

This is a self-archived version of an original article. This version may differ from the original in pagination and typographic details.

Author(s): Taipale, Joonas

Title: The Modifying Mirror : Binding One's Experiences through Music

Year: 2023

Version: Published version

Copyright: © 2023 Oxford University Press

Rights: In Copyright

Rights url: <http://rightsstatements.org/page/InC/1.0/?language=en>

Please cite the original version:

Taipale, J. (2023). The Modifying Mirror : Binding One's Experiences through Music. In J. De Souza, B. Steege, & J. Wiskus (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Phenomenology of Music* (pp. C14S1-C14N65). Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780197577844.013.14>

CHAPTER

The Modifying Mirror: Binding One’s Experiences through Music

Joona Taipale

<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780197577844.013.14> Pages C14S1–C14N65

Published: 20 April 2023

Abstract

This chapter compares music listening with the infant’s experience of care. Several scholars have argued that music can be used for scaffolding one’s self-experience. Developmental psychologists, in turn, maintain a wide consensus over the claim that, in early interaction, the attuned caregiver supports and modifies the infant’s self-experience in various ways. The chapter brings these phenomena together, illustrating how the examination of the early *self/other relation* can teach us something important concerning the *listener/music relation*. The first section elaborates on the scaffolding function of music and clarifies two ambiguities haunting the debate. The second section relocates musical scaffolding in the register of *vitality forms*. Once the third section has dealt with early interaction, and analyzed the basic functions of the attuned caregiver, the fourth section uses the gained insights to examine the structural similarities between music listening and early experiences of attunement. Ultimately, this investigation reveals the “thanatic function” of music.

Keywords: music listening, affective scaffolding, vitality forms, thanatic function, affect attunement, early interaction, infant and caregiver, affect regulation, mirroring function, regulative function

Subject: Musicology and Music History, Philosophy of Music, Music

Series: Oxford Handbooks

Collection: Oxford Handbooks Online

Introduction

Music [...] is too far on the hither side of the world and the designatable to depict anything but certain schemata of Being—its ebb and flow, its growth, its upheavals, its turbulence.

– Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Eye and Mind*

Music as an actual physical temporal event is one dimensional and homogeneous in time, yet it presents virtual time—that is, time as lived or experienced, rushing, tripping, drawn out, or suspenseful.

– Daniel Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*

The “scaffolding” function of music listening has been underlined in many recent studies. The basic idea is that we can use music to regulate our mood: when wanting to relax or be energized, when seeking to console our heartaches or alleviate our miseries, or when preparing for a party and wanting to get into the mood, we put on a kind of music that we expect to promote the desired affective modifications. This regulating activity comes close to the way in which a caregiver attunes to the affective state of his child and purposively pulls it

in a wanted direction. As long as the child is still unable to do it herself, it is the caregiver who is in charge of organizing the child's sensory environment in the turmoil of changing circumstances.¹ In this sense, the presence of the caregiver shares some of the core functions of music listening in adult life.

There are numerous studies on both of these issues, but the link between the two phenomena has not been examined in detail. To be sure, there is an abundance of investigations on the "musical" aspects of infant-caregiver interaction.² There are also various philosophical and interdisciplinary contributions to the experience of music and musical scaffolding,³ and studies on the role of mutual attunement in joint musical improvisation and music therapy.⁴ However, there are fewer studies that explicitly link *parental attunement* and *musical scaffolding* by considering the latter in terms of the former. In this respect, the available comparisons tend to be onesided and unilateral. Musical metaphors are often used in descriptions of early interaction, which is to say that music listening is considered as a fruitful model for research on interaction. While granting the importance of such studies, I am here interested in a contrary comparison. Namely, my argument is that certain important functions of music listening and music-use can be accounted for in terms of early interaction. This comprises the main contribution of the present chapter.

Building this link, I will approach the scaffolding function of music by comparing music listening with the infant's experience of care, and I will argue that the examination of the early self/other relation enables important philosophical, phenomenological, psychological, and psychoanalytical insights concerning the listener/music relation. As I will show, the presence of an attuned caregiver and the presence of music of one's choice share two central functions. I will call these the "mirroring function" and the "regulating function." While there are many studies on the mirroring function in developmental psychology,⁵ this function has received much less interest in the literature on affective scaffolding.⁶ In the latter literature, the regulative function has been emphatic instead. That is to say, while numerous studies exist on how music can be used to enhance or transform the prevalent affective atmosphere of the listener, fewer studies exist on the mirroring function of music. By importing this link into the discussion on musical scaffolding, I will show that music can not only be used to *regulate one's feelings*, but also to *clarify how one feels*. Moreover, as I will show, both functions relate music listening back to early experiences of care. My claim is that, like the caregiver's presence, music listening not only enhances and transforms the affective atmosphere of the individual, but also teaches the latter how he or she currently feels. In short, music is not just a tool for *emotion regulation*, but also a tool for *emotion articulation*.

