

RHYTHMIC ACCENT AND THE ABSOLUTE: SULZER, SCHELLING AND THE AKZENTTHEORIE

TOMAS MCAULEY



ABSTRACT

1770s Berlin saw the birth of a new theory of rhythm, first stated in Johann Georg Sulzer's *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste* (1771–1774), and later labelled the *Akzenttheorie* (theory of accents). Whereas previous eighteenth-century theories had seen rhythm as built up from the combination of distinct units, the *Akzenttheorie* saw it as formed from the breaking down of a continual flow, achieved through the placing of accents on particular notes. In his *Philosophie der Kunst* (1802–1803) the philosopher Friedrich Schelling used Sulzer's definition of rhythm to suggest, astonishingly, that music can facilitate knowledge of the absolute, a philosophical concept denoting the ultimate ground of all reality. In this article I show how Schelling could come to interpret the *Akzenttheorie* in such extravagant terms by examining three theories of time and their relationships to rhythm: that of Sulzer and his predecessor Isaac Newton, that of Immanuel Kant and that of Schelling. I conclude by arguing that in Schelling's case – an important one, since his is the earliest systematic presentation of a view of music that came to predominate in the decades after 1800 – his view of music was driven neither by developments in contemporary music nor by changes in the philosophy of art as a discrete intellectual enterprise, but by revolutions in philosophy by and large unconcerned even with art in general.

In his *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste* (General Theory of the Fine Arts), first published in two instalments in 1771 and 1774, the Enlightenment man of letters Johann Georg Sulzer defined music as 'a succession of sounds that originates as a passionate emotion, and which has the power to depict, arouse, and strengthen such emotions'.¹ In arousing particular emotions, Sulzer believed, music could dispose the

<tmcauley@indiana.edu>

This article originated in a paper presented at the Nineteenth Congress of the International Musicological Society, Rome, July 2012. The article also incorporates material presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Music Theory, New Orleans, November 2012. I am grateful to the audiences at both for their insightful questions and comments. I am especially grateful to Michael Fend, Andrew Bowie, Mark Evan Bonds and Elizabeth Swann for their valuable comments on previous versions of this material, and to Nicholas Mathew and the two anonymous reviewers of this journal for their excellent work towards the final article.

- 1 The definition is from the article 'Musik' in Johann Georg Sulzer, *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste*, volume 2 (Leipzig, 1774), 782. The *Allgemeine Theorie* was originally published in Leipzig in two volumes in 1771 (A–J) and 1774 (K–Z). It was reprinted in Biel in 1777, each volume split into two parts. A second, 'improved' edition was published in Leipzig in four volumes in 1778–1779. A new, enlarged edition was published in Leipzig in four volumes in 1787. An enlarged version of the second edition was published in Leipzig in four volumes between 1792 and 1794. A third and final edition was published in Frankfurt and Leipzig in 1798, as was the last of a three-part set of literary additions by Christian Friedrich Blankenburg (1796–1798). All references in this article are to the first edition. Selections of the musical articles, along with a number of articles on 'aesthetic foundations' and 'the creative process', have been published as Johann Georg Sulzer and Heinrich Christoph Koch, *Aesthetics and the Art of Musical Composition in the German Enlightenment: Selected Writings of Johann Georg Sulzer and Heinrich Christoph Koch*, trans. and ed. Nancy Kovaleff Baker and Thomas Christensen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). This volume includes an extract from the 'Musik' article, from which the cited translation is taken, page 83. Throughout this article, where no English translation is cited, the rendering is my own.



listener to ethical behaviour. Such a position was typical of the prevailing Enlightenment view of music. In his 1802–1803 lectures on the *Philosophie der Kunst* (Philosophy of Art), the German idealist philosopher Friedrich Schelling put forward a somewhat different view of music: ‘The forms of music are the forms of the eternal things . . . the forms of music are necessarily the forms of things in themselves.’² Schelling’s discussion of music in these lectures is the first systematized statement of a new view of music that arose among German-speaking thinkers and critics in the years around 1800; according to this view, music is capable of providing non-linguistic knowledge into the ultimate nature of reality.³

In expounding their divergent views, both Sulzer and Schelling place particular emphasis on rhythm. Given the differences between their views of music in general, one might expect their definitions of rhythm to be equally dissimilar. Yet Sulzer defines rhythm as ‘nothing other than a periodic division of a row of homogeneous things, through which their uniformity is combined with diversity’,⁴ while Schelling defines rhythm as ‘nothing other than a periodic division of homogeneous things, through which their uniformity is combined with diversity, and, therefore, unity is combined with multiplicity’.⁵ That is, their definitions of rhythm are practically identical.⁶ In order to understand how Schelling arrived at his view of music – the first systematized version of a perspective that became increasingly prevalent in aesthetics and criticism after 1800 – it is necessary to explain how the same theory of rhythm could have formed the core of two such different conceptions of music. The aim of this article is to offer such an explanation. I do so by examining three theories of time and their relationships to ideas about rhythm: the Newtonian conception of time inherited by Sulzer, a new understanding of time first set out by Immanuel Kant and finally Schelling’s post-Kantian conception of time.⁷

