same strategy can be employed for artistic and representational properties where our *prima facie* intuitions look to favour the hypothesis that the work has some *aesthetic* attribute which it would lack if it lacked artistic and representational properties.

I think there are candidates for such aesthetic properties grounded by artistic or representational features of works. A work can be ascribed *boldness*. Sometimes this is because it is notable for its imposing themes and harmony, features which are plausibly acoustic. Sometimes a work might be ascribed boldness because, despite lacking such acoustic characteristics, the work stands out against the styles and theoretical orientation common at the time of its composition. If the ascriptions of boldness are warranted exclusively by such considerations then the sonicist would likely want to redistribute the latter boldness ascriptions to compositional acts. This does not look problematic. What does look problematic, however, is dealing with the intermediate cases where, intuitively at least, it looks like ascriptions of boldness are true, but not exclusively because of either its acoustically imposing themes nor its departure from established compositional norms, but because of an organic combination of both. Natural candidates here might perhaps include Schoenberg’s *Pierrot Lunaire* and other examples of early experiments in atonality and serialism. It’s not easy to see how this work’s aesthetic impact comes apart from its originality or its originality and novelty. Indeed, it is an originality and novelty which can be experienced by many present day auditors because of the lack of exposure to music composed during this inventive period.

We might also think that there are several jazz works which equally deserve the ascription of boldness because of both their acoustic and artistic features, a salient example being John Coltrane’s *Giant Steps*. Similarly, it seems right to say that Miles Davies’s cool jazz compositions are bold, not by virtue of simply his acts, or their formal simplicity. Rather, it is the extreme simplicity against their frenetic be-bop background.

Here, as in the quotation case, it is puzzling what we should say about such works if we want to strip away the purported non-acoustic component of their boldness. Further, as in the quotation case, there seems no principled explanation
independent of the empiricist theory offered for why some boldness is possessed by the work and some by the composer’s actions.

As for aesthetic features grounded in representational attributes, I think there are candidates here too. *Flight of the Bumblebee* is *prima facie* quite a striking case of musical representation. It seems that we might want to describe the work as *haphazard, clumsy* or *erratic* but these attributions depend upon an organic combination of acoustic and representational properties. For instance, perhaps the chromatic nature of the melodic line makes an acoustic contribution to the work’s being *erratic*, but this is not the whole story. For consider the dynamic variations in the melody line. These, I contend, contribute to the work’s *being erratic, clumsy* or *haphazard* because they represent a bumblebee in flight; they contribute to the representation of a bumblebee which is moving with respect to the listener in a way which sounds uncontrolled. Again, it is utterly puzzling as to how to understand this work without understanding it as representational because the natural understanding takes it to have expressive and affective aesthetic properties which depend upon its representational properties.

8.3: The Direct Argument for Artistic and Representational Properties

The quotational argument also has an application which simply trades upon the plausibility that a work’s quotational properties *are* artistic and representational. Artistic properties of a work are defined as those which are determined by reference to another work. Whether or not a work quotes another can only be determined by reference to the work quoted, and so, it seems that quotational attributes are indeed artistic attributes of a particular sort. Further, it appears that the quotational work meets the determinacy requirement imposed for representational artworks. A quotational work like CO picks out its target, *The Leningrad* Symphony, with *reasonable determinacy* and *expresses a thought about it*, that it is excessively bombastic. And it does so by exploiting and manipulating the conventions which determine significant musical similarity. That is, *Concerto for Orchestra* exploits
musical conventions which allow us to pick out *The Leningrad Symphony* and derive the derisive comment.

Perhaps the empiricist will deny that meeting the determinacy requirement is sufficient for representation, she might add more necessary conditions. However, the prospects for this sort of response look dim because the *necessary* conditions for representation already advanced by the empiricist make it look difficult for us to explain just how it is that paradigmatically representational arts, like painting, can be representational (Ridley 2004: 59). For instance, given a straightforward understanding of the determinacy requirement it is difficult to see just what thought is expressed by the painting *The Mona Lisa* and just what elements of the painting medium and conventions of arrangement are being manipulated in order to express the representational content associated with it. Presumably, such problems would surely only be exacerbated by tightening the conditions further.

The quotational attributes apparently possessed by works provide a case study in just how difficult it is to think of aesthetic empiricism as a plausible thesis about musical appreciation. Further, because the same style of argument concerning aesthetic properties being dependent upon the possession of quotational attributes has analogues for artistic properties, the same difficulties beset the empiricist strategy applied to these. Finally, as quotational attributes are a special instance of artistic and representational attributes we find that if the argument for quotational attributes goes through, and it is difficult to deny, we have at least some instances of works possessing these attributes. Even on the demanding conditions for representation offered by the musical empiricist, it would seem that musical quotation can satisfy them. And this would seem to leave the claim that music is in principle incapable of representing in need of justification.

9: Conclusion

Although blessed with some intuitive pull, the sonicist view and its empiricist motivation are too simplistic. Attempts to prop up empiricism in light of apparently legitimate ascriptions made in everyday practice often appear *ad hoc* and
often leave us wondering if this account can really be about musical works’ identity conditions at all.

This chapter has, however, served to clarify some things we ought to aim at explaining. We need an account of musical work individuation which is up to the task of distinguishing works on the basis of their artistic category, their artistic properties, and any representational or quotational properties they possess.

What we’ve also seen, and which will be important to us as universalists, is that the acceptance of contextualism is not merely relevant to our appreciation of the repeatable musical work. It is also relevant to our appreciation of the work’s repetitions, the occurrences which instantiate it. And this strongly suggests that there must be a causal connection which reaches back to the work’s contextually determinative act of composition. For the universalist who, ultimately, wants to express identity claims about musical works in terms of conditions for (correct) occurrence, this motivates the suggestion that a causal condition be introduced into the properties that are musical works. This aim will be realised in chapter 8.

So, a case has been made that sonicism isn’t to be trusted, but we now turn to a harder task; the provision of an account of musical work identity which can capture the connection between a work’s appreciable features and its context.
Chapter 7: Contextualism

1: Introduction

In this chapter, we’ll be looking at a family of views formulated by Jerrold Levinson (1980, 1992) which aim to give a theory of individuation about musical works which can capture the contextualist intuitions which lead us away from contentist views like sonicism. However, we’ll find that Levinson’s attempts at capturing and explaining contextualist intuitions are philosophically unsuccessful. In response, we’ll return to Davies’s performance theory, but this time, we’ll be looking at its plausible claims about musical work individuation. This will put us in a position to formulate an improvement on both views in chapter 8.

1.1: Indicated Structure Theories

To capture our contextualist intuitions, Levinson’s idea is to add context-specifying indices into the indicated structures identified with musical works. Before we examine the contextualist aspects of his proposals, it’s worth noting a debate that we’ll be passing over. In Levinson’s proposals, the instructional content is more precisely specified than it is in Dodd’s timbral sonicism. Levinson offers some interesting considerations which suggest that the means of sound-production specified in scores are to be included amongst the identity conditions for paradigm musical works (Levinson 1980: 74-7, 1990: 396-7). He sums up his arguments in the desideratum:

(Per) Musical works must be such that specific means of performance or sound production are integral to them. (Levinson 1980: 78).
For this reason, he thinks that the instructional content which plays a role in the individuation of musical works ought to be understood not merely as a qualitative matter of tonal and timbral content, but rather as ‘sound-performance means structures’ which incorporate content about both the acoustic requirements and the way in which the acoustic properties must be produced; which instruments are to be used, which technique employed, and so on.

It should not be doubted that this proposal has generated interesting debate (see, for instance, Dodd 2007: 217-235, Davies 2009 165-71). However, it is a debate that considerations of space force us to pass over. Our concern here is not with how we ought to extract a work’s instructional content from a canonical representation. Our present quarry is about whether Levinson’s efforts succeed in giving a satisfactory explanation of our judgments about musical works’ possession of contextually determined attributes.

Levinson offers more than one proposal concerning the constitutive elements that make up the indicated structures he identifies with musical works. In this chapter, we’ll examine three different specifications of constitutive elements proposed as adequate to the individuation of musical works. These specifications are:

(MW) S/PM structure-as-indicated-by-X-at-t (Levinson 1980: 79)


In chapter 3, we examined the categorial aspect of Levinson’s proposal according to which each indicated type is a structured entity and is constituted by elements bound together by an act of indication (Levinson 1980: 79-80). However, the indicated type framework also carries some schematic identity criteria. For the purposes of this chapter, there are two salient implications of employing the indicated type framework.
First, one may represent the identity conditions of indicated types in terms of tuples of their constituents. An indicated type, IT1, constituted by \(<C, D>\) is identical with indicated type IT2 constituted by \(<C', D'>\) if, and only if, \(C = C'\) and \(D = D'\). That is, in general, the identity conditions of indicated types are determined by the identity of the entities indicated which the act of indication unites.

The second important feature of Levinson’s indicated structure framework concerns its consequences for the trans-world identity criteria of musical works. Although Levinson’s (MW), (MW+) and (MW’) differ with respect to the constitutive elements they specify for indicated structures, he thinks that when an indicated type has a certain element amongst its constituents, it has that constituent as a matter of modal necessity (Levinson 1980: 84-5 n. 29, 1982: 163).

Perhaps the strongest reason for accepting this is that Levinson’s ambitions extend beyond the provision of intra-world identity criteria. He is not merely looking to offer an informative criterion which specifies how works are distinguished and identified within worlds. He is also trying to answer the ambitious individuation question. And such answers do yield trans-world identity criteria. If indicated types are, in this sense, individuated, by an S/PM structure, a person and a time, at any world, they are individuated those entities at every world at which they exist.³³

We raised certain concerns with Levinson’s categorial proposal in chapter 3 where we decided that the best way to formulate a theory in the style of the indicated structure theory was to construe musical works as impure relational types, or, better, impure relational properties. Nevertheless, for expository purposes, we’ll continue to talk in Levinson’s terms, as this won’t make any relevant difference to the arguments presented. Impure relational properties are also modally inflexible in ways parallel to the modal inflexibility of Levinson’s indicated structures (see Humberstone 1996, Howell 2002).

2: Levinsonian Contextualism

³³ Levinson, in correspondence, has confirmed these explanatory ambitions. He also offered another reason for taking indicated structures to have their constituents essentially. He suggested that the relation between an indicated structure and its constituents is one more akin to that between a set and its members than the relation between a material object and its constituent matter. I find this latter suggestion rather less helpful than that presented in the main text.
As was argued in the previous chapter, the content of the instruction prescribed by a composer is not sufficient to determine various sorts of attributes musical works possess. In the arguments we’ve seen so far, it appears that we can ‘epistemically’ individuate content duplicates by virtue of certain aesthetic and artistic properties to which our appreciative judgments are sensitive. In seeking to explain this fact, it’s a natural enough thought that what contentist approaches fail to reflect is that a work’s ‘context’ plays a role in determining the properties the musical work has, and which must play some role in the story about musical work identity. However, attempting to explicate this thought has proved very difficult indeed.