The phenomena to be discussed in the following have been examined in various disciplines—from neuroscience, biology, and developmental psychology, to anthropology, linguistics, and cultural history. Given the breadth of the topic, a number of caveats is necessary. (1) First, my interest here lies exclusively in the experiential dimension. When talking about "functions" and "structures," I am accordingly not referring to biological or neuroscientific issues. (2) Second, I focus on the experience of music listening, instead of music-making. Presumably, these two phenomena are closely related to each other, but discussing music-making is an expansion that will be left for further studies. (3) Third, when talking about music-listeners, I will be primarily thinking of people with the possibility of freely choosing what they listen to (e.g., by way of an access to a streaming service). (4) Fourth, I will be moving within a mundane context, thus leaving unexamined the additional functions that music listening may have in religious communities, for instance. (5) Fifth, I will not give particular emphasis to lyrics, but focus on the "vital quality" of music,⁷ and accordingly consider vocals in terms of an instrument that participates in the flow of music like any other. By overlooking the verbal and discursive nature of vocals in favor of the singer's tone of voice, as it were, my intention is not to deny the additional importance that the lyrical side of musical expression often has, but to facilitate the comparison with early, non-verbal interaction. As I will show, both in music and in early interaction, "how" something is expressed often weighs more than "what" is expressed. (6) Sixth, as goes without saying, many people do not primarily use music but prefer other ways of scaffolding their affects, but here I will be primarily thinking of people who do. It remains to be seen whether my analysis is applicable to other mediums of scaffolding and hence to other forms of art.

The chapter is structured as follows. In the first section, I will discuss musical scaffolding, disambiguate the concept by distinguishing between "positive" and "negative" scaffolding, and elaborate on the central functions of music-use. In the second section, I will argue that the experience of music primarily unfolds in the register of vitality affects. The third section focuses on early interaction and analyzes the two aforementioned functions of the attuned caregiver. The fourth section uses the gained insights to examine and underline the structural similarities between music listening and early interaction with an attuned caregiver. Arguing that both music and the attuned caregiver are characterized by the mirroring function

C14P6

C14P7

C14P8

C14P9

and the regulating function, I will be analyzing certain neglected aspects of musical scaffolding. Before concluding, I will develop one such neglected aspect by discussing the “thanatic” or “deadly” function of music.

Musical Scaffolding—Positive and Negative Aspects

C14S2

We use music to modify our experiences. In preparing for a party, longing for our loved ones, dealing with heartaches, wanting to relax after a stressful day, or engaging in writing, we put on the kind of music that is expected to promote the sought-for experiential tone. We might want to savor the sense of longing, for instance, or to alleviate it. While the respective preference might vary from one person to another, the fact remains that music can be used for both purposes. Moreover, while we may often be consciously aware of such aims, on other occasions the motives of our music-use remain less clear to us. Yet, given that (we know that) different kinds of music have a different effect on us, the act of putting on a certain kind of music is always an expression—whether conscious or unconscious.

C14P10

The chosen piece of music can *fit* better or worse with our current mindset. A song might resonate with our affective situation, match with our current mindset, and steer us toward the desired mood; or it can feel more or less unfitting, match poorly with our affective situation, and leave us cold or irritated. When wanting to relax just before going to bed, highly energetic or aggressive music may seem unfitting, much like listening to melancholic and drowsy music when preparing for a party. Sometimes particular kind of music can also be “too much,” as it were: consider struggling with heartache after being abandoned, barely holding yourself together, when the radio begins to play a tune that seems to tear open the very core of your heartache. In this case, the tune feels way too fitting or intrusive, as it puts you face to face with the feeling that you would rather not deal with. Given the complexity of the feelings that we undergo, a perfectly fitting piece of music might not exist, or at least it might not be known beforehand. Yet, as indicated by our occasional search for “just the right song” for the present moment, we are pursuing something that *matches* our affective situation.

C14P11

The use of external resources to purposively influence one’s emotional and sensory situation is called “affective scaffolding.”⁸ Interestingly, the term scaffold literally refers to a physical, and originally wooden supporting structure that is used in building, but also a raised platform for public executions (e.g., at a hanging). In contemporary usage, the term has a figurative sense: a scaffold is a sensory phenomenon that mentally enables and supports certain kinds of affective modifications. Krueger exemplifies this in reference to music: “We let music take over self-regulatory dynamics that would normally fall within the scope of our own internal capacities and, via this offloading, let it do some of the emotional work for us.”⁹

C14P12

The term is ambiguous in two ways, however. The first ambiguity has already been touched upon. Namely, “scaffolding” is used in many senses: for example, in reference to efforts of *enabling* and *establishing* new kinds of self-experience, to efforts of *maintaining* certain already-established forms of self-experience, to efforts of *enhancing* particular areas of self-experience, and to efforts of *transforming* or *modulating* self-experience in a particular manner.¹⁰ As long as the concept is used as an overall term for various kinds of indirectly exerted “influences” to our affective self-experience (without further distinctions between enabling, maintaining, enhancing, transforming, etc.), the nature and importance of the findings can be obscured. It is important to point out what aspect or dimension of affective scaffolding the authors are thinking about. In the following, will do my best to avoid using the term, and will speak, instead, of enabling, maintaining, enhancing, and transforming affective situations—except for when it comes to places where the ambiguity is either not of importance or needs to be underlined.

