

## ANOTHER GO AT MUSICAL PROFUNDITY: STEPHEN DAVIES AND THE GAME OF CHESS

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I have argued previously that the art of absolute music, unlike, for example, the art of literature, is not capable of profundity, which I characterized as treating a profound subject matter, at the highest artistic level, in a manner appropriate to its profundity. Stephen Davies has recently argued that there is another way of being profound, which he calls non-propositional profundity, and for which chess provides his principal example. He argues, further, that absolute music also exhibits this non-propositional profundity. I argue in the present paper that Davies's attempt to rescue profundity for absolute music will not work, because it does not allow what I take to be the crucial distinction between great works of absolute music that *are* profound and great works of absolute music that are *not*. In other words, it has the unwelcome implication that all great works of absolute music are profound works.

### I

WHEN I decided to conclude my book, *Music Alone*, with a chapter called 'The Profundity of Music', I had no idea that what I said on the subject would raise so many hackles.<sup>1</sup> But I should have known better. For, after all, pure instrumental music, what I called in the book 'music alone', is generally agreed upon to be one of the fine arts; and perhaps the highest compliment one can pay to a work of the fine arts, it might be thought, is to call it 'profound'. So when I cast doubt on whether such music *could* rightly be called 'profound', I must have been seen as consigning 'absolute music', as it came to be called in the nineteenth century, to a second-class citizenship in the community of arts and letters. A play, a poem, a novel, maybe even a painting might achieve the highest level, *qua* work of art, the level of profundity. But a work of instrumental music *never*. *Faust* yes; *Paradise Lost* yes; the *Eroica*—application denied.

Since I reached this seemingly distressing conclusion, in 1990, numerous replies have been directed at me by the distressed. And in 1997 I tried to answer what I took to be the most philosophically interesting of them. There matters

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Kivy, *Music Alone: Philosophical Reflections on the Purely Musical Experience* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell U.P., 1990), ch. 10.

stood, at least as far as I know, until 2002, when the question re-emerged again, on the pages of the *British Journal of Aesthetics*, in the form of an article by Stephen Davies called 'Profundity in Instrumental Music'.<sup>2</sup> Were the article by a 'lesser light', I would have been inclined not to read yet another attempt to find a place for absolute music in the Pantheon of the Profound. But when the attempt is by Davies, one is ill-advised to pass it over without serious consideration. And having read Davies's intriguing arguments, it seemed clear to me that the time indeed had arrived to reopen, at least briefly, the question of musical profundity. Apparently my 'distressing' conclusion continues to distress.

## II

It would be well to begin by stating carefully what my distressing conclusion was, and what reasons I had for reaching it. And I want to state it not exactly as I stated it in *Music Alone*, in 1990, but in the way I stated it later on, and now understand it. For although I have not changed my views with regard to the profundity of absolute music, I have become clearer about them over the years, due in large measure to the many critical comments that they attracted.

I begin with the assumptions that, first, we do, from time to time, feel it appropriate to describe certain exemplary works in the canon of Western absolute music as profound, and, second, that we by and large agree upon which works deserve the compliment. The question is why we describe these works as profound, and not others, even though we might well agree that the other works are beautiful or great works of art.

In order to answer this question, I proposed in *Music Alone*, and, later, in *Philosophies of Arts*, that we first take some clear cases, where we can agree what the criteria are for ascribing profundity, and then see if the musical cases fulfil these criteria. My examples were drawn from two obvious sources, philosophy and literature; and since in the case of music we are dealing with one of the fine arts, it was literature that provided my paradigm. With literature in mind, then, this is how I characterized profundity in *Philosophies of Arts*, a characterization that I still think is pretty much on target. I take the liberty of quoting from myself:

for a work of art to be profound—and literature is the obvious example here—it must (1) have a profound subject matter and (2) treat this profound subject matter in a way adequate to its profundity—which is to say, (a) say profound things about this subject matter and (b) do it at a very high level of artistic or aesthetic excellence . . .<sup>3</sup>

But if this is the basic sense of profound, then it is clear why we should be very sceptical of ascribing profundity to any work of absolute music. For it requires

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Davies, 'Profundity in Instrumental Music', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 42 (2002), pp. 343–356.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Kivy, *Philosophies of Arts: An Essay in Difference* (New York: Cambridge U.P., 1979), p. 145.

that whatever is profound be capable of both reference and sense; and pure instrumental music seems incapable of either.

