

**Robust Praxialism and the Praxial Turn in Music Education:  
A Reply to Philip Alperson**

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The following is a slightly edited version of the text of my 20 minute reply to Philip Alperson's much longer paper, "Robust Praxialism," given at ISPME, June 10, 2010 in Helsinki, Finland. The only substantive changes are those that attempt to take into account a *few* of the differences between the paper Alperson submitted for my reply and the paper he actually delivered, and the endnotes. At the time, no page references could be cited, and some of the quotations (below) taken from the final draft I was given were not included in the paper Alperson actually read. I have no idea at present whether they will appear in the published version. A much longer and more detailed reply to Alperson's paper, one comparable in length to it, will be available in this space later this year (2011).

*Music as Praxis*

Concerning praxialism, Alperson argues that understanding "music as a species of art" leaves out much, if not most of what music more broadly understood has to offer. Instead, he acknowledges that "music is produced and enjoyed in a wide range of contexts and circumstances in which music can be understood as having many different kinds of functions," and thus firmly confirms the praxial nature of music and its many functions.

There are myriad instances of music—work songs, anthems, sport songs, dirges, religious chants, and so on—whose main function is not necessarily or perhaps even primarily tied to a concept of art at all, . . . Music plays an important role in the fabric of society, serving to regulate behavior, enforce compliance with social norms and mores, integrate society by marking significant events in the life of a community, inducing behavior that may be disintegrative to society, enhancing personal relationships, having a healing or restorative function, or serving to further particular political aims, raise awareness of oppressive conditions, and encouraging action to correct (or foster) oppressive forces in society.

Yet these many diverse praxial functions have been demeaned, disregarded or denied by conventional aesthetics and by most music education philosophy predicated on aesthetics.

In contrast, Alperson correctly notes that praxial philosophy proceeds *inductively*, arguing from the empirical evidence of music's many functional values in everyday life.

Thus, he argues, it is not wise to start philosophical inquiry "by attempting a totalizing

account of the philosophy of music education based on some essentialized notion of music.” Inquiry about music’s importance in life and in schooling, he argues, should instead start with the ample evidence of music’s praxial diversity.

Yet, his “robust praxialism” *is* predicated on just such an essentialized notion: that music’s praxial benefits depend on the appeal of its aesthetic essence. Despite his repeated use of aesthetic qualifiers, one looks in vain for any stipulation that distinguishes aesthetic experiences ontologically from ordinary experiences, aesthetic properties epistemologically from non-aesthetic properties, or aesthetic values from musical values or praxial benefits.<sup>1</sup> This lack of precision may be due to the fact, as one aesthetician candidly admits, that “many philosophers are quite skeptical about the possibility of defining key aesthetic terms . . . or of devising theories that explain what is special or unique about them” (Eaton 1988, 10).<sup>2</sup>

### *Praxialism as anti-aesthetics*

Despite admitting that “there are many ways to construe the idea of aesthetic experience and aesthetic qualities,”<sup>3</sup> he nonetheless claims that, in denying aesthetic essentialism, the praxialism of Elliott, Bowman, and Regelski fails to robustly enough account for why people are drawn to music.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, he quotes Elliott and Bowman out of context, ignores Elliott’s (1995) chapters on the phenomenology of musical experience as ‘felt’ and about music’s capacity for eliciting affective experience and “flow.” And he fails to engage Bowman’s published arguments against the philosophical imprecision of aesthetic theorizing and language. Against Alperson’s straw-man, I will briefly summarize why praxialism can do without aesthetics—the “s” being important.<sup>5</sup>

First of all, regarding music as praxis recognizes that its values are *empirically pragmatic*, not matters of “aesthetics” as the term has traditionally been used to refer to a hypothesized transcendental, occult, ecstatic, exotic *ontology* reserved for special moments of contemplation, according to a disinterested aesthetic attitude, practiced competently only by ideally informed listeners, and as above everyday life. Regarding music as praxis puts aside such metaphysical speculations and stresses its down-to-earth values, appeal, and pragmatic benefits. In so doing, we in fact gain a *more* robust rationale *and* philosophical basis for music education, one that is comprehensible to music teachers, their students, and the public.