C14P13

The second ambiguity refers to a more general onesidedness, that—as far as I know—has not been recognized in the available literature. This ambiguity refers to the fact that, despite of the aforementioned connotations and meanings, the available contributions have been mainly focusing on what could be called the positive dimension of scaffolding or, more simply put, *positive scaffolding*. To be sure, by rule, scaffolding also aims at a positive outcome: for example, to a novel feeling, a desirable affective situation, and so on. Yet, all scaffolding also has a negative dimension to it—a hither side, if you will. This negative dimension has not remained altogether untouched in the literature, as there are analyses on cases where the negative aims of scaffolding are more prominent—for instance, sometimes the negative aim of minimizing disturbances is more emphatic than the positive aim of maximizing concentration. Also, there are studies of the ways in which affective scaffolding can turn against, and in this sense have a negative effect on,

C14P14

individual freedom and agency.¹¹ However, my point concerns a negativity that pertains to *all* acts of scaffolding, and hence also to cases where the positive aspect is prominent.

To illustrate this structural negative aspect in scaffolding, consider someone nervously preparing for an important interview and putting on music of her choice. Regardless of whether the individual's "primary" aim is a positive one (e.g., to enable and promote certain feelings, focus and underline the strengths of her self, and enhance her self-confidence) or a negative one (e.g., to overthrow her feelings of nervousness, drown her insecurities, and silence the voices of doubt), the assumption seems convincing that, no matter which of these aims is more emphatic, *both* have their role to play in the overall process. The promotion of confidence can either lead to silencing one's insecurities, or it can be a consequence of the latter. To give an alternative example: to say that, in preparing a playlist for a party, the songs and their order are chosen with the aim of boosting and maintaining the cheerful mood in the participants, is a kind of positive translation of saying that the aim is to disable, prohibit, or minimize tiredness and melancholia in the participants. That is to say, the hither side of positive niche construction consists in a negative aim with respect to the unwanted—to play with words, niche construction is always simultaneously niche de-construction. Even when it comes to beavers and dams—the paradigmatic analogy used in the literature on affective scaffolding—the negative hither side to the beavers' active reorganization of the environment lies in actively undoing the unfavorable facets of the environment. The hither side to *establishing something new* lies in *replacing, destroying, overwriting, or downplaying the old*.

To generalize, all acts of scaffolding are simultaneously oriented toward positive and negative outcomes, even if either one of these goals might be more prominent than the other. Sometimes (and perhaps even often) positive scaffolding is unequivocally the dominant motive, whereas on other occasions negative motives might be more emphasized. Sometimes we primarily want to get into a particular mood, and sometimes we primarily pursue overwriting our current mood—the latter attitude reminds us of an alcoholic who, with her substance use, no longer primarily seeks for pleasure but tries to undo or drown her misery.¹² Metaphorically speaking, the mind is not like a well where one, by using various scaffolds, picks up certain positive contents, as a consequence of which the water level (or affective tension) is lowered; the primary motive might also be to push down the water level, as a consequence of which certain positive contents pop up into the surface. Nonetheless, regardless of questions of emphasis, while striving toward a positive aim, the negative aim may be simultaneously pursued as well—even if this aspect of the process would remain tacit or even unconscious.

While the positive aspects of scaffolding (e.g., enabling, maintaining, enhancing, and transforming) have been emphatic in scholarship on affective scaffolding and niche construction, the perpetual negative aspect has been omitted; certain overtly negative examples of scaffolding have been discussed in the available literature, but the perpetual negative aspect in all scaffolding has not been recognized. If what I have said here is on the right track, and an optimal niche is always a result of both positive and negative scaffolding, a bias toward the positive aspect can be misleading and render onesided descriptions of the phenomenon. In the current context, emphasizing this less examined, negative aspect of scaffolding is important, as its relates to what I will later call the thanatic function of music listening. Namely, as I will show, music, too, can be used not only to *animate wanted affects*, but also to *amortize unwanted ones*.

The Vital Core of Musical Expression

This perpetually present hither side of music-use will be discussed later on. In order to build a comparison between music and the attuned caregiver, what we need to examine first is the following question: When we feel that a piece of music "matches" with our mood, *what* exactly matches with *what*?

On the one hand, music is an *audible phenomenon*, whereas subjective experiencing is not: unlike music, affective experiencing does not, literally, sound like anything. On the other hand, as a non-discursive artform, music itself cannot directly express categorical mental contents like beliefs, thoughts, or emotional states. And yet, whether there are lyrics or not, music itself is nonetheless "affectively meaningful." To be sure, unlike verbal descriptions, music cannot express or enunciate particular emotional states like joy, but music can nonetheless *proceed* or *unfold* in a joyous manner. In short, music can be joyous.

C14P15

C14P16

C14P17

C14S3

C14P18

C14P19

To cash this out, Daniel Stern's distinction between "categorical affects" and "forms of vitality" proves helpful. To pinpoint the distinction, consider someone saying to you, "I am sad," but doing this with an elevated tone of voice, with a raising pitch, eventually bursting into laughter. While the other's explicit verbal communication points toward the emotional category of sadness, the manner in which this expression proceeds makes it hard for you to believe the other's words. When it comes to music, what primarily matters is the manner in which the musical expression proceeds—the vital form of musical expression.¹³ In the absence of lyrics, there can be no discursive categorical contents to be expressed.¹⁴ And yet, as Rechartd puts it, music presents "dynamic patterns of feeling" that are not tied to any particular contents.¹⁵ And so, any song that proceeds in a melancholic fashion, but has witty lyrics, primarily renders the latter *unfitting* vis-à-vis the song. As in the previous example, lyrics seem to be somehow "off" in the light of the vital quality of the music.¹⁶ Conversely, as long as the lyrics are more or less in line with the vital quality of the respective piece of music, no such distance makes itself felt. That is to say: when it comes to music, *how* something is expressed matters more than *what* is explicitly expressed. And whenever lyrics are overlooked, not understood, or simply absent, this dimension is *all* that matters.