Against my characterization of profundity in the arts, Davies responds, to start with, that it is, in effect, too exclusionary. But this response is the result, I believe, of a misunderstanding of my position that I would like to clear up before going any further.

Davies writes:

His account of profundity is vulnerable in its insistence on what I will call the 'aboutness' criterion. Kivy seems to require for 'aboutness' both reference and predication. This makes the expression of profundity essentially propositional, so it is not surprising that instrumental music fails to make the grade. But surely this is too restrictive a standard? (It will exclude, as well as all music and painting, all but the most explicitly didactic literature.) . . . There are ways of conveying ideas other than asserting them. These ways might show rather than say how things are.<sup>4</sup>

Now it would, indeed, be an intolerable conclusion, for me, if my account of profundity in literature implied that only 'the most explicitly didactic literature' could be profound. If that were really what it implied, I would give up my account altogether. It could not possibly be the right account of profundity if it had that implication. But surely it does not.

To begin with, my account implies that most didactic literature is *not* profound—that is to say, not profound *qua* literature, although it might be profound *qua* philosophy, say. Indeed I considered just such a case of works that are philosophically profound, but not profound literature, in *Music Alone*, namely, the dialogues of Bishop Berkeley.<sup>5</sup> They do indeed fulfil criteria (1) and (2a): they are about profound subject matter and say profound things about it. But they do not fulfil criterion (2b): they do not treat their subject matter at a very high degree of artistic or aesthetic excellence. As I remarked in *Music Alone*, 'The characters are wooden, and the philosophy sticks out, when the works are read as literature.'<sup>6</sup>

Now the problem here seems to me to be this. Davies must, I guess, think that for a work of literature to be, say, philosophically profound, according to my propositional take on literary profundity, it must contain tons of *sentences* expressing profound philosophical thoughts: which is exactly what didactic literature does (when it is profound). But that, of course, is exactly why 'didactic' is a term of abuse when applied to literature. For literature that did contain tons of sentences expressing profound philosophical thoughts would be bad *literature*, although it might, for all of that, be great philosophy.

But the view that for literature to be profound it must express profound

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Davies, 'Profundity in Instrumental Music', p. 344.

<sup>5</sup> Kivy, *Music Alone*, p. 213.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

propositions is not the view that it must express those directly in sentences. On the contrary, that would make it bad, and so not profound literature. The view that literature can sometimes be profound by expressing profound propositions has always been the view that it expresses these propositions indirectly. It ‘suggests’ or ‘implies’ them in a literary way.

Thus, I thoroughly agree, in spirit, with Davies, when he says that ‘There are ways of conveying thoughts other than asserting them.’ But what I take that to mean is that there are other ways one can convey thoughts besides directly asserting them in sentences. One can indirectly assert them in the ways literature does. ‘I don’t mean that a novelist’s statements about a fictional Mr. N.N. are true claims about a non-existent person, but that such statements *convey* truths about what makes people tick.’<sup>7</sup>

I agree, too, in spirit, with Davies when he says that ‘These ways might show rather than say how things are.’ But what I take *that* to mean is that we can sometimes express propositions through showing things rather than asserting the propositions directly in sentences. Literature expresses many propositions by showing the ways people behave and by various other ‘showings’. I will call this ‘propositional showing’.

Davies, however, is not defending propositional showing in these two remarks I have just quoted. Rather, he is defending the view that I will call ‘pure showing’. For I take him to be saying that there are ways of conveying thoughts that are not propositional at all. And since absolute music, on his view as on mine, if it can express propositions at all, can only express pretty banal ones, propositional showing is out of the question for it as a means of attaining profundity. Pure showing is the option Davies chooses for it. And he introduces his notion of pure showing with an excellent and intriguing example: the game of chess. To that example, and what follows from it, I now want to turn.

### III

I must begin this discussion by making it very clear that I know next to nothing about chess. I know how the pieces move, how they can ‘take’ other pieces, what ‘check’ and ‘checkmate’ are. In other words, I can ‘follow’ a game of chess. But if I were to play a game with Davies, I probably would have to resign after three moves.

To get directly to the point, or, if you will forgive me, cut to the chess, Davies adduces two masterful games of chess which, as he puts it, ‘illustrate to a jaw-dropping degree the inexhaustible fecundity, flexibility, insight, vitality, subtlety, complexity, and analytical far-reachingness of which the mind is capable’ (p. 351).

