

Contemporary Aesthetics (Journal Archive)

Volume 4 *Volume 4 (2006)*

Article 15

2006

Wittgenstein and Haydn on Understanding Music

Yael Kaduri

Bezalel Academy of Art and Design, Jerusalem, anneb@link2usa.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.risd.edu/liberalarts_contempaesthetics



Part of the [Aesthetics Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Kaduri, Yael (2006) "Wittgenstein and Haydn on Understanding Music," *Contemporary Aesthetics (Journal Archive)*: Vol. 4 , Article 15.

Available at: https://digitalcommons.risd.edu/liberalarts_contempaesthetics/vol4/iss1/15

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Liberal Arts Division at DigitalCommons@RISD. It has been accepted for inclusion in Contemporary Aesthetics (Journal Archive) by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@RISD. For more information, please contact mpompeli@risd.edu.

[About CA](#)

[Journal](#)

[Contact CA](#)

[Links](#)

[Submissions](#)

[Search Journal](#)

[Editorial Board](#)

[Permission to Reprint](#)

[Privacy](#)

[Site Map](#)

[Publisher](#)

[Webmaster](#)

Wittgenstein and Haydn on Understanding Music

Yael Kaduri

Abstract

Wittgenstein's remarks about music have motivated philosophers to build a comprehensive picture of his philosophy of music, concentrating on the central issues of musical meaning. It is often claimed that, according to Wittgenstein, understanding music consist in grasping the internal relationships between musical events. Musical practice, however, is naturally saturated with what philosophers often call extra-musical meanings. The present study, by considering a musical issue in Haydn's instrumental music, attempts to show that musical language games in the Wittgensteinian sense involve explanations of music that enhance the listener's ability to understand music by broadening his musical competence. Nevertheless, constituting understanding of music, these explanations might use professional musical terms as well as non-musical terms, comparisons, gestures and so on. Thus, though music does not goes beyond itself in the sense of being understood through correlations between purely musical "concepts" and extra-musical contents, it does go beyond itself in musical practice, which involves understanding music through explanations and descriptions of music using various kinds of terms and images.

Key Words

musical meaning, understanding music, philosophy of music, Wittgenstein, Haydn, description of music, explanation of music, extra-musical description, formal description of music, musical expressiveness, empirical investigation of music, philosophical investigation of music

1. Introduction

The question of understanding music or musical meaning is one of the central issues in philosophy of music.^[1] From its very beginning, people thinking about music have tried to explain its importance in human life, thus dealing, whether explicitly or implicitly, with the question of meaning in music.

The issue is particularly challenging when instrumental music - absolute music, as Wagner was the first to name it - is at issue: How could a collection of pure musical sounds express anything? What does it mean to understand music that does not contain words? These and accompanying questions are the heart of a philosophical discourse which has gradually become broader over the years. Philosophers as musicologists wonder again and again about the unobvious link between instrumental music and the extra-musical world as a source of musical meaning.

Naturally, a pure philosophical examination would be different from a musicological one. Philosophers deal with questions of principle, and try to weave a net of concepts and ideas. Musicologists, on the other hand, usually concentrate on a specific musical piece or style. In many cases they use non-musical models - theories of language understanding, narratologies, semiologies and so on - to explain meaning in music.

In this essay I will offer an apparently indirect way of dealing with this issue - a philosophical contemplation of musicological research. The study that will serve here as a kind of raw material is my recently concluded research on the general pause in the instrumental music of Joseph Haydn.^[2] I will present some central aspects of this research, and simultaneously ask philosophical questions about it, using some basic concepts of Wittgenstein's philosophy.

2. Philosophical and Empirical Investigation

In his later philosophy of language, Wittgenstein distinguishes between philosophical and empirical investigation. Empirical investigation enquires about

the casual links between a word and the way people react to it. For example, if we ask a group of subjects to point at the appropriate colored rectangle when they hear the word "red," we could come to some conclusions about the empirical link between the word and the subjects' behavior.

Philosophical investigation, in contrast, enquires about the intrinsic, logical links between concepts in their different uses and contexts. Members of each cultural environment grasp the permanent links between objects and facts as normative. To give as example, in Western cultures we roll out a red carpet for an honored guest; we do not wear loud red clothes at a funeral; a bride is dressed in white. Grasped as norms, these links constitute a meaning of these objects, and thus they are analogical to grammatical links in a particular language.