Accordingly, musical meaning, value, and appreciation are seen in *use*, with different musical practices sharing a ‘family resemblance’ collectively called “music.” As Wittgenstein writes, “we don’t start from certain words”—for example, from aesthetic terms and principles—“but from certain occasions or activities”—in other words, from musical practices (n.d., 3). For Wittgenstein, that someone “appreciates” music is empirically shown in his or her musical choices.<sup>6</sup>

Secondly, praxialism dispenses with aesthetics because, as Alperson admits,<sup>7</sup> the many terms, concepts, and speculative aporia upon which conventional aesthetics depends are irreparably contested. Aestheticians agree on just about nothing!<sup>8</sup> In fact, in his paper Alperson critiques the premises of the leading schools of aesthetics. Furthermore, many analytic philosophers have taken due note of the problems of aesthetics<sup>9</sup> and have criticized aesthetics for lacking appropriate philosophical substance and rigor.<sup>10</sup>

As to the *relevance* of aesthetics, Christopher Small writes of Edward Lippman's history of musical aesthetics (Lipman 1992):<sup>11</sup>

it bore very little relation to anything I recognized in my own musical experience, as listener, or as performer, or as composer. . . . I just could not make myself believe that so universal, and so concrete a human practice as music should need such complicated and abstract explanations. (Small 1997, 1).<sup>12</sup>

Philosopher Michael Proudfoot agrees, noting that

such an inadequacy to our experience of art has been evident, a result, I believe, partly of aestheticians' preoccupation with what it is to treat something 'aesthetically', and partly from a concentration on works of art in isolation from the circumstances in which they are actually created or appreciated. (Proudfoot 1988, 850).<sup>13</sup>

In his paper, Alperson did avoid concentrating on music in isolation from its praxial circumstances. But he also argued that "it is possible to save the idea of aesthetic experience and the attitude appropriate to its contemplation by widening the range of what might be thought to be a candidate for appreciation from an aesthetic point of view." However, this attempt to "save the idea of aesthetic experience" overlooks that any argument for the apodeictic status of "aesthetic experience" is an attempt to pass off an *evaluative judgment* as an *analytic term* and thus commits a category error: as philosopher Jean-Marie Schaeffer (2000) puts it, it commits the *logical fallacy* of basing "an ontic category on an evaluative category" (64).<sup>14</sup>

Since inconclusive arguments exist concerning virtually every term, theory, or premise of aesthetic theorizing,<sup>15</sup> mere mortals, such as music teachers, typically greet such contradictions<sup>16</sup> as Ivory Tower equivocations and intellectualist affectations. However, this hasn't prevented some from relying uncritically on noble and profound sounding aesthetic *rationales*.<sup>17</sup> Thus, despite the veritable Babel of vague and bewildering aesthetic discourse issuing from aestheticians, Bennett Reimer (1989b) claimed that the aesthetic paradigm "provides coherence and longevity" (26) for music

educators.<sup>18</sup> However, despite (or because of) such high-minded rationales, an acute “legitimation crisis”<sup>19</sup> has music educators increasingly having to defend and justify the aesthetic virtues claimed by music education as aesthetic education.

I also want to mention Wayne Bowman’s important 2006 editorial on aesthetics in a special issue of the journal *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education*.<sup>20</sup> In brief, his argument is that aesthetics and its terms are simply not *needed* to account for music’s indisputable appeal and values. Indeed, he argues, the very ‘utility’ of the term *aesthetic* “was due in no small part to an elusiveness and vagueness that permitted its use wherever an affirmative adjective was needed: aesthetic this, aesthetic that, aesthetic whatever.”<sup>21</sup> Elsewhere Bowman writes:

My biggest concerns stem precisely from the term's meaninglessness and from people's misguided tendencies (in spite of this) to assume that ‘aesthetic’ names something necessary and sufficient to *musical* experience, something useful in its description, something that contributes in important ways to processes of music education. ... If aesthetic experience and aesthetic meaning and aesthetic value refer to some quality . . . shared by music, drama, poetry, painting, sunsets, and elegant mathematical formulas—just the beginning of the kind of list one would require, . . . —then I'm pretty sure it's not pointing to anything especially distinctive in music. ... We can talk, think, and act more clearly as music educators if we use other language” (personal communication, 2010).

### *Aisthesis*

Consequently, we don’t *need* to rely on aesthetics to account for the distinctive and powerful affective appeal of music. We need only to rely on the ancient Greek concept of *aisthesis*, and on “aesthesiology,”<sup>22</sup> the many disciplines that study the senses. In particular, in a recent analysis, artist, semiotician and philosopher Katya Mandoki (2007)<sup>23</sup> returns to aisthesis as knowledge and cognition linked to bodily sensation, and to the range of terms “which exhibit *family resemblances* with the common root ‘*sen*’ all of which are related to the basic concept of sensibility: *sentiment*, *sensation*, *sensual*,

*sensitive, sensible, sentient, sensorial, sensational, sensuous, (common) sense, sense as meaning, sense as reason, sensing as feeling, and so on*” (46; italics original).<sup>24</sup> For the same reason, symbolist poet Paul Valery (1945) proposed the term “esthetic”<sup>25</sup> to reassert the immediacy of feeling that had been *anesthetized* by conventional aesthetics’ intellectualist denial of the body—one problem (among others) duly noted by postmodern critics of aesthetics.<sup>26</sup>

