ITERATIONAL

The object of this paper is to present a case for a new perspective on music and musical analysis. The perspective I shall present is one in which music is to be approached in terms of "phenomenal" or "heard" characteristics. Further, this approach to music involves a view of a musical work as an artifact of what I shall call an "iterational" practice or system. There may, in the view I shall present here, be many such systems, some of which are musical, and others of which are non-musical and include what are commonly called "languages." The artifacts of an iterational system, I shall argue, can be semantically involved to at least four different degrees, where semantic involvement is a matter of the degree to which an object functions as a sign or symbol. No one of these four levels of semantic involvement, ranging from the "zero degree" of purely "formal" entities to the highest degree of uni-

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vocal symbols, is, I shall urge, characteristic of music. The view I shall present, accordingly, avoids the dilemma between theories of music which require some semantic dimension for musical artifacts and those which insist that music is a product of an exclusively playful activity, none of whose artifacts have, as such, a semantic dimension.

It would, I believe, be fair to say that the predominant focus of attention in philosophies of art since Plato has been the semantic dimension of works of art. Plato or Socrates was perhaps the first to hold that the poets literally do not know what they are doing.*1 They represent gods and heroes, so the argument goes, in an all too human way. Their representations are derived from the only available cases of things divine or heroic, ordinary people with whom the poets have daily inter-

course. But this implies that these representations are derived from less than perfect cases of what they are representations of. Accordingly, such representations are ignorant. Nevertheless, such a representation might, even though ignorant, luckily be a true one. The result of such luck would be a work which would so direct the attention of ordinary mortals that they could transcend their imperfect acquaintance with less-than-heroic heroes and begin at least to apprehend a higher ideal for life. Fortuitously, a work of art can direct the human spirit in something like the way that, for Plato, reason directs that spirit by design. But, in order for this to happen, a philosopher — one whose spirit is already directed by reason — must select, on the basis of his knowledge of the ideal, those representations which luckily are true, and suppress all others.

Here we have the first glimpse of three persistent bugbears in the philosophy of art. First, there is the view, which I shall call the "semiotic" thesis, that works of art have meanings or some sort of symbolic function. Second, there is the view that in some way or another works of art are really about something extraordinary — they have a semantic dimension, but it requires some sort of special sensibility to apprehend the true meaning of a work. I shall call this the thesis of special meaning. Third, there is the view that I (and my colleagues, of course), who happen to engage in that discipline which provides this sensibility (in the case of Plato, the discipline is philosophy), am thereby enabled to evaluate accurately works of art, while others, including even (or especially) the artist himself, are not capable of assessing those works. This bear I propose to call the thesis of a critical elite. In the twentieth century the first two bears have become bones of considerable contention. The third, on the other hand, has hardly been heard from, at least at a theoretical level.

Richard Rudner, in an extremely important though neglected paper titled "On Semiotic Aesthetics," argues that, since the value of a work of art considered only as a work of art is intrinsic, and since the value of a sign or unit that has some semantic dimension or meaning, considered as a sign, is instrumental, a work of art as such could not be a sign.*2 This, by implication, means that music as music could not signify anything, although, of course, music can be musically abused to signify lots of things.

Eduard Hanslick, similarly, argues that music is in principle incapable of expressing (i.e., referring to or evoking) ordinary everyday feelings like joy and sorrow, and thus has by itself no semantic dimension.*3 The "by itself" here is important, since, according to Hanslick, music which is customarily played on joyful occasions can take on an extraneous signification of joy, though in itself music cannot signify in this way. Hanslick goes on to argue that by itself music can have a semantic dimension — music can express specifically musical feelings rather than ordinary everyday ones. But, he argues further, such expression is irrelevant to the aesthetic value or beauty of music. In the last analysis for Hanslick, though music by itself can express certain feelings by taking on a semantic dimension, music as such has no meaning whatsoever. This is a somewhat fancier way of coming to the same conclusion that Rudner came to some years later.

Prima facie, the views of Rudner and of Hanslick constitute denials of both the semiotic thesis and the thesis of special meaning, though, for Hanslick, music can have a special, although irrelevant, meaning. Furthermore, in denying the thesis of special meaning, or the musical relevance of such meaning, each of these views closes one of the main avenues leading to the thesis of a critical elite. Much later in this paper I shall argue that such "formalist" views leave open another avenue leading to the thesis of a critical elite in a peculiarly modern form of that thesis.

Opposed to such denials of the semiotic and special meaning theses, and theoretically leaving open (though flatly denying) the thesis of a critical elite, Suzanne Langer presents a view of music in several chapters of her book Feeling and Form. Since my discussion of Langer's view is somewhat involved and leads to the central thesis of this paper, let me begin with a brief exposition of the salient points of her view.

Langer holds that music is not a linguistic sort of thing because the elements of music are not discrete units with fixed conventional referential meaning, such as words are (the elements of a language). Music, nevertheless, shares with language the feature of involving artifacts which are "articulate forms."*4 By this I understand "forms which are made up of repeatable and reidentifiable parts which can be deployed in various permutations and combinations," although Langer offers no such definition.

Unlike linguistic expressions, a musical composition does not have any meaning, according to Langer, although her sense of "meaning" is highly idiosyncratic. It is opposed to what she calls "import," which music does "have." Here we see the beginnings of a thesis of special meaning, although we are enjoined from calling it "meaning." The import of music is the "dynamism of subjective experience."*5

This import arises in the following way. The elements of music are "moving forms of sound," units which, as above, are articulate forms and which move in and constitute a very special sort of time called "musical duration."*6 Musical duration is an image or semblance of "lived" or "experienced" time, as opposed to the linear time of clocks. This "lived" time is what Henri Bergson called "durée."*7 Musical duration is accordingly an illusion, a time created only for perception, "virtual time." Because of its resemblance to experienced time, it expressively symbolizes that time. A piece of music has a "commanding form" which (I believe this is Langer's implication at this juncture) is "the vital rhythm of the subjective time"*8 which the piece symbolizes. The commanding form of a piece is a "matrix of musical thought," the "internal logic" of the piece by which the music is related ("intimately and self-evidently") to life. That is, the matrix of musical thought is a framework or logical structure, within which the vital import of the music arises, the structure by which the music images the dynamic forms of emotional life.

There are, in this view, three points which bear further explanation and examination. First, there is the thesis that music, like language, involves articulate artifacts. Second, there is the thesis of special meaning, which in Langer's view takes on the aspect of a denial of musical meaning in favor of the notion of the vital import of music. This will be approached through a discussion of Langer's claim that, unlike linguistic meaning, the import of music is not a function of fixed, conventional, referential meanings of elements, as is the meaning of linguistic units. Third, there is her account of how this special meaning or "import" is acquired by musical pieces. The key features of this account are the notion of the "commanding form" or "musical matrix" of a piece and the correlative notions of "musical duration" and "lived time," together with the relation of symbolism between them. I shall discuss each of these points in turn in the first three of the following five sections of this paper. In the remaining two sections, all these

considerations will come together in a proposal to take the promised new perspective on music, in which music is seen as an iterational practice. Then, finally, I shall discuss some of the cultural dangers of failing to adopt this new perspective on music, focusing instead in a narrower way on the semantic dimension of music.

1. Musical Artifacts

Whenever people do things in such a way as to involve the production of something which subsequently is a center of human attention, we can speak of the something produced as an artifact. In some cases this way of speaking is a bit strained, as in the case of language, where someone utters by way of, say, giving some bit of news, a noise of some characteristic sort. The noise uttered is subsequently a center of some sort of human attention — it can be remembered, understood, agreed with, or the like, and it can serve as a basis for discussion, become subject to verification, corroboration, or criticism. That noise is called an artifact, even though it, unlike a stone axe or a pottery shard, is not persistent enough to remain available for human attention years after its author is gone from the scene.

Musical artifacts, like linguistic artifacts, but unlike artifacts of many other common kinds, are of two distinct and significantly different sorts. There is the kind, usually on paper, that is persistent enough to outlive its author, and there is that other sort, evanescent, which is gone the moment it is completed. Only after the concert is over does the musical performance become a center of critical attention. We may recapture it only in memory, or perhaps on tape, but the result of playing the tape persists no more than the original performance. In what follows, I shall discuss only those fleeting artifacts, and not the persistent ones: the scores, records, and tapes which may be viewed as artifacts that are tributaries on the musical scene at large. Were there only scores unperformed and tapes unplayed, there would be no music to speak of.