The different uses of a concept in a particular human activity and its normative links with other concepts form its "grammar." It is the concept's uses which constitute its meaning. Philosophical investigation thus has an explanatory power which empirical enquiry lacks. By emphasizing the concept's grammar as a source of its meaning, it clarifies the essence and conditions of language understanding.[3]

The distinction between philosophical and empirical enquiry is important for musicological research and philosophical questions about it. We can imagine an empirical study of the general pause in Western music. For example, we can play for a group of listeners some short musical fragments that include distinctive general pauses, and ask them to write sentences that translate the fragments into words. Comparing the results would show to what extent the pauses capture the listeners' attention and in what terms were they are inclined to describe it.

It is likely that we will find some similarities among the descriptions of the pause, as well as among the descriptions in general. In this way the empirical study would demonstrate the obvious: The general pause is as communicative as the sonorous events around it. However, it would not explain the fact that the general pause is grasped as an integral part of the musical flow even though apparently it cuts it off. It would not explain how is it possible that the pause - the very absence of sound - has meaning, just as it would not explain how other events have meaning.

Philosophical inquiry, in contrast, concentrates on analyzing musical examples, classifying, comparing and revealing the links between them. It also takes into consideration the relevant musical theories and aesthetic background.[4] The assumption at the basis of my research is that studying the way Haydn uses the special method of the general pause, and taking the theoretical and aesthetic context into consideration, should lead to a deep understanding of the meaning of the pause in Haydn's work. But why choose Haydn specifically?

3. Haydn and the "Grammar" of the General Pause

The music of the Baroque era (seventeenth century to mid-eighteenth century) made use of the special effect of silence in music. Music theory of the time offered the composer a catalogue of rhetorical figures for increasing the expressivity of musical works. Among its offerings is a set of silent figures, the most significant of which is the aposiopesis - the general pause. The general pause of the Baroque was used to illustrate concepts such as eternity, death, sublime, infinity and silence in vocal music.[5]

This concept did not disappear in the transition to the classic era, just as the general idea of the rhetorical power of music did not. We can find examples of the aposiopesis in the music of Haydn and Mozart, even in instrumental works. A particularly remarkable example is found in the opening measures of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*: The whole symbolic content of the opera is embodied in the

ternary declarative chords and the unmeasured pauses (through fermatas) between them. This dramatic opening involves the central masonic idea of silence as a source of wisdom and patience. Romantic music could also serve as a rich source of examples of representative musical silences of this kind.

However, Haydn represents a turning point. From the very beginning of my research, two important facts became clear, especially when I compared Haydn with his contemporary, Mozart. First, Haydn's instrumental music contains so many general pauses that it seems they form an intrinsic component of his musical language. Second, the pauses can be clearly classified into several categories, which are dependent on genre, style and form. These two facts, together with the immensity of Haydn's repertoire, seems to invite the analyst to enquire into Haydn's systematic use of silence.

What then did the philosophical investigation of the general pause in Haydn's music reveal? The study confirmed the hypothesis that almost every one of Haydn's pauses belongs to one of the categories that were noticed in its relatively early stage. The string quartets contain similar types of general pauses, which are different from those found in the symphonies; movements in sonata form contain general pauses that are different from those occurring in rondo movements and minuets. Moreover, the pauses almost always appear in the same positions in each of the different forms.

Four main categories can be noted. To make the issue clearer, I will briefly mention two of them here. In the first movements of string quartets, which are usually written in sonata form, Haydn uses the general pause as a part of his compositional games to emphasize the compositional craft. The pauses seem like dead ends and are crucially important in creating an impression of deviation from the right way or compositional stumbles. Thus they create a quality of romantic irony.

General pauses of another kind are frequent in Haydn's symphonies. In rondo finale movements there are pauses juxtaposed to the successive repetition of a small motif. The general pause is usually located before and after the repeated motif, so that it seems that this motif enters the silence, as if to expand it with notes. In contrast with the complicated general pauses of the string quartet, a naive listener can grasp these symphonic pauses quite easily. The distinctions by genres and forms are not surprising. The sonata form is the most complicated of the classical forms, especially in the intimate and subtle context of the string quartet. Thus, it is not surprising that general pauses of romantic irony are included in these movements.