SULZER, NEWTON AND THE AKZENTTHEORIE

Before the *Allgemeine Theorie*, eighteenth-century theories of rhythm had on the whole been guided by a mensural conception, according to which rhythm works by combining individual, discrete building-blocks

-
- 2 Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schellings *Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. K. F. A. Schelling (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta’scher Verlag, 1856–1861), series 1, volume 5, 501. Except where stated otherwise, all references to Schelling’s works are to this complete edition. The lectures have been translated into English as Schelling, *The Philosophy of Art*, trans. Douglas W. Stott (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).
 - 3 For an overview of the rise of this new view of music see Mark Evan Bonds, *Music as Thought: Listening to the Symphony in the Age of Beethoven* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).
 - 4 Sulzer, *Allgemeine Theorie*, volume 2, 980.
 - 5 Schelling, *Sämmtliche Werke*, series 1, volume 5, 492. Translation modified from Schelling, *Philosophy of Art*, 110.
 - 6 The continuations of the above quotations carry on the similarity. Sulzer continues: ‘. . . in order that a continuing emotion [*Empfindung*] that would otherwise remain the same (homogeneous), acquires rhythmic division, change [*Abwechslung*], and variety [*Mannigfaltigkeit*]’. Sulzer, *Allgemeine Theorie*, volume 2, 980. Schelling continues: ‘for example, the emotion that a piece arouses as a whole, is quite homogeneous, singular; . . . this emotion, that in itself remains homogeneous, acquires change and variety through the rhythmical division’, *Sämmtliche Werke*, series 1, volume 5, 492. Schelling, *Philosophy of Art*, 110. Schelling also follows Sulzer closely, to the point of part-quotation, in his belief that ‘everything one can call truly beautiful in music or dance actually has do to with the rhythm’; in his example of the manual worker who lightens his load by counting; in his distinction between various levels of rhythm and *Takt*; and in his asking how a series of undifferentiated noises (such as drum beats) can become ‘significant’, *Sämmtliche Werke*, series 1, volume 5, 492–494. Schelling, *Philosophy of Art*, 110–111. Sulzer, *Allgemeine Theorie*, volume 2, 976–981.
 - 7 By implication, then, this study also contributes to current debates about the relation of music to changing perceptions of time in the eighteenth century. Recent studies include Karol Berger, *Bach’s Cycle, Mozart’s Arrow* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); John Butt, *Bach’s Dialogue with Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Bettina Varwig, ‘Metaphors of Time and Modernity in Bach’, *Journal of Musicology* 29/2 (2012), 154–190; and, moving into the early nineteenth century, Keith Chapin, ‘Time and the Keyboard Fugue’, *19th-Century Music* 34/2 (2010), 186–207.



into larger units. The block was either the *tactus*, which contained within itself two parts corresponding to a downwards and an upwards movement of the hand (*thesis* and *arsis*), or the bar, which evolved from the older concept of the *tactus* in the seventeenth century.⁸ Sulzer, by contrast, saw rhythm and metre as formed not from the combination of discrete elements, but from the breaking down of a continuous flow, such as a row of equal notes. This flow is broken down, according to Sulzer, by placing accents on particular notes. Because of this emphasis on accents, Sulzer's theory later became known as the *Akzenttheorie*, or theory of accents.⁹ The past decade has seen two important discussions of the *Akzenttheorie*, by William E. Caplin and Roger Mathew Grant.¹⁰ Much of what follows takes the form of an appreciative but critical response to these writers.

Caplin and Grant both acknowledge that three different thinkers – Sulzer, Johann Philipp Kirnberger and Johann Abraham Peter Schulz – may have been involved in formulating the *Akzenttheorie*, but both identify Kirnberger as the principal theorist 'for the sake of convenience',¹¹ focusing on *Die Kunst des reinen Satzes in der Musik* (The Art of Strict Composition in Music), which appeared under Kirnberger's name in 1771–1779.¹² Crucially, however, the first work to state the *Akzenttheorie* was Sulzer's *Allgemeine Theorie*, which first appeared in 1771–1774, and in which the *Akzenttheorie* was expounded in particular detail in the article 'Rhythmus; Rhythmisch'.¹³ Although volume 1 of Kirnberger's *Kunst des reinen Satzes* came out earlier in 1771 than did part 1 (A to J) of Sulzer's *Allgemeine Theorie*,¹⁴ Kirnberger's discussion of rhythm and metre was contained in volume 1, part 2 of *Kunst des reinen Satzes*, which came out in 1776, two years after part 2 (K–Z, 1774) of the *Allgemeine Theorie*, which contained the 'Rhythmus' article.

To be sure, the authorship of the music articles within Sulzer's lexicon is notoriously unclear – Sulzer, Kirnberger and Schulz each having had a hand in at least some of the articles. Indeed, it is common to presume, not without good reason, that most of the music articles in the *Allgemeine Theorie* were written primarily either by Kirnberger or by Schulz.¹⁵ Yet Sulzer, Schulz, Kirnberger and their Berlin contemporary

8 On this evolution see George Houle, *Meter in Music, 1600–1800: Performance, Perception, and Notation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 1–34.

