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Andrew Kania
Trinity University, akania@trinity.edu

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Since analytic aesthetics began, around fifty years ago, music has perhaps been the art most discussed by philosophers. This interest is reflected even in the contents of this volume, with three chapters devoted to specifically musical issues, with other arts getting at most one chapter to themselves. The reasons for philosophers' attraction to music as a subject are obscure, but one element is surely that music, as a non-verbal, multiple-instance, performance art, raises at least as many questions about expression, ontology, interpretation, and value as any other art – questions that often seem more puzzling than those raised by other arts.

Musical ontology – the study of the kinds of musical things there are, and the relations that hold between them – has been discussed for as long as any other topic in analytic philosophy of music, placed center-stage by Nelson Goodman's discussion in *Languages of Art* (1968). Amie Thomasson has recently pointed out that the number of

proposals offered for the ontology of art in general seems rather an embarrassment of riches (2005: 221), and this observation certainly holds for musical ontology in particular. The kinds of theories defended about the nature of just Western classical musical works include (1) nominalism – a work is a set of scores and/or performances (Goodman 1968, Predelli 1995, 1999b), (2) idealism – a work is a particular, or type of, mental entity (Collingwood 1938, Sartre 1940), (3) eliminativism – there are no musical works (Rudner 1950), (4) action theory – a work is a particular, or type of, action performed by the artist (Currie 1989, D. Davies 2004), (5) platonism – a work is an eternal abstract object (Kivy 1983, Dodd 2002), and (6) creationism – a work is a creatable abstract object (Levinson 1980, Howell 2002).[1]

But the riches are even more embarrassing than this. For in addition to these theories about the fundamental metaphysical nature of the classical musical work (what I call the 'fundamentalist debate' below), there are various competing theories about (i) the nature of the relations between works, performances, and recordings, and (ii) theories about the similarities and differences between the ontologies of different musical traditions, both (a) within the Western classical tradition – Can we generalize about the ontology of classical music? (S. Davies 2003) Did the concept of a musical work arise relatively recently? (Goehr 1992) – and (b) between the Western classical tradition and others, such as Western rock and jazz (Gracyk 1996, Brown 1996), and non-Western traditions such as Balinese gamelan (S. Davies 2001).

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[1] The references given here are just illustrative samples.

Finally, there have been a couple of recent defenses of scepticism about musical ontology – the view that most of these investigations are fruitless because born of a mistaken view of the nature of musical ontology (Ridley 2003, Thomasson 2005).

In keeping with the aims of this volume, I will say something about each of the three strands in musical ontology delineated above. First I will say something about recent work on the fundamental nature of classical works, then I will discuss what I call 'higher-level' musical ontology, including comparative musical ontology and issues like the relations between works, performances, and recordings. After each of these engagements with the literature, though, I will address some sceptical views of musical ontology as it has been practiced heretofore.

1. The fundamentalist debate

David Davies has recently presented a thorough defense of an action-theory ontology of art in general (2004). Discussion of this theory can be found in Dodd 2005, Kania 2005a, and Stock 2005. Also, a recent anomalous but able defender of a Goodmanian nominalism is Stefano Predelli (1995, 1999a, 1999b, 2001). Ben Caplan and Carl Matheson also seem to be moving in a nominalist direction (2006). Nonetheless, realism – the view that musical works are abstract objects – is the most widely accepted view, and the debate between platonism – the view that musical works are uncreatable abstracta – and creationism – that they are creatable abstracta – is still central in the literature. It is thus this debate that I will engage with here.

One issue that is sometimes addressed within this debate is what kind of abstractum a musical work is – type, kind, or universal. However, nothing of metaphysical or musical consequence seems to turn on this point (S. Davies 2001: 42,

Kania 2005b: 57-9). More important, if works are acknowledged to be types, say, is the question of what exactly they are types *of*. When philosophers originally turned their attention to musical ontology in the middle of the twentieth century, though they nominally acknowledged the performance aspect of the Western musical tradition, their attention was not focused on the nature of performance. As a result, and perhaps for understandable reasons of beginning with as simple a model as possible, they tried to explain the nature of works and the relation between a work and its performances on the model of a simple property and its instances (Goodman 1968, Wollheim 1986, Wolterstorff 1980). This quickly led to the problem that either performances must be note-perfect in order to be of the works they purport to be of, or all works must be identical, since there could be no principled distinction between a perfect performance of one work and a hopelessly misguided performance of another (Goodman 1968).