<sup>7</sup> Susan Haack, ‘As for the Phrase “Studying in a Literary Spirit” . . .’, *Manifesto of a Passionate Moderate: Unfashionable Essays* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 56 [emphasis added].

The first game, Fischer versus Byrne, Davies avers, 'was a masterpiece of tactical calculation', the second, Capablanca versus Marshall, 'a masterpiece of strategy' (pp. 349, 350) I have no reason to doubt Davies's claim that these two games were 'masterpieces', nor to doubt that if I understood chess more adequately than I do, I would share Davies's thrill in seeing revealed in them the incredible accomplishments 'of which the human mind is capable'.

But Davies wants, obviously, to go further. These games of chess are not just masterpieces of chess; they are 'profound'. Thus he writes:

Chess fails Kivy's conditions for profundity. It is not obviously *about* anything and certainly is not about anything that goes to the moral heart of human life. . . . In particular, neither Fischer's move nor Capablanca's strategic play could be profound on Kivy's account. Yet I maintain that these abstract, intellectual achievements are profound in their way. And I would say the same of some complex mathematical proofs, for instance. (p. 350)

For Davies, then, there is a kind of profundity, other than propositional profundity, other even than the kind of propositional profundity exhibited by literature, in which the profound thoughts, if there are any, are expressed, not, for the most part, directly, but by what I called propositional showing. It is the profundity of pure showing. In Davies's words, 'It is sufficient that profundity is *shown* or *displayed* by an activity or judgement' (p. 350). And the *criterion*, if you will, of purely shown, non-propositional profundity, is that the thing, or activity, or whatever, as Davies so well puts it, 'illustrate[s] to a jaw-dropping degree the inexhaustible fecundity, flexibility, insight, vitality, subtlety, complexity, and analytical far-reachingness of which the human mind is capable'. When this degree of mental capability is shown or displayed forth by some human accomplishment, it is, by virtue of that, to be called 'profound'. And pure instrumental music can, surely, qualify as profound, because it can satisfy this criterion: 'in creating the very greatest music, composers display to an extraordinary degree many of the general cognitive capacities seen also in outstanding chess; namely, originality, far-sightedness, imagination, fertility, plasticity, refinement, intuitive mastery of complex detail, and so on' (pp. 351–352).

To begin dealing with Davies's concept of non-propositional profundity, of which chess and instrumental music are his principal examples, I want first to point to what I take to be an argument, and a bad one at that, for his position, 'suggested', if that is the right word, although not stated outright, in a crucial passage quoted above. Here is what Davies says: 'neither Fischer's move nor Capablanca's strategic play could be profound on Kivy's account. Yet I maintain that these intellectual achievements are profound in their way. And I would say the same of some complex mathematical proofs, for instance . . .'.

Now what bothers me here is the adducing of mathematical proofs as examples of non-propositional profundity, and the argument that, it seems to me, lurks therein. For I take it that Davies is trying to convince us of the plausibility of non-propositional profundity by adducing what he takes to be completely non-controversial examples of it, namely, 'some complex mathematical proofs'. But although complex mathematical proofs are *certainly* non-controversial candidates for profundity, and sometimes, anyone would agree, achieve it, they are certainly, when they *do* achieve it, clear examples of *propositional* profundity. Surely they have a subject matter, number, quantity, groups, dimensions, surfaces, and all of the other 'things' mathematics is about, although the ontological status of mathematical 'objects' is a matter of dispute. Mathematics consists in propositions, even though these propositions are not expressed in ordinary language. And it achieves profundity, one would think, in just the way other human sciences and disciplines do: by dealing with a profound subject matter in a way adequate to its profundity (and, by the way, sometimes exhibiting, as the mathematicians tell us, 'elegance', and other 'aesthetic' properties). Thus, if Davies is trying to work his passage from mathematical profundity to chess profundity, and, thence, to musical profundity, I do not think it will work. Indeed, I think a chess enthusiast might have the same problem with chess profundity as I have with musical profundity; we both feel compelled on occasion to call an object of our veneration 'profound', and we cannot think why. For chess to get us to musical profundity, then, it will have to do it on its own, without the help of mathematics. I do not think it can, and here is why.