Final symphonic movements are in a way opposite to first movements in chamber music. Since they bring the public symphonic event to a conclusion, these movements have to be fairly simple yet still final evidence of the composer's skill. Haydn therefore chose the trivial event of the articulating pause, and expanded it by the successive repetition of a small element. In that way he inserted a theatrical event that focuses the audience's attention on the strategic articulating point.

The different ways in which Haydn employs the general pause and the logical links between them constitute a "grammar" of the general pause, which provide its meaning. My research shows that Haydn's instrumental music is an ideal environment, a kind of a laboratory for this unique method. This environment, which can be described in analytical, aesthetic and historical terms, is the earliest conceptual field in Western music in which the general pause was systematically cultivated, and thus provided with meaning.

4. Understanding Music as a Model for Understanding Language

Do we have to know all this in order to understand Haydn's general pause? Does anything of all this comes into the listener's mind while listening to the

music? And what about the naive listener? It seems obvious that people understand music when they listen to it, says Wittgenstein. However, understanding music is not a mental event that occurs in the listener's mind as a reaction to musical sounds. We therefore cannot understand what it means to understand music through psychological or statistical studies of mental reactions.

In his lectures on aesthetics, Wittgenstein explicitly discusses this point. We cannot answer questions about aesthetic impressions through empirical experiments or statistics as to people's reactions and the agreements among them, he says.^[6] Rather, to describe a musical taste we have to ask about the whole musical tradition: Did children give concerts in that musical culture? Did women give them or only men? Did widening the audience circle from the nobility to the bourgeois have any influence on these matters? This is an example of tradition in music, he concludes.^[7]

Wittgenstein is talking about musical taste, but we can apply his idea to musical styles or a unique musical phenomenon as well. Thus, it is important to have some theoretical and aesthetic knowledge about the different forms in which the general pauses usually occur. It is important to know the intended audience of the work, as well as who was supposed to play it and where. It is important to know who Haydn was compared to in his own day. The more we know, the better we can understand Haydn's general pauses. In this way we can also understand what is it to understand a musical pause. The last point paves the way for an explanation of musical understanding, as we shall see.

Wittgenstein, who had a deep interest in music, discusses it on many occasions throughout his writings.^[8] His remarks about music have motivated philosophers to build a comprehensive picture of his philosophy of music.^[9] Wittgenstein, who had a deep interest in music, discusses it on many occasions throughout his writings.^[8] His remarks about music have motivated philosophers to build a comprehensive picture of his philosophy of music.^[9] Wittgenstein's intention, however, is not a purely aesthetic one; his lectures on aesthetics include an exceptional example of discussing music for its own sake, which means not as part of an explanation of meaning in language.^[10] One of Wittgenstein's principal methods of presenting his philosophy of language is comparing sentence understanding with other human practices like understanding a rule, obeying a signpost or understanding a facial expression. Music is mentioned among these practices.

The picture of meaning that Wittgenstein is trying to undermine, to put it briefly, is the traditional picture of understanding language as a mental experience. According to that picture, concepts are like cards which we hold in our mind and which refer to objects around us. For example, the card "red" refers to the color red. Meaning is not constituted of correlations between mental images and the world, says Wittgenstein. The picture in which understanding a sentence is knowing what it refers to in the extra-linguistic world is mistaken. Rather, it is linguistic practice, which is deeply rooted in the human form of life, that constitutes meaning.

In the *Brown Book* Wittgenstein mobilizes music to clarify this idea:

What we call "understanding a sentence" has, in many cases, a much greater similarity to understanding a musical theme than we might be inclined to think. But I don't mean that understanding a musical theme is more like the picture which one tends to make oneself of understanding a sentence; but rather that this picture is wrong, and that understanding a sentence is much more like what really happens when we understand a tune than at first sight appears. For understanding a sentence, we say, points to a reality outside the sentence. Whereas one might say "Understanding a sentence means getting hold of its content; and the content of the

sentence is in the sentence."[\[11\]](#)

Wittgenstein uses understanding music as a model for understanding language. Understanding what it means to understand music can give us a clue to understanding language. But the model, we would insist, is even more enigmatic than the practice it comes to explain. Musicologists and philosophers of music try to explain the meaning of absolute music by appealing to linguistic meaning.