All of Levinson’s formulations accord a significant role to the notion of indication. It is the act of indication executed by the work’s composer which binds the comparatively aesthetically and artistically indeterminate content to its compositional context. The composite indicated type is then supposed to be adequate to satisfying the ascriptions of context-determined attributes which the S/PM structure does not determinately possess. What Levinson aims to do is give a specification of contextual elements which indication binds the structure to. He offers a characterisation of what he calls “musico-historical contexts” (MHCs). He offers two groups of factors which he takes to be jointly, but nevertheless merely partially constitutive of musical works’ compositional contexts (Levinson 1980: 69).

One group of factors Levinson calls General Musico-Historical Contexts. For Levinson they are relevant to the outcome of anyone’s composing in that context. Levinson characterises these general contexts, relevant to anyone’s composing at a context at a time, \( t \), as including:

a) The whole of cultural, social and political history prior to \( t \)
b) The whole of musical development up to \( t \)
c) Musical styles prevalent at \( t \)
d) Dominant musical influences at \( t \) (Levinson 1980: 69).
In addition, Levinson thinks that there are features of context which have specific relevance to a particular composer. These are particularly salient when one considers influence relations and the contribution that distinct works in the same oeuvre may make to one another’s content.\textsuperscript{34} For this reason Levinson elucidates what he calls \textit{Individual Musico-Historical Contexts}. For a composer $P$ composing at time, $t$, Levinson proposes that the individual context includes the following factors:

\begin{itemize}
  \item[(e)] Musical activities of $P$’s contemporaries at $t$
  \item[(f)] $P$’s apparent style at $t$
  \item[(g)] $P$’s musical repertoire at $t$
  \item[(h)] $P$’s oeuvre at $t$
  \item[(i)] Musical influences operating on $P$ at $t$ (Levinson 1980: 69).
\end{itemize}

The list from (a) to (i) does serve as an elaboration of the sorts of factors that crop up in musical discussion and this suggests that some or all may be relevant to the determination of a certain aesthetic or artistic property possessed by a given musical work.

The characterisation is, however, incomplete. This can be argued by pointing out that it fails to incorporate the full range of entities that might be \textit{represented} by a musical work. At the very least, we can see that MHC requires supplementation. We might, however, accept that Levinson’s proposals are aimed at individuating finely enough to capture any reasonable revision of MHC.

What’s more important is that the characterisation of contexts afforded by MHC doesn’t give us any identity conditions, not even ones which decide when actual contexts are distinct or identical. There’s no specification of when a change in political history, or which changes in the activities of a composer’s contemporaries, for example, suffice to determine a new context. This point will become pertinent in the later sections of this chapter.

\textsuperscript{34} For more on this latter point see Levinson’s “Work and Oeuvre” in \textit{The Pleasures of Aesthetics} (1992: 243-73).
2.1: \( (MW) \) and \( (MW+) \)

In his seminal paper *What a Musical Work Is* (1980), Levinson argues that the following indicated type schema provides the right way to individuate musical works.

\[
(MW) \text{ S/PM structure-as-indicated by } X \text{-at-} t \quad \text{(Levinson 1980: 79)}
\]

It might appear puzzling that composers and time pairs are playing the role of contextual determinants here. Levinson’s arguments seem to be premised on the thought that contextual, rather than specific personal and temporal factors, are responsible for the works’ attributes. Levinson reasons that a work’s compositional context, at a world, is fixed by the specification of a composer at a time at that world. So, differences in time of composition or of composer at a world will be compositions of distinct works. Composer and time pairs, then, serve to fix a unique context for the work. And this makes indicated types specified by \( (MW) \) specific enough to determinately possess the sorts of contextually determined attributes which motivate the move away from contentism (Levinson 1980: 79).

Earlier, we saw that Levinson’s proposal is one which incorporates conclusions about the trans-world identity of indicated types. These are, I think, problematic and will be considered in the next section. However, some philosophers have argued that \( (MW) \) is subject to a more basic problem. They argue that the intra-world identity conditions entailed by \( (MW) \) distinguish musical works too finely. This criticism will have a natural backing by contentists, but there is also a resistance from the contextualist ranks.

Some who endorse, or entertain contextualism, have expressed their intuition that even if musical works can be distinguished from one another on the basis of contextual features, it is still possible that the same work be composed more than once, so long as the instructional content and contextual features are the same (Davies 2001: 79-82, Dodd 2007: 244). Such philosophers endorse \( (MC) \):
(MC) It is possible that composers who compose independently may compose an identical work.

(MW), however, yields intra-world identity conditions which are incompatible with (MC). If we have a different composer, or a different time of composition as constituents of our indicated structure, according to (MW), we have distinct works. As such, they compose distinct musical works, even if they're matched with respect to the qualitative features of context cited in (MHC).

I don’t think that the incompatibility with (MC) gives a good reason for rejecting (MW) because I don’t see any strong reason for accepting (MC) as a pre-philosophical desideratum that musical work identity conditions ought to accommodate. Stephen Davies (2001: 76-83) offers a lengthy discussion of (MC) and spends some time trying to mark out a ‘mild’ contextualism which can allow that musical works be distinguished by contextual factors, but which accommodates (MC). However, in amongst his various thoughts about such scenarios (2001: 76-7, 79-82), there is a decisive lack of independent motivation for endorsing (MC). My suggestion is that any thought that (MC) is pre-theoretically compelling is perhaps due to the superficial appeal of contentisim, a view that identifies musical works with entities that can be multiply composed. However, once we reject this general outlook, the truth of (MC) becomes an open question for the musical ontologist.

2.2: Counterfactual Problems for Levinson

The more serious objections to (MW), I think, are trained on its implications for the trans-world identity of musical works. One objection is that the trans-world identity criteria entailed by (MW) are not sufficiently demanding. We can coherently suppose that a musical work in a counterfactual situation has the same S/PM structure, composer and is composed at the same time as an actual musical work. However, we may still find ourselves compelled to deny that that work is identical with the actual one. Gregory Currie (1989) offers a persuasive thought experiment to this conclusion.
Levinson’s rationale for offering composer-time pairs as context-determining indices was that in a single world, such a specification is adequate to any change in contextual factors. Where we have a different compositional context, we’ll have a different composer, time, or both. However, Currie (1989: 60) points out that composer-time pairs will not track counterfactual variations in context. To illustrate his objection, Currie asks us to consider a counterfactual work which is just like the actual Hammerklavier sonata with respect to its S/PM structure, time and composer. In the counterfactual situation Currie envisages, the work’s composition takes place in a musico-historical context in which no musical works have been composed since the time of Henry Purcell. In such an impoverished context, Currie thinks, it seems counterintuitive to think that we have the very same work in a different counterfactual situation, rather than a distinct work.

One could perhaps hold on to (MW) here, but the idea is unappealing. It seems unlikely that Levinson has made a surprising discovery about musical works here. What seems more likely is that in offering his rather elegant proposal adequate to contextualist intuitions about intra-world individuation, Levinson has taken his eye off the prize, the ambitious explanatory account of individuation which carries implications about trans-world identity. Levinson (1992) conceded the force of this counterexample and presented a more discerning formulation of his proposal, (MW+). According to (MW+) a musical work is:


This formulation blocks the inference to the identity of the actual and counterfactual sonatas. Because the counterfactual work is in a musico-historical context which is distinct from its actual context of composition, the supporter of (MW+) is under no compulsion to accept the problematic identification of the two. The reference to context serves to explain just why the counterfactual work would rightly be accorded such divergent artistic status from the actual Hammerklavier.

There are, however, counterfactual problems for (MW) which are inherited by (MW+). Both (MW) and (MW+) feature specifications of structures, composers and times of composition. And Levinson’s ambitions for his view make these constituents essential. Any musical work is the one it is because of its structure,
composer and its time of composition. So, from either (MW) or (MW+), it follows that all musical works have their structure essentially, have their composers essentially, and have their times of composition essentially.

We’ve already seen in chapter 3 that there are reasons for thinking that at least some musical works have the structure they do contingently. And we’ve already suggested a way this can be accommodated by a universals theory. However, the essentiality of composers and the essentiality of times of compositions to musical works will strike us more counterintuitive than the structural essentialist implication.

I accept that there may be some cases in which composers are essential to the works they compose. Shostakovich’s Fifteenth String Quartet, written during his final bout of sickness, is somewhat subdued in comparison to other string quartets in his oeuvre. It has seemed apt to describe it as a musical ‘farewell’ from the great composer. And perhaps in such a case it doesn’t make sense to think of the work as being composed by any other. That work could be no one else’s farewell. Similarly, Charles Mingus’s Self-Portrait in Three Colours, which portrays the man in a more gentle light than testimony sometimes suggests, might be essentially tied to that composer. A musical portrayal of Mingus by anyone else, perhaps, could never be that work, no matter how similar in content and context the counterfactual composer was.

Nevertheless, it’s difficult to see why composer essentialism should be accepted across the board. Indeed, Levinson himself finds the suggestion counterintuitive (Levinson 1980: 83). And it seems that because there’s no suggestion that practice requires, or is even compatible with, a blanket affirmation of composer essentialism Levinson must present independent motivation for this unusual consequence. In an attempt to do this, he argues that composer essentiality is in fact a benefit of his account. He argues that the implication is to be welcomed because it gives composers ‘logical insurance’ of ownership of the works they compose (Levinson 1980: 83-4). However, it seems that Levinson is clutching at straws here. There’s no obvious reasons why any intuitions about composers owning their works must be secured by a blanket commitment to composer essentialism. Presumably, any intuitions we have about the ownership relation can be captured by the thought that the composer actually owns the work in question,
and with the denial of (MC), that any other actual composer’s efforts will yield a distinct work. As such, composer essentialism appears poorly motivated.

The consequence that musical works have their times of composition as a matter of modal necessity is perhaps even more shocking. Although it’s sometimes difficult to achieve consensus on matters of trans-world identity, that’s not the case here. Our practice isn’t in general sensitive to specific times of composition any more than it is sensitive to the precise spatial location of a work’s act of composition. It seems quite coherent to think that the *Eroica* symphony could have been composed a little later or earlier than it actually was. If there is a problem with such a supposition, Levinson needs to offer us some independent reason for thinking so. This he does not offer.

Rather, in response, he offers a somewhat *ad hoc* suggestion which he wants to cover structural essentialism worries too. Levinson suggests that we, ‘…recognize that “same structure” and “same time” admit of a degree of freedom or looseness, perhaps varying from case to case’ (Levinson 1992: 145). Of course, this makes the identity conditions he provides into something of a moveable feast, and we might object that the account becomes unprincipled. And I think there’s something more serious here than the moveable feast objection. Whether we’re thinking of Levinson as offering identity criteria which are supposed to elucidate our grasp on musical works, or whether we’re seeing him as offering a deep metaphysical explanation of musical work identity, the response he makes here undermines either of those ambitions. When he suggests that the looseness with which we understand the ‘same time’ or ‘same structure’ should be taken to vary from case to case, the ‘cases’ he is referring to are musical works. As such, it would seem that his intention is that we use our grasp of the identity of the musical work in order to determine the variations in time of composition and in structure that the work can undergo. Yet, this isn’t a satisfactory way to go. The identity of sets of indicated structures’ constituents should *inform* us about the identity of the musical works they constitute. And, more ambitiously, the identity of those constituents is supposed to *explain* the identity of the musical work they constitute. We shouldn’t presuppose a grasp of musical work identity to inform and explain the variability of its constituents.
3: Levinson’s Neglected Alternative: (MW’)

One option Levinson toys with is the (MW’) formulation of the indicated structure theory. On (MW’) each musical work is identified with an:


The (MW’) theory of musical work identity was suggested by Levinson, but he eventually dropped it because he thought, as we’ll see, that its generation of the multiple composition scenario made it problematic (1980: 82). In light of the foregoing counterfactual objections, however, it might seem a stronger contender than Levinson originally thought.