9 In the *Allgemeine Theorie*, Sulzer puts forward the *Akzenttheorie* in the articles 'Rhythmus; Rhythmisch' (volume 2, 975–985), 'Musik' (volume 2, 780–795) and 'Takt' (volume 2, 1130–1138), among other places. The 'Rhythmus' article is the focus of the present essay. The term *Akzenttheorie* was first used by Hugo Riemann in his *Musikalische Dynamik und Agogik* (Hamburg, 1884). It is, however, a convenient and accurate label for Sulzer's theory; as such, I use it in this article. On Riemann as the first to use the term *Akzenttheorie* see Wilhelm Seidel, *Über Rhythmustheorien der Neuzeit* (Bern and Munich: Francke, 1975), 85 and 252, note 2.

10 William E. Caplin, 'Theories of Musical Rhythm in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', in *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory*, ed. Thomas Street Christensen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 657–694; Roger Mathew Grant, 'Epistemologies of Time and Metre in the Long Eighteenth Century', *Eighteenth-Century Music* 6/1 (2009), 59–75.

11 Grant explicitly follows Caplin on this point; both authors use the exact phrase 'for the sake of convenience'. Caplin, 'Theories of Musical Rhythm', 668, note 34; Grant, 'Epistemologies of Time and Metre', 59, note 1.

12 Johann Philipp Kirnberger, *Die Kunst des reinen Satzes in der Musik* (Berlin, 1771 (volume 1), 1776 (volume 2, part 1) and 1779 (volume 2, part 2)). Translated in part as Johann Philipp Kirnberger, *The Art of Strict Musical Composition*, trans. David Beach and Jurgen Thym (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982). The theory of rhythm is put forward in volume 2, part 1, chapter 4 (included in the translation, 375–417). On the different editions of *Die Kunst des reinen Satzes* see David W. Beach, Introduction to Kirnberger, *The Art of Strict Musical Composition*, xi–xii.

13 With the exception of a bibliographic supplement first added to the 1794 edition and repeated verbatim in the 1798 edition, the text of the 'Rhythmus' article remains virtually identical across all editions.

14 Beach, Introduction to Kirnberger, *The Art of Strict Musical Composition*, xi.

15 Apart from the *Allgemeine Theorie* itself, the key source for considering musical issues of authorship in the *Allgemeine Theorie* is J. A. P. Schulz, 'Ueber die in Sulzers Theorie der schönen Künste unter dem Artikel Verrückung angeführten zwey Beyspiele von Pergolesi und Graun, zur Beantwortung einer Aeusserung des Hrn. V. Dittersdorf . . .', *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* 16 (15 January 1800), 273–280. Directly or indirectly, most recent discussions of these issues are based primarily on Schulz's account. These include those of Raymond A. Barr, 'Schulz, Johann Abraham



Johann Friedrich Reichardt all corroborate that Sulzer played at least some role in writing the musical articles before the letter S. Besides which, the 'Rhythmus' article is classified not exclusively under the heading of music, but under the threefold heading 'Verbal Arts [*Redende Künste*], Music, Dance'.¹⁶ Whatever the shortcomings of his musical knowledge, Sulzer would have considered himself a greater expert in oratory than Kirnberger or Schulz. Moreover, the article 'Ordnung', which mentions music only in passing, also contains a summary of the *Akzenttheorie*.¹⁷ Furthermore, as we will see, there are compelling connections between the *Akzenttheorie* and Sulzer's metaphysics.¹⁸

According to both Caplin and Grant, the *Akzenttheorie* depends on a new, 'Newtonian' conception of time, which Caplin describes thus:

The medieval and Renaissance mensural system is rooted in an Aristotelian conception of temporality, whereby the passage of time is conceived as a succession of discrete, individual *times* (in the plural) each marking a concrete type of cyclical motion ... During the seventeenth century, a new conception of temporality emerged, one eventually codified by Newton, in which *time* (in the singular) is understood as an empty, homogeneous, and infinite span, waiting to be filled by any kind of motion. It was not until the second half of the eighteenth century that ... a theory of musical rhythm founded upon this newer concept of time [was articulated].¹⁹

The new theory of rhythm to which Caplin refers is, of course, the *Akzenttheorie*. While I do not doubt that, according to the Newtonian conception, time is homogeneous, I would query Caplin's premise that Newtonian time is also 'empty'. For Newton, as for earlier thinkers, God sustains and fills time. Take the *Principia mathematica* of 1687, which concludes with a discussion of the nature of God. The 'true God', writes Newton,

Peter', and Howard Serwer, 'Sulzer, Johann Georg', both in *Grove Music Online* <www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (2 December 2011); Johan Van der Zande, 'Orpheus in Berlin: A Reappraisal of Johann Georg Sulzer's Theory of the Polite Arts', *Central European History* 28/2 (1995), 191–192; and Matthew Riley, 'Civilizing the Savage: Johann Georg Sulzer and the "Aesthetic Force" of Music', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 127/1 (2002), 2, note 5. It is necessary, however, to supplement Schulz's account with those of Kirnberger and Johann Friedrich Reichardt. See Johann Philipp Kirnberger, 'Briefe von Kirnberger an Forkel (Mitgetheilt von H. Bellermann)', *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* 29 (23 August 1871), 457–460; and J. F. Reichardt, 'J. A. P. Schulz', *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 36 (3 June 1801), 597–606.

¹⁶ Sulzer, *Allgemeine Theorie*, volume 2, 975.