It is this vital form of musical expression that either matches or mismatches with our affective situation. When listening to music, it is not the individual tones or their static combination that we listen to, but the manner in which the musical expression proceeds and develops.¹⁷ In this sense, we can revise our earlier characterization of music as an audible phenomenon: the audible moments do not exhaust music, as the latter also lies "between the notes."¹⁸ Differently put, the vital core of music does not make itself felt in the particular notes or in a collection thereof, but in the manner in which the simultaneous and consecutive notes resonate with one another, in the manner in which the silences prepare, emphasize, and contrast with what is audible, and so on.

Stern's theory of vitality forms targets this dynamic dimension. Distinguishing between "categorical affects" and "vitality affects," Stern offers the following comparison:

The expressiveness of vitality affects can be likened to that of a puppet show. The puppets have little or no capacity to express categories of affect by way of facial signals, and their repertoire of conventionalized gestural or postural affect signals is usually impoverished. It is from the way they move in general that we infer the different vitality affects from the activation contours they trace. Most often, the characters of different puppets are largely defined in terms of particular vitality affects; one may be lethargic, with drooping limbs and hanging head, another forceful, and still another jaunty.¹⁹

Stern underlines that no vital form is firmly tied to any particular categorical affect. For instance, delightedness and anger can equally unfold in a "bursting," "forceful," or "accelerating" fashion: "the contents, by themselves, need not conform to any particular dynamic experience. Anger can appear on the scene explosively, or build progressively, or arrive sneakily, or coldly, and so on. So could happiness and its smile."²⁰ Furthermore, vitality affects can also occur in the absence of categorical affects. As Stern exemplifies, besides the rush of anger or rush of joy, also "a perceived flooding of light, an accelerating sequence of thoughts, an unmeasurable wave of feeling evoked by music, and a shot of narcotics can all feel like 'rushes.'"²¹

The differentiation of these "forms of feeling," "archaic meaning schemata," or "vitality affects" occurs originally on the level of "preverbal bodily experiences"²² and the various "vital processes of life"²³ that impinge on the organisms most of the time—for example, breathing, getting hungry, eliminating, falling asleep and emerging out of sleep, or feeling the coming and going of emotions and thoughts.²⁴ By way of primitive symbolization, these processes receive an "amodal," and hence "flexible," expression that, as a pattern of unfolding, is "translatable" or "movable" from one sensory modality to another.²⁵ When we hear music, Stern explains, we sometimes experience "sound in motion," or "imagine specific sounds (from one source) moving in different directions."²⁶ Such cross-modal translations are not something additional to our experience of music, but reflections of the fundamental nature of the latter.

Importantly, affective experiences and trains of thought, too, are dynamic experiences with a vital quality. For one, like pieces of music, emotions, feelings, and trains of thought, too, can be "exploding," "rushing," "fluttering," "powerful," "gentle," "fading," and so on.²⁷ Far from being something additional, our sensitivity vis-à-vis the style of unfolding serves as the primary source of our implicit and explicit emotional self-understanding. Affective self-awareness does not boil down to any of the fleeting contents

C14P21

C14P22

C14P23

C14P24

C14P25

C14P26

that pass through our mind (like particular notes), but to the dynamic relations between these fleeting sequences. In this sense, as with music, the defining core of affective experiencing lies between the notes: in the manner of unfolding. Accordingly, prereflective “knowledge” of how one feels does not rest on the discursive categorization of one’s emotional state; what suffices is sensitivity toward the dynamic relations, tensions, and transitions between one’s temporally unfolding experiences.²⁸ In this light, it is not a coincidence that musical terms such as *crescendo*, *fortissimo*, *allegro*, and *andante* can be applied to affective experiences as well—after all, both are communicable in terms of vitality forms. As Dilthey once put it, “life is like a melody.”²⁹

The alleged sense of “match” between a piece of music and our affective situation hence no longer presents a mystery: the felt match is found on the level of vitality forms. The vital quality of the song can *fit* better or worse with the vital quality of our affective situation. When it comes to vitality forms, “we are never without their presence, whether or not we are conscious of them, while ‘regular’ affects come and go.”³⁰ When it comes to mental contents and expressions thereof, we are primarily attuned to “dynamic happenings.”³¹ And this is what primarily interests us in music as well.

Sensitivity to the vital form of expression plays a central and indispensable role in *interpersonal encounters* as well. As the previous example illustrated, we eventually base our judgment of others on our experience of the vital form of their expression—no matter what they explicitly say. As with music, *how* something is said often weighs more than *what* is said—and “knowing the ‘what’ [...] is incomplete without knowledge of the ‘how.’”³² Whenever a distance or an imbalance makes itself felt between the explicit content of the other’s verbal expression and the vital contour of the latter, what we first and foremost question is the veracity of the explicit expression—not the authenticity of the vital form. Unlike one’s tone of voice and the various micro-gestures that remain in the background, verbal expression is more firmly under one’s voluntary control and hence also consciously manipulable.