This proposal cites context directly and has been seen by some (see e.g. Dodd 2007: 244) as the best way to incorporate a contextual element into an indicated type theory. The arguments of Walton and Levinson suggest that it is facts about the context of a work’s composition that serve to determine certain aesthetic and artistic properties, and so, it seems natural to suppose that (MW’) will be adequate to meeting those arguments.

Stephen Davies (2001: 75-86) argues for a view he calls ‘mild contextualism’ which is much like (MW’). He thinks that (MW’) doesn’t have the problematic implications associated with (MW) and (MW+). (MW’) makes no direct reference to composers or times. This leads Davies to think that it doesn’t have to face the counterfactual objections which affect (MW) and (MW+). He also thinks that (MW’) can allow the possibility of multiple composition within a world. This is a possibility he finds intuitive and so thinks it is a benefit of (MW’) that it can accommodate it. However, there is a preliminary obstacle that Davies must overcome.

Levinson didn’t drop (MW’) without motivation. He has concerns about the multiple composition scenario which (MW’) seems to entail. The mild contextualist does have responses to Levinson’s objections, but, as I’ll argue, the responses invoke costly hypotheses.
One worry goes as follows. Suppose two composers, A and B, independently compose the same musical work by prescribing the same content in indiscernible contexts. Perhaps they live next door to one another, share contemporaries, and so on. We might suppose that at their time of completion, the work composed by A and the work composed by B are indiscernible with respect to the attributes that might be correctly ascribed. So, it might seem that because there’d be no aesthetic or artistic difference at the time of completion, we could suppose that A’s work is identical with B’s work.

The problem, Levinson suggests is with the possibility of artistic divergence after A and B have completed their works (Levinson 1980: 84). He suggests two specific examples of how this may happen. One involves the intuitive suggestion that A’s work and B’s work come to diverge with respect to the influence they exert over works composed in the future. A’s work, for instance, might lead to successful performances and consequently influence future works, inspire transcriptions, and so on. B’s work, however, might be deemed unsatisfactory by its composer and its score may be destroyed, never to be performed or exert any influence over any other composer.

A second example concerns the relationship between a work’s attributes and the oeuvre in which it is situated. Levinson takes it that the correct attributions a work receives can depend upon other works in that composer’s oeuvre and that correct ascriptions can be determined by how that oeuvre develops after the composition of a work. He suggests the possibility that the work A composes in his oeuvre may turn out to be a seminal work, while the work B composes in his oeuvre may turn out to be a false start (1980: 84). If Levinson is right here, the difference in attributes possessed by A’s work and B’s work indicates they are distinct.

Another implication of (MC) which irks Levinson is that it appears incompatible with a plausible thesis about the connection between a work and its performances. It is a truism to say that if one work W and a work W* are identical then e is a performance of W precisely when it is a performance of W*. Therefore, if a work, W, has a performance which a work W* lacks, or vice versa, the works are distinct. And while not a truism, it is certainly plausible to follow Levinson in thinking that for a performance, e, to be a performance of a certain work, W, e, must bear a causal relation to that work’s composition.
One possibility found in the case of independently working composers A and B is that the performance e can be connected to A’s act of composition by way of the score A inscribes without there being any obvious causal connection to the act of composition performed by B. We might suppose that B destroys her score immediately after completion of her work, if so, e is not causally connected to B’s act of indication. So, given the plausible assumption that all performances of a work are causally connected to its act of composition, e is a performance of A’s work, but not of B’s work and this would imply that W is not identical to W*. So, to accept that works may be multiply composed, Levinson thinks, requires denying a particularly plausible thesis: performances of a musical work must bear some causal relation to that work’s composition.

Davies doesn’t think Levinson’s objections here are decisive and seeks to explain away the apparent difficulties posed by the possibility of multiple composition. In the latter case, he aims to explain how a performer can be causally connected with a work’s composition despite the fact that the performer is not causally connected with each of the multiple acts which are compositions of the same work. Recall our earlier example in which composer A connects performers to her compositional act by giving them a score, while B destroys her score. How can we explain the performers’ causal connection to the work B composed?

To explain this possibility, Davies distinguishes between musical works and the musical work sources (2001: 81). For Davies, there can be more than one source of a single musical work. If two composers independently indicate the same performed sound/structure in the same cultural context, they will provide distinct sources of the same work. Davies argues that a performer is causally connected to a work by virtue of being connected to any of its sources. This, he argues, preserves the causal requirement on performance while allowing that the composition of a work be in principle repeatable by composers working independently.

The other explanation Davies’s requires is how it is possible for a single work to diverge in its artistic attributes after composition is completed. His strategy is borrowed from Nicholas Wolterstorff (1991: 80). Davies argues that one can accept (MC) and maintain that sentences declaring the artistic divergence may be true, but that this is because their proper analysis will show the artistic properties in question are relativised to acts of composition. That is, the following sentence referring to A’s work W and B’s work W*: 
(Inf) ‘\(W\) is influential and \(W^*\) is not influential.’

Might be held true despite the \((MW')\) theorist’s claim that \(W = W^*\). The explanation of this possibility is that the correct analysis of such a sentence has it as expressing the following proposition.

\[(\text{Inf*}) <W \text{ is influential-as-composed-by-}A \text{ and } W^* \text{ is not influential-as-composed-by-}B>\]

If this strategy were appropriate it would usefully generalise in obvious ways to the oeuvre-relative attributions \(\text{was a false start and was seminal}\) considered by Levinson. One and the same work could be \(\text{a false start-as-composed-by-}X\) and \(\text{seminal-as-composed-by-}Y\). It is these two strategies with which Davies responds to Levinson’s arguments. Perhaps, it might be thought, the availability of these responses shows that Levinson’s original objections to the multiple composition scenario are without force.

Davies is right to think that Levinson’s objections to the possibility of multiple composition are not decisive. Philosophical objections rarely are. However, Davies’s strategy doesn’t come for free. Work sources are a distinctively philosophical introduction into the theory. Their role is specified by the work that Davies needs them to do and the aim of making \((MC)\), a purported entailment of \((MW')\), compatible with the causal requirement on work performance. Yet, there seems no independent motivation for \((MC)\), nor for the introduction of work sources which lay that role in propping up \((MW')\).

A similar concern attends the semantic hypothesis. Wolterstorff’s original proposal is one which applies to artistic predicates across the board. He offers it because his contentist proposal about musical work identity can’t make sense of such ascriptions without giving a relational analysis. And it has been rightly argued that Wolterstorff’s suggestion is \(\text{ad hoc}\) (see Dodd 2007: 255). There’s no reason independent of Wolterstorff’s ontological proposal to think that we should interpret the sentences in the way suggested. Now, it might be thought that Davies’s suggestion is preferable because it minimises the range of sentences which must be treated in the manner suggested. However, Davies’s suggestion is even less
satisfactory than Wolterstorff’s proposal. Consider, a pair of works, $a$ and $b$, and a pair of true sentences about the influence relations they stand in to each other: ‘$a$ was influenced by $b$’ and ‘$b$ influenced $a$’. Prima facie, we’d expect these two sentences to be treated as semantically equivalent. And Wolterstorff’s proposal bears this out. Even if he holds that their logical form makes reference to the acts of the influenced composer, this is at least common to both influence ascriptions. But, Davies’s suggestion, that only one of the pair is to be treated as a relative ascription suggests a semantics which is rather more ad hoc than that offered by Wolterstorff.

So, my concern is that the solutions Davies offers in defending (MC) force him into costly ad hoc ontological and semantic hypotheses which we’d do well to avoid. This should lead us to worry that (MC), even if it some philosophers find it intuitive, is not something we should aim at explaining. However, I think that (MW’) has a greater problem: the identity of contexts is obscure, and this leaves it unclear whether it does accommodate (MC) or the other putative facts about musical works that might appear to favour it over (MW) and (MW+)

### 3.1: The Obscurity of Contexts

The aim of Davies’s ‘mild’ contextualism is to satisfy the intra-world desideratum, (MC), and the trans-world desiderata concerning the possibility of alternative authorship and the possibility that a musical work might have been composed over a different time period. The main motivation for thinking that (MW’) would accommodate these possibilities is that the wording of the (MW’) formulation doesn’t directly specify particular people or particular times as constituents of musical works. This gives the appearance that the desiderata suggested and (MW’) are compatible.

I think we can agree that there’s no obvious incompatibility between what (MW’) entails and the propositions concerning multiple composition, alternative authorship and the contingency of a work’s time of composition. However, there’s also no obvious incompatibility in the thought that musico-historical contexts are as finely individuated as the composers-at-times specification found in (MW). This, I suggest, is because it’s unclear what a musico-historical context is. So far as one
can gather, it’s an open question whether (MW’) is compatible with the desiderata it is aimed at satisfying.

Consider, for instance, Levinson’s characterisation of MHCs. Each ‘constitutive factor’ presented is indexed to the time of composition. And the description of determinants of ‘individual’ contexts feature a variable whose value is the person who is composing the work in question. This specification doesn’t show that MHCs are distinct where composers and times are. Perhaps an identical context can be determined by different composers and different times of composition. Nevertheless, it would be premature to assume that’s possible. Levinson’s characterisation doesn’t include actual world identity criteria for musico-historical contexts, let alone intra-world or trans-world criteria that would give license to make conclusions about the desiderata at which Davies is aiming. Perhaps musico-historical contexts are such that any difference in time or composer determines a distinct context.

Stephen Davies (2001: 75) is concerned about this issue. The solution he proposes is to introduce a notion of ‘significant’ difference between contexts. This is designed to capture differences in contextual factors which do give rise to distinct contexts. With the problem labelled, he offers a proposal about significant differences between musico-historical contexts:

How should we identify ‘significant’ differences in musico-historical contexts”? There is no algorithm for doing so, but apparently it is possible when temporal distance allows us to pick out styles, periods and trends, since musical historians make judgments of this kind all the time (Davies 2001: 75).

As can be seen, his proposal is not a ‘philosophical’ one about the necessary and sufficient conditions for context identity. Rather, it is an epistemological suggestion which tells philosophers how to find out which differences are significant. Significant differences on this account are to be derived from the judgments of musical historians. We might call this methodological proposal historical deferentialism about musico-historical context identity.

The suggestion is somewhat under-elaborated given how much hangs on it. Even in this basic form, however, it looks unpromising. It seems pretty unlikely that context identity conditions are the subject of any sort of consensus amongst
historians of music. A textbook on music history will tell us about the various periods, styles and genres that have been successfully identified. And, as contextualists, we’ll probably agree that a work composed in one period can be distinguished from any work composed in another, regardless of similarities in content.