Mandoki (2007) describes aisthesis in terms of what she calls “latching-on.”<sup>27</sup> “Instead of mystic ‘contemplation’ that cancels the somatic condition of the subject,” Mandoki adopts a bodily metaphor derived from “the act of *latching-on* to the nipple and thriving from it” (67).<sup>28</sup> She thus metaphorically extends “this primordial archetype of bonding between mother and child” (67) to the strong appeal of various heightened sensory experiences. “In the act of *latching-on*,” she writes, “subjects are coupled to their objects by their form in diverse registers of experience . . .” (67). Such latching-on, she notes, “sharpens one or several senses simultaneously. . .” (67); for example, “hearing is tuned more than any other sense when we are captivated by music . . .” (67). “There is,” she stresses, “a certain orality, metaphorically speaking, in aisthesis when we nourish ourselves through the world” (67).

In contrast, she writes, “the ‘disinterested delight’ so common in aesthetic theory, is denied by the concrete experience of the vehement appetite in aisthesis” (68). In fact, “not only since we are born but also when we wake up every morning, moment by moment we seek objects for latching-on” (68). In sum, “the term *latching-on* implies fascination, seduction, impetus, nutrition, and appetite” (68), particularly in contrast to

disembodied contemplation. And, most importantly, “*latching-on* is an activity” and thus stands in stark contrast to the traditional stipulation of an “aesthetic attitude” (68).

Mandoki also acknowledges “collective *latching-on*” (70) and thereby accounts for music’s appeal in all manner of social events, from concerts to weddings. This capacity is also affirmed by cognitive psychologist William Benzon (2001) who writes: “Music is a medium through which individual brains are coupled together in shared activity” (23).<sup>29</sup> Thus the metaphor of *latching-on* nicely explains music’s affective appeal and robust praxial functions without recourse to aesthetic this, aesthetic that, aesthetic whatever.

#### *Aesthetic Properties and Principles*

We may thus also wonder what musical features Alperson’s many references to “aesthetic properties” names or identifies? On this topic, Theodore Gracyk, whom he cites approvingly in another connection, writes that “aesthetic terms pick out aesthetic properties” (2007, 77). These properties, in turn, support *aesthetic evaluations* of music (77). However, Gracyk nonetheless denies that such evaluations *depend* on aesthetic terminology and claims, instead, that “evaluating music requires learned habits of listening” (77). He explains further that aesthetic properties (examples of which he gives as “expressive power, formal ugliness, and monotony”—all ordinary words!) “are contextually relative to what the listener finds salient, which depends on a disposition to regard specific features as standard” (84).

However, learning to regard particular features of certain musics as “standard” is just what “standards” of musicianship, listenership, and artistry involve and they are typically expressed in non-aesthetic, sometimes musical, and usually functional terms

typical of a particular musical praxis. Gracyk may have this in mind when claiming that “competent listening attends to whatever is salient. But this is a principle for evaluating listeners, not music” (85)! And, according to Gracyk, since equally competent listeners can have different judgments, they must be using different aesthetic *principles* (86). Yet, he writes, “the most obvious problem with [aesthetic] principles is that the resulting evaluation is not necessarily an aesthetic one” because “evaluation can be separated from the experience of what is being evaluated” (87). More perplexingly, he adds that “many aesthetic properties are only apparent when the experience is directed by extramusical knowledge” (93) possessed by the *ideal* listener or critic—such as historical information (94-95). However, after detailing the many “serious problems with postulating an ideal listener” (99), Gracyk concludes his 26 page discourse on aesthetic properties and principles with recourse to the different functions of music and thus to praxis:

Rather than endorse the one best response (whichever conforms to evaluative principles, or the response of the ideal critic), we should explore ways that *different musical categories serve different nonmusical functions*. Because a single musical performance or musical work can belong to many different musical categories, different aesthetic properties will emerge in different *functional* contexts. (99; italics added).

So, it appears that so-called “aesthetic properties” are actually attention-eliciting *aesthetic* properties, patterns, or features that are salient for ‘selective attention’ according to different musical practices and listeners—which, again, is the musicianship, listenership, artistry (etc.) that praxial theory addresses in the commonly used, non-aesthetic musical terminology of particular musical practices.