Though this narrows the field of our discussion considerably, a further exclusion is needed to get squarely in view those artifacts that we are hunting. There is a long tradition, both in musical aesthetics and in music theory, of focusing attention on such elements of musical artifacts as tones, intervals,

chords, figures, and the like, in such a way as to reduce them to acoustical terms — cycles per second, resonances, and strings or combinations of elements belonging to such terms. Thus are framed the stylistic proscriptions (parallel fifths, octaves, etc.) we all know from our conservatory studies and the musical universals of such theorists as Hindemith and Heinrich Schenker. Without denying the importance of acoustical analysis, I should like to focus on a very different sort of thing than that which can be said to be constructed out of tones which differ in frequency, timbre, decibels, temporal size according to the clock, and modes of outset, continuation, and ending. Instead of the acoustical object, ultimately measured by oscilloscopes and clocks, I should like to speak of what may be called the "heard music," or "the music as it is heard," or, if some fancier label is desired, "the musical phenomenon."

The heard music can differ in just about any musically important way with music considered as an acoustical object. For example, take a metronome. Set it at 180 and listen to the metered ticks. In themselves, they have no pattern of emphasis, but, if you are so disposed, you can hear groups of three:

or two

or four:

Acoustically the sounds remain the same throughout these experiments, while musically they vary considerably. From an acoustic point of view we might ask questions concerning the ways of deploying elements of sound in such a way as to provide an occasion on which only those heard sounds we have in mind as composers or performers will be heard by those in attendance on the occasion. Such problems are those of musical acoustics and are not the central concern here. Even so, the investigation of ways in which acoustical elements provide occasions for heard sounds presupposes some independent means of describing the heard sounds, and it is to this latter that our efforts will henceforth be exclusively directed.

This turn away from acoustical analysis is made by Langer:

> . . . the elements of music are not tones of such and such pitch, duration, and loudness, nor chords and measured beats; they are, like all artistic elements, something virtual, created only for perception. Eduard Hanslick denoted them rightly: "tönend bewegte Formen" — "sounding forms in motion."*9

It is in light of this focus, not on the object of acoustical analysis, but on the heard music, that we must approach an understanding of Langer's thesis that music, like language, involves articulate artifacts. This focus complicates matters somewhat. For example, who possesses the heard music artifact is not always so clear as it is in the case of the sound of music when subjected to acoustical analysis. In view of the experiment with the metronome prescribed above, we might be led to the conclusion that the heard rhythms are attributable to the hearer alone — the heard music would thus be a radically subjective, personal sort of thing. Yet, contrary to this conclusion, there is the fact that on occasions of more complex musical performance the music we hear seems to be significantly the same music.

Regardless of how these considerations sort themselves out, when I hear the triplets or quintuplets in the metronome's ticking, they are very much what I hear. And — this is the important methodological point for present purposes — I can describe this rhythm and account for how it emerges in my imagination without having to decide one way or another concerning its objective or subjective status. When I hear that rhythm, furthermore, I am hearing it not as though it were a purely subjective phenomenon, but as though the sound itself, apart from me, were rhythmic. The rhythm has no dream-like quality.

Is it the case that the heard music is an articulate artifact, as are linguistic expressions? Is the heard music made up, that is, of repeatable and reidentifiable parts which can occur or be deployed in various permutations and combinations in such a way as to constitute, out of the same elements, a range of significantly different artifacts? I am inclined to agree with Langer on this point, though I should immediately qualify this agreement in two ways.

First, I am extremely skeptical of the prospects of finding any delimited set of musical elements which could be deployed differently to constitute, say, a Bach fugue and Stockhausen's Zyklos, as I ordinarily hear these pieces. But, following the analogy to language, I am equally skeptical of the prospects of finding any delimited set of linguistic elements which can be variously deployed to generate now a statement in English, now one in Chinese. The quest for universal musical elements, as in the analogous case of language, most likely will prove to be a focus of misplaced enthusiasm. I should not like the thesis that the heard music is an articulate artifact to be understood in such a way as to support such enthusiasm.

Second, this view of musical structure should not be taken to imply that a composer (or listener) should, or must, operate exclusively within a single framework of musical elements, as might be suggested by the analogy with language. It does, however, imply that one must operate musically within some framework. Such is the difference between music and noise. Several examples come to mind which support this implication. For example, Stravinsky, in his Poetics of Music, addresses himself to the question involved here when he writes:

> . . . I experience a sort of terror when, at the moment of setting to work and finding myself before the infinitude of possibilities that present themselves I have the feeling that everything is permissible to me. If everything is permissible to me, the best and the worst; if nothing offers me any resistance, then any effort is inconceivable, and I cannot use anything as a basis, and consequently every undertaking is futile.*10

or again:

> I have no use for a theoretic freedom. Let me have something finite, definite — matter that can lend itself to my operation only insofar as it is commensurate with my possibilities. . . .*11

Stravinsky called this terror the "abyss of freedom," which makes the composer unable to write. It is a direct consequence of the refusal to adopt a framework of combinable musical elements. Schönberg's twelve-tone theoretic framework was adopted by him in order to make it possible to continue writing in the face of a rejection (as arbitrary or exhausted) of

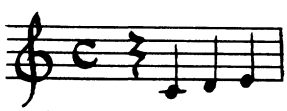
older theoretic frameworks. That this framework is adopted arbitrarily (by a convention of sorts) is beside the point — the relatively fecund result of the adoption is all that counts.

Similarly, a freedom from any framework of musical elements would, for the listener, make for an inability to constitute imaginatively any "heard music" at all. The metronome would continue to tick, but insignificantly, with no rhythm at all. Though there is no one framework of musical elements out of which we can constitute the heard music, that there be some such framework in each case of heard (or composed) music is a musical a priori without which there would be nothing musical.

Thus, heard music has a syntactical or structural dimension closely parallel to that of linguistic expressions. Musical analysis may proceed on the presupposition that a piece of music can always be broken down into units which are reiterable in different contexts and recognizable from context to context, although, when faced with a piece, the problem of what sorts of elements to look for, what framework of musical elements can be relevantly brought to bear, often takes precedence over the problem of analyzing the particular piece. For example, traditional polyphonic or contrapuntal structures and "vertical" structures may compete for attention in some early classical music, and the desiderata brought to bear in such a situation might become extraordinarily complex.

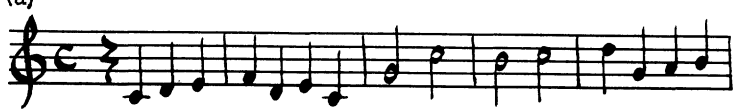
To identify a unit as a reiterable and reidentifiable unit is to look forward to the possibility of that unit's recurrence in different contexts such that those different compounds containing that unit are significantly different musically. Thus, to identify the phrase:

(p)



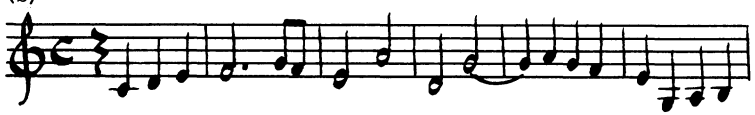
in the following:

(a)



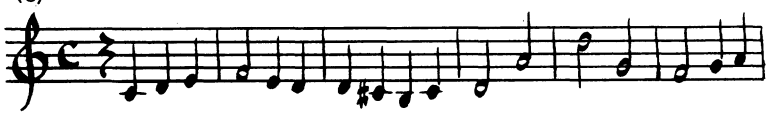
is to be much less surprised when one encounters that phrase in significantly different compounds — for example:

(b)



or

(c)



Here, we approach a juncture at which the semiotic thesis can naturally arise. In order to view the phrase (p) above as a musical element in (a), we must expect that it will recur in compounds, such as (b) and (c), which are significantly or ("importantly") different from (a). If, however, we ride the analogy between music and language just one step further, the semiotic thesis is implied on the strength of considerations of (p), (a), (b), and (c) taken above, since in linguistic analysis a unit is not isolated as a separate linguistic element unless it can occur in significantly different compounds, where what counts as a significant difference between compounds is a matter of a difference in meaning. Thus, to identify the expression:

(e) it

in

(a') It is green.

is to be much less surprised when one encounters that expression in significantly different compounds — for example:

(b') It is on the table.