However, more specific projects in music history, say, dealing with the works of a specific composer, will typically make recourse to more finely distinguished contexts than those that can be elaborated in the basic conceptual apparatus associated with distinctions of period, genre and style. Works within that composer’s oeuvre, specific techniques learned from a teacher, the composer’s particular interest in certain sorts of instrumentation, and so on, might be relevant to understanding the attributes possessed by a work in her genre.

And this proliferation of schemes of identity might lead to more than one philosophical position on the matter. Perhaps it could lead a pluralism about context identity and the mild contextualist corollary of a pluralism about musical work identity. On the other hand, it might be thought that by fusing the identity conditions suggested by musical historians, we’ll develop a maximally fine grained account of context identity. The former approach seems especially unappealing, but the same problem attends both suggestions. For some historical projects, it might be that contexts are discernible when there’s a different composer, or a different time of composition. If so, on either a pluralist or maximally fine grained account of context identity, we don’t have a clear reason for thinking that (MW’) secures the desiderata it is aimed at satisfying.

Perhaps Davies’s thought could be supplemented with a realist proposal about context identity. Perhaps musico-historical contexts can be ‘carved at the joints’ so to speak, and historical inquiries into music are progressing steadily towards an account which will succeed in corresponding to those objective facts about the identity of contexts. The contextual specification in (MW’), then, will be one stipulated to pick out this distinguished notion of context identity.

However, on this understanding of historical deferentialism, the connection to its motivation remains problematic. If the identity conditions and deep metaphysical individuation of contexts is left as an empirical matter to be settled by historical investigation into music, the endorser of (MW’) is left hostage to fortune over the results of that body of inquiry. That musical works can be composed more
than once within a world, or have their composers and times of composition contingently, is not something already settled.

The failure to deliver on its advertised benefits is, of course, a problem for (MW’), but it is a symptom of a systemic difficulty for views which invoke the slippery notion of a context to do serious philosophical work in specifying informative identity conditions or in giving explanations of musical work identity. And the problem with the obscurity of contexts isn’t unique to ‘mild’ contextualism offered by Stephen Davies. Remember, Levinson also invokes contexts in supplying the identity conditions of musical works in his (MW+) formulation. Although the intra-world questions receive a clearer treatment because of the specification of time and composer pairs, these specifications give apparently incorrect trans-world identity criteria. What’s worse, he’s resting his account of the trans-world identity of musical works upon the mysterious notion of context. And it seems this is worrying whether he sticks by his MHC characterisation or opts for historical deferentialism.

In the next section we’ll be looking at an objection to Levinson’s (MW+) which exploits a different weakness in the trans-world identity criteria generated by Levinson’s notion of context: They’re not just obscure, what they say is too demanding to be plausible.

4: The Work Relativity of Modal Flexibility

One problem which applies to both (MW’) and (MW+) is advanced by David Davies (2004:105-13). This problem was sketched in chapter 5, but now it will receive a more detailed elaboration. Davies thinks that for works composed in a certain musico-historical context, if we hold counterfactual variations in context constant, our intuitions about whether the same work can be composed in that context will vary depending upon the work we are considering. If we take such intuitions seriously, this is problematic for Levinson. On his view, there will be general contextual factors common to every work composed at the same time. To illustrate Davies’s point we may consider a variation on one of his thought experiments.
Consider two composers composing at the same time. One we might imagine is Béla Bartók in 1943 composing *Concerto for Small Orchestra*. This was the work considered in chapter 6 which features a quotational passage satirising Shostakovich’s *Seventh Symphony* (the *Leningrad*). The other composer under consideration is composer X, a scholar of the music of J.S. Bach. We suppose that composer X has never heard the *Leningrad*, or anything influenced by it. Composer X is composing a work for solo cello based on her study of the Bach’s *Cello Suites*. Call this work *X’s Cello Suite*.

Imagine now a counterfactual situation in which Shostakovich’s *Leningrad Symphony* is never composed. We might imagine, say, that the siege in which the work was composed went less favourably for the soviet army. Now, had the *Leningrad* not been composed, there would have been one less work in both Bartók’s and X’s general musico-historical context: The musical development at that time would have been lacking one very important musical work.

From (MW+) and the difference in musico-historical context, one can conclude that any work composed by Bartok in this situation is not the same as the actual *Concerto for Orchestra*. This result is acceptable to a contextualist. After all, the artistic and aesthetic features of the counterfactual concerto which hang on it featuring satirical quotational passages would seem voided. It seems that anything composed in the absence of the *Leningrad* couldn’t be that work, *Concerto for Orchestra*.

However, the counterintuitive consequence of (MW+) is that in this counterfactual situation, composer X is equally incapable of composing *X’s Prelude*. This is because the *Leningrad* actually features in the work’s *General* musico-historical context under the rubric of ‘the whole of musical development up to t’ (Levinson 1980: 69). As this context is not the one in which composer X composes her actual prelude, on (MW+) she cannot compose *X’s Prelude*. This seems wrong, there is no obvious reason why we should want to say that the work X composes cannot be the actual work. It would seem that the presence or otherwise of Shostakovitch’s *Leningrad* symphony in counterfactual situations should have no bearing on whether or not X can compose her J.S. Bach inspired work.
4.1: Levinsonian Responses to the Work Relativity of Modal Flexibility

Davies himself pre-empts two responses he thinks might be offered by a Levinsonian contextualist. (2004: 113). One option is to simply bite the bullet and claim that the apparently identical works are distinct. Under the counterfactual supposition that the *Leningrad* is not composed, composer X is precluded from composing the prelude she actually composes. The counterfactual work is not composed against the same musico-historical backdrop as the actual work and so is distinct, regardless of our intuition that *The Leningrad* has no relevant bearing upon the identity of the naive work. Davies envisages such a response being supplemented by a further proposal aimed at sweetening the pill. Its advocate might propose that, despite the numerical distinctness of X’s actual and counterfactual works, the latter may stand in the “critical counterpart” relation to the actual work.

As Davies notes (2004: 113) this is merely a relabeling of the problem. The trans-world identity criteria offered will distinguish indicated types as distinct by virtue of counterfactual differences in context which just don’t appear to have any bearing upon the possession of the work’s attributes. The addition of the critical counterpart strategy for analysing our intuitive talk might be thought to sweeten the pill, but it adds its own costs, forcing a controversial analysis of the counterfactual situations involved.

A more likely line is suggested by his response to an objection which merely denies the plausibility of taking times and structures as essential to works. We mentioned this earlier when we considered the temporal implication of (MW+). Levinson suggests that we, ‘…recognize that “same structure” and “same time” admit of a degree of freedom or looseness, perhaps *varying from case to case*’ (Levinson 1992: 145 [my italics]). And this might be applied to the present case concerning the features of a work’s context. Presumably the ‘cases’ here are the musical works, and we employ our knowledge about what is relevant to the understanding of the work in question to determine the context it is composed in.

However, the same objections can be raised again. It’s not just bad philosophical practice to offer such a response. It undermines the aims of representing the intelligibility of musical works and explaining their identity.
There is another response suggested by Caplan and Matheson (2008: 510-11). They suggest that Levinson could retreat to offering a proposal which only gives intra-world identity conditions. It is because of the ambitious explanatory nature of the indicated structure theory that Levinson’s proposal carries the trans-world implications that it does. And so Levinson could save his view by offering a more modest contextualised product theory. This move, however, is dialectically unappealing. The reason is that the performance theory gives the same intra-world results as the contextualised product theory Caplan and Matheson envisage. The performance theory, which explains musical work identity and the modal behaviour of musical works in terms of the identity and modal behaviour of compositional actions answers questions about trans-world identity in a very plausible way. We’ll examine the benefits of the performance theory in the next section.

To sum up, we’ve looked at a good number of Levinsonian suggestions about musical work identity, and we’ve looked at a good number of responses to the problems they have. These responses on behalf of Levinson result in unattractive positions for such a contextualist. The Levinsonian is either committed to outright obscurity as in the case of mild contextualism, to undermining the aims of the projects of informing about, or of explaining the identity of musical works, or the Levinsonian must retreat from the ambitious project, and, as I shall argue presently, give up ground to the performance theorist.

5: The Performance Theory and Individuation

Despite its categorial eccentricity, the performance theory comes into its own where questions of individuation are concerned (see Chapter 5). And I think the problems with the indicated structure theory bring this out. For one thing, the performance theorist may present a plausible explanation of the work relativity of modal flexibility by reference to the following thought:

Our intuitions about “same work” in modal contexts track our intuitions about “same specificatory performance” which, in turn, reflect our construction, in appreciating the work, of a perspicuous representation of that performance…The underlying idea is that our intuitions as to the modal properties of works are of the form: “could this have
been done under those circumstances?,” where “this” refers to a generative performance rather than the product of such a performance. (Davies 2004: 117).

There’s certainly some psychological plausibility to this thought. In trying to answer questions about the trans-world identity of musical works, we do lean on the heuristic Davies presents in the final line. And this indicates that our appreciative practice, when it turns its gaze to modal questions about musical works, is sensitive to modal facts about compositional actions.

I must confess, I can offer little more than primitive intuition in favour of this suggestion. However, accepting it does have a certain illuminative capacity. In chapter 4, we considered the putative modal flexibility of musical works’ structural elements. And the examples which seemed to speak in favour of musical works being modally flexible in structural respects, were marked out by the arbitrariness of those structural features. Central Park in The Dark didn’t seem to have those ‘ominous wobblings’ as a matter of necessity. Similarly, a work with shapeless transition passages seems to require some sort of functional organisation in those passages. But, the specific structure realisation is, we tend to think, arbitrary. And this lends plausibility to the thought that a work containing such a passage could have lacked that specific structure in those passages.

Davies’s suggestion sheds light on the arbitrariness in such examples. The arbitrariness of a structural specification is an indicator that the compositional act which specified it needn’t have done so. In such cases, the arbitrariness of the specification is grounded in its arbitrariness in serving the aims of the specificatory act. The specification of a different ominous wobbling, or a different transition between two keys, could have realised the goals by which the act is picked out in counterfactual circumstances.

Additionally, Levinson’s proposal about musical work individuation yields the consequence that musical works have their composers and times of composition as a matter of modal necessity. And it seems dubious that this is true in general. The performance theory about metaphysical individuation, however, doesn’t need to make either of these claims. There’s no incoherence in thinking that there are some actions which could have been performed by another agent. Perhaps, for instance, the action performed by Gödel of proving the theorem which actually bears his name, could have been performed by a different mathematician, just so long as that
individual’s mental states were correctly aligned with those which guided Gödel’s act. Similarly, there seems no *prima facie* compulsion to treat times of occurrence as essential to actions. Perhaps the action of proving Gödel’s theorem could have taken place slightly earlier or later. We’ll return to this latter issue in the next chapter when we consider an argument for temporal essentialism about actions.