Displaying his awareness of this tendency, Wittgenstein states: "But I don't mean that understanding a musical theme is more like the picture which one tends to make oneself of understanding a sentence," the referential picture. If so, it seems obvious why Wittgenstein uses understanding music as a model. Instrumental music, in principle, is not referential, a fact that usually leads people to raise the question of meaning in music. Precisely because musical meaning can't be the result of an outside reference, it has the power to clarify linguistic meaning. Musical meaning is constituted in the internal links between "concepts" - musical events - and the purely musical games played with them. The same is true of linguistic meaning.

It therefore seems that we have a formalistic picture of musical meaning here. There is no place for talk about extra-musical meanings in instrumental music. If "the content of the sentence is in the sentence" in language, it is certainly the case in music. And even more than that, it is easier for us to understand this notion in relation to music, especially instrumental music, than in relation to language. That seems to be the reason why Wittgenstein makes use of the concept of understanding a musical theme.[\[12\]](#) However, in *Zettel* Wittgenstein says things that are apparently the opposite: "Doesn't the [musical] theme point to anything outside itself? Yes, it does!"[\[13\]](#) Do we really have a contradiction here?[\[14\]](#)

5. The Transition of Baroque Musical Theory

At this point we should return to the study of the general pause in Haydn's music. We said that Haydn's general pause constitutes a turning point from the Baroque pause. The aposiopesis, like other expressive rhetorical figures, acquires its meaning through its correlations with extra-musical contents. We can say that the meaning of the general pause in Baroque music is part of a concept in which musical meaning is the result of referential power.

Haydn's general pause, in contrast, operates completely differently. Here the pause does not get its meaning through links to the extra-musical world, but through the rules of the musical game, the internal rules of instrumental music. In the sonata-form first movements of the string quartet, as we said, the general pauses are a part of an ironic emphasis on the compositional process itself. In symphonic final movements, on the other hand, the lighter general pauses are usually juxtaposed to a repetition of a small motif, to create a touch of amusement.

Is it plausible to describe the transition from Baroque musical theory to that of the classical style in these terms? This idea is not completely groundless. The "meaning tables" offered by Baroque theory - the theory of musical figures - are part of the concept of musical meaning of the time. While we cannot fully understand Baroque music without an acquaintance with theories of figures, the intelligibility of the classical style does not depend on rhetorical figures, which became less important in the second half of the eighteenth century, even though they did not completely disappear.[\[15\]](#)

The intelligibility of Haydn's general pause is thus not the result of extra-musical meanings being correlated to it through rhetorical figures. However, it is clear that this type of pause is not purely musical in the conventional sense. The terms we have just used - dead ends, romantic irony, comic drama and so

on - indicate this. Now I would like to discuss a short musical fragment as an illustration.

In the first movement of Haydn's string quartet in G minor, *Op. 20, No. 3*, there is a short dramatic section in which Haydn cuts off the musical continuity twice with general pauses (see example 1, below):

Example 1

After each of these pauses, Haydn inserts a brief assertive motif that also interrupts the flow (the unisons of mm. 146-147 and m. 152). He then continues from the point where he cut off the music before the pause. In that way, the impression is created of repeated disruptions in the course of a movement.

This section is exceptional and calls for an explanation. It is taken from a movement in sonata form. The sonata form has two parts. The first part begins with an exposition of a first theme in the movement key - the tonic. After that, a transitional section leads to a second theme in a polar key. The second part develops materials from the first part, modulating from one key to another. At the end of the second part, a short but important section appears - the retransition - which leads back to the tonic, the gravitational center of the movement.

Example 2, below, shows the first theme of the movement and the transition to the polar key:

Example 2

The image displays a musical score for the first movement of Haydn's Op. 20, No. 3, marked 'Allegro con spirito'. It features four staves: Violine I, Violine II, Viola, and Violoncello. The score is divided into sections: the main movement, a 'transition' section starting at measure 6, and a 'sequence' section starting at measure 12. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns and melodic lines characteristic of the Classical period.

<="" p="">

What happens in the retransition of the first movement of Op. 20, No. 3? It seems as if Haydn "walks" the sequence like a clown walking a tightrope in imitation of an acrobat. He pretends to have a fear of heights; he seems to be falling, but finally succeeds in completing the task, and the retransition leads back to the tonic.