### *Praxis and Practice*

Finally, in his account of a robust praxialism that depends on an aesthetic essentialism for music, Alperson managed to avoid using the word “praxis” even once. But important philosophical distinctions exist between the “praxis” of praxialism and

“practice.” First, mention of a “practice” can simply refer to skills. While musical skills are central to any musical practice, it is less obvious that a comparable body of stable skills exist as regards teaching it.<sup>30</sup> And, until very recently, conventional aesthetic theory has been mainly silent about the variables of musical performance skills.<sup>31</sup> However, arguments have been offered by those promoting music as aesthetic education that young students’ musical skills are not fully meritorious on aesthetic grounds and that music education should focus instead on teaching concepts said to be needed to appreciatively respond to music that exemplifies appropriate aesthetic heights.<sup>32</sup>

Secondly, “practice” often describes *mindless* habits. Thus, such references in music education often indiscriminately identify routines—musical and pedagogical—that lack professional accountability. In contrast, a third sense of “practice” is akin to the pragmatic habit of “reflective practice,” but it does not seem to be as characteristic of music teaching as it should be. Aesthetic assumptions often disincline music teachers from such problematizing of teaching, and thus any teaching is regarded as “good enough” if it deals with “good music” and “good methods”—the latter as identified as “good” before use (Regelski 2002).

Furthermore, the Greek word “praxis” is translated *not* as “practice” but as “action” (Peters 1967, 163), and thus it participates in the widespread *action theory* of philosophy and the social sciences. “Action” is distinguished in action theory from mere “activity” on the basis of intentionality: by what an action is ‘about’ or pragmatically ‘for’. Thus, for Aristotle, actions that follow from mindful choice—in Greek, *proairēsis*—fall within both the practical *and* ethical spheres (Peters 1967, 163).

For Aristotle, the “right ends” of any praxis, the goods aimed at by its actions (Peters 1967, 163), are *first* decided on by philosophy (i.e., what Aristotle called *theōria*), *then* the “right means” of action are chosen according to the criteria of the practical needs at stake (Aristotle 1988, 154-168).<sup>33</sup> In this “praxis” is similar to “reflective practice” that facilitates “right ends.” Failure to identify philosophically warranted “right ends,” however, leads to all manner of *methodolatry* (Regelski 2002) and other mischief in pursuit of taken-for-granted ends and values, chief among which are various assumptions that *musical* experience is essentially *aesthetic* experience: thus, if the assumed “right ends” are simply “having aesthetic experiences,” then promoting *any* musical activities or experiences qualifies as good teaching.

Moreover, praxis is a “doing” undertaken on behalf of people—in our case, students—while focus on performance is the domain of *technē* and *poiēsis*, or “excellent *making*.” Emphasizing praxis thus stresses the ‘doings’ of *all* forms of musicking, not just performing. The oft-repeated mischaracterization that praxial theory is “for performers only” is thus egregiously ill-informed, misleading, and philosophically disingenuous.

Furthermore, the neo-Marxian and critical theorist’s understanding of “praxis” is action undertaken in and on one’s lifeworld to improve it for one’s self and for others.<sup>34</sup> Music as praxis is thus both a source of personal agency and a primary resource for *performing sociality*.<sup>35</sup> Music regarded as praxis also shares in the recent “practice turn” in contemporary social theory where sociality and culture are understood praxially.<sup>36</sup> As Zygmunt Bauman (1999) summarizes: “The concept of culture . . . transcends the immediate, naïve datum of private experience” (94-95) and “the community rather than

mankind . . . is therefore the medium and bearer of praxis” (95).<sup>37</sup> The praxial role of music as sociality—as culture with a small “c”—is among the strongest reasons for acknowledging its potency in everyday life and its relevance for education.

Finally, praxis has an ethical connotation. Its active form is *phronēsis*, an ethical criterion to be prudent and care-full (Peters 1967, 157). When translated as “practice,” this ethical sense of praxis is altogether negated. Mal-*praxis* is not the failure to observe “standard practice,” since there are no such standard practices in the helping professions. It is a failure to observe the profession’s ethical *standards of care*. Lacking this ethical sense of praxis, all teaching is “good enough.”

### *Conclusions*

The primary advantage of praxial theory for music education is that *music* is, first of all, regarded as praxis, with all of the down-to-earth values of its praxial role and socio-personal benefits as detailed by the social sciences and advanced by social philosophy and theory. In addition, *music education* as praxis more fully professionalizes music education. Professional accountability thus becomes a matter not only of “good results” stipulated in *musical* terms, but also in *ethical* and *educational* terms, and particularly in terms of the lasting musical contributions music education should make to life and society.

Finally, praxialism clearly doesn’t *need* aesthetic speculations to be robust; it *is* robust without them on aisthesis grounds and, in fact, is more robustly effective without hypothesizing or hypostasizing an aesthetic ghost in the machine.<sup>38</sup> Praxial theory allows music teachers to focus on teaching *music*, understood *musically* in the common musical and functional terms of its various practices. Music education should thus continue to

move “beyond aesthetics,” to borrow Noël Carroll’s book of that title (2001), with its Aristotelian “favoring of practice over theory,” as none other than arch aesthetic formalist Peter Kivy writes approvingly.<sup>39</sup> Un-burdened by the unnecessary ballasts of aesthetic this, aesthetic that, aesthetic whatever, the *praxial turn in music education* points in newly beneficial directions.