Further, it should strike us that the objections presented earlier concerning the obscurity of musico-historical contexts don’t have analogues which are as significant in the case of compositional actions. Although, there may be the usual dissenting voices, and tricky philosophical puzzles, the performance theorist about musical works at least inherits a partial picture about the nature and identity of actions. There is a standard line about the sort of thing that actions are: actions are things which *happen* and which are guided by the mental states of agents. The Levinsonian contextualist seems to have no available proposal about the ontological nature of contexts. For another, we have a better grasp on the identity of a compositional action than we do on that of a context. From the intra-world perspective, actions of composition can be distinguished from one another by differences in spatio-temporal location. We’ll say more about these issues in the next chapter.

We might also supplement our case for the superiority of the performance theory by mentioning some of Davies’s other arguments in its favour. One of these was considered in chapter 5. It’s plausible to think that our appreciative practice is sensitive to differences between works whose differences lie in whether or not a certain aim of the act of composition was achieved. It seems that there’s a great range of judgments in which our appreciative capacities would mark a difference between a work which did and a work which did not realise its composer’s intentions. The problem for a contextualised product theory is that that view’s most natural interpretation is one on which aspects of provenance which do not have a corresponding upshot in the final structure will make no difference to musical work individuation. The prime suspect for explaining this phenomenon, however, is the act of composition and the aims which serve to direct it. Actions of composition may be distinct by virtue of differences in the aims for which they are performed, whether or not their results are otherwise indiscernible.

A further feature of our cognitive individuation concerns the sensitivity of appreciative judgments to facts about whether a work was completed or not (Davies
There is a sense of ‘incomplete’ which can be accounted for without reference to a work’s action of composition. A musical work might be lacking in unity, or perhaps contains inexplicable failures of harmonic resolution, for instance. However, it would appear that appreciative judgments are sensitive to whether these perceptually discernible characteristics are due to some interruption in the act of composition, or simply down to the failure of the composer to recognise, or properly treat the harmonic features. Indeed, the point goes further. Some works appear complete, like Bruckner’s Ninth symphony, and yet are incomplete in the latter sense because the act of composition was not completed. And this fact is sufficient to alter our appreciation of the work. We must take our assessments of this work to be provisional in a special way.

These reasons offered by Davies are primarily trained on the performance theory’s adequacy to our appreciative ascriptions and ways of treating musical works. However, in this thesis, we might add reasons pertaining to the explanatory virtue of the action token view.

First, the performance theory in its basic statement is an elegant and simple view. Musical works are individuated by the actions of content specification performed by composers. In comparison, contentist views have a tendency to proliferate musical works. If a musical work just is a piece of instructional content, the sort of thing that can be represented by a score, there are presumably indefinitely many musical works.

The performance theory is also ontologically conservative. The everyday music lover and the specialist are already believers in compositional actions. What’s more ontologists of music also seem to believe in such things. Dodd’s anti-contextualist view makes recourse to such actions in the elaboration of his error theory about artistic attributions (Dodd 2007: 257-9). Wolterstorff has recourse to actions of composition in both his treatment of the semantics of artistic attributions (1991: 80). In his suggestion about the conditions of occurrence for musical works (1980: 84-8) he ultimately settles on a view which makes a causal connection to a work’s act of composition a necessary condition of a work’s occurrences. Further, Levinson’s (1980: 79-82) notion of indication and Anderson’s (1985: 47-8) notion of ‘making normative’ (see also Levinson 1990: 259-61) are philosophical precisifications of the common sense idea of an act of composition. In comparison, the indicated structures, postulated by Levinson seem somewhat novel. And even if
they did meet the explanatory desiderata set, their postulation would appear to be something of an addition to both common sense and specialist ontology.

The performance theory as a view about musical work identity also serves to deepen our understanding of contextualist intuitions about appreciation and identity. Our first-up thought concerning the explanation of why a musical work has certain attributes like originality, and so on, is to say that they are determined (in part) by the work’s context. However, because the notion of a musico-historical context is so elusive, it seems that this first-up thought requires explication more substantial than has been offered by the contextualist views we’ve surveyed here. By invoking actions of composition, we can achieve a principled specification of musico-historical context which is correct for a given work. It is the action of composition performed by the composer that serves to determine the context that is relevant for a given work.

When it comes to the issues of musical work identity, then, the performance theory is simply the most promising option. The performance theory is, however, disadvantaged with respect to its categorial proposal. In the next chapter, we’ll present a theory which marries the promising thought that musical works are individuated by particular acts of composition with the best account of musical works’ ontological category: the property theory defended in the first half of the thesis.
Chapter 8: An Integrated Account of Category and Identity

1: Integrating Action Tokens into Properties

The performance theory presents the best account of musical work individuation on the market. However, the type 1 and type 2 objections presented in chapter 5 indicate that the categorial proposal is inferior to the construal of musical works as universals. What’s required is an ontology of musical works which marries the benefits of a property theory of category and an action token theory of individuation.

By now, it should come as no surprise that my suggestion for achieving this employs impure relational properties. However, the impure relational properties with which I identify musical works are of a simpler specification than those offered by Howell. On my account, each musical work is identified with an impure relational property consisting of a single dyadic relation and a single particular. The condition upon correct occurrence for a work is simply the instantiation of a relational property.

The involved particular is the token act of the work’s composition, the entity with which Davies identifies the musical work. And the identity or distinctness of any musical works $x$ and $y$ qua impure relational properties is determined by the identity or distinctness of the acts involved.

The relational component, which is shared by all musical works, we’ll call ‘obedience’. This useful concept has its origins in philosophical accounts of speech acts which order or command. It is by obeying a specificatory act performed by a composer that an occurrence of a musical work is produced. And to obey such an

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35 Subject to certain departures from Davies’s official stance on the metaphysical nature of such actions (see below).

36 See, for instance, Francois Recannati’s discussion of speech acts in his (2007:134)
act, thereby producing an occurrence of a musical work, two conditions must be met.

First, in order to obey the compositional act, an occurrence must *comply* with the instructional content specified. That is, the occurrence must meet the conditions which are specified by the relevant act of composition. As such, the *compliance* relation in the present theory is much like the *occurrence of* relation as construed by the contentist. Perhaps the most elegant way to construe compliance is to think of a canonical representation of a musical work as representing a property. We might conceive of a score, or an exemplar performance, say as providing a representation of that property. And it is the instantiation of the property represented that is necessary and sufficient for compliance.

Instantiating the property determined by the work’s instructional content does not suffice for producing an occurrence of the work, however. As we saw in chapter 6, a work’s instructional content doesn’t necessarily determine a unique compositional act as the one against which an occurrence should be interpreted and evaluated. Because of this, we must introduce a relation which connects a given occurrence to a unique act of composition. And the best way of doing this is to place a causal condition on a work’s occurrences (c.f. Currie 1989, Stephen Davies 2001).

The relation of obedience as found in non-musical commands includes such a condition. Should one be ordered to, ‘Water the plants’, one may comply with the instruction by watering the plants. However, in the absence of a causal relation between the order and one’s watering of the plants, one hasn’t obeyed the command, one has merely complied.

The same is true for obeying acts of musical composition. One doesn’t perform a work by merely instantiating the property determined by its instructional content. For one’s performance to be properly evaluable as a performance of a certain work, there must be a causal chain which connects the performance back to the act where that piece of instructional content was articulated.

An intuitive way of testing the truth of causal dependence claims is in terms of counterfactual co-variation (Stephen Davies 2001: 171-2). To work out whether an occurrence is an occurrence which causally depends upon a given compositional act, we may consider whether that occurrence would have taken place if the compositional act had not taken place. If the occurrence would have taken place
even if the act of composition had not, there is no robust causal connection between the occurrence and the work and we can accept that the occurrence is not an occurrence of that work.

If it is true that the occurrence would not have taken place had the act of composition not taken place, we have some grounds for thinking that the occurrence is robustly connected to the act of composition. In a similar way, we can also consult our intuitions about how the occurrence would have differed if the compositional act had differed. For instance, if differences in the content instructed would have had no upshot in the relevant performance, this provides (defeasible) evidence against the presence of a robust causal connection between the compositional act and the performance. The more robust the causal connection, the closer differences in the compositional act correspond to differences in the occurrence (Stephen Davies 2001: 171-2).

So, the relational component common to musical works is the relation of obedience, and the identity or distinctness of each musical work resides in the identity and distinctness of particular actions of specification. This allows the formulation of intra-world identity criteria. The identity criteria for musical work \( x \) and musical work \( y \) are given by replacing the occurrence of ‘\( R \)’ in (ICM) with ‘\( C \)’, a predicate expressing the relation of co-compositionality. Musical work \( x \) and musical work \( y \), stand in this relation precisely when the token action of composing \( x \) is numerically identical with the action of composing \( y \). Where the sortal expression, ‘\( \Phi \)’, stands for musical works, the following identity criterion expresses an action token criterion of intra-world identity:

\[
(\text{CC}) \equiv (\forall x)(\forall y)((\Phi x \& \Phi y) \rightarrow (x = y \leftrightarrow Cxy))
\]

However, on my view, musical works are not identical with actions of composition, even if their intra-world identity conditions can be given in such terms. In its canonical form, my account represents a musical work, \( W \), which is composed by action \( a \), as the following property: being obedient to \( a \). A musical work’s identity is explained by the identity of the action and the identity of the relation of obedience. We might follow the type theorist and present this thought in terms of
the conditions that a musical work lays down for its correct occurrences. Given a musical work, $W$, composed by action (token) $a$:

$$(OC) \; x \; \text{is a (correct) occurrence of} \; W \; \text{if, and only if,} \; x \; \text{obeys} \; a.$$

It should be noted that the act, $a$, is an act of specifying a property, however, this doesn’t mean that the property thereby specified is essential to the musical work. If the act $a$ could have specified a different property, complying with that act could have required instantiating a different property from the one actually specified.

2: Events and Temporal Essentialism

There is an objection to action token theories of musical work individuation that has been developed in a number of places in the literature. The objection is that actions of composition have their times of occurrence as a matter of modal necessity (see Davies 2004: 168-9, Dilworth 2005: 77-8, Dodd 2007: 189-92). However, our modal judgments about musical works seem quite contrary to this philosophical conclusion that a musical work composed over a certain interval of time must have been composed over that interval. The objection from temporal essentialism, then, suggests that we should accept the metaphysical claim about actions and our modal judgments about musical works, but discharge the action token theory of musical work individuation.

There are different arguments for this conclusion. They do have some common premises. One premise is that each action token is identical with some event. Another is that each event has its time of occurrence as a matter of modal necessity.

For instance, the action of composing the Eroica symphony is identical with a certain event. Because events have their times of occurrence essentially, it isn’t possible for that event to take place at any other time. And so, it’s not possible for the action of composing the Eroica to have taken place at any other time.
This conclusion, I think, should strike us as quite surprising independently of our philosophical view about musical work identity. Our extra-musical, pre-philosophical thoughts about actions appear quite contrary to this essentialist conclusion. It seems that, in a game of chess, the same action (token) of putting an opponent in check could have been performed slightly earlier or later, we think, so long as the game’s history and the reason for the move had been the same. There’s no obvious incoherence in thinking of wars, competitions, parties, and the like, as being capable of counterfactual temporal relocation.

If temporal essentialism were true, all such occurrences would have their actual times of occurrence as a matter of modal necessity and the following apparently true sentences would, on their most natural reading, express propositions which were necessarily false.