(c') It is magenta.

Here, of course, these compounds are significantly different in meaning, and the structural analogy with the cases of (p) above might suggest that (a), (b), and (c) likewise differ in meaning. Which, once the suggestion is accepted, involves one squarely in some version of a semiotic thesis.

A general argument which would support this line of analogical reasoning might go something like the following. First, it may be asserted that syntactical or structural analysis is, wherever appropriate, not simply an arbitrary matter of dividing things into parts. The sentence "It is green" is not a combination of just any identifiable parts (such as the dot in the "i" and the vertical line in the "t," put together with the rest). What count as parts of a unit analyzed must be governed by considerations of something beyond the structural or syntactical dimension of the artifact analyzed. Yet there seem to be just two sorts of features of any artifact that go beyond its structural dimension. These are semantic features or meanings and pragmatic features or features having to do with the purposes for which the artifact is used. In the case of musical or linguistic artifacts, the use of the artifact is somewhat a degenerate affair — it is used just by being displayed, brought out for inspection — unlike a hammer, or a table, or other such artifact of human productive activity, whose use involves some effective engagement of the artifact in further action with things. Such display, if it is not simply pointless, must serve to signify or stand for something beyond the artifact displayed. Thus, unless musical activity is an entirely pointless affair, its artifacts must have a semantic dimension.

Here is something of a dilemma — one which I shall eventually try to avoid — between the semiotic thesis and the view that musical artifacts are insignificant, simply playful, pointless products of a rather highly organized activity of noise-making. If we are not prepared to accept the latter thesis in general, we are enjoined to accept the former, or so the argument goes. If we follow the argument, thus, to the semiotic thesis, we provide thereby a foundation for musical analysis (ensuring ourselves of continuing employment as musicologists, etc.), according to which analysis is not just an arbitrary procedure of dividing a piece up into parts, but is governed by a semantic dimension of musical artifacts. Thus, analysis would have as its aim an articulate account of how musical elements conspire together to give rise to compounds with musical meanings.

2. Musical Import

Langer denies that the import (i.e., "meaning" in an ordinary sense, not Langer's) of music is a function of fixed, conven-

tional, referential meanings of elements, as is the meaning of linguistic units.

> Music, like language, is an articulate form. . . . Why, then, is it not a language of feeling, as it has often been called? Because its elements are not words — independent associative symbols with a reference fixed by convention. Only as an articulate form is it found to fit anything; and since there is no meaning assigned to any of its parts, it lacks one of the basic characteristics of language — fixed association, and therewith a single, unequivocal reference.*12

I rather suspect that this is a spurious contrast with language, not because it misrepresents the nature of music, but because it mistakes a large part of the ways in which linguistic units have the meanings they have — words simply do not, despite the protests of logicians, have fixed meanings, nor is it at all clear that their meanings are largely referential, and it is misleading to call the meanings of words "conventional," as though they were wholly a matter of some controllable connection made between words and things. Like the "social contract" of Hobbes and Rousseau, the "convention" is one which was not a matter of two or more parties laying down a convention or making an agreement.

How, for example, are we to maintain in the face of the word "green" that its meaning is fixed when, depending on all sorts of contextual factors, some of them extralinguistic, it means variously "of a certain color called green," "sick," "envious," "inexperienced," "new," "fertile," and many other things when used in relatively creative metaphors? This, however, need not be pursued here, since linguistic meaning is not our center of attention.

Linguistic meanings can be functions of fixed, conventional, referential meanings of elements, though they need not be, and the same seems to be true, mutatis mutandis, of musical meanings. It may be that music with such meanings tends not to be very good or tends to be relatively simple-minded, but it would seem to me to be a fantastic aberration of the philosophical intellect on Langer's part if she meant to deny the existence of program music or folk music in which the notes are so arranged as to constitute a pentatonic tonal structure quite specifically and conventionally expressing tenderness, or

a mixolydian mode quite conventionally expressing sadness, and like constructions. That the conventions involved tend to be local does not dissolve them, any more than the fact that I do not speak Chinese dissolves the meaning of a Chinese sentence. Wagner's motif of the Rhine Maidens really does refer to those maidens, though we could never tell that it does on first hearing the motif apart from our program notes. But, so it is in the case of the word "Rhine Maidens" – on first hearing it and apart from our dictionary, it means nothing.

But Langer has, I believe, a subtler point in mind, one which would have it that such meanings are musically irrelevant. It is not music that never means in these ways, but rather, as Hanslick would argue, music as such, or music as music. It is with this thesis that we shall have to deal.

I believe that any thesis to the effect that music, or, for that matter, language, either means or does not mean some kind of thing or in some sort of way, is an answer to an absurd question. The question would be a question such as "What does music (language) mean?," or "How does music (language) mean?" Philosophers have been asking after the meaning of language for close to two thousand years. As soon as one answer is proposed, another is offered, with arguments that exclude the first, and this process is repeated over and over again. Language refers to universals, or abstracta, reporting the various ways they bundle together. On the contrary, linguistic units ultimately refer only to particulars, characterizing them by virtue of their similarities with other particulars. None of the above, another philosopher will claim. Language refers, insofar as it makes sense at all, only to sense-data, albeit elliptically.

Until recently, it has fairly gone without saying that there must be some general and significant way to characterize what language is about. In the twentieth century, occasional linguistically-oriented philosophers, among them John Austin in his posthumously published lectures titled Sense and Sensibilia,*13 have come to be suspicious of the question that all these answers were supposed to be answers to. Like the question "What is language about," or "What does language mean?" is best answered "Anything at all," and promptly dismissed. Such questions are raised in such a way as to suggest that we consider all the things that we can think of, and then say which of them language is about or which of them it is not about. But,

put this way, it sets an impossible task — how should we refer to what, in our answer, we mean to exclude?

Similarly with "How does language mean?" The only answer to a degenerate question of this sort is "It means in any way you can get away with." Anything more exclusive by way of an answer must eventually characterize the ways language does not mean, and, in so doing, give us instruction in how, linguistically, to mean something and thus give our language meaning in the excluded way.

This is not in any way a restriction on semantic theory — it can still be significantly asked of any single linguistic expression what it, as opposed to other linguistic expressions, means, and how it means what it does. But the collection of all such questions, and whatever pattern appears among investigations set by them, is the whole of semantic theory.

Much the same thing goes for music. "What does music mean?" and "How does music mean?" are questions which aspire to an answer so general as to be virtually nonsense. There is no single thing music means, nor any single way it means. If someone were to ask of a particular piece of music, played in a specific context, what the heard music means, then we would have a question which we would at least know how to answer without subscribing to a hidden and spurious generalization. And, then, the question of how (by resemblance, iconicity, convention, association, etc.) that music means what it does makes equally good sense.

Thus, Langer's thesis of special meaning fails, not through presenting us with a view of musical import which has it that music means (specially) something which it does not or could not mean, but through failing to tell us which music, in which contexts, means that which she says music does, or has the "vital import" she describes. Her thesis of special meaning, or "vital import" of music must be understood by means of an explanation of why she focuses on the particular sort of meaning that she ascribes to music. The import of music, she says, is "the dynamism of subjective experience."*14 Music "presents a sentient and emotional reality"*15 by means of a "non-discursive image" of lived time, or, again:

> . . . music is a symbolic presentation of the highest organic response, the emotional life of human beings.*16

This special meaning thesis is persuasive enough — from a philosophical point of view it rounds out many dangling edges of philosophical aspiration. Why have we never been able to capture, in our philosophical anthropologies, the image of man as a creature of such subtle and varied sensibilities, textures, and directions of feeling, emotion, and cathexis? Because this image cannot be expressed in words. Yet, all along we have had before us these artifacts, musical works, expressing this subtle and varied pattern of human sensibilities, directions, and textures of feeling and emotion. We have only to listen for such expression — our mistake, philosophically, was to limit ourselves to words. Music fills a gap in philosophical understanding.