In the meantime, however, some theorists turned to a closer examination of the nature of musical performance (for example, Levinson 1987, S. Davies 1987, Thom 1993, and Godlovitch 1998). One of the things that came to light during these discussions was that there is an intentional relation between a performance and the composer's specification of the work the performance is of. A performance can only be of a particular work if the performers intend to follow the instructions that the composer set down as to be followed in performing that work. Spelling out this necessary condition on work performance precisely is not a simple task. Mere wishing cannot count as the right kind of intention, or else I could perform *The Well-Tempered Clavier*. Questions of intentional content also arise, since I am performing the relevant work when I think I am playing Purcell's *Trumpet Voluntary*, but am in fact playing a piece by Jeremiah Clarke (because

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I mean to follow *these* instructions, which I mistakenly take to have originated in a compositional act of Purcell's).[2] But what is important for our purposes here is just that some such intention is necessary for a performance to be of a work, that an account of such intentions could be given, and that such an account would allow for the possibility of someone's meeting the intentional requirement, yet playing some wrong notes (Predelli 1995). For what it means to say that there is such an intentional requirement is in part to say that the type or kind of performance a work *is* is one that is intentionally related to the composer's compositional act. Such a type of performance is still tokened when the performers mean to follow all the instructions in the score yet make a few mistakes. Thus, I think the problem of imperfect performances is relatively easily solved once we have an understanding of the relation between a performance and the work it is of.[3] This understanding is also helpful in considering the debate between musical platonism and creationism.

The heart of this debate is whether a respectable conception of musical works as creatable abstracta is defensible. This can usefully be viewed in terms of an inconsistent triad of propositions:

(A)   Musical works are created.

(B)   Musical works are abstract objects.

(C)   Abstract objects cannot be created.

Platonists reject (A) on the basis of arguments for (C). Creationists, then, must refute any

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[2] For a detailed discussion of these issues, see S. Davies 2001: 163-6.

[3] There is, of course, a lot more to say about what exactly that relation is. See, for example, S. Davies 2001: 151-97.

arguments platonists have for (C), and ideally provide an account of how abstract objects can be created.[4] Part of the debate has been a classic war of intuitions, with platonists attempting to soften the appearance of their position by talking up the possibility and value of creativity without creation, and our conception of composers as discoverers, while creationists emphasize the strength and centrality of the creation intuition to our conception of musical works. In my judgment, the outcome of this part of the debate is a small victory for the creationists (Kania 2005b: 61-74). The arguments in favor of platonism often exhibit *ignoratio elenchi* – a creationist can accept their conclusions without budging from the position that musical works are created. The arguments in favor of creationism point out intuitions we could preserve only if platonism were false, but those intuitions alone are not strong enough to merit rejection of a substantive argument that platonism is the only defensible metaphysical view of musical works as abstract objects. This brings us to the substantive metaphysical debate.

Platonism has recently found a very able defender in Julian Dodd, and it is his arguments for platonism and against creationism that I will now consider.[5] While he contributes to the debate over the damage done to our creation intuitions by platonism,

[4] In fact, this triad can be used to frame a debate between platonists, creationists, and nominalists. Nominalists, of course, deny (B) and try to explain away our apparent references to abstract works as references to concrete objects and events.

[5] As this chapter goes to press, Dodd's new book on musical ontology (2007) is being published. He defends there the same view by means of largely the same arguments as those I discuss here. The main difference is in his theory of property existence. This affects the argument of a few of the following paragraphs, as I note below.

his more important contribution is an extended argument in favor of the view that abstract objects cannot be created. He summarizes the argument as follows:

(5)   The identity of any type K is determined by the condition a token meets, or would have to meet, in order to be a token of that type.

(6)   The condition a token meets, or would have to meet, in order to be a token of K is K's property-associate: *being a k*.

So   (7)   The identity of K is determined by the identity of *being a k*.

So   (8)   K exists if and only if *being a k* exists.

(9)   *Being a k* is an eternal existent.

So   (10)   K is an eternal existent too.   (Dodd 2002: 381-2)

A creationist can in principle attack any one of these premises in order to defuse the platonist attack, but the weakest point of the argument is premise (9), and it is on this premise and the reasons Dodd gives in its support that I will focus.

The main support Dodd gives for (9) is what he calls 'an intuitive theory concerning the existence of properties. The theory in question, simply stated, is that the property *being a k* exists if and only if it is instantiated now, was instantiated in the past, or will be instantiated in the future' (Dodd 2000: 436). As for its intuitiveness, when it comes to the metaphysics of properties I doubt we have any pre-theoretical intuitions beyond the existence of concrete particulars and their having properties.[6] But Dodd also

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[6] Disturbingly, in Dodd's new book this theory of property existence has been demoted from 'intuitive' to '[a] view that I once seconded,' 'an uncomfortable result,' and 'hard to motivate' (2007: 62), while an alternative theory is now touted as 'highly intuitive' in Dodd's view (2007: 60). The new view is that 'a property F exists at t if and only if there

has some arguments in favor of the view. The first is that it steers us between a Scylla and Charybdis of alternative views. The Scylla is

> the doctrine of transcendent properties: the view that the question of whether a property exists is utterly independent of the question of whether it is instantiated…Charybdis, on the other hand, is the idea that properties exist only when instantiated: a view which has properties switching in and out of existence as they come to be, and then cease to be, instantiated.   (Dodd 2000: 436)

But without further argument, Dodd is open to the charge that these theories of the existence of properties are not a Scylla and Charybdis, but rather a false dichotomy. He, perhaps rightly, sees his theory of property existence as preferable to the two alternatives he considers, but he offers no argument for these three theories' being the only games in town. A creationist may, for instance, argue in favor of a view that sees certain properties – for instance, those essentially involving contingent beings – as coming into being only when the contingent beings they involve come into being.[7] This view would not entail that the existence of such a property is 'utterly independent of the question of whether it is instantiated', for it is linked to this question by way of questions about whether it could *possibly* be instantiated. Nor would it entail that 'properties exist only when instantiated'. It suggests there may be different criteria for property existence than simply whether a

is some time t^* such that t^* is either before, after, or identical with t, and at which it is (metaphysically) possible for F to be instantiated' (2007: 61). Though the view he now endorses is closer to that for which I argue below, the shifting sands of Dodd's intuitions suggest that we should take their rational force with more than a grain of salt.

