

Chegados ao fim da leitura do texto conjunto de McKenna e Pereboom o juízo que se faz é que esta obra é incontornável para todo aquele que quiser pensar a questão do livre-arbítrio no modo em que ela se faz sentir na contemporaneidade. Uma vez que lida também com noções como a causalidade e o determinismo ele não deixa de ser importante para todo o estudioso cujo objeto de reflexão seja o domínio mais alargado da metafísica. Para lá disso, por exemplo, o seu tratamento do argumento da consequência é leitura obrigatória para quem quiser trabalhar seriamente o argumento em questão. A sua leitura é exigente, razão pela qual este não será o livro ideal para o debutante, antes apropriado para o leitor um pouco mais avançado, mas recompensadora, sugerindo ainda ao leitor pistas para leituras posteriores.

José Guilherme B. A. Sutil

Doutorando. Departamento de Filosofia, Comunicação e Informação
Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Coimbra

jose_guilherme@sapo.pt

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Roger Scruton, *Music as an Art*. London: Bloomsbury, 2018, 263 pp. ISBN: 978-1-4729-5571-5

Recently, Roger Scruton published a new book on music. *Music as an Art* joins the two other reflections made by the British philosopher, public commentator and author, on the subject of music: *Understanding Music*, published in 2009, and *The Aesthetics of Music*, published in 1997. Some of Scruton's books were translated to Portuguese, like the recent *Tolos, Impostores e Incendiários* (2018), *As Vantagens do Pessimismo* (2016), *Estética da Arquitectura* (2010) and *Beleza* (2009).

In the introduction to *Music as an Art* Roger Scruton claims to further pursue the lines of inquiry launched in *The Aesthetics of Music* and *Understanding Music*. The book is arranged in two parts: "Philosophical Investigations", containing six chapters on different subjects related to music, and "Critical Explorations", counting on eleven chapters centered on several composers, film music, opera, pop music and the music of the future.

The first philosophical investigation starts with the question "When is a tune?". Scruton tries to understand what distinguishes a "genuine melody" from a mere sequence of pitches. He finds out that a melody is a purely intentional object of musical perception and, as so, has an internal constraint exerted by every note on every other, as well as boundaries, this is, a beginning and an end. A melody must follow a direction, each note leading to its successor. One of the implications of such claim is that dodecaphonist and serialist composers end up making no real music, as they seem not to have a genuinely melodic thinking. In dodecaphonic or serial music "notes stand against each other", as Scruton puts it. Schönberg would agree with him about

it. What Schönberg wouldn't agree with is Scruton's position, which is implicit in this first investigation, about real music having to remain within the fields of tonality. Although Scruton makes a fair point in explaining when can a sequence of pitches be called a melody, he precipitates to the conclusion that music which has no "genuine melody" is not real music.

In the second philosophical investigation – "Music and Cognitive Science" – the author questions the cognitive sciences' approach to music and underlines that it cannot bring an answer to the philosophical questions about music. The most important question – whose answer Scruton finds lacking in evolutionary psychology, in the computational theory of the brain, as well as in the speculative cognitive sciences that claim to be a link between music and language – is "what makes an experience of sound into an experience of music?". Scruton's small step contribution to answer this philosophical question is inspired by Dmitri Tymoczko's *Geometry of Music* (2011), a treatise on tonal theory, history and analysis. He proposes an "imagined space of music", a purely *intentional* space of intentional objects without independent material reality at all. This space is constituted by the way we hear sound sequences as organized geometric metaphors. It is this geometrical organization of sounds that we perceive as music and that is absent in "modernist experiments" and in music which employs scales that defy harmonic order. For Scruton, sounds are music only when we perceive them as organized. However, this misses to explain in what extent are speech, scales or *Muzak* different than music. These two questions were already posed and addressed by Jerrold Levinson, in *Music, Art and Metaphysics* (1990) and Andy Hamilton, in *Aesthetics and Music* (2007).