¹⁷ Sulzer, *Allgemeine Theorie*, volume 2, 854–856; Sulzer and Koch, *The Art of Musical Composition*, 37–41. Sulzer writes: 'Isolated taps upon a drum or anvil do not interest us. But as soon as we notice any order in these taps, especially if they become metric or rhythmic, they accrue aesthetic force.' Sulzer, *Allgemeine Theorie*, volume 2, 855; Sulzer and Koch, *Aesthetics and the Art of Musical Composition*, 38. The concept of order also plays a central role in the 'Rhythmus' article.

¹⁸ My positing of Sulzer as a central figure in eighteenth-century musical thought may seem unusual, since he is generally thought to have had 'little or no training in music' (Serwer, *Grove Online*) and to have been unsympathetic to the art. Matthew Riley, 'Civilising the Savage', however, has recently shown how, far from seeing music as an inferior art, Sulzer saw music as in some senses the highest of the arts. Before Riley, there had been few musicological engagements with the *Allgemeine Theorie*, in English at least. Owen Jander speculates that the work may have been an influence on Beethoven in 'Exploring Sulzer's *Allgemeine Theorie* as a Source Used by Beethoven', *The Beethoven Newsletter* 2/1 (1987), 1–7. See also Christensen, Introduction to Sulzer and Koch, *Aesthetics and the Art of Musical Composition*, 3–24.

¹⁹ Caplin, 'Theories of Musical Rhythm', 666–668. Grant, 'Epistemologies of Time and Metre', 68, describes Newton's new time as an 'empty, open expanse'. Although Grant does not make it explicit, an 'empty, open expanse' could not be anything but homogeneous (what could break the homogeneity?). Both Caplin and Grant acknowledge a debt to Seidel, *Über Rhythmustheorien der Neuzeit*.



is a living, intelligent, and powerful Being ... He is eternal and infinite ... ; that is, his duration reaches from eternity to eternity; his presence from infinity to infinity; ... He is not eternity or infinity, but eternal and infinite; he is not duration or space, but he endures and is present. He endures for ever, and is every where present; and by existing always and every where, he constitutes duration and space.²⁰

Not only can there be no time where God is not present, for his presence reaches 'from infinity to infinity', but God 'constitutes duration'. Time, for Newton, is replete – with God's presence.

This conclusion, that the Newtonian time upon which the *Akzenttheorie* was founded was homogeneous but full, is borne out by Sulzer's *Allgemeine Theorie* and the *Kunst des reinen Satzes* (on which Sulzer, by Kirnberger's own admission, was a major influence).²¹ In both of these texts, the guiding metaphor for homogeneous time is flowing water²² – an image that evokes a millennia-old tradition associating God with flowing water (the Holy Spirit in particular), and precisely precludes temporal emptiness.²³

KANT, SCHELLING AND THE AKZENTTHEORIE

In Sulzer's inaugural conception of it, then, the *Akzenttheorie* was predicated on a notion of time as homogeneous and full. The idea of homogeneous, *empty* time is, however, crucial to the subsequent history of the *Akzenttheorie*. Though neither Caplin nor Grant quote him explicitly, the phrase 'empty, homogeneous time' is, in modern scholarship, associated primarily with Walter Benjamin.²⁴ In his late essay 'On the Concept of History' Benjamin suggests that a fundamental break in dominant conceptions of time occurred in the early nineteenth century – a break from an older time-consciousness, dating back at least as far as Biblical ages,²⁵ to a modern temporality that Benjamin calls 'homogeneous, empty time' (*homogene und*

20 Isaac Newton, *Newton's Principia: The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, trans. Andrew Motte (London, 1846), 505 <www.archive.org/details/100878576> (11 May 2011). Newton writes elsewhere that 'The most perfect idea of God is that he be one substance, simple, indivisible, live and making live, necessarily existing everywhere and always, understanding everything to the utmost, freely willing good things, by his will effecting all possible things, and containing all other substances in Him as their underlying principle.' Cited in J. McGuire, 'Newton on Place, Time, and God: An Unpublished Source', *The British Journal for the History of Science* 11 (1978), 123. For a way into the (extensive) scholarship on Newton's theology see the references in Kim Ian Parker, 'Newton, Locke and the Trinity: Sir Isaac's Comments on Locke's *A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistle of St Paul to the Romans*', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 61/1 (2009), 40–52.

21 On Sulzer's role in the composition of the *Kunst des reinen Satzes* see Kirnberger, 'Briefe von Kirnberger an Forkel', 458.

22 In the *Kunst des reinen Satzes*, the primary metaphor for homogeneous time is that of a flowing stream: Kirnberger, *Kunst des reinen Satzes*, volume 2, part 1, 113. See also Kirnberger, *The Art of Strict Musical Composition*, 381–382. In Sulzer's *Allgemeine Theorie*, the primary metaphor is of rainfall: Sulzer, *Allgemeine Theorie*, volume 2, 976.

23 A canonical example of this is found in the Gospel of John: 'Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive', John 7: 37–39 (New International Version (NIV)). Among a host of Biblical metaphors concerning (flowing) water see also John 4: 7–15: 'Jesus answered, "... whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life"' (verse 14, NIV). Specifically on rainfall see Psalm 68: 'When you, God, went out before your people ... the earth shook, the heavens poured down rain, before God ... You gave abundant showers, O God; you refreshed your weary inheritance', Psalm 68: 7–9 (NIV).