It may be that some in the aesthetic education choir will be receptive to Alperson’s argument—except for the dissonance of his endorsement of music’s intrinsic praxial nature. However, I hope I have offered enough to incline some here today to consider new tunes, explore new themes, and consult the exciting and promising literature the “practice turn” in contemporary social theory offers for music education philosophy and praxis.

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<sup>1</sup> Similarly undefined, yet made frequent recourse to as though unproblematic or not subject to critique, are references to "aesthetic properties," "musical expressiveness," "expressive meaning," and "specific aesthetic understandings."

<sup>2</sup> For just such an attempt to define and describe aesthetic experience and to distinguish its ontology from other experiences, see Reimer 1989a, 100-110. However, as Raymond Williams has written, "there is something irresistibly displaced and marginal about the now common and limiting phrase 'aesthetic considerations', especially when contrasted with practical or utilitarian considerations . . ." (Williams 1983, 32). The vagaries of the term "aesthetic" are expanded in the *New Keywords* edition of William's classic by Bennett et al. (2005, 1-3), where recent social theory is also brought into the fray. Social theory challenges many of the metaphysical and speculative premises of aesthetics, and its findings are suppressed when music's praxial nature is denied.

<sup>3</sup> Thus allowing for copious instances of the *fallacy of equivocation*, where the meaning of "aesthetic" shifts from instance to instance of its use, as Bowman notes below: "aesthetic this, aesthetic that, aesthetic whatever." See, e.g., n. 7.

<sup>4</sup> The literature calling aesthetics into question is large and growing within the philosophy of art (see notes 8, 14, 26, 31 for some selected sources). An even-handed précis of the general trend is given by Joughin & Malpas (2003, 1-23) who offer a challenge "to the image of the old-style academic aesthete sitting in his (and it was always his) ivory tower and handing down judgements about the good and the bad in art and culture with a blissful disregard for the politics of his pronouncements" (1). To this Mandoki (2007) adds: "Aestheticians continue to work alone in the museums, libraries and art galleries with their coffee table books and academic journals so as not to be disturbed by the smell, heat, and sweat of everyday life" (13). Mandoki's sharp critique (1-71) of "the labyrinths of aesthetics" (viz., the "problems," "fetishes," "myths," and "fears" of aesthetics) is particularly damaging to the claims of traditional aesthetic theorizing.

<sup>5</sup> Without denying, on the other hand, the self-fulfilling prophecy of the Thomas Theorem (after W. I. Thomas, 1863 – 1947, influential University of Chicago sociologist) that belief in the reality of something (e.g., God, racial superiority, aesthetic experience) can result in certain consequences even when that belief may be false or unverifiable. Thus, those who engage with music in *expectation* of what they have learned

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to call “aesthetic experience” will no doubt call their *musical* experiences “aesthetic.” In fact, aesthetic terms—most notably the very idea of a distinct ontology of “aesthetic experience”—are passed on by “interjection” (see Wittgenstein, quoted below in n. 6), by someone’s *evaluative* characterization of an experience (i.e., their expression of approval) as “aesthetic.” This is how anyone comes to learn the word “aesthetic” at all; as opposed to, say, learning the meaning of the word “red” ostensibly—which, unlike “aesthetic,” is intersubjectively confirmed by being pointed to (which is what “ostensive” means). There is, therefore, no ostensive ‘pointing to’ or analytic definition of “aesthetic experience,” only subjective claims for it. NB: In the paper given me for reply Alperson wrote: “Is there anyone here who has not delighted in the sheer splendor of musical sounds: in the sheer sensuousness of musical sounds, the deep richness of Johnny Hartman’s voice, Glenn Gould’s crisp precision, the sonorities of the Kronos Quartet, the impish improvisations of Ella Fitzgerald, the profound sorrow of Barber’s *Adagio for Strings*?” But in the paper as delivered, and thus which I did not have the opportunity to reply to on the spot, he newly added that these qualities were “ostensive proof” of aesthetic experience, which is pure sophistry. Such experiences are evidence only of *musical* or *affective* delights. In other words, involved are *evaluative, subjective* experiences, *described with common words* (splendor, sensuousness, richness, precision, impish, sorrow) that in no way ostensibly prove (i.e., point to) the apodeictic existence or ontic reality of some extraordinary realm called “aesthetic experience.” See, also, n. 14.