The chess games of Fischer and Capablanca that Davies adduces are both, he says, 'masterpieces'. To a jaw-dropping degree they illustrate the tremendous creative capacity of the human mind. And to the extent that chess games show, not tell, about the great creative capacity of the human mind, they are non-propositionally profound.

Now my problem is that, so far as I can tell, *any* great game of chess, *any* chess masterpiece, by this criterion of profundity, will be profound. There will be no great chess games, no chess 'masterpieces' that will *not* be profound games of chess. That is because any truly great game of chess will require the great capacities of the human mind to create, and so any great game of chess will illustrate, display forth, show the unutterable fecundity, and so forth, of the human mind. And so every great game of chess will be non-propositionally profound.

Of course it is absolute music, not chess, that concerns me. It may be my utter ignorance and ineptitude, chess-wise, that makes it seem counter-intuitive that if great chess games can be profound, all of them are. But absolute music is my game. And so far as I can tell, the kind of non-propositional profundity Davies is touting for chess and for absolute music will have the same counter-intuitive result for the latter as for the former. On Davies's view, as I see it, all great musical works will be non-propositionally profound musical works. Because all

truly great musical works require that awesomeness of mental endowment, 'genius' I am not ashamed to call it, in the good old Romantic sense, they will all illustrate, all display forth that awesomeness of mental endowment, that incomprehensible genius that makes jaws drop in stunned wonderment and disbelief. The *Eroica* does it; but so too do Mozart's shimmering wind sextets, with their seemingly endless display of delicate musical beauties in which the individual characters of each of the wind instruments are exploited in a way never equalled, let alone excelled. How can a human mind be capable of creating such a parade of beautiful sounds, in such variety and profusion? These works, no less than the mighty *Eroica*, display forth those mental characteristics of imagination, fertility, plasticity, intuitive mastery of complex detail, and the rest. So it would appear that, on Davies's criterion for musical profundity, Mozart's wind sextets should be counted profound musical works. I take it that they are masterpieces of their genre, but surely not profound. (If you are not familiar with these wonderful compositions, you may work the same argument on Mozart's *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*, or any other work you may think fits the bill.)

'So what of it?', the convert to Davies's position might respond. 'What is wrong with the conclusion that all musical masterpieces are profound? It sounds OK to me.' To see what is wrong with it we will have to get back to basics.

The quest for musical profundity began with the assumption that certain works of absolute music tended to elicit from some the judgement 'profound', and that there was agreement, more or less, on the part of people who passed such judgement, on which works deserved it. At least that is the assumption I began with, and which Davies seems to share.

Given this assumption, my project was to try to pin down just what we might mean to say of an art work when we call it 'profound'; and I took as my model the literary arts which, I thought, presented uncontroversial and easily made out criteria for profundity in the fine arts. There is no need to go over that ground in detail again except to point out that what the literary model clearly showed is that we use the term 'profound' in such a way as to distinguish between those literary works that are great works of art but not profound, and those that are great works of art and *are* profound. In other words, it turns out that, if literature is taken as our model, according to the way the word 'profound' is used, all profound literary works are great literary works, but not all great literary works are profound.

But if we accept that result, if we accept the condition on profundity in the fine arts that not all great works of art are profound works of art, then we must reject Davies's account of musical profundity. He certainly has said something that is important and true: that truly great works of art display forth, illustrate the awesome fecundity, inventiveness, creativity, and so forth, of the human mind when it is functioning at the genius level. Furthermore, I certainly agree with him that it is part of our experience of great works of art to be aware of this, and have

written about it elsewhere in my own terms.<sup>8</sup> But it is *not* profundity, even though one can call it that if one wishes, by stipulative definition, or, as R.G. Collingwood would say, as a ‘courtesy’ definition, as when we call the pastry chef’s latest creation a ‘work of art’, knowing full well that it isn’t.<sup>9</sup> (I have been known to describe the *Eroica* as a ‘profound human utterance’, although I do not think it is either an utterance or profound.)

Suppose, though, someone were to reply in this wise: ‘Why choose literature as your model? Take, rather, philosophy. With regard to philosophical works, doesn’t it seem true that any great work of philosophy is, *ipso facto*, a profound work?’