24 For two especially important discussions of the concept, both of which trace the phrase to Benjamin, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edition (London: Verso, 1991), 22–36, and Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 54–59.

25 Walter Benjamin, 'Über den Begriff der Geschichte', in *Erzählen: Schriften zur Theorie der Narration und zur literarischen Prosa*, ed. Alexander Honold (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2007), 129–140. Translated as 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Fontana, 1992), 245–255. The older



leere Zeit).²⁶ In my view, this Benjaminian shift from an older conception of time (as neither homogeneous nor empty) to a newer one ('homogeneous, empty time') is not a single transformation but a two-stage process in the history of ideas. First, the Newtonian paradigm portrays time as homogeneous but full. Then, as we will see, the Kantian tradition reconceives time as both homogeneous and empty.

Indeed, Kant's mature philosophy, as launched in his 1781 *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Critique of Pure Reason), is founded on a radically new attitude to time.²⁷ Previous thinkers, Sulzer and Newton included, had seen time as a feature of objective reality. Time, according to this view, is a feature of how the world around us is in itself. Kant, by contrast, believes that time, along with space, is a 'form of intuition', a way in which rational beings necessarily perceive the world.²⁸ Space and time, for Kant, function as lenses through which we see the world, and without which we are blind.²⁹ These lenses structure the empirical world so that it appears to us as spatial and temporal, regardless of how it is in itself. As a form of intuition, time is in itself contentless – not only homogenous, but also empty.³⁰ It was not Newton but Kant who emptied time.

The nature of time was also a central issue in Schelling's 1802–1803 lectures on the *Philosophie der Kunst*.³¹ Schelling's view of time, as set out in these lectures, is basically Kantian, but with a twist. As we have seen, for Sulzer and Newton, time is a feature of objective reality, and is correspondingly filled with God's presence. For Kant, however, time is a lens through which the subject perceives the world, and God is correspondingly absent. In other words, for Sulzer and Newton time is an aspect of nature, whereas for Kant, time is constituted by the subject. Schelling's temporal starting-point in the *Philosophie der Kunst* is Kant's theory, but he imbues this conception of time with something of the realism and naturalism of Sulzer's pre-Kantian approach. Throughout his early philosophy of the 1790s, Schelling developed a position whereby there is a close interaction between the objectivity of nature and the subjectivity of human consciousness. On the one hand, Schelling sees the subject as a part of nature: humans are in a sense nothing more than one part of the natural world around them, and they depend on this world for survival. On the other hand, however, Schelling believes that nature is completed by human consciousness, for it is only through this consciousness that nature comes to know itself. Nature and the subject are

time-consciousness theorized by Benjamin was distinctly theological: a recent investigation by Giorgio Agamben has shown how there is not only a 'conceptual correspondence' but also a 'textual correspondence' between Benjamin's essay and passages from the letters of St Paul. See Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. Patricia Dailey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 144.

26 Benjamin, 'Über den Begriff der Geschichte', 136, and Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', 252.

27 Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Riga, 1781, second edition 1787). In citing from the *Kritik*, I follow convention in giving references to the page numbers for the original first (A) and second (B) editions. The standard English translation (from which all citations are taken) is *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

28 A24–25/B38–39, A26–27/B42–43 (space is a form of intuition); A30–35/B46–52 (time is a form of intuition).

29 For Kant, time is the necessary form of intuition of inner sense, 'the intuition of our self and our inner state'; A33/B49. Space is the necessary form of intuition of outer sense, our relationship with the external world. Time, however, is, in a sense, more fundamental than space. For inner sense (governed by time) does not rely on outer sense (governed by space), but outer sense *does* rely on inner sense; A34/B50.

30 Kant makes this explicit later in the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, when he states famously that 'thoughts without content are empty'; A51/B75.

31 Despite a request from Schelling that only the section on tragedy be published, the lectures were published in 1859 as part of the complete edition edited by his son, K. F. A. Schelling (*Sämmtliche Werke*, series 1, volume 5, 353–736). On the circumstances of their publication see K. F. A. Schelling's Introduction to volume 5 of the first series of the collected edition, *Sämmtliche Werke*, series 1, volume 5, v–xiii. According to René Wellek, the lectures circulated in manuscript form prior to publication: Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism 1750–1950*, volume 2, *The Romantic Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 82. Patricia A. Ward makes a similar claim in 'Coleridge's Critical Theory of the Symbol', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 8/1 (1966), 23.



consequently seen as two aspects of the same world. The result of this is that there is a natural affinity or fit between nature and the subject: for Schelling's rational subject, time is still a lens through which nature is viewed, but this lens is itself part of nature, and nature is constituted in such a way that it is receptive to being viewed in temporal terms.