[7] Dodd briefly considers this view in his 2007: 63-5.

property is, has been, or will be instantiated.[8]

This brief look at the kind of theory the creationist will need to provide in order to retain works' creatability helpfully brings out two aspects of Dodd's theory of properties. One is the *principle of instantiation*. This is the principle that there are no uninstantiated properties, that is, properties that are not instantiated at any point in time. The other is the *principle of eternality*. This is the principle that what properties there are exist eternally; properties do not come into or go out of existence. Note that in order to refute Dodd's argument, it would be enough for the creationist to refute the principle of eternality. Let us look, then, at Dodd's arguments for this principle.

One argument that often seems implicit runs as follows:[9]

(1)   Properties are abstract objects.

(2)   Abstract objects do not exist in space or time.

(3)   Causation is spatio-temporal – that is, the relata of the causal relation must exist in space and time.

So   (4)   No properties are caused to exist.

This argument engages with some heavyweight issues in metaphysics, particularly the nature of abstract objects and the nature of causation. In a recent paper, Ben Caplan and Carl Matheson (2004) grapple with some of these issues in relation to Dodd's views on musical works. On the nature of abstract objects, they argue that Dodd's claims that

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[8] A version of this view – that property existence is tied to the possibility of something's being the correlative way – is defended in Levinson 1978 and 1992, and appealed to by Dodd in 2007: 63.

[9] The following formulation of the argument is mine, not Dodd's.

abstract objects are non-spatio-temporal are more or less question-begging, since a creationist will not accept such a view of abstract objects. They claim that the platonist needs 'another way of cashing out the distinction between abstract and concrete objects, one that is acceptable to [creationists and platonists] alike' (Caplan and Matheson 2004: 118). But this seems too much to ask of a philosophical opponent. On any charitable interpretation, Dodd does not simply pluck this characterization of abstract objects out of the air to suit his current purposes. It is a widely held metaphysical view that many argue is well motivated.[10] The burden is on the creationist to provide an alternative conception of abstract objects if that is what he requires.

On the issue of causation, Caplan and Matheson point out that one serious contender for a theory of causation posits *events* as the relata of causal relations, and holds events to be *sets* of a certain kind. But then abstract objects are the relata of the causal relation, rendering (3) false. This seems a weak argument. There are other theories of causation and events on offer, and Caplan and Matheson do not provide any arguments in favor of the views they describe. Now they seem to be in danger themselves of being accused of picking their metaphysics to suit their conclusion. As Caplan and Matheson are fond of saying, the settling of this issue requires 'some serious metaphysical work' (2004: 119 and *passim*). Without that, it is open to a platonist simply to subscribe to another respectable theory of causation or events that does not result in abstract objects' being the relata of the causal relation. On the other hand, as I noted above, Dodd's argument for the principle of eternality is implicit, so it is not clear that the burden of proof lies at the creationist's doorstep. I will have something to say about the status of

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[10] See, for example, Lowe 1999: 210-27, and the references given there.

these general metaphysical commitments in art-ontological debates near the end of this section.

A better criticism Caplan and Matheson offer is that Dodd is inconsistent on whether he accepts premise (2) (Caplan and Matheson 2004: 122-3). For although he insists that all properties are eternal, he grants that some abstract objects, namely, some sets, come into and go out of existence, thus existing temporally. For example:

> once the Eiffel Tower was built, the singleton containing the Eiffel Tower thereby came into existence, but the fact that such sets can come in and out of existence does not violate the principle of the causal inertness of abstracta: the causal process in this case involved people and bits of metal, the coming to being of the set being an ontological free lunch.   (Dodd 2002: 397)

Here, Dodd seems to reject (2), that abstract objects do not exist in space or time. Sets with temporally initiated concrete objects as members come into and go out of existence, and thus exist in time. To hold on to his conclusion (4), then, he must replace the general claims in premises (1) and (2) with a more specific claim:

(11)   Properties do not exist in space or time.

(3)   Causation is spatio-temporal – that is, the relata of the causal relation must exist in space and time.

So   (4)   No properties are caused to exist.

This replaces the issue of the nature of abstract objects with the issue of the nature of properties in particular.