This may or may not be true of philosophy. But it is manifestly not true of the literary arts; and that is because the literary arts are *arts*. Being arts, they are valued, *qua* art, in ways that philosophy is not valued, *qua* philosophy. Most obviously, they are valued *qua* art, as philosophy is *not* valued, *qua* philosophy, in virtue of their outstanding aesthetic and artistic qualities. That being the case, a literary art work can achieve greatness without achieving profundity; if it is very high in aesthetic value (say) and without profound subject matter. But it cannot be profound, *qua* art, without being high in aesthetic value, because to be profound, *qua* art, a literary work must be about profound matters, treat them in a way adequate to their profundity, *and* be of very high aesthetic value. That is why we can single out only *some* great literary works as, *qua* literary work, *profound*.

But why choose literature rather than philosophy as the model for musical profundity? The answer is all too obvious. Music, like literature, is a fine art; and, furthermore, we seem to gravitate naturally to the use of ‘profound’ for absolute music that allows us to single out from among the larger class of great musical works those that are *also* profound.

Davies, then, has not, so far as I am concerned, made out a case for absolute music’s profundity. He more or less agrees with me that absolute music does not seem able to achieve propositional profundity. And his attempt to make out a case for absolute music’s being profound in a non-propositional sense seems to me a failure because it implies that all great instrumental music is profound music, an implication I find highly implausible. (As a matter of fact, Davies’s view implies, so far as I can see, that *every* human accomplishment and invention requiring genius or greatness of mind is non-propositionally profound in Davies’s sense; and I do not see why one should accept a view that would require the revising of ordinary language to the extent of calling the steam engine, for example, ‘profound’. Yet the steam engine, surely, illustrates, displays forth that very greatness of mind that is displayed forth by Bobby Fischer’s chess game and Beethoven’s *Eroica*.)

<sup>8</sup> See Peter Kivy, *The Possessor and the Possessed: Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, the Idea of Musical Genius* (New Haven, CT: Yale U.P., 2001).

<sup>9</sup> See R. G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938), pp. 8–9.

So where do we go from here? There will be, I am sure, among music lovers of a philosophical bent, further wringing of hands over the ‘loss’ of profundity to absolute music, and further attempts to ‘restore’ it. But what I think would be far more useful than either is resignation and consolation. Absolute music cannot be profound. Let us learn to live with that and see it for what it is: not a defect in absolute music but, rather, part of what it *is*, and part of what makes us love it. To that (perhaps impossible) task I would like to devote the final section of this paper.

#### IV

There was once a kid named Sid whose favourite part of the week was Friday afternoon, after school. It held out the promise of Saturday and Sunday, which were still pristine and unused. Saturday was good: there was still Sunday between Sid and School. But by Saturday morning the glass was *beginning* to be half empty. And although Sunday was OK—no school!—it was, all in all, a rather depressing day. Stores were closed, and Monday was waiting in the wings, like Captain Hook, to cast a pall over Sid’s rapidly dissipating freedom. Saturday was good, Sunday OK; but Friday afternoon was the nuts.

While at that stage of his life when Friday afternoon was the favourite part of his week, Sid’s favourite colour was navy blue. And one day, in a blinding flash of philosophical insight, Sid came to realize that his favourite part of the week could not be his favourite colour: Friday afternoons could not be navy blue. Sid’s shirt could be navy blue; his trousers could be navy blue; even his dirty old pair of socks could be navy blue; but his favourite part of the week could not be his favourite colour—could not, indeed, be any colour at all.

Sid became profoundly depressed over this; for although Friday afternoons were still his favourites, they did not seem to have quite the charm for him that they once had. Something was missing, or so it seemed.

Sid’s parents, realizing they had a problem, a ‘philosophical’ problem, went to the neighbourhood philosopher who, providentially, had just read the newly published translation by Miss Anscombe of the *Philosophical Investigations*. (The year of which I write was 1953.) This local guru immediately recalled a passage in the *Investigations* in which the master had tackled the very problem that was poisoning Sid’s Friday afternoons. Wittgenstein wrote: ‘Given the two ideas “fat” and “lean,” would you be rather inclined to say that Wednesday was fat and Tuesday lean, or the other way round? (I incline to choose the former.)’ He added: ‘Here one might speak of a “primary” and “secondary” sense of a word’, and provided another example: ‘If I say “For me the vowel *e* is yellow” I do not mean: “yellow” in a metaphorical [but in a secondary] sense, . . . for I could not express what I want to say in any other way than by means of the idea “yellow”.’<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1953), p. 216e.