Music becomes, as it was in a very different way for Plato, a domain for those with a philosophical turn in their thinking. Though the critical elitism attendant upon Plato's thesis of special meaning is not expressed by Langer, one suspects that it lurks there between the lines.

Once this perspective is taken on Langer's thesis of special meaning, I must confess, I find it difficult to take that thesis seriously. It all sounds very nice, comfortably like the sort of thing I, philosophically, have in mind much of the time. Yet, in the court of a Louis, when the quadrille was played, did not the music express the formal, tense, secretly animal motion of those silk-and-linen-clad bodies, rather than the dynamic shape of their emotional life? And, at Cöthen, when people first heard the fantastic Chaconne Bach tacked onto his partita for violin, who could have thought of anything but just the music itself, the inexorable variations of that purely musical idea? Yet again, did not the Hospodi Pomilui of the Russian Orthodox church signify the raising and lowering of the cross, rather than the dynamic shape of the attendant joy and sorrow?

Not that this music has to signify these things to me, now, when I play the record at home, or listen to it, cut off from its natural habitat and placed in that zoo, the concert hall. Should I even try to understand the tiger by watching him in his cage? In such contexts, music may very well tend to mean the same sort of thing. The tigers and the elephants become, in time, "institutionalized," with the same glazed look in their eyes and the same aimless shuffle.

Finally, back to the metronome. It may very well turn out that,

if you listen carefully to the music, you will hear the rising and falling of human desire, the grasping, groping, fluctuation, regimentation, dissolution, retrenchment, leadings toward and away from of human emotional life. But you may also hear the rushing and geometrical descent of a thousand jet warplanes assaulting a country pond filled with croaking frogs. Or, you may hear nothing but the result of a highly disciplined play with sound — just the rushings, the descents, the regimentation, the leadings, and so forth. The noises before you must be heard, and how they are heard should be just a matter of what heard sounds provide you with a most valuable experience. There is no a priori reason to suppose that you, as do I or Langer, have a desire for insight into human emotional life, or even that, were you thus philosophically inclined, music would provide such insight. Langer is free, as is anyone else, to recommend a focus on music, but, as with the ticking of the metronome, I will hear largely the sort of thing I listen for. Musical pieces are complex enough as heard to admit of some sufficiently regular relation with some case of any equally complex phenomenon such that the heard music can, with only a minimal predisposition on the part of the listener, express that case of that other complex phenomenon. For a physiologist, a piece of music might express the dynamic pattern of the Krebs-cycle, while, for Langer, that same piece might express the dynamic pattern of mania and depression. To arbitrate between such views would inevitably be an arbitrary procedure, in case Langer and the physiologist each derives (as they most likely would) more or less the same degree of satisfaction from the music he hears.

A more formal way to present this thesis might go something like the following. A piece of music, apart from being heard, is like the ticking of the metronome — it can occasion quite different hearings. Langer proposes that we hear music as it is dynamically isomorphic with the emotional life of human beings, and thus, as it expresses the dynamic patterns of that life. Yet the same prospects are open to hearing a piece of music as it may turn out to be dynamically isomorphic with any other sufficiently complex phenomenon. Arbitration between any two of these prospective hearings of a piece of music would be reasonable only in case one or the other of those hearings led the hearer to a more positive evaluation of the piece, since this would indicate a more fruitful audition.

Here, we must leave the subject for another time. I hold the

conclusion of this line of discussion as a point of general aesthetics — that aesthetic evaluation is unlike other sorts of evaluation, not in being based on purely "aesthetic" consideration or in being "intrisic" as opposed to "instrumental," but in being positively directed or biased in favor of the work. That is, other things being equal, of two views of a work, one of which leads to a less positive (or more negative) evaluation of that work than the other, the burden of proof always lies on the first. The main reason why I hold this view is a fact, somewhat forgotten in the technical shuffle of theories of art, that works of art are the sorts of things people produce and approach above all with an eye to entertainment. Thus, it would be perverse to require someone to be entertained less because he is missing "the true meaning" of a work.

3. The Musical Symbol

We have now to look more closely at Langer's thesis of special meaning, and discuss her view of the way in which musical "import" arises. We have not, in the previous section, rejected Langer's thesis of special meaning altogether, but only its claim to generality, so a closer look at the "how" of the musical import she describes is in order. Still, it is important to keep in mind that, if this explanation of musical import is kept completely within the context of Langer's view, it appears as an answer to a spurious question — "How does music mean?" So, with an appropriate degree of reservation, we turn to Langer's account.

> The elements of music are moving forms of sound; but in their motion nothing is removed. The realm in which tonal entities move is a realm of pure duration. Like its elements, however, this duration is not an actual phenomenon. It is not a period — ten minutes or a half hour, some fraction of a day — but is something radically different from the time in which our public and practical life proceeds.*17

The first thing we must contend with in this view is the somewhat paradoxical notion of motion. Musical elements, that is, the musically significant or important parts of the heard music, are in motion, yet "nothing is removed." Recall what you would normally hear in connection with musical excerpt (a) some pages back, and consider the part of what you hear that

corresponds to the figure (p). Most likely, you will agree that it is in motion, and yet it does not move as does an automobile down the street. There is no place that it is at at a time, and then is no longer there. This is true for two reasons. First, the heard sound does not have a location as does a physical thing. Second, the heard sound does not fit in with temporal orders that organize other things that one sees, hears, or otherwise perceives. Let me dwell on each of these points briefly, in an attempt to get them more clearly in focus.

First, the heard sound does not have a location, such as, for example, my typewriter has. I might hear it as coming from the piano or the flute, but chances are I do not even locate it in this way when I listen to it as music. The source of the sound becomes irrelevant when I listen to the music. My habits of locating sources of sound are more tied up with practical concerns that I have — I locate, in this sense, the rattle in my car's engine because it might signal something in need of repair. But I do not listen to music, usually, with an eye to repairing the piano. Instead, if I am required to locate the sound of the figure (p), I am more likely to locate it somewhere between high and low, but not "high" in the sense that the moon is high, nor "low" in the sense that the valley is low. I locate it, that is, metaphorically, though the metaphor is old and well-enough used as to be virtually a second literal use of "high" and "low."

Second, the heard sound does not fit in with temporal orders that organize other things seen, heard, or otherwise perceived. What is strange, for example, about saying that the andante came ten minutes after the ice-cream soda I had before the concert,*18 even though it is quite literally true, by the clock, that the interval between them was just ten minutes? What is strange is that, in the temporal organization of the heard music of which the andante is a part, there is no relation of a temporal sort which extends outside the heard music. Here is another metaphor. Literally, if the concert began, as it did, after I had the sundae, and the andante began after the concert began, then the andante began after the sundae. But this transitivity of "after" is blocked by the boundaries of the metaphorical domain of the temporal labels I use to describe the heard music.

These two metaphors conspire together, as do their literal counterparts, to frame a notion of motion. Something whose

location (literally or metaphorically) changes in a span of time (literally or metaphorically) moves (literally or metaphorically). But why not speak literally – is not this just obfuscatory talk, reporting something that is not a motion by a kind of systematic indirection? Aside from a detailed discussion of how metaphors work,*19 the best answer to this is that at this point in the description of the heard sounds we have something to describe for which our language was not designed to describe. Literalizing these metaphors is a tricky and perhaps impossible undertaking – the most common attempts end up shifting the reference to something other than the heard sound. This happens, for example, when one reduces "high" and "low," or their comparative cognates, to acoustical terms having to do with frequency – unless, of course, the acoustical terms are, in turn, used metaphorically.

With whatever caution is required by these observations, we can adopt the metaphors involved in Langer's claim that the elements of music are moving forms of sound. The next point we shall have to deal with is her notion that these moving elements constitute a very special sort of time, called "musical duration." We are told, above, that this is "something radically different from the time in which our public and practical life proceeds," but our consideration of the ice-cream sundae and the andante only establishes the bare difference. Musical time could be just like the time of clocks except that it does not extend beyond the boundaries of the musical phenomenon, as far as our considerations up to this point go.