Dodd subscribes to David Armstrong's theory of properties (Dodd 2000: 436, n. 18). This is an immanent, or 'Aristotelian', view of universals. It combines the *principle*

of instantiation, mentioned above, with *naturalism*, a view that entails that universals exist only in their instances, that is, within the spatio-temporal realm.[11] This is opposed to a transcendent, or 'Platonic' view of universals, whereby they exist outside of space and time, and not in their spatio-temporal instances (Armstrong 1989).[12] One consequence of such a view, which Dodd does not acknowledge, is that in the absence of further argument, immanent universals would seem to exist very much in space and time. It seems quite natural, if universals exist only in their instances, to say that they begin to exist when they begin to be instantiated, and cease to exist when they cease to be instantiated. If Dodd wants to resist this conclusion (which appears to commit him to the Charybdis of intermittent properties discussed above), he must explain how universals' existence when they are not instantiated in space and time is consistent with his naturalism. He may claim that the eternal existence of properties, like the existence of sets, is an 'ontological free lunch'. But this is not a very satisfying response, since it is of a kind usually available to one's opponents in some form in any metaphysical debate where its use is tempting (Thomasson 2001).

If properties can have temporal beginnings, as suggested above, then the

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[11] Thus, Dodd rejects this view in his 2007, along with the principle of instantiation, partly for the reasons I give here. His current view, however, while closer to that I defend below, still endorses the principle of eternality. Unfortunately, my arguments against his current view must wait for another time.

[12] A neglected third option is that some universals may exist in time, but not in space (the question of their spatial location being a kind of category error). Such universals would not exist in their spatio-temporal instances. I discuss this option further below.

creationist has made some headway. If there is a type for every property, and *vice versa*, and properties have temporal beginnings, then we are part of the way to an explanation of how types can be created. But Dodd might grant the temporal initiation of properties, and hence types, and yet resist their creatability, again on the basis of the nature of causation and abstract objects. For even if some abstract objects are brought into being by spatio-temporal events, as he admits the singleton containing the Eiffel Tower is, and as the above considerations suggest some properties are, Dodd might argue that this 'being brought into being' is not creation. That is, Dodd could retreat to the position that musical works are temporally initiated, but that it does not follow that they are caused or, *a fortiori*, created.

Caplan and Matheson offer three ways to respond to this suggestion. The first is that the suggestion is inconsistent with the principle that things that come into existence must be caused to exist. Such a response seems to be an appeal to a version of the principle of sufficient reason. It is thus a weak response, since there are no compelling reasons either *a priori* or *a posteriori* to subscribe to this principle (Mackie 1982: 82-7). The second response is that on a counterfactual analysis of causation, the coming into being of an abstract object in the way described *just is* an instance of causation. Had people not acted in such a way as to construct the Eiffel Tower, the singleton containing it would not have come into existence. Therefore, the people who caused the Eiffel Tower to come into existence also caused the singleton containing it to come into existence. This is a weak response for the same reason that Caplan and Matheson's appeal to the event-based theory of causation is weak. It is open to Dodd simply to appeal to some other theory of causation.

But Caplan and Matheson's third response is stronger, for it allows granting the retreating Dodd his claim that temporal initiation does not imply causation. The response is that even if we grant that the people who built the Eiffel Tower did not strictly *cause* its singleton to exist, the singleton still came into existence *as a result of* their actions; even if we grant that Beethoven did not strictly *cause* his Fifth Symphony to exist, it still would not have existed had he not engaged in his compositional activity. Thus this third response is a version of the second, without the counterfactual theory of causation.

> [R]ecall that the creatability requirement is supposed to be motivated by untutored intuitions. Insofar as there is a distinction to be made between *causing* something to come into existence (in the strict and philosophical sense) and *bringing* it into existence (in the loose and popular sense), people do not have intuitions about what can, or cannot, be *caused* to come into existence; rather, they have intuitions about what can, or cannot, be *brought* into existence.   (Caplan and Matheson 2004: 123)

If the argument thus far has been sound, then we have seen that properties, and hence types, are creatable in a sense that respects the creation intuition. But that is not enough to show that musical works are created by their composers during the act of composition. For a musical work, if a type, is a type of *performance*. The complex property that is the property-associate of the type is a property that performances instantiate, or possess. But if, as Dodd's principle of instantiation implies, properties come into existence when they are first instantiated, then a musical work only comes into existence when it is first performed. And this would make the first performers of a work its creators, rather than the composer. Moreover, my remarks above suggest that

properties come into and go out of existence as they are instantiated. This would have the further odd consequences (i) that a musical work does not persist through time, but pops into and out of existence, according to whether and when it is being performed, and (ii) that it is brought back into existence at each performance by whoever is performing it. All of these consequences seem to violate corollaries of the creation intuition.

There is a further odd consequence of Dodd's adherence to the principle of instantiation, one which can be turned into a *reductio* of his position. By subscribing to the principle of instantiation, he denies the existence of uninstantiated properties.[13] But if musical works are types of performance, then works that go unperformed do not have their property-associate instantiated. It follows that neither the property nor its type-associate, the work, exist. But that means that the composer of the work could not have discovered it, composition being discovery for a platonist. Thus, on Dodd's view, any work that has not, is not, and will not receive a performance has not in fact been composed.