In the *Philosophie der Kunst*, Schelling developed this position by suggesting that both nature and the subject are subservient to a greater reality.³² Schelling refers to this reality as God, but under the influence of Spinoza, he conceives this God in pantheistic terms, believing God to be the totality of the universe. This totality is, for Schelling, infinite and absolute, hence Schelling sometimes refers to God simply as *das Absolute*. At the time of the *Philosophie der Kunst*, Schelling held to a philosophical system commonly known as *Identitätsphilosophie* (identity philosophy).³³ Its core principle is that God is not only infinite and absolute, but also absolutely one. That is to say, in God there is no difference, only pure identity. Schelling conceives this identity in the most radical terms as meaning that in God there is not even any difference between subjectivity and objectivity, between sameness and difference, or between unity (*Einheit*) and multiplicity (*Vielheit*).³⁴ Because God is conceived in pantheistic terms, Schelling's assertion equates to the mind-bending claim that there is no difference between anything in the universe.

Such a claim is clearly implausible. It is, in fact, so implausible that Schelling himself started to back-track just as soon as he had made it, suggesting that, alongside God's infinite sameness, there is also a finite world in which things are differentiated.³⁵ This finite world, Schelling believes, must fall short of the true nature of reality, for true reality is found only in God. This finite world is also the world to which humans belong – the world that is split into objective nature and subjective consciousness. Yet objective nature and subjective consciousness are driven to combine with each other, and in this combination they *reflect*, if only dimly, God's ultimate sameness. Objective nature is, broadly speaking, characterized by difference or multiplicity; subjective consciousness is characterized by sameness or unity. The multiplicity of objective nature is, Schelling believes, unified precisely by subjective consciousness, which draws together the variety of the world around it into a unified whole. The fundamental way in which the subject does this is through its imposition of time onto nature, time as conceptualized in broadly Kantian terms.³⁶ Essential here is that

32 Schelling opens the *Philosophie der Kunst* with a general outline of the foundations of his philosophical position. Although much simplified, the following summary is based as closely as possible on this outline. *Sämmtliche Werke*, series 1, volume 5, 373–387; Schelling, *Philosophy of Art*, 23–32.

33 The key works of Schelling's early *Identitätsphilosophie* are, apart from the *Philosophie der Kunst*, the 1801 *Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie* (Presentation of My System of Philosophy), *Sämmtliche Werke*, series 1, volume 4, 105–212, and the 1802 *Bruno, ein Gespräch* (Bruno: A Dialogue), *Sämmtliche Werke*, series 1, volume 4, 213–332. The latter is available in translation as Schelling, *Bruno, or on the Natural and Divine Principle of Things*, trans. Michael Vater (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984). For two lucid discussions of Schelling's *Identitätsphilosophie* see Andrew Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy: An Introduction* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1993), 55–90, and Frederick Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism, 1781–1801* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 551–595.

34 Schelling expounds this doctrine forcefully in *Bruno*: 'since we make the unity of all opposites our first principle, unity itself along with ... opposition, will form the highest pair of opposites. In order to make unity the highest principle, we must think of it as encompassing even this opposition of unity and opposition, and determine that unity as the one, in which unity and opposition, sameness and difference, are one'. *Sämmtliche Werke*, series 1, volume 4, 236; Schelling, *Bruno*, 136.

35 Again, Schelling's discussion in *Bruno* helps to elaborate the more condensed Introduction of his *Identitätsphilosophie* in the *Philosophie der Kunst*. Here Schelling notes that absolute sameness precludes human cognition: 'Are we not forced to say ... that unity and multiplicity ... are absolutely combined [*verknüpft*] in one and the same absolute ...? ... But, on the other hand, is it not evident that to finite cognition, unity means only endless possibility, while multiplicity comprises the actuality of things?' *Sämmtliche Werke*, series 1, volume 4, 244; Schelling, *Bruno*, 143.

36 Schelling writes: 'The principle of time within the subject is self-consciousness, which is precisely the informing [*Ineinsbildung*] ... of the unity of consciousness into multiplicity'. *Sämmtliche Werke*, series 1, volume 5, 491; Schelling, *Philosophy of Art*, 109.



this time is, in itself, homogeneous *and empty*: it is mere empty form, devoid of any content. Time, for Schelling, is the subjective frame that unifies nature's objective multiplicity.

Schelling, then, thinks that humans can gain knowledge of God through the finite world's reflection of His ultimate reality. The artefact that, in the finite world, best reflects God's ultimate reality is, for Schelling, art: art, he claims, embodies more than anything else in the finite world the divine combination of objective nature and subjective consciousness, and in particular the combination of multiplicity and unity. How does art accomplish this? It would be appropriate at this point to turn our attention specifically to music.³⁷ Schelling sees music, understandably, as the most temporal art – meaning that music is the art most closely linked to the subject's imposition of unity onto nature's multiplicity. In explaining how music imposes unity onto multiplicity, Schelling draws precisely on Sulzer's *Akzenttheorie*. If we compare once more Sulzer's and Schelling's definitions of rhythm, we may note a small difference between them:

[Sulzer:] [Rhythm] is at root nothing other than a periodic division of a row of homogeneous things, through which their uniformity [*Einformigkeit*] is combined with diversity [*Mannigfaltigkeit*].

[Schelling:] [Rhythm] is . . . nothing other than a periodic division of homogeneity, through which uniformity [*Einformigkeit*] is combined with diversity [*Mannigfaltigkeit*] and, therefore, unity [*Einheit*] is combined with multiplicity [*Vielheit*].