Yet (and here we begin a wildly complex elaboration and mixing of the temporal metaphor) musical time, unlike the time of clocks, changes its pace. It can come to a stop, a stasis, as it does in the midst of a piece when a false cadence momentarily stops the whole show, or when a prolonged silence or "rest" is earned by an especially forceful line of motion cut off suddenly. Such a line continues into the rest, by virtue of our imaginatively completing the Gestalt it begins, but it also does not continue into the rest by virtue of the sudden and audible cessation of that line in mid stream. Thus, its imaginative continuation is one temporal line, while its cessation is another – the musical time "branches" into two lines of succession. Either of these lines may then be continued: the line of motion may be resumed at a later point, or another line may be begun, cutting off the imaginative continuation of the previous line. Or both may be continued, splitting, in polyphonic devel-

opment, the heard music into two distinct temporal lines. Thus, a fugal subject may end with a rest, and then continue with counterthematic material while the theme re-enters at the point of rest in the first voice. This happens in the second movement of Bach's G-minor Violin Sonata, for example. The result is a temporal organization which establishes a fabric of distinct temporal lines, each a succession by itself, but with no interrelation in terms of the same relation of succession with the others, such that one would be led to say that an element in one line follows upon an element in the other line. Then the lines may coalesce, and one voice may decline an element which is continued by the other. Thus, the temporal dimension of the music becomes a fabric, rather than a thread, while the temporal dimension of things that the clock measures is always a single linear array of times at which things are.

Musical time thus admits of qualifications that clock time does not. Musical elements can so conspire as to produce a temporal stasis or stretto, a more or less filled or empty temporal line, a divergence or coalescence of distinct temporal lines, tensions within or between temporal lines, resolutions of these, transformations within a single line from one meter to another, and a wide variety of textures within a single meter. These qualifications are admissible because of the metaphorical turn that is required to talk of elements of sound in motion. The task of literalizing such an intricate body of metaphorical talk might present itself to us, but only were we to have some philosophical designs on the nature of music according to which we would want to discuss that nature in a relatively scientific way. It is not at all clear that we should have such designs. For most critical and even musicological purposes, the metaphorical vocabulary seems to do quite well.

In Langer's next step, the special symbolic function of music begins to appear. She notes a similarity between musical time, or "musical duration," and "lived time":

> Musical duration is an image of what might be termed "lived" or "experienced" time — the passage of life that we feel as expectations become "now," and "now" turns into unalterable fact. Such passage is measurable only in terms of sensibilities, tensions, and emotions. . . . The semblance of this vital, experiential time is the primary illusion of music. All music creates an order of virtual time, in which its sonorous forms move in relation to

> each other — always and only to each other, for nothing else exists there.*20

Presumably we can say all the same sorts of things, mutatis mutandis, about emotional life that we can say about music. But instead of "moving forms of sound," we would speak of "moving elements of feeling" or some such elements. The metaphor of motion, thus, takes on a different domain, but it remains a metaphor. In this motion, nothing is removed. A cathexis has a "direction," as does a musical element, but it is directed toward the intended object of desire or aversion, just as one musical element can point to or away from another. A feeling can be more or less intense, more or less "high," as can a musical tone, though we have no tendency to reduce it, as we might (mistakenly) attempt in the case of a musical tone, to anything parallel to acoustical notions. And a development in the life of feeling can involve a motion within this space of "high" and "low," just as a development in a piece of music can involve, analogously, such motion.

The elements of emotional life have no literal location, nor do they fit in with temporal orders that organize things ordinarily heard, seen, or otherwise perceived. Yet when the metaphors of direction and time conspire together, the result is a vocabulary, opaque to the extent that any metaphor is, which can significantly be used to describe the emotional life in terms of stasis, stretto, filled, empty, divergence or coalescence of emotional lines, tensions within or between lines, resolutions of these, transformations within a single line from one tempo to another, and a wide variety of textures within a single tempo.

For Langer such a parallel between music and emotional life is tantamount to a symbolization-relation between them. In our terms, the parallelism is a matter of some sort of isomorphism between the domain of musical elements and the domain of feeling elements, as they are sorted out by the metaphors in question. Yet it is never the case that a similarity, even a thoroughgoing one, is sufficient (or necessary) for a relation of symbolization. This is argued rather conclusively in more recent literature. For example, Nelson Goodman, in his Languages of Art, presents us with a relatively simple, but conclusive, consideration in this regard. He argues, having somewhat of a field day with the notion in question:

> The most naive view of representation might perhaps be put somewhat like this: "A represents B if and only if A appreciably resembles B," or "A represents B to the extent that A resembles B." Vestiges of this view, with assorted refinements, persist in most writing on representation. Yet more error could hardly be compressed into so short a formula.
>
> Some of the faults are obvious enough. An object resembles itself to the maximum degree but rarely represents itself; resemblance is symmetric: B is as much like A as A is like B, but while a painting may represent the Duke of Wellington, the Duke doesn't represent the painting. Furthermore, in many cases neither one of a pair of very like objects represents the other. . . . A Constable painting of Marlborough Castle is more like any other picture than it is like the Castle, yet it represents the Castle and not another picture — not even the closest copy.*21

What is needed, over and beyond isomorphism, is some other element, which may be a convention, or a habit, or perhaps a genetic relation, in order for an isomorphism to become a symbolization. Yet Langer explicitly denies conventionality. The musical symbol is an icon, according to her view, and, in view of iconoclastic arguments cited above, there is no such thing.

If these considerations are substantially correct, Langer has not provided us with a sufficient condition for music to symbolize subjective time or be, as she calls it, a "symbolic presentation of the highest organic response, the emotional life of human beings." The net effect of Langer's rhetorically forceful presentation of this view might very well be in the direction of effecting a relation of symbolization between music and subjective life. But this effect would be of the nature of a convention established by her presentation of her thesis. In a weak way, Langer's thesis, if we are prepared to listen to music by its lights, is self-verifying.

But, by virtues no different from this, any similar thesis to the effect that music symbolically presents any other highly complex, multilinear phenomenon would be equally correct and equally misleading. To insist on Langer's proposal, rather than any of the others with the same virtue of being self-verifying, would be an act of choice or prejudice in favor of

one, rather than another sort of message one would like to look for in the music. One need not even accept any of the views in this prospective range of different semiotic theses. Such a refusal would reflect a preference for "pure music," or music as an exclusively playful, intricate, temporal phenomenon without any transcending significance. This is, I must confess, a preference I have on occasion.

But any of these views must remain a preference. The so-called controversy between the "heteronomist" and "autonomist" views of music is a controversy that ultimately carries back to a matter of choice, in which any of the available choices can result in a valuable perspective on (some) music.

4. Iterational Systems

I am now in a position to present the central thesis of this paper. The conclusion our investigation points to is that a piece of music may, but need not, be understood as a symbol, and that if understood as a symbol, it need not be understood as symbolizing any particular sort of thing. In the light of this conclusion my thesis can quite succinctly be stated. Music, in general, is a product of an iterational practice, and, in particular, any musical piece is to be viewed as belonging to an iterational system. An iterational system is a collection of repeatable and reidentifiable elements which can be deployed in a variety of different and characterizable permutations and combinations in order to constitute many significantly different compound units. In the case of music, any given iterational system in question (and it appears that many different systems are musical, according to our considerations above) will have as its elements "moving forms of sound," just as Langer maintains. And we can expect that (here is a necessary and sufficient, though not very restrictive condition) the modes of combination of these elements will be such that the result is a (reasonably complex and unified) musical time, in the sense discussed above, in contrast to the simple, linear time in which we set our practical affairs.

In this way, then, a piece of heard music is a unit which belongs to an iterational system whose elements are moving forms of sound and which constitutes an order of musical time. Notice that any language is also an iterational system, in the sense defined above, though not a musical one. In what

follows I should like to explore some of the prospects that this focus on the nature of music opens up for us. In the remainder of this section I shall outline four different degrees of semantic involvement, or semiotic status, that iterated units, and in particular heard music, can have. These four are (a) music as a purely formal entity with no semantic dimension at all; (b) music as a formal entity with what, to use Langer's vocabulary, might be called "virtual meaning"; (c) music as a symbolic entity with an equivocal semantic dimension; and (d) music as a symbolic entity with a univocal semantic dimension. Then, in the concluding section of this paper, I shall turn away from these considerations and briefly examine some of the cultural prospects and dangers which might naturally be associated with each of four theories of music which result from an exclusive focus on one or another of these four levels of semantic involvement.