But I am not committed to the principle of instantiation. I will now sketch an alternative metaphysical picture to the one Dodd provides. Its first element is the neglected third option for the mode of existence of abstracta, noted above. We are not compelled to choose between abstracta that exist outside of space and time, and those that exist in their instances – firmly within space and time. Another option is that (some) abstracta exist in time, but not in space. This option is often ignored in surveys of the possible meaning of 'abstract' (for example, Lowe 1999: 210-16), but not always (for example, Rosen 2001). It is not obvious why temporal, but non-spatial, existence should

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[13] Again, in his 2007, Dodd rejects this principle, partly for the reasons I give here.

be considered more problematic than non-spatiotemporal existence.[14] Investigating this option might be seen as part of a program Amie Thomasson suggests of broadening the class of entities metaphysicians take interest in:

> In short, if, rather than trying to make works of art fit into the off-the-rack categories of familiar metaphysical systems, one attempts to determine the categories that would really be suitable for works of art as we know them through our ordinary beliefs and practices, the payoff may lie not just in a better ontology of art, but in a better metaphysics.   (Thomasson 2004: 90)

Subscribing to this view of the mode of existence of musical works (or other abstracta) immediately puts paid to the problems of intermittent existence. For, on this view, the work does not exist in its instances, thus there is no need for it to go out of existence when there are no instances of it around. Its existence in time, on the other hand, allows it to begin to be at a certain point – a key requirement for creatability.

The second element of the view is a *principle of possible instantiation*, intended as an alternative to Dodd's principle of instantiation. According to this new principle, a

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[14] Compare spatial, but non-temporal, existence, which is hard to make sense of.

I should also note here that my talk of 'modes of existence' is metaphorical. I take existence to be univocal. As Lowe puts it, '[t]o exist *in* space and time is not to have a special kind of *existence* – for the notion of existence, like that of identity, is univocal. Rather, it is just to have certain sorts of properties and relations – spatiotemporal ones' (Lowe 1999: 212). The 'mode of existence' I am suggesting we consider is just something's having temporal, but no spatial, properties.

property exists at any time that it *could* be instantiated.[15] If, as I suggested earlier, the type of performance a work is includes an intentional link to the compositional act of its composer, then such a performance becomes possible with that act of composition. So the other aforementioned problems with Dodd's account do not apply to my suggestion – works come into existence with their composition, not performance, and unperformed works are easily individuated.

I should say a little about the kind of possibility my principle invokes. There is a sense in which it is possible for there to be a performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony right now. Perhaps no one has in fact done the requisite organizing, rehearsing, and so on, but someone could have. In this same sense of 'possible', it is *not* possible for there to be a performance of Beethoven's *Tenth* Symphony right now. No amount of organization or rehearsal will be sufficient, because there is nothing to rehearse, nothing to organize a performance of. Why? Because, of course, Beethoven did not compose a tenth symphony. The reason this sense of possibility needs to be distinguished from others is that Beethoven *might have* composed a tenth symphony, had he lived longer, or had different priorities. And since he might have composed such a work, it might have been performed. (There are possible worlds where Beethoven composed a Tenth Symphony and then attended its première.) Thus, it is the sense of

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[15] Dodd's latest principle of instantiation, noted above, differs from mine in that he takes a property to exist at a given time iff there is some time at which it could be instantiated. This is what allows him to hold on to the principle of eternality. The implausibility of this view is suggested by the discussion which follows, but its full elaboration must come elsewhere.

'possible' in which it *is* possible to perform Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, but is *not* possible to perform Beethoven's Tenth, that is appealed to in my principle of possible instantiation.[16]

I have articulated an alternative picture to Dodd's, but I have not argued for it. At best I have shown that it is a coherent alternative. Why, then, should anyone subscribe to my view rather than Dodd's? Precisely because my view respects the creation intuition. Dodd might respond that an intuition only counts as a reason to subscribe to a theory *prima facie*, or *ceteris paribus*. He would claim that neither of these conditions is met by the creation intuition. Nobody aware of the debate can claim that we are still evaluating the creatability of musical works at first glance, and Dodd would say that, given his arguments, things other than the creation intuition are no longer equal. We cannot hold on to our creation intuition in the face of his arguments about the uncreatability of abstracta.

My response to this begins with recalling my earlier arguments that Dodd's case depends on controversial general, or fundamental, metaphysical theses – what might be called 'technical' points. There are two ways to avoid relying in a question-begging way

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[16] This sense of possibility is closely related to the sense in which Saul Kripke suggests there could be no unicorns: 'no counterfactual situation is properly describable as one in which there would have been unicorns' (Kripke 1980: 156). No counterfactual situation is properly describable as one in which Beethoven's Tenth Symphony is being performed. This sense of possibility might also be seen as related to Armstrong's 'inner sphere' of possibility (1997: 165-9), though that notion is much more technical, and thus less ready to hand for my purposes here. But see also David Lewis's discussion of 'alien possibilities' (1986: *passim*).

on such theses. One is to wait for the more fundamental metaphysical disputes to be solved. Another is to solve them yourself. Taking the former path involves giving up musical ontology for the time being (and, if the history of metaphysics is anything to go by, for the foreseeable future). The latter path gives you something to do with the time you used to devote to musical ontology, but doesn't seem likely to bring the dispute to a close any earlier.