<sup>6</sup> “The subject (Aesthetics) is very big and entirely misunderstood as far as I can see” (n.d., 1). “If you ask yourself how a child learns ‘beautiful’, ‘fine’, etc., you find it learns them roughly as interjections . . . . The word is taught as a substitute for a facial expression or a gesture. The gestures, tones of voice, etc., in this case are expressions of approval. What *makes* the word an interjection of approval? It is the game it appears in, not the form of words” (2; italics original). Furthermore, “in real life, when aesthetic judgements are made, aesthetic adjectives such as ‘beautiful’, ‘fine’, etc., play hardly any role at all. Are aesthetic adjectives used in a musical criticism? You say, ‘Look at this transition’, or ‘The passage here is incoherent. . . . The words you use are more akin to ‘right’ and ‘correct’ (as these words are used in ordinary speech) than to ‘beautiful’ and ‘lovely’ ” (3). The empirical understanding of “appreciation” as *use* is argued on p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> Alperson writes: “Consider the difference between the ways the term [aesthetic] is understood variously by writers such as Kant, Beardsley, Sibley, Dewey, and Heidi Westerlund and Pentti Määttänen who have discussed a specifically Deweyan conception of aesthetic experience.” Again, this amounts to the fallacy of equivocation mentioned in n. 3.

<sup>8</sup> The Greek term *aporia* refers to insoluble impasses, “with no way out” (Peters 1967, 22). Disagreement over the very term “aesthetic” (see notes 2 and 7, above) is an example. For a compact survey of these disagreements, see Eaton (1988) for whom the “issues” in her title is a synonym for the various debates and *aporia* in aesthetic theory and where she warns the reader to “be aware that some people reject the possibility of defining or theorizing about key aesthetic concepts altogether.”(7). For a collection of (contradictory) writings by various philosophers and aestheticians that illustrate the “debate about the relationships between the aesthetic and art” (4), see Feagin & Maynard (1997) who affirm that “the idea of aesthetics is controversial. Historically, ‘the aesthetic’ appeared as a reformulation of ideas about beauty. It then became a replacement for them: as revealed today even in one everyday use of the term ‘aesthetic’ to denote cosmetology . . . (4), aesthetic surgery (etc.). For a survey applied to music education, see Schwadron (1967), an account of the plurality of contested aesthetic doctrines. On aesthetics as ideology, see Eagleton (1990).

<sup>9</sup> For example, Proudfoot (1988) writes: “Claims that the subject is dreary, irrelevant, muddled and misunderstood have been a persistent theme, not only of recent, that is to say, post-war writers, but from the very start of the subject. Alas, these claims have all too frequently been justified” (831).

<sup>10</sup> A leading analytic philosopher (Urmson 1989) writes that aesthetics “seems doomed either to pretentious vagueness or to an extreme poverty which makes it a poor step-sister to other main fields of philosophical inquiry (3).”

<sup>11</sup> One wonders how many music educators—especially those who rely on or advance a “music education as aesthetic education” advocacy paradigm—have read this long and detailed study and its account of the *aporia* surrounding the term and the practices associated with it? If that history was not complex enough, the two concluding chapters on the phenomenology and the sociology of music in fact largely contradict the previous 13 chapters and generally support a praxial account of music, its meaning, and value—although Small’s concern, quoted just below, remains valid.

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<sup>12</sup> For Small's own account of music and musical value, a decidedly praxial one, see Small (1998).

<sup>13</sup> See also n. 9 for a related quotation from Proudfoot.

<sup>14</sup> For details supporting this conclusion, see 6-7, 49-64. Regarding the "cognitive pretensions" of aesthetic theory (284), Schaeffer describes a *double category error*: "on one hand its descriptive basis is not neutral but functionally dependent on a prior evaluation; on the other hand, contrary to an implicit presupposition, its evaluation is not reducible to a justifying description, since even while accepting the latter one can still deny the former" (286). In regard to the circularity of an *aesthetic ontology* of art, the logical fallacy "confuses art as a phenomenal object with art as value; it defines it by its [aesthetic] value and then valorizes it in return by means of its [aesthetic] definition" (64). For details of the recurring aporia of descriptive, analytic, evaluative, persuasive definitions in aesthetics, see Schaeffer, 7, 107, 113, 284-287. In addition to these category errors, as also noted by Dewey, the attempt also runs afoul of William James' "psychological fallacy," which, in the hands of Dewey (1980/1934, 123, 315-317) became the philosophical fallacy of taking the consummations of "an experience" and, after the fact, asserting that such meanings or qualia were somehow contained 'in' the artwork to begin with and 'caused' the response. Concerning aesthetic terms as evaluative interjections, see Wittgenstein, quoted in n. 6. Wittgenstein also specifically stipulates that "an aesthetic explanation is not a causal explanation" (n.d., 18), thus pulling the rug from under Alperson's key contention that aesthetic properties causally explain or robustly account for music's praxial attractions and benefits.