Moreover, the non-discursive level of interaction supports the sense of connection also when verbal communication is absent, incomprehensible, or compromised.³³ Sensitivity to this match of vital forms serves “as a sort of non-conscious compass” to guide the course of interaction.³⁴ Importantly, in early infancy, and hence before words, the interaction between the infant and the caregiver unfolds exclusively on this level: “for the baby, the music comes before the lyrics.”³⁵ As in the case of instrumental music, or with music sung in an unknown language, the infant’s experience of the caregiver unfolds *exclusively* on the level of vitality forms. To be sure, words may be present, but their discursive content is not grasped by the infant: the lyrics do not matter, as it were.³⁶ The register of vital forms is all that makes the difference.

These insights enable a comparison between music listening and early experiences of care. As I will show, our “interaction” with music and our “use” of music in later life bears functional and structural similarities to the infant’s interaction with, and use of, the caregiver: the former is modeled according to the latter. To build this comparison between music and the attuned caregiver, let us first turn to early interaction.

The Attuned Caregiver: A Mirror and a Regulator

Much of what we have elaborated above vis-à-vis music is already going on in the early interaction between the infant and the caregiver. In his developmental account, Stern places emphasis on the caregiver’s capacity to spontaneously organize his expressions in a way that matches with those of his infant. What is at stake is something more than sheer imitation. Stern exemplifies:

A nine-month-old boy is sitting facing his mother. He has a rattle in his hand and is shaking up and down with a display of interest and mild amusement. As mother watches, she begins to nod her head up and down, keeping a tight beat with her son’s arm motions.³⁷

Whereas simple imitation (e.g., the mother grasping another rattle and shaking it up and down) could inform the child that his mother has recognized *how his action looks like*, here the response nonverbally informs the child that the caregiver has grasped *how the child felt while doing it*.³⁸ The mother alters the modality and the content of the child’s expression, while nonetheless matching her response with the vitality form displayed in the child’s expression.³⁹ In this manner, she puts the infant’s feeling “into her own words,” as it were:

We have the impression that a kind of imitation has occurred, yet there is no faithful rendering of the infant's overt behaviour at all. Nonetheless, some form of matching is going on. The matching is largely crossmodal or intermodal; that is, the channel or modality of expression used by the mother to match is different from the channel or modality used by the infant to express.⁴⁰

C14P34

This "selective and cross-modal imitation" Stern calls "affect attunement."⁴¹

C14P35

Affect attunement has two important functions that should be distinguished and elaborated in order to build the comparison with music listening: the mirroring function and the regulating function. For one, by gesticulating in a manner that matches the vital quality of the child's expression, the caregiver not only imitates the child's external comportment, but gives an alternative expression to the child's feeling. This expression is not identical with that of the child, but it nonetheless matches with the vital quality of the latter. Now, given the sense of match, in the presence of such attuned caregiver, the child finds his subjective feelings being reflected back to him.⁴² In this sense, the caregiver functions like a *mirror*: in her attuned presence she provides the child with a reflective surface that furthers the child's emotional self-understanding, while also informing the child that he or she is not alone with this feeling. For the infant, the other's attuned response appears, not as a second, separate expression, but as an expressive completion of one's own feeling. In this manner, affect attunement serves as a nonverbal "path to sharing inner feelings."⁴³ In the case of mismatch, the caregiver's expression does not seem to have anything to do with the child's own feeling; the former does not appear as an attuned development of the latter. Instead, it introduces itself as something "other," something external. In such cases, the child might gain knowledge of how the other feels, but not knowledge about how he himself feels. As Winnicott puts it, "[i]f the mother's face is unresponsive, the mirror is a thing to be looked at, not a thing to be looked into."⁴⁴

C14P36

In addition to the mirroring function, affect attunement also has a regulatory function. To be sure, the mirroring already exerts a tentative regulatory effect on the child in two ways. For one, by serving as a reflective surface to the child's feeling, with her "marked" response the attuned caregiver lets the child know that *he is not alone with the respective feeling*. And finding one's feeling shared readily changes the affect. For example, shared joy feels different from solitary joy, and distress feels less crushing in the presence of an attuned other. Second, in her mirroring function, the attuned caregiver facilitates the *categorization* of the child's feeling as this-or-that feeling, thus furthering the child's emotional self-understanding. Rather than an amorphous atmosphere that fills every corner of the child's subjective universe, in and through parental mirroring the child's feelings are increasingly differentiated from other feelings, and categorized, for the child, as feelings of this or that type—"categorical affects," as Stern would put it. By receiving a tentative categorical identity, the "freely moving" and "restless" affect is increasingly differentiated from various other kinds of feelings, and "bound" into a form that can be represented, handled, and potentially verbalized.⁴⁵ This, too, already modifies the affective experience.

C14P37

Besides this twofold tentative regulation entailed by the mirroring function, the caregiver can also *actively manipulate* the child's self-experience—whether consciously or unconsciously. That is to say, aside from serving as a mirror, the caregiver initially serves as an *active regulator* of the child's feelings. To illustrate this, consider the process of soothing a distressed child who has harmlessly fallen down from a chair. Instead of merely attuning to the child's plight, and hence mirroring back what is offered as it were, the caregiver takes an active role in modifying the expressed feeling of his child. By taking the crying child into his arms, by stroking and rocking him, while perhaps uttering something in a soothing tone of voice, the caregiver assumes the role of a *modifying mirror*. For instance, by finely "under-attuning" with the child's expression, the caregiver may suggestively steer the child toward an alternative and less intense version of his current feeling: he "'purposively' mismatches the dynamic features and returns a vitality form to the child" in a way that underlines the caregiver's differing take on the behavior, yet in a manner that *sufficiently* echoes the child's affective situation and hence allows the child to experience that her original feeling has been recognized.⁴⁶ And just as under-attunement can alleviate, appease, or discourage the child's affects and impulses, "over-attunement" can activate or encourage the child: "the matching/mismatching of vitality forms can shape what the infant does and how he feels about doing it."⁴⁷ That is to say, along with the caregiver's soothing maneuvers, for instance, the child not only gains an external-reflective point of view on his own feeling, but also finds his affective plight actively appeased by the presence of the attuned caregiver.

