



COMMENT ON “THE CONCEPT OF MUSIC EDUCATION FROM A PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE”

Wenkai Zhou


The Department of Economics & Management, Dezhou Vocational and Technical College. Dezhou, 253034 - China.

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-4564-1534> |  zhiouzhou0417@163.com

Commented article: LIU, Z. Y. The concept of music education from a philosophical perspective.

Trans/Form/Ação: Unesp journal of philosophy, v. 47, n. 5, e02400161, 2024. Available at:
<https://revistas.marilia.unesp.br/index.php/transformacao/article/view/15083>.

Submission: 26/09/2024 | Decision: 30/09/2024 | Revision: 06/10/2024 | Publication: 20/10/2024

 <https://doi.org/10.1590/0101-3173.2024.v47.n5.e02400306>



This is an article published in open access under a Creative Commons license

COMMENT ON “THE CONCEPT OF MUSIC EDUCATION FROM A PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE”

Wenkai Zhou¹

Commented article: LIU, Z. Y. The concept of music education from a philosophical perspective. **Trans/Form/Ação**: Unesp journal of philosophy, v. 47, n. 5, e02400161, 2024. Available at: <https://revistas.marilia.unesp.br/index.php/transformacao/article/view/15083>.

Music has long been seen as an iconic aspect of human existence and played a key role in the ebbs and flows of emotion, ethics, values and shared experience. Understanding the philosophical underpinnings of music education can shift the view that music is more than a formal subject or extracurricular activity. A good understanding of music education requires a comprehensive understanding of the philosophical methods, history, and discourses of music philosophy, music education, and philosophy of education. The study can be done by analyzing the cultural and social implications of music, as well as how music affects the collective worldview (Liu, 2024).

Though music manifests under various terms (mousikḗ, música, Musik, musikk, muzyka) and assumes various forms, there are three core frameworks through which it can be understood (Bowman, 1998). Music can be seen as an artistic medium, a way for expression that both shapes and mirrors culture. This lens highlights the aesthetic appeal of music as well as its power to evoke strong feelings and convey important ideas. The former also underlines the potential of music as enjoyment or as a tool that creates possibilities for social integration, leading to the rise and preservation of groups. Additionally, music is perceived as an intangible strategy, which is a structural arrangement of sounds that promotes different cognitive skills and leads to enduring patterns of thought. Through accepting these varied viewpoints, we can develop a deeper understanding of the complexity of music and its profound significance in our lives. As it has been indicated in Aristotle’s Poetics, the ancient Greek society did not view music as a work or composition that was considered by the listener; thus, music was not

¹ The Department of Economics & Management, Dezhou Vocational and Technical College. Dezhou, 253034 - China. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-4564-1534>. E-mail: zhiouzhou0417@163.com.

viewed as a work-centered art form. Instead, music was seen as a social activity that possessed social and ethical functions and values. That is, people, process, product, and situated social and ethical values were totally incorporated into the point of view and application of music (Bowman, 1998).

Music was appreciated as a social praxis associated with social concerns concerning status, gender, and worship even when it came to medieval and Renaissance music education (Bowman, 1998). For example, noble children in the medieval era were often taught music as a way to enhance their social status and courtly manners, with young girls learning instruments like the harp or lute to entertain guests. Further, cathedral schools provided teaching on Gregoria's hymn for church purposes since it was also regarded as a way of spiritual training (Bowman, 1998). This is not to suggest that problems associated with structures of music were left uncovered; on the contrary, any structures of music were always seen within a certain history and society, certain demands and experiences, certain values and sensuality. According to Higgins (1998, p. 16), One of the most important features of music is experiential context. Most musical experience throughout history and across cultures has been imbedded in extramusical experience – indeed, it is unimaginable without it – the extramusical has had a decisive impact on the meaning of the music for the listener.