The third philosophical investigation is titled "Music and the Moral Life". Its aim is to open the path to a theory for understanding musical expression. According to Scruton, expression in music is a manifestation of the moral life and expressive properties belong to the *meaning* of a work of music. He starts with the question "can musical idioms exhibit moral virtues and moral vices?". Although the use of the terms *vice* and *virtue* for describing musical idioms does not, in itself, signify anything about the moral impact or meaning of music in general, Scruton states that it can say something, about particular works of music, that can improve or impoverish the moral temper of humanity. This philosophical investigation on musical expression ends up claiming that listening to a noble work of music makes the listeners feel noble emotions and listening to a decadent work of music makes the listeners feel decadent emotions.

In the fourth philosophical investigation – "Music and the Transcendental" – the author starts by denoting a difference between the *listening culture* of the 19th century, when the idea of music as giving access to the transcendental became popular in German Romanticism, and our present-day context of a *hearing culture*. Scruton's agenda is to defend the idea that some music presents the transcendental, that way giving access to the ineffable, criticizing Andy Hamilton's theory about the real essence of music being delivered by the physical activity of sound alone and its

attributes. Before condemning our hearing culture, which cannot grant access to the transcendental aesthetic experience, Scruton explains that the “sublime expressions of emotion” in music “endow empirical emotions with a completeness and purity that in everyday life they could never attain” (p. 84). As such, real music can present us with the ineffable, the transcendental.

The fifth philosophical investigation states a defense of tonality, defined as “the strict use of the diatonic scale and functional harmony as in the ‘common practice’ of Western art music. The features of the diatonic system are presented as what we recognize when we hear music, while the experimental avant-garde and serial music are again declined by Scruton for being incapable of “delivering anything comparable to what was given to us by the great tradition of tonal melody and harmony” (p. 102). Just before, Scruton had written that “we bring to the serial piece a ‘listening grammar’ shaped by tonal expectation” (p. 102). This would have to mean that the incapacity of avant-garde and serial music against tonal music is shared among its listeners’ expectations. But again, the author criticizes the experimental avant-garde for presupposing an existing audience, while, for instance, jazz, R&B, rock, pop, hip-hop, EDM, house and techno music create an audience, because they stand in natural diatonic fields. Scruton underlines that, since Schönberg’s proposal of a break with tonality (in the 1920), no “canon of acknowledged masterpieces, composed according to his principles and accepted into the repertoire” (p. 87) emerged. One could ask, nevertheless, how political, social, economic and institutional intricacies affect this entrance and acceptance of “modern music” in the repertoire, as well as what makes functional tonality – a practice that was constructed in the 17th and 18th centuries, theorized by Rameau in his 1722 *Treatise on Harmony* – an *a priori* privileged way of composing music.

In the sixth philosophical investigation – “German Idealism and the Philosophy of Music” – Scruton looks for the contribute of German Idealism to the Philosophy of Music. After discussing arguments by Leibniz, Kant, Fichte, Hegel and Schopenhauer he proposes a theory of musical understanding according to which “sounds become music when they are organized in such a way as to invite acousmatic listening” (p. 124), this is being heard as listener addressed. We hear music when we intentionally over-reach to “its claims”. In this philosophical investigation, Scruton elaborates over metaphysical claims of German Idealism – relating its conceptions to music – and presents the notion of “over-reaching intentionality of interpersonal attitudes” as a key issue in understanding music.

After the philosophical investigations, part two of the book begins with a series of critical explorations on composers Franz Schubert and his *Quartettsatz* from 1820, Jean-Philippe Rameau and his description of the topology of tonal space in 1722, Benjamin Britten and his song cycle *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings* from 1943, and David Matthews. Roger Scruton pays tribute to these composers by pointing out the expressive character of their compositions, their melodic ability, their use of tonality, their treatment of dissonance, and their models of true musical

development (like Britten's polytonality or Matthews' "emancipation of consonance"). The fifth critical exploration delivers a critique on Philip Kitcher's book *Deaths in Venice* (2013), which presents a philosophical reading of Thomas Mann's novel, Benjamin Britten's opera and Luchino Visconti's film, by the US American philosopher.

The sixth critical exploration centers on Pierre Boulez (1925-2016) and his music. Scruton attests that Boulez' compositions are not music and accuses the dead French composer of manipulating the French subsidy, as well as of instigating "a false conception of music" (p. 177). In Scruton's provocative opinion, the founding of the *Institute de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique* (IRCAM), in 1977, was a "cultural *coup d'état*" (p. 174), depleting, since then, people's access to great music. The acoustic and compositional experiences promoted by Boulez and others at IRCAM don't express the "virtual causality" and "inner dynamic" that Scruton finds essential in great music. The only true historical significance of Pierre Boulez is then, according to Scruton, the fact that he is "a by-product of a disastrous war".