C14P38

Importantly, the alternative version—as displayed by the modifying mirror—must fit into the "parameters" of the child's experiential situation. In the midst of an affective storm, it is no use trying

C14P39

conjure up feelings that are too far removed from the eye of the storm: the attuned caregiver is not undo the child's feeling or replace it with a different one. Attempts to make a child feel happy or pleased when he is crying inconsolably, for instance, are destined to fail—such responses are destined to feel misattuned, artificial, and potentially traumatic in the sense of abandoning. Likewise, if the child is too tired, attempts to activate him—say, by speaking and gesticulating in an energetic and enthusiastic manner—will appear unfitting from the child's viewpoint. In such cases, the vital quality of the caregiver's presence does not fit the parameters or “window of tolerance” outlined by the child's experiential situation and a sense of disconnection unfolds. In order to have an effect on the child, the caregiver can be underattuned or overattuned, but not *too much*. The response must fit into the parameters of the experiential situation of the child, which is to say that derailments must be slight enough to remain unnoticed.⁴⁸ In soothing the child, for instance, the only possibility is to proceed step by step, and *gradually* lessen the child's distress. The task is not easy, as the parameters of a fitting response change during the process, and if the caregiver is hurrying with the process, the child feels that she is left alone with her feeling. In adult life, too, we only get irritated when it is too obvious that someone is trying to cheer us up when we are in a very different mood: the other's effort does not fit the parameters outlined by our experiential situation. As will be explained in the next section, the same applies to music listening: with the latter, you cannot change your mood from sad to happy at once, but have to proceed in small steps. That is to say: like the caregiver's finely attuned maneuvers during the process of soothing, in pursuing a particular mood, what matters is also the order of songs.

Before going into the comparison, let me give a short summary. Affect attunement has two basic functions: the mirroring function that promotes mentalization, and the regulating function that promotes affective modification. As for the first one, by attuning to the infant's experiences, the caregiver furthers the child's grasp of how he feels. The attuned caregiver is, in this sense, a predecessor of the reflective capacity: she functions like a mirror that enables the child to grasp (and take distance to) how he currently feels.⁴⁹

C14P40

Second, the attuned caregiver actively *regulates* the infant's mental states. By not only cross-modally mirroring the child's feeling, but also filtering what she gives back to the child, the caregiver modulates (e.g., soothes, activates) the child's feeling. While sensitivity to affect attunement first emerges around the age of eight to nine months,⁵⁰ what is at issue is not a passing phase, but a phenomenon that retains its importance throughout life. While at the outset both of the aforementioned functions reside solely in the caregiver, they are gradually *internalized*—the occasional second-person guise in affective self-regulation (such as when we say to ourselves: “you can do this!” or “you'll get over this!”) can be seen as a reminder of the fact that an actual second person was initially in charge of the respective affective changes. Be that as it may, in and through his interactions with the caregiver, the child increasingly learns to mentalize, categorize, reflect upon, and regulate his own feelings independently of the caregiver.⁵¹

This path toward autonomy is significantly facilitated by the individual's increasing capacity to make use of various other external resources—including music—to support his or her affective self-regulation. In this regard, there is a developmental continuum from early interaction to music listening. The structural similarities are noticeable: in both cases, there is an “external resource” that enables, maintains, enhances, or transforms one's affective experiences; in both, this resource is “used” (though at the outset, this usage is largely instinctual and unconscious); and in both, connecting with such a resource takes place on the level of affect attunement. Accordingly, the fact that metaphors related to music listening are so easily applicable to descriptions of early interaction might not be a sheer consequence; rather, it might be telling of the fact that music listening is modeled according to the former. These insights motivate us to finally compare music listening with early experiences of care.

C14P41

Music as an Attuned Caregiver

C14S5

In what follows, I will argue that music, too, is used in the two functions that we assigned to the attuned caregiver: mirroring and regulation. Whereas the latter function has been widely examined in research on affective scaffolding, the mirroring function of music-use has received considerably less attention. As I will show, given a sufficient sense of match between the vital quality of music and the vital quality of one's affective situation, music, too, can not only *regulate one's feelings* but also *mirror how one currently feels*. Let me now elaborate the details of these two functions in relation to music listening, while keeping an attentive eye on our preceding discussion of early interaction.