6. Wittgenstein on the Mental Processes of Understanding Music

Now, after the explanation, we might understand this exceptional passage.

Wittgenstein links explanations of music with understanding music:

Understanding and explaining a musical phrase. - Sometimes the simplest explanation is a gesture; on another occasion it might be a dance step, or words describing a dance. - But isn't understanding the phrase experiencing something whilst we hear it? . . . Are we supposed to imagine the dance, or whatever it may be, while we listen? . . . If seeing the dance is what is important, it would be better to perform that rather than the music. But that is all misunderstanding. [16]

Explanations of music, according to Wittgenstein, do not rely on decisive evidence, on justifying conditions. We can whistle, draw something, do some movement with our hand or make a comparison with a clown walking a tightrope and almost falling, for example. If we don't succeed in explaining it in one way, we can always try another.

Such a concept of understanding music might cause dissatisfaction. Isn't understanding music a mental process taking place in our mind when we listen to music? This assumption, which is regarded almost as self-evident, is the

starting point for all the attempts to explain the nature of the musical experience through psychological research. Whatever the mental process - a construction of formal structures, a correlation between emotional labels and musical motifs, electrical impulses in the brain and so on - these studies try to investigate and quantify it. Theories attempting to provide explanations of musical meaning through some sort of analogy between musical forms and emotional forms are also based on the same assumption.

In any case, even if understanding music is indeed a mental process, we can nevertheless ask how an explanation involving a gesture or an image is related to it. Do they come to the listener's mind?

Wittgenstein, as usual, puts these questions in the mouth of his opponent. He even adds a question of his own: "If seeing the dance is what is important, it would be better to perform that rather than the music." And he concludes: "But that is all misunderstanding."

Asking questions on a number of levels simultaneously is a central method in Wittgenstein's writings. In some cases the questions call for an answer, and here too we can try to answer them. But the way Wittgenstein concludes the discussion indicates another direction. It is an expression of despair; he is no longer able to bear the common but wrong picture that leads to the same questions again and again. This picture always leads us into a trap. Though it seems natural, moving the issue of understanding music into the mental solves nothing. Either we are left with the enigma of musical intentionality ("Are we supposed to imagine the dance while we listen?") or we lose the music ("If seeing the dance is what is important, it would be better to perform that rather than the music.") Thus, as long as we start with a mental process we will end up at a dead end.

In music, such a dead end is presented particularly clearly. On the one hand, pure formalism, which claims that musical forms are constructed in the listener's mind while listening to the music, lacks the power to explain the importance of music to human life - the excitement evoked by a particularly marvelous performance, for example. The assumption that meaning in music is the result of internal musical contents alone is analogous to the assumption that language is not connected to the world. With formalism, then, we lose music.

On the other hand, explanations that rightfully insist on associating musical meaning with music's tremendous significance to human life do not manage to avoid the picture of an unbridgeable gap between music and its emotional meanings. As we said, psychological explanations are a search for agreements between listeners' emotive descriptions of music, while theoretical explanations involve analogies of one kind or another. Scholars in both camps wonder about the magic of the linkage between sound and sentiment. And again, moving the magic into the mental by no means makes it easier to understand. In the end, we are left with the same gap between music and its emotional meanings that motivated these explanations from the outset.

Thus, this is not the right way to approach the question of musical meaning. What is the right way, then? We have to know music. We have to learn to play an instrument, learn harmony, forms and structures; we have to know the history of music, the history of its theory and aesthetics. We cannot explain or understand how we understand music without knowing music, as we cannot explain or understand how we understand language without knowing a language. We cannot really talk about understanding music without some degree of musical ability.

7. Language Games in Music

Musical activity is a "language game," a normative human practice which

language is a part of. In music, as in language, there are different types of language games. Pianists understand and talk about piano music in a different way than violinists; pianists and violinists talk about chamber music in a different way from musicologists; and all of them talk about music differently from amateurs. It is these different types of language games which constitute musical meaning - itself of different types. The more comprehensive one's musical skills, the deeper one's understanding. It is always possible to deepen it even more by practice.