The few extra words – 'and, therefore, unity is combined with multiplicity' – encapsulate the difference between Sulzer's and Schelling's assessments of the significance of the *Akzenttheorie*. For Sulzer, working on the presumption that the purpose of music is to arouse the emotions (and thus shape ethical sensibility), the combination of uniformity and variety in rhythm is important because it allows the emotions aroused by music to be varied, and, therefore, to be sustained for longer without the listener losing interest. Schelling does not deny the emotional power of rhythm's combining uniformity and diversity, but he criticizes Sulzer for thinking that arousing the emotions is the purpose of music.³⁸ For Schelling, rhythm's combination of uniformity and diversity is important because it also equates to the combination of unity and multiplicity. In combining multiplicity and unity, Schelling believes, music combines objective nature and subjective consciousness, and hence intimates God, in whom nature and consciousness, objectivity and subjectivity, multiplicity and unity are all absolutely one. This is, as we saw at the opening of this article, a

37 Despite a growing literature on Schelling, his views on music have attracted relatively little attention. See, however, the following: Herbert M. Schueller, 'Schelling's Theory of the Metaphysics of Music', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 15/4 (1957), 461–476; Carl Dahlhaus, *Klassische und romantische Musikästhetik* (Laaber: Laaber, 1988), 248–256; Enrico Fubini, *History of Music Aesthetics*, trans. Michael Hatwell (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), 272–274; Ian Biddle, 'F. W. J. Schelling's *Philosophie der Kunst*: An Emergent Semiology of Music', in *Music Theory in the Age of Romanticism*, ed. Ian Bent (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 25–36; Andrew Bowie, 'Music and the Rise of Aesthetics', in *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 39–41; Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche*, second edition (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 102–139; Bowie, *Music, Philosophy, and Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), especially 150–152; Berbeli Wanning, 'Schelling', in *Music in German Philosophy: An Introduction*, ed. Stefan Lorenz Sorgner and Oliver Fürbeth, trans. Susan H. Gillespie (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 95–120; Devin Zane Shaw, *Freedom and Nature in Schelling's Philosophy of Art* (London: Continuum, 2010), 118–119. I am grateful to Devin Zane Shaw for sharing material from his book prior to publication.

38 Schelling criticizes Sulzer in the course of rejecting Kant's view of music, which, despite not drawing specifically on Sulzer's *Akzenttheorie*, takes the same broad position that the purpose of music is to move the emotions of the listener. Schelling writes that Kant's explanation of music is 'extremely subjective . . . almost like that of Sulzer, who says that the purpose of music is to awaken the emotions – something that could just as easily be applied to many other things, such as concerts of fragrances or tastes'. *Sämtliche Werke*, series 1, volume 5, 487; Schelling, *Philosophy of Art*, 103.



wholly different view of music from that of Sulzer and of the Enlightenment in general.³⁹ The reason that Schelling is able to afford music such transformed significance on the basis of the same theory of rhythm is that he reinterprets Sulzer's *Akzenttheorie* in the context of a post-Kantian conception of temporality: homogeneous, empty time.

MUSIC, PHILOSOPHY AND THE AKZENTTHEORIE

I noted at the opening of this article that Schelling's discussion of music in the *Philosophie der Kunst* was the first systematized statement of a new view of music that arose among German-speaking thinkers in the years around 1800. The question of the origins of this view of music has been much discussed. One particularly persistent presumption is that it arose in response to contemporary music, particularly that of Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven, with the mature works of Beethoven especially influential. Faced with the wonders of contemporary Viennese music, this presumption goes, contemporary thinkers were compelled to transform their conceptions of the art.⁴⁰

This view has recently been challenged cogently by Mark Evan Bonds in his 2006 book *Music as Thought*.⁴¹ According to Bonds, the music of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was relatively unimportant in the emergence of a new conception of music. Bonds gives three broad reasons for this position. First, the new view of music arose earlier than is often thought, in the late 1790s, before much of the music that is presumed to have inspired it was actually written. The present investigation reinforces this point, for Schelling's lectures on the *Philosophie der Kunst*, the earliest systematic presentation of the new view of music, were first delivered in the academic year 1802–1803, before work had even begun, for example, on Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, the composition with which the rise of the new view of music is most closely associated, because of E. T. A. Hoffmann's celebrated review of 1810.⁴² Second, Bonds observes that the earliest statements of the new view of music rarely name any specific music. Again, the present investigation backs up this claim, for, bar a passing complaint about the bleating of sheep in Haydn's *Creation*, Schelling cites no particular works of music in the *Philosophie der Kunst*.⁴³ Nor does he

39 It is now also apparent that Schelling's equation of the forms of music with those of 'the eternal things' and 'things in themselves' (in the plural) is potentially misleading, for Schelling sees the true nature of reality as being ultimate oneness (with no possibility of plurality). The explanation lies in Schelling's attempt – sidestepped in this article for the sake of simplicity – to introduce into his conception of God a certain kind of difference (*Potenz*, or potency) that, Schelling believes, is not really difference at all. For the present purposes, it is sufficient simply to note that Schelling's terms of reference point beyond the everyday phenomenal world to some greater reality, be it conceived in Platonic terms (the eternal things) or in Kantian terms (things in themselves).