C14P42

As for the mirroring function of music—use, consider undergoing a complex feeling with melancholic and nostalgic elements that you wish to embrace or savor.⁵² Instead of trying to change your mood, you browse for a song than would capture, articulate, or express your feeling. Given the complexity of the latter, however, you might not have a perfectly suited candidate in mind, and you perhaps have to try out a few songs before ending up listening to a song, album, or artist that sufficiently fits with your current mental landscape. Yet, already the process of *searching* for the right song is informative. After all, in dwelling in the vital form of the song, whenever a sense of match occurs, you find your own feeling expressed therein, and hence gain non-verbal information about the kind of feeling you are going through. Likewise, in the case of a sense of mismatch—that is, when the piece of music does not resonate with your state of mind—you gain information about what kind of feelings you are *not* going through. In this sense, even if any particular song hardly exhausts your complex feeling, music nonetheless teaches you something about your current state of mind.⁵³

While music can be deliberately and consciously used in the mirroring function, more often we put on music without giving much thought about our motives. The act of putting on certain kind of music may be motivated by the aim of enhancing our current feeling, but it might also be telling of the fact that our affective situation is *unclear* to us. Our experiential affective landscape may be more like a nameless and unbound atmosphere that affords no coherent discursive representation.⁵⁴ That is to say, in the discursive sense of the word, we might not “know” how we feel.⁵⁵ A piece of music that resonates with how we feel enables viewing our complex feelings from the outside, thus establishing a preliminary reflective distance to them.⁵⁶ And, as already said, experiences with a sense of match also entail a preliminary sense of sharing. To be sure, the fact that the music that you listen to has been created (i.e., composed, played) by someone else readily marks it as an *alternative* expression; yet, whenever there is a match of vitality forms, the piece of music is marked as an alternative expression of how you feel *too*⁵⁷—and hence, in turn, as an expression of how *someone else* feels, or has felt, too. Accordingly, when it comes to unpleasant feelings, such as grief or heartache, in wallowing in such painful atmospheres through music listening, we might not be simply torturing ourselves: whether consciously or unconsciously, we might be rather striving to further our emotional self-understanding, to pursue the accompanying feeling of sharing, or both. In this sense, music is a rather personal issue; the song that we choose is like a trusted and secret companion who shares our feeling—much like an attuned caregiver.

C14P44

While we sometimes more emphatically use music to process, articulate, and savor the feelings that we are going through, or have gone through, sometimes we more emphatically seek to modify or regulate our affects. In this case, the mirroring function is accompanied and strengthened by the regulating function. Here we use music to capture, not our current affective experience, but a desired affective experience. And so, like the attuned caregiver, music too can serve as a *modifying mirror* that not only reflects one’s mood, but also lures it in a certain direction. Moreover, like in the caregiver case, balancing is once more needed. Music listening, too, involves certain tacit “parameters” for a fitted match. It is a matter of navigating in the volatile and sometimes narrow area between intrusive intimacy, on the one hand, and prominent mismatch, on the other. This balancing requirement deserves a closer look.

C14P45

For a case of a prominent mismatch, where the vital quality of music is too far removed from the situational parameters outlined by one’s mood, consider a depressed person putting on cheerful music in order to eradicate her miseries. This resembles the experience of a child whose caregiver, while realizing that the child has bumped herself and crying inconsolably, just laughs carelessly, makes a series of funny faces, and exclaims: “naah, come on, cheer up!” What the child finds expressed in such responses is the caregiver’s own feelings, and not her own, whereby she will feel dismissed. Likewise, the joyous or hilarious quality of the piece of music does not match the depressed individual’s feeling—while it offers, at best, a temporary escape, it exceeds the parameters of a sufficient match, does not seem to have anything to do with listener’s current affective state, and thus ultimately leaves her cold—much like a mirror that one can look at, but not look into, to echo Winnicott’s words.

C14P46

On the other end, music, too, can sometimes painfully underline or violate our emotional landscape. As said, in certain circumstances, a particular song might feel too intimate or “too much,” as it were; it might give a painfully accurate and public expression to affects that one might want to downplay, avoid, repress, or hide instead. Such experiences resemble a relation to a caregiver who, by way of emotional contagion, for instance, takes over the child’s feeling, hijacks it as it were, and reacts as if the feeling were equally the caregiver’s own—rather than being consoled by the presence of the caregiver, the child might even end up consoling the latter. Whereas in the earlier case, music is not sufficiently connected with what I am going

C14P47

through, here music is not sufficiently “marked off” as a representation, or distinguished as an “alternative expression,” of what I am going through.⁵⁸

Accordingly, in a depressive mood, listening to melancholic music has its pros and cons. While it gives an alternative expression to how one feels, as a consequence of which one might feel less puzzled and alone with this affective mood, it can do this only by underlining and temporarily intensifying the painful feeling. Differently put, one can find an affect shared only by also experiencing it oneself. Be that as it may, providing a depressed person with a hilarious music usually works as poorly as beginning to dance in front of a crying child who has hurt herself: the vital quality of the response does not fit the parameters set by the individual’s affective situation, whereby the reflective surface casts an image that feels external or alien.

