
Book Review

DODD, JULIAN. *Works of Music: An Essay in Ontology*. Oxford University Press, 286 pp., \$65 cloth.

Reviewed by Margot Wielgus

Two of our most constitutive intuitions about works of music are that they are singular and yet somehow repeatable, and that they are hearable in their entirety. Musicians can perform works in a number of different ways—sometimes the work is stylistically enhanced and sometimes sloppily executed—but, still, the work is recognizable in each playing. The listener hears the work itself in the performance. To explain these intuitions regarding the relationship between work and performance, Julian Dodd presents in *Works of Music: An Essay in Ontology* a simple, face-value version of type/token theory. His work moves from an explication of type/token theory into a detailed defense of the two flanking positions of his overall view: musical Platonism and sonicism. The exposition is structured around the engagement of contemporary views in the ontology of music (nominalism, realism, idealism, contextualism, and instrumentalism, to name a few) to challenge Dodd's own view and to help solve the arising philosophical problems.

Beginning with the requirement of repeatability, Dodd illustrates type/token theory's virtues as the *prima facie* ontology for musical works. Type/token theory claims that musical works exist as types, instantiated in the world by tokens. A performance of Marsalis's *In This House, On This Morning* is a token—a sound-sequence-event—of the type *In This House, On This Morning*. But what exactly is it that makes a token a true token of a work? Works, Dodd explains, are norm-types, or conditions that must be met for a sound-sequence-event to be a type's token. If a sound-sequence-event has “a sufficient number of those normative properties” specified as conditions for being a token of a work, it counts as a token of the type (34). This formulation allows that even if some performances are flawed, they can still qualify as tokens of a work.

After such an intuitive introduction of an ontological theory, the reader's hopes are high. But the implications of such a theory must be weighed. The consequences of claiming types that accord with our intuitions are that types are abstract, unstructured, unchanging entities. This means that types do not exist in space and do not have parts, nor are they temporally or modally flexible. Although these implications may appear quite troubling at first, Dodd attempts to defeat the incurred doubts while avoiding two inadequate ontologies: (1) the self-subsistence of transcendent types, and (2) instantiation as a condition of types' existence. In the interest of relating types closely enough to the world without making them dependent upon manifestation there, Dodd characterizes types as properties. As for the relation of types to the world, Dodd avoids commitment to the existence of conditions that would be impossible to manifest in the world, such as “being a round square” (61). Thus, Dodd positions types near enough to the world to avoid their self-subsistence. He writes, “A type, like a property, exists at [time] *t* just so long as there is some time or other at which it is possible for it to be tokened; and it is compatible with this account that the type be incapable of being instantiated at *t* itself” (67).” This passage also provides an answer to the

instantiation question. The predicate “being born in 2012” has not yet been instantiated. But presumably 2012 will come and its being tokened will be possible. And even if nothing is born in 2012, the predicate will still *have been* possible for tokening. If we take this predicate to be similar to a type, a type’s existence is, likewise, possible without instantiation.

By avoiding self-subsistence and necessary instantiation, the type/token theory dually connects the existence of types to the world while allowing for the absence of tokens. This sort of existence, though, brings up a number of objections with regard to the nature of composition. Temporal inflexibility means eternal existence. Dodd calls the view that types exist eternally “*Platonism* about types” (58). A type can never be created, nor can it be destroyed. The outcome of this eternality, when applied to works of music, is that works *per se* are not created by composers. Instead, Dodd argues, works must be discovered. Dodd defends this inference against the disagreements of his contemporaries on points regarding the nature of creativity, the import of context, and musical appreciation. Here, Dodd supports his view with aesthetic empiricism, the view that only acoustic properties are relevant to the appreciation of a work.

Lastly, and in line with aesthetic empiricism, Dodd defends the second major prong of his theory, sonicism. The position of sonicism is that “whether a sound-event counts as a properly formed token of *W* is determined purely by its acoustic qualitative appearance” (201). Instrumentalists and contextualists oppose this claim by asserting that instrumentation and musico-historical context, respectively, constitute a work’s identity. Instrumentalists hold that instrumentation is important: if a work is composed for the harpsichord, but is performed on a piano, this performance is not identical to the work. According to aesthetic empiricism, nothing is missed if a work sounds the same, whether it is performed on a piano or a Perfect Timbral Synthesizer (205). With regard to contextualism, Dodd allows that although there are good reasons why a work is composed in a particular era, its identity would not be altered by being composed in a different context. Since all that matters is the sound, the compositional context is inessential.

The book ends rather abruptly at the close of the section in defense of sonicism. But with Dodd’s motivating transitions between sections, readers should have no trouble following the arguments and understanding his overall theory. This book motivates a number of excellent questions concerning musical ontology and ontology as it relates to the arts generally. As with many philosophical treatises, readers who disagree with Dodd’s grounding principles may be frustrated by the implications drawn against their own favored commitments. The chance to investigate one’s own intuitions, however, is invaluable. And regardless of readers’ various starting points, this book is an enlightening account of contemporary musical ontology.

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