40 A particularly tortuous statement of this perspective is provided by Carl Dahlhaus, who, aware that the new view of music arose before the music with which he wishes to associate it, suggests that these ideas 'predicated the existence of instrumental music' to which it could be appropriately attached. With particular reference to Tieck's (un-systematic) statement of the new view of music in his 1799 essay on the symphony, Dahlhaus writes that Tieck's view of music 'did not find an adequate object until [1810, when] E. T. A. Hoffmann borrowed Tieck's language in order to do justice to Beethoven'. Dahlhaus's desire to attach the new view of music to the masterpieces of the Viennese school, especially those of Beethoven, is so strong that he ends up implying that the new view of music was a response to music that had not yet been written. Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, trans. Roger Lustig (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 65, 90.

41 For an earlier statement of Bonds's position see his widely read article 'Idealism and the Aesthetics of Instrumental Music at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 50/2–3 (1997), 387–420.

42 E. T. A. Hoffmann, 'Recension: *Sinfoni . . . par Louis van Beethoven*', *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 40 and 41 (4 and 11 July 1810), 630–642, 652–659. Translated as 'Review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony', in *E. T. A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings*, ed. David Charlton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 234–251.

43 Schelling writes of briefly of 'musical painting, which only a completely degenerate and sunken sense of taste can find good in music, such as that contemporary sensibility that finds edification in the bleating of the sheep in Haydn's creation music'. *Sämmtliche Werke*, series 1, volume 5, 496; Schelling, *Philosophy of Art*, 112.



show any particular interest in specific works of music in his other writings from this period.⁴⁴ Even Schelling's extensive correspondence from this time does not reveal any particular musical tastes.⁴⁵

Third, Bonds argues that there is a more convincing narrative available: the new view of music 'was driven not by any composer or any particular repertory, but rather by a profound shift in aesthetics extending to the very act of listening itself. Ironically, the debate had been unleashed by Kant's *Critique of [the Power of] Judgment*, the same work that had dismissed instrumental music as something less than a fine art.'⁴⁶ The origin of Schelling's philosophy of music that we have just examined puts us in a position to extend the last stage of Bonds's argument. As we have seen, the route by which Schelling arrived at the new view of music was motivated by changes in philosophy standing well outside that area normally identified as 'aesthetics' or the 'philosophy of art', particularly by changes in philosophy regarding the thorny issue of the nature of time. Indeed, to appreciate the origins of Schelling's conception of music, I argue, one must start not from Kant's *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (*Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 1790), the work in which he devotes most discussion to art and music (among other things), but from the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* – the work in which Kant introduced his mature philosophical system, and in which he set out his radically new view of time.⁴⁷

Granted, my focus has been on a set of lectures explicitly about the 'philosophy of art'. Schelling, however, specifically disavows the idea that the 'philosophy of art' is that branch of philosophy dealing with art, writing in the Introduction to the lectures that 'philosophy is absolutely and essentially one; it cannot be subdivided. Hence, whatever is philosophy at all is philosophy completely and undividedly.'⁴⁸ Schelling also insisted that 'For those already acquainted with my system of philosophy, the philosophy of art will be merely the repetition of that same philosophy in the highest form [*Potenz*]'.⁴⁹ Rather than being that branch of philosophy that deals with art, the philosophy of art is, for Schelling, that mode of philosophizing that comprehends the world, the universe and everything *through* art.

Schelling's view of music was the consequence of transformations at the most abstract level of contemporary philosophy, transformations set in motion by none other than the notoriously unmusical Kant. Given that Schelling was the first to state systematically the new view of music that began to predominate among German-speaking thinkers and critics in the decades after 1800, it may be that a full understanding of this revolution in conceptions of music will necessitate closing our eyes, for a moment, to the music of this period and opening our ears to the clamour of its philosophical debates.

44 The most important of these for a discussion of Schelling's attitudes towards art are the aforementioned *Bruno* of 1802 and the 1800 *System des transcendentalen Idealismus* (*System of Transcendental Idealism*): *Sämmtliche Werke*, series 1, volume 3, 327–634; translated as *System of Transcendental Idealism (1800)*, trans. Peter Heath (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1978).

45 F. W. J. Schelling, *Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, im Auftrag der Schelling-Kommission der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, ed. Jörg Jantzen, Thomas Buchheim, Wilhelm G. Jacobs and Siegbert Peetz (Stuttgart: frommann-holzboog, 1976–), series 3, volume 1: *Briefwechsel 1786–1799*, ed. Irmgard Möller and Walter Schieche (2001), series 3, volume 2, parts 1–2: *Briefwechsel 1800–1802*, ed. Thomas Kisser and Walter Schieche (2010).

46 Bonds, *Music as Thought*, 9.

47 I would also stress that Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* is not primarily a work on, or in, aesthetics, but forms rather that part of his system of philosophy dealing with the mental power (*Kraft*) of judgment. The still frequent translation of *Kritik der Urteilskraft* as 'Critique of Judgment' is potentially misleading in this respect; hence my following the title of the 2000 translation by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews.

48 Schelling, *Sämmtliche Werke*, series 1, volume 5, 365; Schelling, *Philosophy of Art*, 14.

49 Schelling, *Sämmtliche Werke*, series 1, volume 5, 363; Schelling, *Philosophy of Art*, 13.