Observing musical practice shows that a constitutive component of it is the explanation that tries to create understanding. This is what I have tried to show in discussing the example of Haydn's string quartet. Descriptions of past musical "language games" such as Haydn's are part of our own musical language game. The more the contemporary listener knows about the sonata form, its strategic junctions and the different ways Haydn manipulates it, as well as the string quartet and the symphony as understood by eighteenth-century aesthetic theory and the like, the better one understands Haydn's string quartets.

Another language game that we can imagine is a music lesson: the teacher explains a musical phrase to the student through an image or gesture. From the student's reaction - a light in his eyes, something he says and especially the way he now plays - the teacher can know whether he understood or not. If not, the teacher can try another explanation. Understanding music, according to Wittgenstein, is a matter of learning; that is what explanations in music are aimed at.[\[17\]](#)

Observing musical practice shows us another thing: the transition from a description in purely musical terms to a description in extra-musical terms does not create any difficulties. On the contrary, it is the act of combining them that creates explanations in music, even when we are discussing absolute music, as in the quartet example.

All this leads us back to the apparent contradiction in Wittgenstein's remarks. On the one hand, the musical theme asserts itself, but on the other, the theme extends outside itself. In one paragraph of *Culture and Value* where Wittgenstein talks about music, these apparently polar attitudes coexist:

"The repeat is necessary." In what respect is it necessary? . . . - Don't we have an impression that a model for this theme already exists in reality and the theme only approaches it, corresponds to it, if this section is repeated? . . . Yet there just is no paradigm apart from the theme itself. And yet again there is a paradigm apart from the theme: namely, the rhythm of our language, of our thinking and feeling. And the theme, moreover, is a new part of our language; it becomes incorporated into it; we learn a new gesture.[\[18\]](#)

These are among the deepest things that Wittgenstein says about music. Here he is discussing the feeling of normativity that music evokes - in this case through repetition. This feeling serves here as an example of an aesthetic, intra-musical impression that calls for an explanation.[\[19\]](#)

8. Conclusion

We tend to say that one should not try to explain such a phenomenon on the basis of extra-musical notions. The content of the musical sentence, including what makes the repetition necessary, is in the sentence. However, the process of explaining naturally takes us out of the music and into the world. The necessity of the transition from one musical idea to another, says Wittgenstein in another place in *Culture and Value* (and he is probably talking about contrasting musical ideas), could be explained, for example, by a comparison

with the transition that takes place when a new character enters into a story - "This is how the piece fits into the world of our thoughts and feelings."^[20]

Human life is a collection of language games. It is these language games that constitute language meaning. Music, being part of human activity - part of "the rhythm of our language, of our thinking and feeling" - is from the outset saturated with human concepts that are apparently extra-musical - emotive concepts, grammatical terms and so on. We could not imagine musical activity that is disconnected from a language. When we come to understand music - to learn how to play, to learn the history and theory of music - we immediately understand that.

If so, it is not a mental operation that correlates sound with sentiment. Rather, it is in the musical language game that "the piece fits into the world of our thoughts and feelings." It is in the musical language game that the music goes out to human life, which knowledge, feelings, interpersonal relationships and art are part of. Thus, music and emotions meet in language in the rich Wittgensteinian sense of a form of life. And even more than that, the theme itself "is a new part of our language," and thus a new part of our world. Music is a constitutive component of human life, of human language games; it is part of our emotive concepts from the start. With any new composition or new style that we become acquainted with, we enlarge the borders of our world.

Wittgenstein's philosophy of music, like his philosophy in general, is not presented in systematic arguments. Rather, concise, deep remarks, in many cases enigmatic ones, are scattered all through his writings. These remarks call for an interpretation. Presumably, it is better first to become acquainted with Wittgenstein's meaning theory and special method of writing before trying to decode his deep insights into music. Analyzing and confronting different presentations of Wittgenstein's philosophy of music, in the form of a critical study, would surely teach us a lot.^[21] An acquaintance with other philosophical attitudes that attempt to explain meaning in music would help as well.

However, I would like to say that the clue to understanding Wittgenstein's philosophy of music is, more than anything else, music itself. His insights in the matter make it evident, especially to the musician, that Wittgenstein has an intimate, immediate access to Western music. It is doubtful whether one can understand what he says about music without having significant musical skills. In this essay I tried to demonstrate this claim by creating a little language game and simultaneously contemplating it from the outside. I used the findings of my musicological research and the way I introduce it to the reader as raw material to show that music itself - in this case Haydn's instrumental music - tells us no less, and perhaps even more, about the understanding of music, than philosophers of music do.