In light of the fact that disputes such as those between Dodd and his critics[17] are unlikely to be resolved anytime soon, given that their resolution depends on the resolution of more fundamental metaphysical disputes, we *are* back to the point where things other than the creation intuition are equal. Thus the intuition has force once more – not *prima facie* force but, perhaps even better, force after reflection.

2. Some scepticism about musical ontology

You might wonder whether the kind of debate engaged in above ought really to be classified as musical ontology – whether its proper place is really in a volume of aesthetics rather than a volume of metaphysics.[18] For the issues being discussed seem to be those that are discussed in general metaphysics, which can give the impression that this is no more *musical* ontology than a metaphysical consideration of artifacts that takes musical instruments as its central example. One defense that might be given is that

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[17] For example, Caplan and Matheson, as discussed above, Howell (2002), who defends creationism differently from Caplan and Matheson, but by similar reliance on controversial metaphysical theses, and Trivedi 2002.

[18] Aaron Ridley wonders this, though for different reasons. I consider his concerns in section 4.

artworks, particularly musical works, are among the most metaphysically puzzling things there are, and thus that they are not *mere* examples, but centrally important ones for any general metaphysician.[19] Anyway, even if this criticism is a good one, it does not object to this kind of metaphysics' *being done*, only to its classification as part of the philosophy of music proper.

Amie Thomasson (2005) has recently defended a limited scepticism about the ontology of art in general, which might be applied to the fundamentalist debate. She argues that in order to ground and reground the reference of an art-kind term, such as 'string quartet', users of the term must have a background ontological sortal in mind, about which they cannot be mistaken (Thomasson 2005: 222-3). For instance, when Shmarb proclaims '*This* is my sixth string quartet', pointing to the pile of inked-up manuscript on his desk, if his baptism is to succeed he must be thinking of a whole multiply-instantiable sonic item, as opposed to a concrete particular (to which he is also ostensibly pointing), a spatial or temporal part of that concrete particular, the countersubject of the fugue in the fourth movement, and so on. Of course, he does this disambiguation in part by using the term 'string quartet', thus appealing to an established art-kind term. The grounders and re-grounders of this kind-term, like the (re-)grounders of *any* kind-term, face the same problem of disambiguation as Shmarb – the '*qua* problem'. In order for their (re-)grounding to be successful, they must have a more fundamental ontological sortal in mind which determines the identity and persistence

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[19] This kind of defense of the ontology of art is made by Amie Thomasson (2004, 2005), though she might not endorse it in defense of the kind of debate engaged in in section 1, as we shall soon see.

conditions of members of the kind. As a result, and this is where Thomasson's scepticism arises, there are only as many facts about the identity and persistence conditions of string quartets as can be derived from the sortal the (re-)grounders of the term have in mind. In other words, there may be questions about musical works which simply have no answer, since our conception of them is vague and incomplete (Thomasson 2005: 227-8).

The creatability of multiple artworks is *not* one of the questions to which there is no determinate answer, according to Thomasson (2005: 226-7). That is one of the basic ontological components dictated by the sortal, about which we cannot be wrong. Yet, at the same time, she recognizes the importance of what David Davies calls 'the pragmatic constraint' on any ontology of art: 'Artworks must be conceived ontologically in such a way as to accord with those features of our critical and appreciative practice upheld on rational reflection' (D. Davies 2004: 23). That is, the only way to discover our shared conception of an art-kind is by extracting its features from our shared artistic practice.

The problem, though, is that our artistic practices often seem to point not just to vague or incomplete conceptions of artworks, but downright contradictory ones, and the revisionary ontological views that Thomasson is at pains to rule out – such as Davies's, that works are in fact the creative performances of their composers – are attempts to make the best sense of these contradictory practices. Dodd sees his view that musical works cannot be created as motivated in the same way: 'I agree with Davies that there is no conception of artworks that manages to pass muster metaphysically without compromising some of our pre-theoretical intuitions; our disagreement concerns whether the performance theory does this better than the structuralism he rejects…' (2005: 86-7).

Thomasson might respond by pointing out that it is basic *ontological* conceptions that take priority here, since it is those that disambiguate and ground the reference of the term being used. Thus, other conceptions, such as the kind of property that might be attributed to a string quartet, should not be taken into account at this stage, as they are by Davies.[20] Dodd's arguments, though, are not of this kind. His strategy, rather, is to argue that there cannot be any such things as are described by our ontological conception of musical works. If he is right about this, it seems that Thomasson would have to conclude that 'string quartet' does not refer – that is, there are no quartets, or any musical works for that matter. For she is careful to note throughout her argument that though one cannot be wrong about the basic ontological category of the referent of the term one is grounding, one might be wrong about there being any such referent (as when one points to a feather duster and says '*that* kind of animal'): 'All grounders are assured of…is that, *if there is any art-kind referred to by the terms they attempt to ground the reference of*, it has the *ontological* standing they commonly (if tacitly) understand and treat it as having' (Thomasson 2005: 227, first emphasis added).