The two critical explorations that follow focus on film music and opera. In the first one a redemption of music composed for film is done. Scruton compares film and ballet music and praises such ways of promoting symphonic music. In the second one a critique is directed not towards opera music but to opera's "new style of production". Scruton criticizes public funding criteria for opera in Britain, as well as the "over-production" which "spoils" this art form. Opera is not an expensive art, says Scruton, it is the producers who are expensive.

After a brief account and rejection of Nietzsche's critique on Richard Wagner, in the ninth critical exploration, Scruton dedicates the last two chapters to "The Music of the Future" and "The Culture of Pop". The first of these final critical explorations is inspired by Wagner's essay *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft* (*The Artwork of the Future*), first published in 1849. Scruton starts with a praise on Wagner's music and an explanation of the "radical break" that happened within Western Art Music in the first avant-garde of the 20th century. He elaborates a tough critique on the compulsion of this "new kind of music" to defy traditional *tonalism* and on the absence of melody in these "acoustical experiments". Four developments of 20th century music are slated by Scruton as responsible for "the growing gap between serious music and the audience on which it depends" (p. 220): 1) the attack on tonality made by Theodor W. Adorno; 2) the invention of serialism in the 1920s by Arnold Schönberg; 3) total or integral serialism that emerged in the 1950s with Pierre Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen and Luigi Nono; and 4) the replacement of tones by sounds started by Edgard Varèse and Pierre Schaeffer in the first half of the 20th century. Other than these four moments underlined by Scruton, two more aspects are described as placing obstacles in the search for the renewal of our musical tradition: on one side there is the ubiquitous presence of "easy music" in our every-day life; on the other, there is the despotism exerted by composers as Boulez plus institutional funding and support on behalf of "difficult music". In search for the music of the future, Scruton

makes a plea for tonality and for the classic concert hall music tradition which is being assaulted by the avant-garde. “It is only”, Scruton states, “the loved and repeated repertoire that will ensure the survival of music, and to be loved and repeated music requires a dedicated audience” (p. 214).

The last critical exploration appraises pop music and its culture. Scruton briefly introduces a critique on Adorno’s disavow on popular music, both stating that the Great American Songbook is previous to an imposed culture industry and that there is much to be valued in the “spontaneous taste of ordinary people” (p. 232). He then follows scolding some of the features of pop music: “beat” instead of an internal structure of rhythm; no melody, as described in the first chapter of the book; and a purely vertical harmony, without melodic construction of the chords. Other aspects of the culture of pop music are censured, such as the idolatry of the “pop star” and the fact that music appears to be secondary regarding this merchandized totemic role. Scruton concludes affirming that pop and rock music have remained the same, merely repeating themselves since the beginning of the century.

Although there is no closing or unifying statement in this book, which can more easily be understood as a series of essays, Scruton’s more general claims in *Music as an Art* lean on the most discussed themes in the Philosophy of Music. The ontological question is posed by describing the nature of the elements of musical works, such as melody and tonality, which Scruton finds essential in music. Understanding, value and the expression of emotions in music are presented in relation to each other. These are relevant and broadly considered themes in 21st century Philosophy of Music to which *Music as an Art* brings no novelty. In fact, Scruton finds himself recapping most of his old ideas from *The Aesthetics of Music* and *Understanding Music*, paying very little attention to what has since been debated. Most of the essays in *Music as an Art* are available online (at www.roger-scruton.com and www.futuresymphony.org) in slightly different versions.

In Scruton’s book, what seems noteworthy for the contemporary debate about Western Art Music is the reiterated acknowledgement of the split between art music and the audience. Though Scruton believes that “modern music” is responsible for this rupture, and for such reason public funding shouldn’t support it, which is a perspective that can and should be questioned, his probing both of the hearing culture and of the social and political matters related to art music today is significant for 21st century philosophical investigations on music.

Margarida Teixeira Neves

Instituto de Estudos Filosóficos – UI&D

Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Coimbra

nevesmargarida87@gmail.com

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