Consider the first case of outright temporal relocation:

(TR) Kasparov’s (token) opening move could have been performed an hour later had deep blue required maintenance.

And a second case which features counterfactual adverbial modification.

(AM) Deep blue’s (token) opening could have been performed more quickly had more powerful components been installed.

The natural reading of these sentences is one on which the event designator takes wide scope over the modal operator. In each sentence, it is that event referred to, the opening move, which could have been different with respect to its time of occurrence. This is not merely a technical matter. It reflects the natural thought that occurrences, both intentional and non-intentional, can be subject to counterfactual temporal relocation. Yet, if temporal essentialism is true, this natural reading comes out false, and necessarily so, because of the ontological nature of occurrences.

The standard move for the temporal essentialist about events is to insist that such true sentences are to be analysed in such a way that gives the modal operator wide scope (see Lombard 1988: 209). The true proposition expressed by (TR) is:
(TR*) < There could have been a (token) opening move performed by Kasparov which was type identical to the actual move performed, had deep blue required maintenance >

While that expressed by (AM) is, according to such an analysis:

(AM*) There could have been an opening move performed by deep blue which was performed more quickly than its actual move, had more powerful components been installed.

The idea is that rather than analysing the sentences as being about the same event in different counterfactual situations, the analysis cites an event distinct from the actual one, but which occurs at a different time. This allows that those sentences can be true in conjunction with temporal essentialism.

Of course, we might sometimes want to analyse sentences of similar form to (TR) and (AM) in the manner suggested. We can concoct counterfactual suppositions about events which trigger the alarm bells of common sense. A sentence like, ‘Kasparov’s (token) opening move could have been made against a Martian, in a game of drafts’, might well require such an analysis because, perhaps, the counterfactual identity of that opening move depends upon the game being played, or the opponent, or both.

The problem with temporal essentialism is that it makes the suggested analysis compulsory for all seemingly true counterfactuals whose antecedents involve the temporal relocation of an action. And, in contrast to our previous case, it is an analysis not prompted by common sense beliefs about the matter.

Our intuitions, I think, are with the possibility of temporal relocation of action tokens. Of course, a good philosophical theory can overrule our intuitions, but we should demand good philosophical reasons before we revise our beliefs. What examples like (TR) and (AM) provide is prima facie motivation for resisting temporal essentialism about events that is independent of supporting an action token account of musical work individuation.
3.1: Davies’s Formulation

David Davies develops a temporal essentialism objection to his own view. The first premise is that each action is identical with some event. The idea that actions are identical with events, but described in intentional terms has been influential at least since its endorsement in Donald Davidson’s theory of action (Davidson 1971: 46). If we accept this claim, and the necessity of identity, it seems that we are forced to accept that if events have their ‘temporal properties’ as a matter of modal necessity, the actions with which they are identical will have those properties as a matter of modal necessity.

Of course, it’s now vital to find out what motivates temporal essentialism about events. Davies’s reason for thinking that events have their times of occurrence as a matter of modal necessity is that many standard account of what is called ‘event- individuation’ cite times of occurrence amongst events’ individuating conditions’. One familiar example is due to Jaegwon Kim (1976: 161).  

(K) \(< s, P, t> = < s*, P*, t*> \iff s = s* and P = P* and t = t*> 

The citation of time is crucial to capturing the intuition that event tokens are unrepeatable, they may occur no more than once at a world. This is what makes events entities of sufficient specificity that they may discharge their commonly assigned theoretical role as the relata of causal relations (See Steward 2007: 135).

Davies endorses a link between theories of ‘individuation’ about a certain kind of entity and the modally necessary properties of the entities of that kind which is summarised in his modality principle which we may summarise as follows (Davies 2004: 120-6).

(MP) For any entity \(x\), any property \(F\) and any kind \(K\), \(F\) is an individuating property of \(x\) (relative to \(K\)), if, and only if, \(F\) is an essential property of \(x\).

\(^{37}\) Davies also mentions Carol Cleland’s (1991) view, which also features a temporal index in the individuation of events.
So, if the modality principle is correct and times of occurrence ‘individuate’ events, times of occurrence are also essential features of events. I think the argument trades on an equivocation over the philosophical term ‘individuation’ and its cognates. There is the sense of ‘individuate’ on which the Modality Principle is correct. If y is individuated by x in any possible world, it is individuated by x in all possible worlds (Lowe 2003: 92). It is this sense which we find employed in the ambitious projects of Levinson and Davies.

However, there is another sense of ‘individuate’ in employment, which is tied to the project of giving intra-world identity criteria. With this notion in mind, Rohrbaugh says, ‘[a]nswers to individuative questions never settle questions of what is called cross-world identity.’ (Rohrbaugh 2005: 212). In this sense, an enduring material particular is individuated from others by reference to the spatio-temporal path along which it travels over its history. This does not, however, mean that an enduring particular’s spatio-temporal path is essential to it.

It would appear that it is the latter notion of individuate that Kim has in mind when he responds to temporal essentialism objections to his view saying, “[i]t is at least a respectable identity criterion for physical objects that they are the same just in case they are completely coincident in space and time. From this it does not follow that a physically object is essentially where and when it in fact is.” (Kim 1978: 321).

Kim does think that his view about events generates certain essentialist conclusions, when he says, ‘[t]here is an essentialist consequence I am willing to accept: events are, essentially, structured complexes of the sort the theory says they are. Thus, events could not be substances, properties, and so on.’ (Kim1978: 322). However, this conclusion seems somewhat benign for the action token theorist about musical individuation.

Is this just Kim trying to worm his way out of theoretical commitments that other event theorists can avoid? I don’t think so. Almost all event theorists accept that times serve to ‘individuate’ events, but it seems that they take this to be an intra-world issue.

Laurence Lombard (1986), for instance, sees events as ‘individuated’ by reference to their time of occurrence, but doesn’t seem to see this as a sufficient reason for taking times of occurrence to be essential. This is evidenced by his
offering an argument for temporal essentialism premised on his theory and an independent premise (Lombard 1986: 213-4). His argument is a reductio ad absurdum of the claim that a particular event may be subject to counterfactual temporal relocation. His argument, however, is no more convincing than Davies’s. As Jonathan Bennett points out, the ‘absurdity’ Lombard reasons to, is ultimately that actual events could, at some world, trade their temporal location. However, the temporal inessentialist is unlikely to accept that this is an absurd conclusion. As such, Lombard’s argument seems to beg the question (Bennett 1988: 60). The key point, however, is that the sense of the term ‘individuate’ employed in debates about events is weaker in its counterfactual entailments than the sense which raises Davies’s worries. The action token theorist isn’t off the hook just yet. There’s a better argument for temporal essentialism about action tokens.

3.2: A Better Argument for Temporal Essentialism

There is a better argument for temporal essentialism about events which has its roots in an austere conception of the nature of events which takes the spatio-temporal regions in which they occur as the basis for understanding their identity. On this sort of view, it is necessary and sufficient for the identity of an event e and an event e* that they spatio-temporally coincide (see Simons 2003) and each region of space-time contains an event whose parts correspond to the spatio-temporal sub-regions of that larger region (see Simons 2003). This view about events is simple and elegant and it has had some prominent supporters (Quine 1961, Lemmon 1967).

However, it has also been suggested that it carries a commitment to temporal essentialism. The classic formulation of such an argument is due to Peter Van Inwagen (1990). His argument isn’t directed towards the temporal essentialist conclusion concerning events. However, it is directed at philosophers who take material objects as four-dimensional worms which are ontologically analogous to

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38 It is this objection which inspires Dodd’s (2007: 189-92) objection. The response I make undermines his objection and his responses to Davies’s solution.
the events of the austere conception. Here’s what he says about the four-dimensionalist’s position on material objects, in this case, Descartes:

…it would make no sense to say of the temporal part of Descartes that occupied the year 1620 that it might have had an extent of a year and a half: any object in another possible world that has a temporal extent of a year and a half is some other object than the object that in actuality is the 1620-part of Descartes. We may summarize this point by saying…that temporal parts are "modally inductile" (and "modally incompressible" as well). (Van Inwagen 1990: 253).

So, if Van Inwagen is right, it is incoherent to think of the spatial and temporal parts of such an entity as being subject to modal variations in their extent. However, because material objects understood on the austere conception have spatial and temporal parts governed by the laws of classical mereology, we’ll find that the whole spatio-temporal worm is similarly inductile and incompressible:

…Descartes himself is one of his temporal parts—the largest one, the sum of all of them. But then Descartes is himself modally inductile, which means he could not have had a temporal extent greater than fifty-four years. (Van Inwagen 1990: 253).

Yet, it seems obviously true that Descartes could have lived longer than fifty-four years. The conclusion Van Inwagen draws, however, is that a philosopher who takes Descartes to be a four-dimensional worm, must analyse this plausible modal claim in terms of a counterintuitive ‘counterpart’ analysis like that suggested above in (TR*) and (AM*).

Now, we don’t need to secure a four-dimensionalist account of material objects like Descartes. However, it is because Descartes is understood to be like the events of the austere conception that the temporal inflexibility is supposed to result and the counterpart theoretic analysis of *de re* modality is required.

Four-dimensionalists have offered a number of ways of responding to Van Inwagen’s argument (see Copeland, Dyke and Proudfoot 2001, Sider 2001: 218-224 for surveys). Some of the responses might lead to interesting results for the action token theory of musical work individuation.
My aim, however, is to keep my account close to David Davies’s solution. This, so far as I am aware, is the best elaborated suggestion in the literature about the ontology of artworks and it is one which I aim to improve upon.

Both Davies and I think that, if there are events as postulated by the austere conception, then there must be a distinction amongst occurrences such that actions of artistic specification fall on one side and austere events fall on the other. What we’re both after is an account of the nature of actions of specification on which their identity does not consist in the identity of their parts, that is, we both want to deny that mereological constitution is identity for acts of composition (c.f. Davies 2004: 175 n. 10). In the next section I turn to Davies’s suggestion and derive some problematic conclusions from it.

4: Davies’s Solution: Basic and Non-Basic events

Davies thinks that certain actions and events are basic. He concedes that basic actions are temporally inflexible (Davies 2004: 172). He thinks that considering a very simple action like my present sipping of tea might be such that picking it out counterfactually might be subject to very tight constraints concerning its time of occurrence. This is perhaps because there’s little in this description, beyond its time of occurrence, to help us get a hold on exactly which of my counterfactual activities is this tea-sipping (Davies 2004: 172).

Davies does not, however, see the generation of a focus of appreciation, an act of composition, as being a basic action. He thinks that the action whereby a musical work is composed is non-basic, or complex, action constituted by basic actions. These include manipulations of a score, experiments on the piano, and so on. Davies doesn’t think that the sum of these basic actions, in the order they take place, is identical with the complex action of composing the work. He believes that the complex actions or ‘doings’ as he calls them are multiply realisable by different configurations of basic actions in different counterfactual situations. That is, they are only contingently realised by the actual sequence of basic events.
Davies offers a non-artistic example to illustrate the idea. He suggests that the action of formulating an argument is a ‘doing’. It is such that it may actually be composed of certain basic actions, such as pressing the keys on a keyboard in a certain order, at certain times. However, in different counterfactual circumstances, such as one in which there is a power cut, that particular complex act of argument formulation could have been composed of different basic actions. The act of argument formulation in question could have been written in ink on paper, illuminated by candlelight, while still being the numerically same action of argument formulation (Davies 2004: 172). Davies also suggests that some non-intentional occurrences are similarly complex, the sinking of the Titanic, for instance, he suggests is a complex event which could have been composed of different parts (2004: 169-70).