Nonetheless, given her distaste for radically revisionary ontologies of art, I presume that Thomasson would resist the conclusion that there are no musical works. If it comes to this, Thomasson can, at the very least, put the burden back on the revisionist's shoulders. For he is beholden to show that his proposed revision is as little revisionary as

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[20] Of course, the question of what kind of properties a given kind of thing might possess is an ontological one. But perhaps an argument can be made that it is a less basic ontological part of our conception of a work, and thus trumped by more basic parts of that conception, such as creatability.

possible (Thomasson 2006: 251-3). In Dodd's case this would mean showing that his theory of what a musical work is is the closest coherent competitor to our pre-theoretical conception of a musical work. Another option would be to reject Dodd's metaphysically fundamentalist style of argument as inappropriate to cultural entities such as musical works. This would require a theory of the nature of cultural entities, and seems to be the direction in which Thomasson is headed. A further alternative would be to revive idealism, which has found few adherents in the analytic tradition. Georges Rey has recently defended a view of linguistic entities, such as sentences, words, morphemes, and phonemes, as 'intentional inexistents': 'They "are there" only for us in our communicative and mnemonic practices. If those practices can be explained without them, there is no independent reason to believe in them' (Rey 2004). The details of these views, and the extent of their similarity, I leave as avenues for future research.[21]

Where does all this leave my contribution to the fundamentalist debate – the suggestion that works exist (i) temporally but not spatially, and (ii) when it is possible to instance them? I suspect Dodd and others involved in the debate will be unhappy with the lack of metaphysical rigor about my suggestion. Thomasson might like the basic thesis – that it's not possible to perform a piece before it has been composed – but is likely to think that the justification for such a claim is our artistic practice, rather than any highfalutin metaphysical argument. I leave it to the reader to decide in exactly which ways the contribution is inadequate.

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[21] The similarity between Thomasson's view and Rey's idealism is intriguing, since Thomasson has developed a substantial theory of fictional entities that harks back to Roman Ingarden's idealism (Thomasson 1999, Ingarden 1973).

3. Higher-level musical ontology

There has recently been growing interest among analytic philosophers of music in traditions other than Western classical music. The issues discussed in the literature on the ontology of other traditions, particularly rock and jazz, are quite different from those central to the fundamentalist debate. The fact that there are creatable, multiply instantiable pieces and recordings, and particular performance and playback events that instantiate them, is taken more or less for granted. The focus of these debates is rather on the relationships between these things, and the roles they play in musical practices. For instance, Theodore Gracyk (1996: 1-36) has argued that recordings are at the center of rock as an artform, and thus that they deserve the honorific 'work of art', while the songs they manifest, and live performances of those songs, are secondary. Stephen Davies disagrees, arguing that rock songs, like classical pieces, are works of art, and that they are merely created for a different kind of performance – studio performance (2001: 30-36).

There is, rightly, no reference to fundamental ontological issues in this debate. This is because these issues lie at a higher (that is, less fundamental) metaphysical level than the debate over the creatability of musical works. For instance, the thesis that rock works are recordings for playback, rather than works for performance, is neutral with respect to more fundamental metaphysical theories about the nature of the type-token relation. If the nominalists turn out to be right, then talk of types is simply a convenient way of talking about tokens. If the realists turn out to be right, type-talk is about quite different things from tokens. But which of them is right will not bear on the fact that rock works are a different kind of type from classical works – one for playback rather than performance.

The independence of ontological theories at these different levels should come as no more of a surprise than the independence of scientific theories from fundamental ontological theories, or for that matter the independence of music analysis from musical ontology. The true fundamental ontological theory had better make room somewhere for our talk about planets, and indeed most fundamental ontological theories are neutral with respect to the existence of planets.[22] Theories of musical ontology had all better make room for melodies, and the most fundamental of them had better make room for works for performance. As with the first sceptical argument considered above, this is not an argument against engaging in the more fundamental debate, but it does seem clear that these higher-level ontological issues are more closely tied to other issues in musical aesthetics, such as those of interpretation and value, than the fundamental metaphysical issues.

Higher-level ontology need not be comparative, however. The debate over the necessary and sufficient conditions on a performance's being of a particular (classical) work are similarly neutral with respect to the fundamental metaphysical nature of performances and works. Another issue in this same boat is that of the nature of elements of musical works, such as melodies, harmony, rhythm, and so on, so far addressed in detail only by Roger Scruton (1997: 19-79) and Stephen Davies (2001: 47-71). The beginnings of a different kind of musical analysis for playback works, such as electronic classical music and rock, raises questions about the nature of additional musical elements, such as the aural space of a recording and timbre, and how they can contribute to a

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[22] Despite what some of their adherents say. See Silberstein 2002 and Thomasson 2001.

musical whole.[23]

One meta-ontological conclusion that I draw from this range of topics in musical ontology is that there is no sharp line between philosophical ontology and musicology (broadly construed). Just as there is little sense in distinguishing the more abstract scientific writing about Quantum Theory from the applied philosophy of science on that topic, musical ontology at higher levels shades into musicology.[24] On the other hand, though we are unlikely to confuse musicology and particle physics, as we descend to the fundamental ontological levels, despite our talking about quark flavors in one case and sound structures in the other, the issues can be the very same.