To speak of levels of semantic involvement is to suggest that, in some way or another, things can have more or less meaning. Prima facie, such talk would be a symptom of an especially equivocal notion of meaning. "If something has meaning, it has it, otherwise not" would be an appropriate response to such talk. Speaking of "more or less meaningful" units would betray a partial confusion of "meaningful" in the sense of "important," with "meaningful" in the semantic sense. Yet among the products of different iterational systems and especially among those that we call "music," there seem to be four distinct degrees of "meaningfulness," strictly in the semantic sense, each of which represents an importantly different kind of heard music.

First there is the "zero" degree of semantic involvement. In listening this is the degree to which meanings arise when we hear the music as simply a display. Nothing is presented to us but the sounds in motion. Such sounds in motion may be said to be exclusively a play of sound upon our auditory faculties. Heard music at this level of semantic involvement signifies nothing. Two pieces can significantly differ from each other by establishing very different temporal shapes or by filling the interstices of their meters with figures that organize tonal components differently. Musical value, at this level of semantic involvement, would not necessarily involve, as one might suspect, only hedonic values. For example, it could, where the heard music has no semantic dimension, even involve the heuristic value of developing our perceptive apparatus; or it could

involve the kind of value which Eugene Minkowski ascribes to imagination in general, namely the value of escape from realities which constantly demand practical involvement and a corresponding retrenchment of our vital energies;*22 or it could involve the sort of value which arises in connection with other absorbing engagements with things, as in the case of a complex mathematical derivation, where one loses sight entirely of the semantic dimension of the symbols manipulated and comes away from such engrossment with a "shipwrecked" feeling (hardly pleasure).*23 These are just possibilities, among many others that might appear with a more thorough investigation. There would, for example, also be a tendency at this level of semantic involvement to speak of "purely aesthetic values" – values of design, unity and diversity, and the like.

The next level of semantic involvement is the level at which the heard music takes on a semblance of meaningfulness. The music presents itself to us as though it were meaningful, as a result, perhaps, of some expectation we have that it will symbolize something. Such an expectation can be a result of reading Langer extensively or it can be a matter of cultural tradition. At this level, however, no meaning is forthcoming. The music is still without a semantic dimension, but its elements arrange themselves in our hearing with an elusive aspect. This is like listening to speech in a foreign language – our attention is not entirely on the sounds that move, because we seek to grasp the "meaning" that we suspect is there. Part of the value that heard music can have at this level of semantic involvement is a function of that elusive or mysterious quality that the music takes on. Such meaningfulness may, to coin a phrase in accordance with Langer's usage, be called "virtual meaning" or "meaning created for perception alone." Analogous cases of purposeful objects which elude any purpose are to be found among works of other arts. Kant, I believe, made such a level of practical involvement into a definitive characteristic of aesthetic objects.*24

The third level of semantic involvement is the level at which the heard music becomes meaningful, but in such a way that multiple meanings suggest themselves, each of which is equally effected by the heard music. Interpretation of music at this level of involvement tends to be a relatively imaginative activity – one might find equally satisfying the claims that the music symbolizes a squadron of jet warplanes attacking a country pond filled with croaking frogs, or that it symbolizes

the siege of Byzantium, or, again, that it represents the eternal polarity between the contemplative and passionate aspects of human emotional life. At this level interpretations tend to be more or less farfetched. The mechanism of symbolization is that of iconicity — the musical symbol is isomorphic with what it is said to symbolize. Yet there is no settled convention to disambiguate the symbol. Interpretation, thus, becomes in part a matter of stipulation or local convention (and thus, to some extent, incorrigible). Further, the musical symbol at this level tends to be inexhaustible, in the sense that another interpretation might always be available. The things symbolized tend to be mutually isomorphic, to display the same number of key elements with parallel relations among those elements. The value of heard music at this level seems to be primarily a function of the potency of its symbolic dimension. This can be a heuristic value, in the sense that it "loosens" our imagination to the point where we can readily associate complex structures of visual, tactile, emotional, and other phenomena with those constituted by the musical forms provided by the music, or in the sense that it turns our thought to the formal aspects of phenomena in general.

Finally, there is the highest level of symbolic involvement of heard music. At this level, the music is a univocal symbol of some quite definite single thing or sort of thing. Even in case the heard music is isomorphic with what it symbolizes, there is a tight convention or habitual association involved which uniquely determines the symbolization-relation. Heard music, at this level of involvement, tends to be programmatic, or specifically occasional (as, for example, one sort of hearing of The Nutcracker Suite accompanied by program notes, a military march, a national anthem, etc.). The value of heard music at this level of semantic involvement is primarily instrumental (as opposed to "intrinsic," not "vocal"). The heard music can promote the occasion well or ill, or fit the occasion more or less well, or express the scene or story more or less accurately. This last can be understood as a matter of how explicitly the program notes have to be written in order to provide a sufficient convention to effect this level of semantic involvement.

Langer places music in general at this level of involvement, though on occasion she will admit the previous level, and in spite of the fact that her discussion does not run to occasional or program music. The sort of musical meaning she describes

is nevertheless univocal and is a limiting case of the last sort of value mentioned above. According to her account there is no conventional element. That an icon can at best function at the equivocal level when no habit or convention for interpretation is operative makes her theory of musical meaning fail. Nothing can mean that way, unless we are prepared to regard her theory as itself a convention which if adopted limits the range of things symbolized by heard music to the realm of human emotional life.

There seems to be no reason why one of these levels of involvement needs be the sole level on which any given piece is heard on different occasions. Some pieces may lend themselves better to one than to another. Nor does it seem to me that we can in any but an arbitrary way proscribe any one of these levels of involvement as "musically (or aesthetically) irrelevant," since heard music at any of these levels remains, after all is said and done, music. There are, however, at least four cultural dangers to which we can quite naturally fall prey in connection with these four levels of semantic involvement. Each of these dangers can best be seen as arising in a context in which the thesis of a critical elite is based on a theory of music which argues an exclusive preference for one of these four levels of semantic involvement. In the concluding section of this paper I should like to present a brief description of each of these cultural dangers.

5. The Thesis of a Critical Elite

Each of the four levels of semantic involvement described above might be adopted as though it excluded the rest, giving us a formalist view of music in case the zero level is exclusively preferred, a "Kantian" theory of music in case the level of virtual meaning is preferred, or, in case one or the other of the higher two levels is preferred, we get some form of a semiotic thesis. Each of these views of music has an attendant cultural danger. The formalist view can lead to a type of critical elitism which promotes some degree of intellectual dishonesty among those who have to do with music. What I call the Kantian view can lead to a form of critical elitism which promotes some degree of a kind of intellectual elusiveness. The view that musical meanings are equivocal can give rise to a critical elitism which promotes an exoteric dogmatism. Finally, the view that musical meanings are univocal can give

rise to a form of critical elitism which promotes intellectual selfishness. Let me briefly sketch the prospects of these four cultural dangers in order to introduce a cautionary note into the proceedings of those who would opt for one or another of these four levels of semantic involvement of music to the exclusion of the others. These considerations, by their nature, must be inconclusive, though in an oblique way they militate against all four of these exclusive theories of musical meaning.

According to the formalist view heard music has no semantic dimension. The other three levels of semantic involvement, and especially those in which the heard music has an equivocal or univocal symbolic function, are excluded either by argument to the effect that music is in itself incapable of symbolic functions, or by argument to the effect that, though music can by itself symbolize, such symbolism is nevertheless musically irrelevant (i.e., though music can by itself have a semantic dimension, music as such has no such dimension). This last is the view of Hanslick, as we reported earlier. Any talk by way of music criticism of what the music means is proscribed on the grounds that such talk deals with matters which involve a reference to elements that are extraneous to the music itself, where such reference must necessarily be beside the point musically (or aesthetically). The governing consideration here implies a more general proscription, one which can lead to an extreme form of "purism" if followed consistently. If the symbolic dimension of heard music is irrelevant because in order to describe it we must refer to something besides the music itself (namely, what the music symbolizes), then any other feature of the heard music is irrelevant as well, if, in order to describe that feature, we must refer to something besides the music itself. Yet carried to the extreme, this view would proscribe as irrelevant any significant feature that the heard music could possibly have. It would, for example, class as irrelevant any heard rhythm, because, as in the case of the metronome which we considered above, something besides the mere noisy commotion (the ticks of the metronome) is involved in the heard rhythm. This something more is a matter of what I expect or listen for in the music. But this involves a covert reference either to me or generally to other heard music and is accordingly to be enjoined by a consistent purism on the grounds that we are to be enjoined from hearing or reporting anything extraneous to the music itself — the same grounds on which we are forbidden to speak of musical meanings.