Sid's parents returned with what they thought would be comforting news for Sid: 'Yes Sid', they said, 'Friday afternoons can be navy blue, at least *in a secondary sense*.' But Sid was made of sterner stuff, and his distress was by no means palliated by the assurance of the local practitioner of philosophy that Friday afternoons could be navy blue, *in a secondary sense*. For the secondary sense gave him nothing that true blue gave him. It was the shadow, not the reality. In the ways that really counted, Friday afternoons remained navy-blueless.

Now Sid, as should be perfectly clear, was involved in a classic case of the category mistake. And I am not for a moment suggesting that it is a category mistake to call a piece of absolute music profound, as it would be to call a Friday afternoon navy blue. Rather, one is inclined to say that profundity is a special case of 'aboutness', and, taking Arthur Danto's line on aboutness, say further that it is, at least, not inappropriate to ask of a given work of absolute music, 'Is it profound?', even though (as I believe) the answer will always be 'No'.<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, although Sid was involved in a category mistake, in his quest for navy-blue Friday afternoons, and the seekers after musical profundity are not, there is something to be learned from the parable of Sid. Sid has let a genuine philosophical discovery, so to speak, cause him to lose his bearings. He has gone from the correct conclusion that Friday afternoons cannot be navy blue to the incorrect conclusion that he has discovered a lack in Friday afternoons: a defect; a gap that must be filled on pain of Friday afternoons losing something of their past lustre and delight.

So too with the philosophical discovery—and that is what I think it amounts to—that absolute music cannot be profound; or, at least, that there is serious doubt about whether it can. It seems to make many music lovers of a philosophical bent feel that they have discovered a lack in absolute music that must be filled on pain of absolute music losing something of its past lustre and delight. If I had been Sid's parents, though, I would not have gone to the local philosopher in search of ersatz, 'secondary sense' ways in which Fridays can be navy blue, to console him for his 'loss'. Rather I would have reminded him what it was he loved about Friday afternoons in the first place, before he discovered that they could not be his favourite colour, and that *that* is there still. I would have reminded him, as well, that he never felt any lack in his enjoyment of Friday afternoons *before* he became obsessed with their lack of navy-blueness.

There is an old adage to the effect that you should never tell a child not to stick beans up his nose, the reason obviously being that he may never have had the idea in the first place, but now not only does have the idea but will do it just for spite. I believe that in chapter 10 of *Music Alone* I committed a similar mistake, and caused grief to a whole lot of philosophically inclined music lovers, who never

<sup>11</sup> See Arthur Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U.P., 1981), p. 82.

would have had the idea in the first place that music *could* be profound, until I suggested that it *couldn't*. Like a huckster creating an artificial 'need' for a useless product, I think I somehow poisoned some people's enjoyment of absolute music by making them feel an artificial 'lack' in it that not only *isn't* there but *can't* be there. And if it is not the categorial 'can't' of navy-blue Fridays, it seems to me to approach it in strength. What absolute music can't be, *it can't be*; and there is something obstinate and deeply irrational about bemoaning and deploring an *almost* metaphysical truth.

Indeed, as I have argued on other occasions, it is part of the wonder of absolute music that it is sound without meaning, *a fortiori*, sound without *profound* meaning, which has the power to move us profoundly, and to engage our intellectual and perceptual faculties in the most arresting and deeply satisfying ways. It is sufficient unto itself. For profundity we go elsewhere, not because absolute music is not up to the task, but because it was meant for other no less important things.

Let me just add that in rejecting Davies's attempt to rescue profundity for absolute music, I by no means reject his characterization of it as revealing the greatness of the kind of mind that can produce such awe-inspiring creations as the *Eroica* Symphony. I believe I was trying to capture the very same experience as Davies was when I wrote in my book, *The Possessor and the Possessed*:

When we experience great works of art, we find ourselves unable to conceive how (by what means) such works could have been brought into being, and this engenders in us a sense of wonder, a sense of miracle that is a necessary part of our aesthetic experience.<sup>12</sup>

We worship the same object. We disagree about the name. But I do not think it is a trivial disagreement. Everything is what it is, and not another thing. And the thing in question is not musical profundity. In my view absolute music, at its greatest, can be profoundly moving and profoundly arresting; but not in spite of lacking profundity; rather, in part, *because of it*.

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<sup>12</sup> Kivy, *The Possessor and the Possessed*, p. 249.