In the early 19th century, a small group of elite male thinkers in a particular cultural, economic, and political situation in Europe developed a concept of aesthetics that viewed the value of music as residing entirely in the formal structure of the musical work contained within the music itself (Bowman, 1998). This concept is also known as formalism, which emphasizes the intrinsic qualities of music such as melody, harmony, and rhythm over association or emotion. They believed that music should be enjoyed for its own sake, without the need for external context or meaning. This perspective had a lasting impact on how music was created and appreciated in later years. When listeners listen aesthetically, they are said to be having an aesthetic experience, a sort of valuable, intellectual and sensual delight. On this somewhat blurry view, 'aesthetic meaning' is rational but ineffable 'worked over' by a unique kind of cognitive module. Musical experience is typically defined as spiritual and miraculous because listening to it is categorized as music 'cognition' or 'perceptual organization,' which is centred on musical objects and shapes (Bowman, 1998).

Education is not limited to viewing music as just a source of fun and leisure, since it becomes a great tool to enhance one's creativity, emotions, and knowledge. It offers students an exclusive form of artistry and prepares them for critical skills and practices that include teamwork, endurance, and self-control. Previous study showed that this type of education does more than help develop critical thinking; it rather assists in improving one's memory, attention span, and group behavior. Students are more devoted to music learning as the teachers do not make music a peripheral subject but find a place to incorporate it throughout

the contents of the students’ education (Bowman, 1998). The activities encourage better relationships in the development of their self-potential through a greater increase in self-confidence related to access to educational boundaries.

Bowman (1998) reveals the relationship between music and education. He put an overarching query: What are the meanings behind music? By these words, language communicates exact ideas, while music appears more ambiguous most of the time. Nevertheless, Bowman argues that music may be very significant by virtue of its own as compared to linguistic meaning, which is often indirect. He posits that it is possible for music to express feelings, states of mind, and even stories conveyed without any spoken words at all. For him, meaning lies within its construction, arrangement, and the effect it has on the audience.

There are various philosophical concepts, including referentialism, formalism, expressionism, and contextualism, showing how such a distinct phenomenon happens in the case of art, such as sounds realized through instructions given by professional musicians (Bowman, 1998). Referentialism presupposes that music is more than just a framework for certain emotions, events, or abstractions. music is seen as a specific emotion, event, or abstraction. In this sense, music works like a referential language because it engages in the symbolisation or representation of an external reference. Formalism interprets the importance of music as a hierarchical and architectural foundation. According to this theory, one should focus more on the actual melody, harmony and rhythm in music rather than figuring out how the outside world perceives it. In the concept of expressionism, music is viewed as a medium that conveys the emotions of the composer or performer. The composer attempts to convey certain feelings through it. Contextualism states that music has a core meaning related to features such as the cultural, social, and historical background in which music continuously evolves. The interpretation of certain music is not fixed, but rather undergoes continuous transformation based on the listener’s individual background, the specific listening context, or the historical period in which the song is played.

In practice, modern music education frequently intertwines these seemingly opposing theories. For instance, the emotional expressiveness found in music—guided by its formal structures—aligns with an educational approach that balances external influences (heteronomy) with internal comprehension (autonomy). A nuanced pedagogy would weave these perspectives together, offering students a richer, more encompassing grasp of music, not only as a technical craft but as an emotionally resonant experience. This integrative methodology allows students to both intellectually dissect music and emotionally connect with it. By blending the principles of both autonomy and heteronomy, music educators can craft an educational journey that fosters both analytical acumen and emotional depth.

REFERENCES

BOWMAN, W. **Philosophical Perspectives on Music**. NY: Oxford University Press, 1998.

HIGGINS, K. M. **The Music of Our Lives**. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. 1998.

LIU, Z. Y. The concept of music education from a philosophical perspective. **Trans/Form/Ação: Unesp journal of philosophy**, v. 47, n. 5, e02400161, 2024. Available at: <https://revistas.marilia.unesp.br/index.php/transformacao/article/view/15083>.