Yet heard rhythms are indeed constitutive aspects of music. The result is that the conception of pure music, carried to this extreme, becomes identical with the conception of incoherent noise. This, of course, is just a matter of the logic of a formalist view. No formalist would ever go this far, or at least I should hope not. If someone were even to dimly see results such as these, the vision would be sufficiently embarrassing to warrant considerable rationalization by way of patching up the formalist orientation towards music. Ultimately, music might turn out to be inarticulate noise, the story between the lines might go, but in order to acquire for musical purposes a working insight into music, we shall keep this ultimate out of sight. At this point things are ripe for an elitism. There are those that have gone all the way, run the course, and they are those who know. They have found that pure musical essence that eludes capture by any of our categories — semantic, metric, tonal, or whatever. Then there are those that are on the way, who might, if they work very hard, achieve this understanding, and, of course, there are geniuses who have this understanding as a gift. But most people are incapable of grasping (the grasp must necessarily be intuitive) pure music, but can only imperfectly approach true understanding. Music is ineffable, and so forth.

Thus, from the logic of purism, the unacceptable result that there is no such thing as music becomes transformed into the acceptable result that there is no such ordinary thing, and music becomes the object of an extraordinary and not generally available sensibility. The thesis of a critical elite can then take over the cultural scene, complete with authorities that are not completely accountable for their evaluations of musical works.

Of course, there is nothing intrinsically wrong with elitism — there really are some things the masses will never understand. But this particular form of critical elitism appears to be objectionable because of a characteristic effect it can have on those who have to deal with music. It encourages some degree of intellectual dishonesty, since, if our view of the logic of purism is substantially correct, there really is no such understanding available for the initiated to have. Carried to its logical conclusion, this approach has the music simply disappear, leaving only the noise. Thus, nobody whose thinking is clear on the matter can in good faith take the position of an authority. Yet since, in good faith, it is quite possible to pre-

varicate enough to actually feel that, yes, I really do understand the music, I might nevertheless take such a position in good faith. I have listened to the music, lived with it, to the point where I have so much of my life invested in it that I have become virtually one with it. The only catch is that this understanding that I feel is inarticulate, it runs beyond the words in my language. I can pronounce, ex cathedra, an evaluation of the music, but I find that I can never completely capture in words the reason why I evaluate it as I do.

Thus, I become an authority. I know a lot about the music, but there are things that I don't have the words to express. Yet, in my thinking, there is always that one small note of intellectual dishonesty, the one that takes a feeling of understanding that I do not have. This is my myth, the foundation of my authority. I might become eccentric, or get ulcers, or otherwise display symptoms of this very slightly dishonest foundation, but chances are I will never be cured of the myth. Since I am, meanwhile, very knowledgeable about details of musical works, I can maintain the public aspect of an authority, setting an example for others who, eventually, might come to feel that they understand the music also, or else give up the quest and sink back into the masses. The situation, though it can be a stable one, is quite unhealthy. Culturally it can limit the accessibility of music to people in general — why listen to it if only those who make it their whole life can understand it?

The second level of semantic involvement is that at which the heard music takes on the semblance of something that has a semantic dimension, though it takes on no meaning per se. It becomes "meaningful, but with no meaning." A Kantian view of music (not Kant's, but very likely something Kant might have held) might propose to understand music only at this level of semantic involvement, excluding all the other levels as musically irrelevant. This view tends very quickly to degenerate into a strict idealism. Listening to speech in a foreign language becomes a worthless procedure in itself, and all the more a waste of time in case there is no meaning we could apprehend if we only had the dictionary. Yet there could, according to this view, be no dictionary, since that would destroy the peculiarly musical characteristic of virtual, but not actual, symbolism.

So one might come to imagine that something like a meaning is there, only transcendent. An ideal to which music aspires,

which it can never achieve, but which it can more or less approximate, emerges. Further, the music is musically better or worse as it more or less closely approximates this ideal. Thus, in order to apprehend clearly the value of a musical work, we must in some way or another apprehend the ideal — not in the heard music, because it could not possibly be there.

This frame of thought can break down entirely, to the point at which someone comes to feel that he is in possession of some special intuitive or transcendental line on the ideal. He then takes on the role of authority, with the attendant elitism and intellectual dishonesty that results — much as it can result from the purist view. A more likely development would be that there arises an exoteric and an esoteric doctrine. In order to maintain an enthusiasm for music on the part of those who only occasionally listen, it is publicly to be pronounced that, yes, music does have meaning, only this meaning is very hard to hear. It requires very close, respectful listening. Such is the public myth. Those who know, on the other hand, hold esoterically the true doctrine that the music is without meaning, that to be meaningful is only the ideal to which music aspires, but never, in principle, can reach. This esotericism might be justified, were the theory correct, on the grounds that the sort of value that music can have only arises to any full extent in the course of long and arduous listening to the music and looking for the meaning that it seems to have. But such listening requires the myth that music has a meaning. Each listener will, on acquiring the full extent of the value that comes from such long an arduous listening, realize for himself the esoteric truth that music has no meaning. Thus, this truth need not, must not, be generally told, because to tell it at large would be to deprive those who are willing to stick it out for the full realization of musical value.

In addition to this duality, whenever a seeker after musical meaning comes to feel that he has at last deciphered that difficult language, one who knows must point out that, no, the music does not mean that. Thus, the cognoscenti, taking the public stance of those who have deciphered that elusive language, become intellectually elusive, to the point where nothing by way of interpretation could possibly count as correct. Which, of course, is a consequence of the theory in question. But the elusion is of a peculiar nature. It requires the pretension that there is some interpretation which is the correct one, a pre-

tension held because of its heuristic value rather than believed. The result is a mode of approach which is entirely sophistical — one who knows is prepared to make any move whatsoever to cure a seeker of any higher level of semantic involvement in the music. Many of these moves will be rhetorical, and rhetoric is a disease which easily spreads in a context in which those who are supposed to know readily accept, or appear to accept, sophistical arguments. Such elusiveness can thus itself become a culturally favored style. And this, I believe, is never a healthy turn of events. Culturally, a class of snobs arises whose entire attention is turned towards mimicking the cognoscenti.

The third level of semantic involvement is that at which the heard music takes on a radical equivocacy — it is symbolic, but its various symbolic functions are inexhaustible. For every interpretation offered, at this level of semantic involvement, there is another which, different from the first, nevertheless tends to have a similarity with the first. This thread of similarity runs throughout large families of interpretations, and is the result of the heard music's being isomorphic with what it is said to symbolize. The conventions which support such musical symbolism are incomplete, local, and weak, and thus never uniquely determine one symbolic function of music rather than another. Yet some sort of convention, habit, expectation, or the like must, as we have seen, be operant if the heard music is to reach the level of semantic involvement at which it becomes possible to provide any interpretation of the music.

A theory of music which would exclude all other levels of semantic involvement exclusively adopting the view that music is an equivocal symbol, would, on the one hand, provide a justification for interpretation of music, and, on the other hand, view any given interpretation as having a limited validity. The justification provided would most likely run in the direction of an analysis of symbolism, which would countenance the notion of iconicity as a sufficient condition for symbolism. That is, according to this view, if the heard music is isomorphic with some other phenomenon, then it may be said to symbolize this other phenomenon. The limited validity that any given interpretation might have would most likely be a matter of the fact that an interpretation will often be "seen" only by a few among people with a similar background. Interpretation, thus, becomes a justifiable, but quite acceptably subjective critical activity.