Endnotes

^[1] A slightly different version of this article was published in Hebrew in *Iyyun* 54 (2005): 149-164.

^[2] My doctoral dissertation on the subject of the general pauses in Joseph Haydn's instrumental music was submitted to the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, in 2004.

^[3] The nature of philosophical or conceptual investigation, in contrast to empirical inquiry, the nature of the grammatical links that are traced by the philosophical investigation and the way these links clarify meaning and understanding are a major concern in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. See especially paragraphs 85, 89, 90, 197, 198, 251 and pp. 59 and 225 in Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, tr. Gertrude. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1963).

^[4] For a similar distinction see Kendall Walton, "Understanding Humour and

Understanding Music," in *The Interpretation of Music: Philosophical Essays*, ed. Michael Krausz (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 259-269; see especially pp. 263-264.

[5] For the Baroque theory of musical-rhetorical figures see George J. Buelow, Peter A. Hoyt and Wilson Blake, "Rhetoric and Music," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd edition, ed. Stanley Sadie, vol. 21 (London: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 2001), pp. 260-275, Dietrich Bartel, *Musica poetica: Musical-Rhetorical Figures in German Baroque Music* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), Hans H. Unger, *Die Beziehungen zwischen Musik und Rhetorik im 16-18 Jahrhundert (Reprografischer Nachdruck der Ausgabe Würzburg 1941)*, Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1969), and Manfred F. Bukofzer, *Music in the Baroque Era: From Monteverdi to Bach* (London, New-York: Norton, 1948), pp. 388-390.

[6] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, ed. Cyril Barrett (Oxford: Blackwell, 1966), p. 21. The notes about aesthetics were written down by Wittgenstein's students during his lectures in Cambridge. Out of three versions, the most complete one was chosen, while significant differences in wording are presented in footnotes.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

[8] The extensive musical activity in Wittgenstein's childhood home (where, as he himself testified, there were seven grand pianos) and the way Wittgenstein was accustomed to listening to and talking about music are described in Brian McGuinness, *Wittgenstein, A Life: Young Ludwig 1889-1921* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1988); see the entry 'music' in his index.

[9] Significant presentations of Wittgenstein's philosophy of music are those by Petter B. Lewis, "Wittgenstein On Words and Music," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 17 (1977): 111-121, Oswald Hanfling, " 'I heard a plaintive melody' (*Philosophical Investigations*, p. 209)," in *Wittgenstein Centenary Essays*, ed. Phillips A. Griffiths (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 117-133, and Sarah E. Worth, "Wittgenstein's Musical Understanding," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 37,2 (1997): 158-167. Worth discusses various aspects of Wittgenstein's analogy between understanding a linguistic sentence and understanding a musical theme. These aspects clarify the claim that understanding music, like understanding language, is not a mental process.

Lewis mentions this point as well, but he concentrates on Wittgenstein's concept of "experiencing the meaning of a word" and in its importance for explanations of understanding poetry and music. Hanfling discusses the meaning of emotive descriptions of music. He uses Wittgenstein's concept of "secondary sense" to explain this, connecting the issue with the notion of experiencing the meaning of a word. Joanna Hodge, in "Aesthetic Decomposition: Music, Identity, and Time," in *The Interpretation of Music: Philosophical Essays*, ed. Michael Krausz (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 247-258, places Wittgenstein's explanation of understanding music in a broader aesthetic frame, according to which the temporal dimension of music is central in its importance for human life. Understanding music, she claims, can be explained in terms of an internal system that is depends on a specific historical style and its conventions.

[10] Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics*, pp. 6, 8, 19-21, 29, 32 and 34.

[11] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Book: Preliminary Studies for the 'Philosophical Investigations'*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1969), p. 167.

[12] Among the philosophers I have cited, Hanfling, in " 'I heard a plaintive melody' (*Philosophical Investigations*, p. 209)," pp. 130-132, is the only one who understands the analogy differently. As mentioned above, he claims that emotive terms in descriptions of music are used with a secondary meaning.