I take it that we’re inclined to go along with Davies’s intuitions here, but we might wonder what delimits the modal flexibility of complex occurrences. As noted, it is not the mere membership and spatio-temporal configuration of their basic actions which tells us what is essential to musical works. Davies thinks it is the ‘intentional context’ in which the composition is performed. For Davies, this intentional context is something our proper appreciative practices are sensitive to. Here’s how he thinks that our judgments about the modal flexibility of artworks stand to proper appreciation:

1. In appreciating a work, we arrive at a perspicuous representation of the performance whereby the work focus was specified;

2. It is relative to that representation of the performance that we decide when we have the same performance in counterfactual situations; and

3. It is these judgments about sameness of performance that ground and explain the work-relativity of our modal judgments about works. (Davies 2004: 116)

Davies sometimes calls this ‘perspicuous representation’ an ‘adequate representation’ or an ‘adequate description’ and it plays a central role in the account. The explanation for our judgments which point to the work-relativity of modal
flexibility are, ultimately, explained by reference to our formation of ‘perspicuous representation’ of the act by which the thing we hear in the concert hall was specified.

He then elaborates upon this connection between the judgments we form about works on the basis of how we appreciate them.

Our intuitions about “same work” in modal contexts track our intuitions about “same specificatory performance” which, in turn, reflect our construction, in appreciating the work, of a perspicuous representation of that performance…The underlying idea is that our intuitions as to the modal properties of works are of the form: “could this have been done under those circumstances?,” where “this” refers to a generative performance rather than the product of such a performance. (2004: 117).

Later, in elaborating this proposal, we see a passage which appears to express much the same thing. It appears to stress the connection between our judgments about sameness of specificatory performances and sameness of work.

What individuates a particular artistic doing is given through our emerging sense, in the process of appreciatively apprehending the artwork realized through a given vehicle, of what must be included in an adequate characterization of the motivated manipulations of the vehicular medium through which the artist specified a particular focus of appreciation having this vehicle. (Davies 2004: 173).

In this quote Davies is employing the notion of individuation in the strong explanatory sense. The wording in this passage is, however, somewhat slippery. The appearance is that Davies is simply outlining an epistemological procedure by which we typically uncover a compositional action’s constitutive properties: We grasp the constitutive properties of a musical work by hearing the vehicle which articulates it (the performance) and in applying our appreciative capacities, we come to an adequate characterisation of the medium-specific manipulations performed by its composer.

We might imagine that an adequate characterisation of a given specificatory act is a sort of *theory* about what individuates it and is, therefore, a theory about what is modally necessary. This, I think, has some plausibility, but would be a misleading way to put Davies’s point. The practice-led methodology Davies endorses does not see the appreciatively inflected characterisation of the
composer’s act as one which merely *pursues* the independently obtaining facts about what individuates a certain artistic act. However, this would be misleading. On Davies’s account, this characterisation is determinative of what properties are individuating of the action and, therefore, what features it has as a matter of modal necessity.

### 4.1: Objections to Davies’s Solution

There are at least two sorts of worries about Davies’s proposal. One concern is an instance of general worry for Davies’s practice-led methodology: it promotes anti-realism. In this case, it is an anti-realism about the individuation of acts of composition. In making the proposal, Davies's aim is to give an account of the *de re* modal flexibility of compositional actions. However, when we examine Davies’s story about what determines the modal flexibility of the compositional actions, it appears that there’s an implausibly small role for the *res* it is supposed to be about.

Take, for instance, the question of whether it was essential to the act by which the *Leningrad* Symphony was composed that it was composed in a city under siege. According to Davies, in our artistic examination of the focus of appreciation specified by Shostakovich, we form a representation of Shostakovich’s act of composition, and we adjust this representation in light of the goals sought in our evaluative practice. It is by doing this that we settle whether *that* act could have been performed without taking place in a city under siege.

Yet, this seems strange. We might accord a role to musical practice in setting certain boundaries of coherence for what can count as the same act of specification. And it might be that the conceptual apparatus of musical theory is practically indispensable in providing a perspicuous description of composers’ actions. However, it seems that one could buy into this much and still think that the action Shostakovich performed had its modally necessary properties independently of how we’d describe it in light of reflection upon our appreciative practice. That very action might have taken place, and yet, had Leningrad been taken, perhaps no one would ever have appreciated it.
Further, it is unmotivated to think that the act by which a given musical work is composed can’t have a feature essentially unless its representation is germane to our artistic appreciation. There might, for instance, be modally necessary features possessed by entities with temporal parts which are of no concern so far as appreciative practice is concerned. Similarly, there might be properties essential to the sorts of agents capable of supporting complex activities like composing music. Being performed by such an agent might then be an essential property of any act of composition, without being the sort of property relevant to our appreciative practices. These are just putative examples, but the point remains pressing. It’s unclear why we should accept that acts of artistic specification qua genuine denizens of reality should be such as to have modally necessary properties that our practices would discern.

Davies, one suspects would not be irked by this sort of criticism. Danilo Šuster offers a similar worry premised on the thought that Davies’s approach here threatens to undermine our realist intuitions and lead to the anti-realist conclusion that, ‘…works of art are not entities existing independently of our reflective critical and appreciative practice.’ (Šuster 2005: 48).

To this Davies’s responds that:

...those ‘intuitions’ are misplaced: the concept work of art cannot be elucidated without reference to a given set of practices in which entities are treated in certain ways. If a different set of practices replaced our current ways of proceeding, there might no longer be works of art in our sense, or, at least, the latter might no longer be appreciated as works of art. (Davies 2005: 84).

I think this response fails to satisfactorily answer the objection. For one thing, what one has to do to elaborate a certain concept doesn’t obviously generate any entailments concerning the essential properties of entities falling under the concept’s extension. The following suggestions seem to present an even less appealing defence of the original position. To return to our example of Shostakovich performing his act of composition in a city under siege, whether this circumstance was essential to the performance of that act, I do not know. I am confident, however, that that act would have existed, even if the entirety of human civilisation had been wiped out after its completion. And the question of whether...
anything was appreciated as art after the *Leningrad’s* completion just doesn’t seem relevant to its modal profile.

Now, I’m not especially sympathetic to the radical form of descriptivism that lies behind Davies’s response here. If it permits the deletion of actions performed in the past, I’m not sure I even understand it. And perhaps the incredulous stares from the realist represent nothing more than question begging over the correct way to do the ontology of music. Nevertheless, there are two things to bear in mind. First, it would be a shame if the appealing action token view about musical work individuation were only available to a radical descriptivist. This suggests that it’s worth formulating a position on compositional actions which isn’t tied to radical descriptivism. Second, the essentialism worries that motivate Davies’s proposal about artistic actions are essentialism worries that would generalise to non-artistic actions. Action tokens such as filling out a tax return, walking to the shops, formulating an argument, and so on, would also appear to have their times of occurrence inessentially. Yet, not only would we want to steer clear of radical descriptivism about those acts, there wouldn’t even appear any associated body of appreciative inquiry that could play the relevant determinative role.

There are also worries which aren’t directly levelled at the anti-realist basis for Davies’s proposal. One is that the story here, in its application to essentialism objections, is *ad hoc*. The essentialist objections are premised on the thought that an action of composition has a certain feature as a matter of modal necessity, whereas the very same work could have been composed by an action lacking that feature. The key idea is that what is taken to be work individuating determines the facts about a compositional action’s modal profile. Yet, this response seems to solve the problem by stipulation. According to Davies’s view *any* seeming mismatch between an action token theory and our artistic ascriptions must be due to an incorrect judgment about our appreciative practice, or an incorrect judgment about the modal flexibility of the compositional act in question. On the account Davies offers there’s simply no question of the two coming apart.

A second objection highlights another way in which Davies’s theory is *ad hoc*: complex actions are underspecified. The distinction between simple and complex actions is not drawn in terms of mereological complexity, as the terminology might suggest. Even the actions Davies takes to be ‘simple’ have some
degree of mereological complexity. An action of sipping tea, or of depressing a key have some temporal parts. 

The distinction Davies draws, however, is characterised exclusively in terms of modal flexibility: Simple actions are modally inflexible with respect to their times of occurrence while complex actions are thus modally flexible. The worry is that the distinction between simple and complex actions is simply drawn in terms of the modal profile required to respond to the essentialism objection.

I think Davies is onto something with his suggestion, however, I think there’s a better way of capturing what he’s after. This is to draw a distinction between events and processes.

5: Events and Processes

I think that the intuitive differences between the ‘basic’ and ‘complex’ occurrences that interest Davies are better clarified and motivated in strands of literature concerned with the distinction between events and processes. In the strands of that literature that concern us, we can accept the events of the austere conception, but we’ll find that ontologies which only contain occurrences of this sort are inadequate.

One problem for events is that they don’t seem to be interruptible, whereas the occurrences we often think and talk about are. Consider Roland Stout’s example of the decaying of an apple (2007: 48-9). Suppose we have an apple which has started to decay, but we place the apple in a deep freeze at a stage when it is half-decayed, perhaps we later remove it, before returning it, and so on, until the decaying of the apple is complete.

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39 What’s more, the better argument for temporal essentialism seems constructible for occurrences of any degree of mereological complexity.

40 I can’t do justice to the richness of this literature. Contemporary exploration of the event/process has been conducted since the seminal essays of Zeno Vendler (1957) and Kenny’s book Action, Freedom and Will (1963). Further contributions to the debate have been made by Alexander Mourelatos (1978), Jennifer Hornsby (1980), Kathleen Gill (1993) and Rowland Stout (1997).
We might think that there’s such a thing as the ‘decay-event’ identical with the sum of all of the spatial and temporal parts which happened where and when the apple was decaying. However, this entity doesn’t seem like the referent of the expression ‘the decaying of the apple’ as we’d normally use it. One reason is that the referent of that expression could have occurred even if the apple had never been placed in the freezer. In such a counterfactual scenario, the decaying event, on the other hand, is distinct from the actual one because of the different spatio-temporal parts it would possess.

This example brings out a feature of processes which is pertinent to our musical quarry. Processes are interruptible, whereas events are not. The same action of composition can cease, and be resumed at a later date. Events, on the other hand, appear to have no such capacity. An event occurs over a certain interval. Later, a distinct event occurs. There’s no sense in which the same thing resumes at a later time.

Another plausible thought due to Steward is that events can’t undergo intrinsic change, whereas processes can. And this is pertinent to our understanding of actions which is betrayed in the semantics of certain sentences.\(^{41}\) Consider the following sentence containing a comparative adverbial modifier:

\[(\text{CAM}) \text{ Smith waved more and more frenetically in the attempt to attract Jones’ attention.}\]

On a standard Davidsonian conception (Davidson 1967), this sentence implicitly quantifies over an action, the waving performed by Smith. However, what the comparative quality of this adverb serves to express is that the action quantified over here undergoes intrinsic change. Initially, the action is frenetic to a certain extent, and it becomes increasingly frenetic as Smith tries to draw Jones’ eye.