4. Some more scepticism about musical ontology

Aaron Ridley has recently argued that musical ontology is a waste of time (2003). The debate he discusses as a representative example of what he is arguing against is that over the necessary and sufficient conditions on a performance's being of a particular work, a debate I classify as higher-level. Ridley's attack has three parts. He argues that (i) there are no puzzling questions in musical ontology and, even if there were, nothing would be gained by considering them, since (ii) musical ontology has no consequences for musical practice or value, because despite what musical ontologists claim (iii) the ontological facts about music depend on facts about its value.

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[23] For examples of criticism and theory of this sort about rock music, see Daley 1998 and Zak 2001: 48-96.

[24] Note that this is consistent with my view stated earlier that conclusions at one level are independent of those at another.

There is no space to go into the details of Ridley's arguments here.[25] Instead I will see if anything might be salvaged from Ridley's conclusions. That is, I will discuss some more plausible theses that might be considered in the same ballpark as Ridley's hyperbolic claims. His first claim is beyond redemption. Perhaps all those who have engaged in musical ontology have been logic-chopping simpletons, but it seems unlikely. Furthermore, Ridley strangely avoids simply stating the unpuzzling facts of musical ontology, and in fact, despite his claims to the contrary, commits himself implicitly to a range of questionable ontological assumptions.

Ridley's second claim is also unsupportable, at least as a general claim. One cannot evaluate something without evaluating it as a particular *kind* of thing, and thus to evaluate it *correctly*, one must evaluate it as the kind of thing it actually is (S. Davies 2001: 203-5). Musical ontology is the study of the kinds of musical things there are, and thus it is an essential part of a complete theory of musical value.[26]

As we have seen, however, there are a number of different issues under the umbrella of musical ontology. And it may be that some of these are more relevant to questions of musical value than others. To give a non-musical example: to evaluate my

[25] For that, see Kania (unpublished).

[26] There is of course a huge literature on this topic, notwithstanding Ridley's puzzlement: "'How, exactly, is a convincing ontological backdrop supposed to lend perspicuity to evaluative questions? No one, so far as I am aware, has actually asked this: certainly no one has given any sort of explicit answer" (Ridley 2003: 210). For a couple of canonical examples, see Walton 1970 and Danto 1981. Walton discusses a specifically musical example in his 1988.

new piece of designer furniture correctly, you must realize it is a coffee table rather than a *chaise-longue*. But I don't think you need trouble yourself about whether it is a substance instantiating various universals or a bundle of tropes. Either way, it looks just as good in the living room. Similarly, Ridley's conclusion may apply to questions about the fundamental nature of musical works (which he barely notes), though it does not apply to the question he focuses on – the nature of the work–performance relation – or other higher-level ontological questions.[27]

Could Ridley be wrong about the independence of value facts from ontological facts, but be right about the dependence of ontological facts on value facts? That is, could value facts and ontological facts be inter-dependent? In a sense, I think, the answer is yes. Perhaps the most widespread consensus amongst philosophers of art is that we are in the business of making sense of a very complicated, even messy, human cultural practice. Now, if there is some objective universality to this practice, as some argue on evolutionary psychological grounds,[28] we might be able to make some general claims about artistic practices that do not even exist yet, just as linguists can describe some features of any natural human language that has not yet been encountered.[29] But there are other questions that cannot be answered without investigating the practice in question,

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[27] Jerrold Levinson has argued that if musical works are not the creations of their composers they are less valuable than we had thought (1990: 218). If this is correct, even fundamental ontological issues have far-reaching consequences for musical value.

[28] See, for example, de Sousa 2004 and Currie 2004.

[29] Of course, they could not have the theory that enables these descriptions without having first investigated a range of natural human languages.

and the higher-level questions of musical ontology are of this kind. Higher-level musical ontology, then, describes certain features of a pre-existing practice, one which has developed as a whole, with ontological, evaluative, interpretive, institutional, and all sorts of other features interacting with each other. Thus, in some sense, the ontology of a specific tradition might be the result to some extent of the evaluative practice in that tradition (and *vice versa*). But this is a long way from Ridley's implausible idea that confronted with a musical performance, first we settle the evaluative questions, and then go on to answer the ontological ones on that basis.

5. Conclusions

None of the sceptical arguments we have looked at has provided a compelling reason to abandon musical ontology. However, the most promising avenues of research seem to lie outside the fundamentalist debate. First, there is the question of how cultural entities, such as musical works, are different from other kinds of objects, such as so-called natural kinds. Second, there are the higher-order musical-ontological issues, such as the different ontologies of various kinds of music, the nature of the elements of various kinds of musical works, and the nature of the relations between different kinds of entities within these various traditions. If anything these ontological questions seem to imply that there is even more to be discussed in the philosophy of music than has been considered so far.[30]

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