At this point, however, a tendency can develop for the doctrine to split into an exoteric doctrine, made available to the public, and an esoteric one, maintained privately by those who know. An interpretation offered need not be accepted by anyone else. Yet if critical activity is to be taken seriously, this fact must be kept relatively secret. Thus, the outward form of critical activity takes on the aspect of debates as to whether one or another interpretation is correct. In such debates, different interpretations are featured as mutually exclusive. This amounts to an exoteric doctrine to the effect that music is semantically involved at the highest level, at which the music is univocal. Someone who engages, over long years, in such disputations will, in any case, come to the realization that multiple interpretations have the sort of parity which, according to the esoteric doctrine, they have. But, by that time, such a person will have dealt with sufficiently many interpretations of works that he will be in a position to see how these multiple interpretations conspire together to make for an overall understanding of the music. Before this appreciation develops, however, someone should not be apprised of the esoteric doctrine. There are, thus, those who know, and those who are on the way to knowing. Inevitably most people will never get to the point where they can have the necessary perspective on critical interpretation to be able to see how multiple interpretations, each of which might have only a subjective validity, can jointly amount to a full, even objective, understanding of the music.

Yet this elitism places one who knows in a position of having to publicly argue as though an interpretation could be conclusively defended against all other interpretations. But since, according to the esoteric doctrine, such argument must inevitably be just a rationalization of something which is only locally or subjectively valid, that argument takes on a degree of dogmatism, in which everything counts in favor of the interpretation defended and nothing could possibly count against it. The debates, accordingly, tend to be standing debates with no end in sight. Such dogmatism then tends to become a dominant cultural style, and there arises a class of disputants who, with little regard for the music itself, arduously defend one or another interpretation of a work by rhetorical techniques. This is not a healthy turn of events.

Finally, a fourth level of semantic involvement is that at which musical meanings are univocal. A theory might be held which

maintains that this level of semantic involvement is, exclusive of the others, that at which a true understanding of music is to be achieved. Yet, in order for any artifact to have a univocal symbolic function, there must be a relatively tight convention, habit, or expectation which determines just what, in any given case, the artifact symbolizes. And a convention or the like is the sort of thing which requires a consensus on the part of those who have to do with its objects.

A general consensus will usually not be forthcoming. Once a convention is made explicit, there is always a class of those who will find it more satisfying not to accept that convention. In this way, were the criteria for correct interpretation of music generally available, they would be subject to a process of multiplication to the point where any interpretation of a piece of music would be as acceptable as any other. Critical activity would no longer be seen as the serious, interpretative sort of activity which, according to the theory in question, it should be. The way is open for the establishment of a critical elite via a thesis of special meaning. Were it the case that the sole meaning of a musical work was something very special and difficult to apprehend, then one could expect only the special consensus of the cognoscenti in matters of critical interpretation. Thus, in the face of an inadmissible pluralism of critical interpretations, a critical elite might emerge, publicly maintaining that there are universally valid criteria by which critical interpretations can be viewed as correct or incorrect, while privately recognizing that such criteria are just a matter of convention. Someone who engages in the quest for these criteria and that unique understanding of music will either come in the course of his studies to adopt a convention or develop habits of interpretation, which closely enough correspond with those of the established critical elite so that the interpretations he offers are in accordance with those offered by one who knows. Otherwise he will fall back into the ignorant masses. In the first case, he could then safely be apprised of the fact that these are, after all, just conventions. To attempt to enlighten him prior to this point in his development would be like insisting to a two-year-old child that the word "cow" is only arbitrarily connected with animals of a certain sort, and encouraging that child to use the word in other ways as well. He would never learn the language.

The public aspect of one who knows, in this sort of development, is that of someone who is in possession of the "key" (the

"dictionary") to music, but who keeps it to himself. He may offer interpretations, but never the final reason for them. Thus, it may come to be that a degree of intellectual selfishness is culturally favored. One attains an understanding of music only by individual effort, and that understanding becomes virtually an article of private property. Little spirit of mutual inquiry would prevail. And this, I believe, is not a healthy situation.

A formalist view can give rise to a situation in which intellectual dishonesty is culturally favored; a Kantian view of music can provide a milieu in which intellectual elusiveness is encouraged at a cultural level; the view that musical meanings are equivocal can encourage a dogmatic style of thought; and the view that musical meanings are univocal tends to promote a degree of intellectual selfishness. None of these considerations counts directly against any of the four theories in question. What they do indicate, I believe, is that the consequences of adopting any one of these theories might be sufficiently grave to warrant avoiding such adoption regardless of the truth or falsity of a theory in question. Philosophically, though, I find this a paradoxical enough result that I hesitate to develop it any further.

On the other hand, in the course of our considerations we have presented a theory of music which would accommodate the sort of insight offered by each of the four theories in question without the exclusive focus on one or another level of semantic involvement of music. Music, if our theory is correct, is not necessarily a language, nor need it be non-linguistic. Instead, music, like language, is an iterational practice, where the artifacts of any given iterational practice can be semantically involved to any degree. Of any given piece of music we might significantly judge whether that piece is best heard at one or another level of semantic involvement; or we might aim our critical discussion at a judgment of any given piece, where our standards of evaluation are such as to prefer one or another level of semantic involvement; or, instead of this, we might seek an evaluation of a piece from each of the four points of view provided by the four levels of involvement described above. But in all this, we would never have occasion to present, a priori, any generalization to the effect that music (rather than a particular piece of music), or that music as such must be heard or lend itself to being heard at any one of these levels. If we come to such a conclusion at all (and I seriously doubt the prospects of such a conclusion) it would be a poste-

riori, as a result of having looked at many and various individual cases. Thus, our aesthetic theory, in an important way, does not obviate the need for looking at individual pieces of music in order to arrive at a conclusion of what music is in general. This is a virtue which our theory does not share with any one of the four theories discussed in this last section of the present paper.

Accordingly, I believe that we can define music (aestheticians are always after the definition that it all adds up to) as a term which includes any product of any iterational system whose elements are "moving forms of sound," in the sense discussed in the fourth section of this paper. From this definition nothing follows concerning the semiotic status of music, although it has been observed that any given musical artifact might be semantically involved to any degree.

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1 This account of Plato's view is drawn from many scattered places in his dialogues. Some of the more prominent of these are: Apology, 22a-c; Republic 2.377, 3.398a, 6.484d, 8.568b, 10.596-607; Laws 2.670e, 4.719c, though there are many others.

2 Richard Rudner, "On Semiotic Aesthetics," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, Vol. X, No. 1, September, 1951, pp. 67-77.

3 Eduard Hanslick, Vom Musikalisch-Schönen, translated as The Beautiful in Music, by Gustav Cohen, London: Novello, 1891.

4 Susanne Langer, Feeling and Form, New York: Scribner's, 1953, p. 31.

5 Langer, p. 32.

6 Langer, p. 109.

7 Langer, pp. 113 ff. The relevant text in this connection is Henri Bergson's Introduction to Metaphysics.

8 Langer, p. 129.

9 Langer, p. 107.

10 Igor Stravinsky, Poetics of Music, trans. A. Knodel and Ingolf Dahl, Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970, p. 85.

11 Stravinsky, p. 85.

12 Langer, p. 31.

13 John Austin, Sense and Sensibilia, G. J. Warnock, ed., New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964. Austin's argument in this work is directed largely against the question "What do we perceive?," which is a bogus question in much the same way as that of what language means.

14 Langer, p. 32.

15 Langer, p. 118.

16 Langer, p. 126.

17 Langer, p. 109.

18 I owe this example to Rita Nolan, who used it in the course of commenting on a paper of mine, titled "Definitions of Sense-Categories," read at the May, 1970 meetings of the Western Division of the American Philosophical Association.

19 The beginnings of such a detailed discussion may be found in Nelson Goodman's Languages of Art, New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968.

20 Langer, p. 109.

21 Goodman, pp. 3–5.

22 Eugene Minkowski, "Imagination?," Revue Internationale de Philosophie, XIV (1960), pp. 3–31.

23 Jose Ortega y Gasset, in his collection of essays, The Dehumanization of Art, (Princeton, 1968), uses the term "shipwrecked" in a similar context, talking about the novel.

24 Immanuel Kant, The Critique of Judgement, trans. J. Meredith (Oxford, 1952), pp. 34 ff. (though Kant's language is opaque enough to require more than a passing glance at this or any other passage).