However, the problem for the philosopher who wants to suppose that the waving action is identical to an event on the austere conception is that events understood in this way don’t undergo genuine intrinsic change. There’s a distinct

\(^{41}\) She makes several arguments in her (2007) and (2012), but the one which is most dialectically effective here is the following one because it doesn’t presuppose the modal flexibility we’re trying to argue for.
event for each region of space-time occupied by the whole waving. And this doesn’t allow there to be a single individual persisting through the changes. There is a mere succession of distinct individuals with different properties, rather than an individual subjected to a genuine change. The event we might associate with Smith’s waving is, as Steward puts it, ‘static – it has the nature it has, and that is that,’ (Steward 2012: 377). What’s responsible for the inadequacy of the event ontology is the mereological ‘fragility’ of the events of the austere conception (2012: 383). Any change in parts over time, or across possible worlds, gives us a distinct event, but that doesn’t seem correct for many of the sorts of occurrent of which we normally think. Various kinds of occurrents, be they decayings, sinkings, or wavings, are marked out by their apparent mereological robustness. They can be interrupted and resume

5.1: Steward’s Processes

Steward proposes that actions are processes, where these differ substantially from the fragile events invoked in the argument for temporal essentialism. She draws an illustrative spatial analogy. She suggests that events are akin to Lockean masses of matter (2012: 383). Such entities are mereologically fragile in that any change in the spatial parts of such a mass yields a distinct entity. Processes, on the other hand, are similar to the material particulars on an Aristotelian conception (2012: 383). They are entities which are constituted by parts, but which may remain identical through changes of the parts which constitute them.

The reason that Aristotelian particulars can survive changes in their spatial parts is because the identity of such an entity depends upon the possession of a certain form (2012: 384). It is because the spatial parts are arranged in a certain way that they may constitute a certain individual. And it is because a form can be realised that we can have the same horse, tree or person, constituted by different parts at different times. This same means of explanation is available for the modal flexibility of such particulars. It makes sense to think of the same horse having different spatial parts in a different counterfactual situation because the actual parts
of which it is composed aren’t necessary for the realisation of its form; whatever it requires for the continuation of its life.

The same is true for processes, although these have temporal as well as spatial parts. A token process has a certain form, a certain natural way of unfolding in time, and it is by the accumulating temporal parts that the same process realises its form (2012: 384). But the process is distinct from the sum of those parts and the same process could have been constituted by distinct parts in different counterfactual situations so long as those parts are properly organised as required by the form the process actually has.

The way to understand the identity of a process is not in terms of the spatio-temporal regions at which it occurs. Rather, the primary way to grasp the identity of a process is in terms of its ‘point’, or, in jargon, its ‘telos’.

...in thinking of a process, we lock onto an entity which we conceive of as having a principle of individuation which has to do with what one might call norms of development – or, in the case of specifically of human action, with such things as intentions and goals. (2012: 384).

By proposing that actions of composition belong to the category of processes, we have an account of their nature which improves upon Davies’s suggestion in deflecting temporal essentialism objections. First, we don’t need to court anti-realism that seems engendered by Davies’s descriptivism about the determination of a compositional action’s modal profile. The existence and nature of an action of composition is not determined by representations we construct in appreciating it. The conceptual apparatus contained in our appreciative practice might stabilise the meaning of our talk of compositional actions, and theoretical resources for their accurate characterisation. However, we can preserve the natural thought that what makes our existential and counterfactual claims about compositional actions true is, in part, the meanings of our terms, and, in part, the nature of the entities we refer to and quantify over. There was an act of composing performed by Shostakovich during the siege of Leningrad, and that fact doesn’t depend on our appreciative practices. It depends on the occurrence of a process which had a certain form. The process enacted by Shostakovich has its essential properties determined by the form which determined the unfolding of that act.
What’s more, this explanation generalises across actions. It is the organisation of the process’s parts that places limits on the modally necessary requirements for the occurrence of an action. So, we can pick up the action-token theory of musical work individuation without providing an anti-realist perspective on the individuation of those action tokens and without leaving it a mysterious matter how, in general, temporal essentialism about actions is to be explained.

We’ve also avoided the *ad hocism* which attends Davies’s solution. We haven’t stipulated that the modally necessary features of an action of composition are precisely those which enter into our appreciative judgments. We can accept that what we can garner from those judgments may give an incomplete specification. And we also accept that judgments actually made, or diligently reconstructed, could be erroneous. The point is that we should think that the judgments we make in practice represent the best justified judgments about compositional actions, but that what makes those judgments correct is their ability to track the facts about the identity of the forms possessed by those actions. Further, processes have a richer theoretical specification than Davies’s complex actions. The primary characterisation of processes is not one which cites their modal flexibility directly. Rather, processes are actually possessed of a form and it is this form which does independent work in explaining how actions may accumulate temporal parts and undergo genuine change. It is the explanation of the actual phenomena that provides illumination of why actions of composition may undergo modal variation in their spatial and temporal parts.

Construing actions of composition as processes is a better motivated and more illuminating proposal than construing them as ‘complex’ actions. As such, I think that we should prefer this construal to Davies’s suggestion. The hypothesis that acts of composition are processes also serves to deepen our understanding of the appreciative phenomena that give action token theories their special appeal over Levinsonian competitors. Once we understand compositional actions as entities which unfold and change, each in accordance with its own specific telos, it becomes obvious why a work’s being complete or incomplete, and its success or failure in achieving its intended goal are relevant. The identity of a process is determined by the goals which guide the form of its unfolding. If a process fails to reach its specifcatory goal, either by interruption or by improper development, this process is distinguished from any process which articulates identical instructional content,
but which is successfully completed by that specification. The processes are distinct because their aims are, even if they happen to terminate on the same content. If our cognitive individuation of musical works is sensitive to facts about completion and failed intentions, as Davies plausibly argues, the account of compositional actions as process can achieve a fundamental explanation of why this is so.

The explanation of the modal flexibility of a work’s instructional content is also deepened. The inessentiality which marks out certain tonal specifications, such as the particular ‘ominous wobblings’ found in Ives’s *Central Park in the Dark*, is due to the compositional act being one whose form and telos does not require those particular specifications being made. The goal which governed Ives’s compositional process was to articulate a soundscape evocative of an evening at Central Park. And although *some* ominous wobblings might have been required to articulate that artistic statement, *just those* ominous wobblings are not.

### 6: Queries

I imagine that there will be additional objections to the view advocated here. One sort of objection might concern whether this version of the property theory is under-motivated or uniquely problematic. It might be argued that although the view that musical works are properties is the best categorial proposal on the market, part of the motivation for thinking that is that properties are *audible* in a manner which seems to mesh rather well with our intuitions about musical works’ audibility. However, the objection might go, properties specified by the *obeying Φ* schema don’t represent *any* acoustic structure or property of the musical work composed by Φ. So, how can a musical work be audible on the present view?

Well, the answer to this query is that the schema indirectly gives the musical work in question its acoustic profile. The act of composition is an act of instructional content specification and occurrences must comply with that instruction by instantiating the acoustic property it represents. The acoustic profile of the musical work is determined by its act of composition and one can hear the work’s qualitative acoustic profile by hearing an occurrence which complies with the content specified by its associated compositional act.
The situation concerning a work’s acoustic profile is similar to a sonicist’s view about the audible aesthetic characteristics of a work. A sonicist may accept that the aesthetic properties of a musical work are audible. However, the canonical statement of her view is not one which specifies musical works in aesthetic terms. Her view is that the aesthetic characteristics supervene upon the non-aesthetic sonic conditions which do feature in the canonical statement of her view. Something similar is true of my view. A given musical work is audible on the present view because acoustic properties are required by anything which obeys its act of composition.

I omit the direct specification of an acoustic component for good reason. Traditional universalist views have aimed at securing the obvious fact that actual musical works have an actual acoustic profile by building a specification of the profile into the specification of the actual universal. However, if one specifies a universal by reference to some acoustic condition it places on instances, it’s plausible to think that that acoustic condition is thereby essential to the universal specified (Dodd 2007: 86-92). Yet, we saw in chapter 4 that there appear good reasons for thinking that some musical works have certain of their determinate structural features only contingently.

Alternatively, it might be worried that employing action tokens in the individuative part of my theory will force me to face type 1 and type 2 objections. The previous was a form of type 1 objection, and my response to others will run parallel to this response. The formal and expressive properties supervene upon the property with which I identify the musical work. Extant type 2 objections are no more worrying. The objector might argue that because action-particulars are ‘involved’ in the impure relational properties, musical works will have the spatio-temporal properties of those particulars, and thus the theory will be guilty of imparting unmotivated properties to musical works. This is not so. An impure relational property is still abstract, although which set of entities are its instances is determined ‘world by world’ by the nature of a certain, modally flexible particular. For illustration, consider the impure relational property being 2 miles from the surface of Mars. What, if anything, instantiates this property varies from world to world, yet it doesn’t seem correct to say that the property is located where Mars is.

Perhaps a more obvious resistance will be given by those who think that the present view individuates too finely. For instance, it might be argued that action
tokens are particulars, unrepeatable entities, and so, the present view fails to accommodate the possibility of the same work being composed on more than one occasion. That is, the action token theory of musical work individuation is incompatible with (MC).

This is a genuine implication of the view on offer. However, I fail to see any *prima facie* intuitiveness of (MC). And those who aim to accommodate the possibility end up with problems of their own. Contentism would explain the possibility. But, contentism is inadequate to the satisfactory explanation of how musical works can determinately possess contextually determined attributes. On the other hand, mild contextualism, which aims at accommodating (MC) postulates costly hypotheses. That form of contextualism introduces *ad hoc* hypotheses concerning the semantics of artistic attributions and ontological hypotheses concerning the existence of ‘work sources’. What’s more, the obscurity of the notion of a musico-historical context leaves it unclear whether mild contextualism really does accommodate (MC). If a better motivation for accepting (MC) were to be presented, or a good theory entailed it, perhaps a re-evaluation of the situation would be called for. At present, however, I see little benefit and great cost in trying to accommodate it.

**7: Conclusion**

So, we can defend an action token theory against essentialism objections by construing actions of compositions as processes. This idea also looks to say something illuminating about the nature of compositional processes: they have a form which governs their development, this form is possessed objectively and its philosophical postulation is motivated by a systematic philosophical need. What’s more, when processes are ‘slotted’ into the property theory, we have a powerful, unified account of musical works’ category and identity which marries the benefits of construing musical works as instantiables with the benefits of understanding musical work identity in terms of the identity of compositional actions.

What’s more, we’ve formulated our proposal in a highly conservative manner. The theoretical resources we’ve used have been extracted from theories already available in the literature in mainstream metaphysics and the ontology of
music. And our arguments have been, in large part, gentle developments of those already made. In comparison to much ontology of art, we’ve moved at a snail’s pace, but, hopefully, we’ve arrived at a view which is robustly tethered to the extant literature, yet, is novel in its defensibility and capacity to increase our understanding of the ontology of musical works.
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