<sup>15</sup> For example, whether the 'aesthetic object' or 'work' is phenomenal or physical; whether aesthetic meanings are pure or contextual; and whether or not art engages morality or politics, or is neutral. Answers range from *monist* arguments for the intrinsic and stable nature of aesthetic meaning and value to *pluralist* arguments that aesthetic meaning is diverse or changing. Monistic views are dogmatic and ignore the diversity and situatedness of human interests, and aesthetic pluralism can devolve to an "art is in the mind of the beholder" claim. NB: Arguments for *aesthetic* pluralism or relativity should not be confused with the *pragmatic* pluralism of Dewey (and the similar "radical empiricism" of William James). Aesthetic pluralism allows that aesthetic meanings can vary subjectively between responders or over time because the perceptual qualities 'in' artworks are capable of eliciting varying responses. For Dewey, plural responses are inevitable, even for the same person over time, due to the unique situated variables on each occasion. However, the meanings involved are decidedly down-to-earth affective delights, not metaphysical or transcendental.

<sup>16</sup> For evidence of the extent of the many aporia of aesthetics, compare the various entries in Cooper (1996), Gaut & McIver Lopes (2002), and Kivy (2004). See the authors cited in n. 8 for even more examples.

<sup>17</sup> Acceptance of an aesthetic *rationale* for music education (which is not the same as a *philosophy* of music education) is typically based on such vague and contested aesthetic assumptions and speculations—no doubt because aesthetic values sound nobly akin to profound or serious religious, ethical, and intellectual values. Of this tendency philosopher John Passmore (1991) observes "the attempt to find a certain kind of seriousness in art—a transcendental seriousness—has in fact issued in solemn idiocies on the part of critics and artists alike" (146). Arch aesthetic formalist Peter Kivy (2004) goes so far as to admit that "art has taken on something like the place of religion in our lives . . ." (11). This *sacralization* of music appears to be endemic among advocates of music education as aesthetic education. On the sacralization of art and music, see Bourdieu (1993), Levine (1988, 85-168), and Shiner (2001, 187-224).

<sup>18</sup> Reimer does not appear to have changed his mind about this claim in his more recent publications.

<sup>19</sup> A legitimization crisis arises when the benefits promised by an institution, ideology, or practice are not matched by actual results. In music education, then, it arises when school music as "aesthetic education" fails to "make a difference" in the lives of graduates—graduates who later become taxpayers, elected school officials, and administrators who, having personally failed to experience the aesthetic values claimed by music education, thus proceed to reduce budgets, schedules, and other resources. On "making a difference," see Regelski (2005).

<sup>20</sup> That editorial was published later in somewhat different form in *Contemporary Aesthetics*, edited by Arnold Berleant, as "Musical Experience as Aesthetic: What cost the label?": <http://www.contempaesthetics.org/newvolume/pages/article.php?articleID=388#FN3>. The quotation here is cited from that unpaginated article, not from the original ACT version (Vol. 5, No. 1, January 2006) at [http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Bowman5\\_1.pdf](http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Bowman5_1.pdf).

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<sup>21</sup> Again (see n. 3), this philosophical practice regularly commits the fallacy of equivocation. Furthermore, Alpers's assertion that "the chief delights of the creation, performance, and appreciation of music stems [*sic*] directly from *the more or less purely aesthetic qualities* of music (italics added)" commits the fallacy of *petitio principii*, or "begging the question" by taking for granted as apodeictic what needs to be explained: viz., the supposedly "more or less purely aesthetic qualities of music." A new aporia seems to arise in consideration of what "more or less purely aesthetic qualities" might be.

<sup>22</sup> Mandoki, *xi*, 74, 84. In this regard, Mandoki argues against aesthetics as a discipline, since its concerns range widely across many disciplines, from perceptual psychology to even economic theory (e.g., economic theories of how creations become accepted as "art" by the art market).

<sup>23</sup> It is important to note that while Mandoki's book title refers to "everyday aesthetics," she redefines "aesthetics" to mean "the study of the condition of aesthesis" (48) and devotes an entire chapter to "The Conditions of Possibility of Aesthesis (Chapter 7; 61-71). As already noted, Mandoki is highly dismissive of the aporia of traditional aesthetics.

<sup>24</sup> Arnold Berleant (2010), citing agreement with Mandoki (e.g., 2, 27), entitles the book outlining his most recent phenomenological theory of art, "Sensibility and Sense."

<sup>25</sup> Herein, when not quoting, I prefer the Greek-derived spelling "aisthesis" and "aisthesis."