Thus, understanding such terms is special; it is similar to understanding music.

This sort of understanding has a significant role in understanding language, says Hanfling, and he quotes from Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, § 531: "We speak of understanding a sentence in the sense in which it can be replaced by another which says the same; but also in the sense in which it cannot be replaced by any other. (Any more than one musical theme can be replaced by another.)" In this sense of understanding, understanding a linguistic sentence might be akin to understanding a sentence in music.

[13] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, 2nd ed., ed. Gertrude E. M. Anscombe and Georg H. Von Wright, tr. Gertrude E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), §175.

[14] Worth and Lewis, who quote the well-known paragraph from the *Brown Book*, infer different sorts of formalism from it. However, both show a sensibility, in one way or another, to its apparent disharmony with things Wittgenstein says on other occasions. Worth, in "Wittgenstein's Musical Understanding," pp. 158-159, states, "Music is often seen as being problematic because of its lack of detectable meaning, but this is precisely why Wittgenstein thinks it has an advantage. The necessarily abstract quality of music allows us to avoid being absorbed merely with the quest for referential meaning." But later on she quotes an idea from Wittgenstein's *Culture and Value*, which is very close to § 175 of *Zettel*. Without explicitly discussing the contradiction, she says (the emphasis is mine): "Here the music does go beyond the notes on the page, but it does not refer to anything in the way **that language does**. Though music contains meaning without being ostensive, it still seems to point something beyond itself" (*ibid.*, pp. 164-165).

Does the analogy collapse here? It seems that Worth is returning to a picture of meaning that separates language from the world. She thus misses the point of the well-known Wittgensteinian analogy, under the interpretation she herself adopts. In any case Worth does not explain how music goes beyond itself according to Wittgenstein, saying only that though an emotional reaction is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for understanding music, it often accompanies such an understanding (*ibid.*). Lewis, in "Wittgenstein On Words and Music," p. 119, offers an internalist interpretation of Wittgenstein: "Understanding a musical theme will consist in grasping the interrelations between or amongst its 'parts,' in appreciating the contribution of each to the whole." In the conclusion of his essay he also quotes § 175 of *Zettel*, and explicitly points out the contradiction between the two different emphases. The sense of "pointing outside itself" in *Zettel* is different from that in the *Brown Book*, he says in the last paragraph of his essay: "The sense in *Zettel* could be captured, I think, by saying that understanding a musical theme overlaps with or is not isolated from other aspects of human life" (*Ibid.*, p. 120). This notion, which is only briefly mentioned in Lewis' essay, is, in my opinion, the heart of Wittgenstein's philosophy of music, as we shall see.

[15] Webster and Bonds claim that the metaphor of rhetoric, in the broader sense of coherence, discourse and intelligibility (in contrast to the narrow sense of figures and the structure of the discourse), is important for understanding classical style.

[16] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, 2nd ed., ed. Georg H. Von Wright and Heikki Nyman, tr. Peter Winch (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), p. 69e.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 70e.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 52e.

[19] Of the scholars I have mentioned, Worth, in "Wittgenstein's Musical Understanding," is the only one who quotes these words, but I'm afraid she does not touch their essence. From what she says it seems that Wittgenstein is

trying to show here that it is useless to attempt to explain why the music demands a repetition, for example. "What sounds 'right' is determined by its creator, and confirmed and recognized by the understanding listener," she says (*ibid.*, p. 165). Worth mentions the link between music and the extra-musical world. She states (the emphasis is mine): "Wittgenstein says that there is no paradigm apart from the theme, but separately from that there are also the rhythms of our language (**of music**) and of our thinking and feeling. All of these have to be present for the composer and they are simultaneously separate from the music and intimately related to produce a work that sounds coherent" (*ibid.*, pp. 165-166). Worth does not point out the rich contradiction, the fascinating split, that Wittgenstein intentionally reveals here, in his original way, through an indirect question. In that way she misses the point and remains with the picture of a gap.

[20] Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, p. 57e; compare with Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, §175.

[21] A sort of a critical study, mostly in clues, I intentionally demonstrated in the footnotes.

Yael Kaduri

History and Theory Unit

Bezalel Academy of Art and Design, Jerusalem

Mount Scopus

Jerusalem 91240

Israel

yaekaduri@013.net

Published April 27, 2006