<sup>26</sup> See, e.g., Eagleton (1991), Sim (1992), Krims (1998), Korsyn (2003), and Rancière (2006; 2009). Sim notes: "The writings of Derrida and Lyotard might be designated as anti-aesthetic in intent, having as their goal the creation of the conditions for a post-aesthetic realm beyond the reach of value judgement" (1). However, Sim is suspicious of postmodern attempts to transcend all value judgments (3-4).

<sup>27</sup> She also discusses "latched-by," which she regards as passive, rather than active, and thus as not necessarily positive; see 67-71. Mandoki consistently italicizes "*latching on*," thus it appears in italics in all the quotations that follow.

<sup>28</sup> On the primacy of the body and body-based metaphors for all manner of conception, perception, and affect see, e.g., Johnson (1987), Lakoff & Johnson (1999), Kövecses (2000), Berleant (2010). Note, too, Richard Shusterman's neologism "somaesthetics" (2008) as a pragmatist's attempt to restore the body to the philosophy of art. For the "corporeal turn" in several disciplines, see Sheets-Johnson (2009).

<sup>29</sup> Other recent examples of music-focused aesthesiology: Levitin (2006), Mithen (2006), Sacks (2007), Ball (2010).

<sup>30</sup> Ironically, while the glib and ill-informed mischaracterization often made that praxial theory in music education is "for performers only," the aesthetic rationale for music education (at least in North America) has promoted performance ensembles to the state of being the 'tail wagging the dog' paradigm of music education—on the assumption by teachers that if music is aesthetic, then simply performing it (or, in general music classes, that any musical activity and experience) is inevitably aesthetic and therefore educative.

<sup>31</sup> For a summary of "performance theory" and its critique of the conventional aesthetic assumption that "music" consists of works, instead of practices, see Cook (2003). "The performance 'of' [works] paradigm," Cook writes, "filters out such dimensions of performance as are not directly referable to the work being performed" (211), a problem also noted by Bowman above. Instead, and echoing a decidedly praxial theme, Cook concludes: "To call music a performing art, then, is not just to say that we perform it; it is to say that through it *we perform social meaning*" (213; italics added). Thus, against the criticism that praxialism is "for performers only," from the perspective of performance theory, music is 'of performance only'. And, from an ethnomusicological perspective, as Turino (2008) notes, *participation*—but of all imaginable kinds—is "why music matters" (1-22)—perhaps one reason Elliott's seminal study (1995) was called *Music Matters*.

<sup>32</sup> Reimer (1989a) expresses a related argument about student performances that too often lack a balance between technical proficiency and artistic understanding, thus "leaving many if not most students with skills unusable after high school and meager musical sensitivity to the nature of the art in which they have been engaged so mechanically" (183). Viewed praxially, however, school music and the entire range of what might be called "amateur" performances—church choirs, caroling, garage bands, barbershop groups, etc.—are all properly their own realms of musical praxis, with their own unique 'goods', criteria, and values. The problem of school music ensembles as a praxis that is limited to the school years—as an adolescent 'activity'—and thus the failure to promote learning and dispositions that 'transfer' to out of school tastes (or even to appreciation of the kinds of music performed in school ensembles) and to lifelong music praxis as adult amateurs *is*, however, a reason for concern—one that can be attributed to the self-

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satisfaction of too many ensemble directors that 8 years of concert performances alone and automatically constitutes an effective curriculum of “aesthetic education.” Were such performance programs focused on promoting skills for lifelong musical amateurism, performance pedagogies would be focused on everyday musicking available outside of school and beyond the school years. On “amateurism” and the values of enthusiastic and dedicated musical participation, see Regelski (2007).

<sup>33</sup> He writes that *theoria* (i.e., philosophy), “makes us aim at the right mark, and practical wisdom makes us take the right means” (1988, 155).

<sup>34</sup> See, e.g., Bernstein (1971), xi-xii, 1-83; Vazquez (1977).

<sup>35</sup> See, e.g., Shepherd (1991), DeNora (2000), Martin (1995, 2006).

<sup>36</sup> See, e.g., de Certeau (1988), Bourdieu (1990, 1993), Wenger (1999), Schatzki, Cetina & von Savigny (2001), Tuomela (2002), Schatzki (2002).

<sup>37</sup> See also, e.g., Shepherd (1991), Stokes (1997), Carroll (1998), Wenger (1999), Schatzki (2002), Scott (2002), Martin (2006), Brown & Volgsten (2006).

<sup>38</sup> For details on the category error involved with “ghost in the machine” mind/body dualism, see Ryle (1970).

<sup>39</sup> From Kivy’s “Forward” to Carroll (2001), xiv.