C14P48

These remarks enable me, finally, to build a link to the question of *positive and negative scaffolding*. As already alluded to, transforming a “niche” is not just a positive matter of coming up with something new; it also necessarily entails the negative aspect of destroying or annihilating the old. As I illustrated, the beaver’s (positive) strive for an optimal environment is a hither side of the (negative) strive to annihilate the given setting, where the threat of predators is imminent. Likewise, in musical scaffolding, the hither side of (positively) pursuing a particular mood lies in the attempt to get rid of or downplay certain other affects. Emphatic or not, such negative dimension is present in all affective scaffolding, though possibly only in an implicit form. In this sense, there is a “thanatic” dimension to music-use. What I have in mind here echoes the Freudian duality between the life drive (Eros) and the death drive (Thanatos). Freud exemplifies this duality vis-à-vis the pursuit of happiness:

C14P49

This endeavour has two sides, a positive and a negative aim. It aims, on the one hand, at an absence of pain and unpleasure, and, on the other, at the experiencing of strong feelings of pleasure. In its narrower sense the word “happiness” only relates to the last. In conformity with this dichotomy in his aims, man’s activity develops in two directions, according as it seeks to realize—in the main, or even exclusively—the one or the other of these aims.⁵⁹

C14P50

This duality is present in musical scaffolding as well: as said, in its regulative function, music listening not only aims at positive construction of something that is not yet present, but also at a controlled destruction of what currently prevails. And so, besides the positively scaffolding side of music, we could also talk of the “deadly” side of music.

C14P51

Moreover, not only the regulating function, but also the mirroring function has a negative dimension to it. While music promotes our grasp of *how we feel*, it simultaneously furthers our grasp of *how we do not feel*. Just consider early interaction, where the attuned caregiver mirrors back how the child feels, thus simultaneously furthering the child’s capacity to differentiate *this affect* from various *other affects*—for instance, the sense of hunger from stomach ache.⁶⁰ In short, the unavoidable hither side of “affective education” lies in “affective differentiation.” With her expressive presence, the caregiver at once comes to suggest to the child how he is not feeling (the negative side of the mirroring function) or how he should not be feeling (the negative side of the regulating function). As the etymological origin of the term suggests, “scaffolds” are not only used for *building and renovating* but also for *hangings and executions*: for getting rid of something.

C14P52

The mutual balance between these two aims depends on the case. Affective situations can be unpleasant in many ways. For one, there are affects that are disturbing per se, and straightforward negative scaffolding often targets these—for instance, if the noise from the building construction across the street disturbs me, I shut the window and thus blot out or obliterate the disturbance. But negative valence is not needed for an affective situation to feel disturbing: even affects that are, as such, pleasant in their quality, can feel disturbing if they are *unbound or excessive*. For this, consider the mental landscape of a five-year-old who has, just before bedtime, “gone wild” in the course of some activating game: even though the affects that the child is going through would be pleasant per se, the flood of unbound impulses and wild affects might be too much to handle in toto. And so, the unbound affects, or the child’s “freely moving energy,”⁶¹ increasingly gives rise to distress or anxiety—and parental regulation is needed. Differently put, besides (Dionysian) *stimulation*, we need (Apollonian) *order and form*, too.⁶² The keyword, once again, is “balancing.”

C14P53

Just as the attuned caregiver cannot straightforwardly eradicate the plight of the crying child, or simply replace it with a different affect, music lacks such magical powers as well. However, by mirroring the vital quality of the listener’s affective situation and thus giving a non-verbal expression to how one feels, music

C14P54

positions the listener's affect in the external world, "translates" it in to the language of the perceptible;⁶³ it thus enables a reflective distance and an alternative viewpoint to one's feeling, while signaling also that one's feeling is shared. After all, the matching piece of music is a living proof of the fact that *someone else* has felt the way I do, and that there are *alternative* ways of experiencing and carrying the respective feeling. Therefore, unlike one might assume, sometimes listening to melancholic music alleviates melancholia: it may gather one's affects into a form that can be reflected upon, articulated, and hence also differentiated from particular other feelings. The success of such scaffolding seems to rely on an equilibrium of intimacy and distance. At one end, there is the possibility of wallowing in the feeling, making oneself at home in it, and falling in love with one's misery, as it were, without gaining an alternative perspective or a reflective distance to it. At the other end, there is the possibility of the music being too far removed from one's affective situation, hence leaving one unaffected. Like the attuned caregiver, music has to keep within the implicit "parameters" outlined by the affective situation of the individual.

By successfully mirroring the infant's affective situation, the caregiver facilitates mentally "binding"⁶⁴ the unbound affective fog that—as amorphous, non-graspable, or incomprehensible—give rise to anxiety. Likewise with music. A caregiver, a friend, a psychotherapist, or a piece of music cannot take away the troubling feeling, but such "external resources" may nonetheless further the aim of mentalizing the feeling, of binding it, and hence with an increasing precision seizing upon it as a feeling of this or that kind. The hither side to this endeavor is what I have called the thanatic aspect in music listening: to undo certain affects, to silence certain voices within, and to get rid of the affective disturbances. Like an attuned caregiver who gives an alternative expression to the complex feeling that one undergoes, music *compartmentalizes* the amorphous affect, or the "freely moving psychic energy,"⁶⁵ and binds it into "this here." In its capacity to mirror one's feelings, music can not only *fulfill and satisfy*, but also *ease and relieve* affective tensions, by enabling a non-discursive "reflection" both on *how we feel* and on *how we do not feel*. This latter, negative aspect in musical scaffolding, amounts to the deadly side of music.

Conclusion

The literature on musical "scaffolding" has not only used the term in an ambiguous manner (referring to enabling, maintaining, enhancing, transforming, etc.), but also mainly focused on the *regulating function* of music, omitting the *mirroring function*. Combining research in psychoanalysis, phenomenology, and developmental psychology, I have built a comparison between music listening and early interaction and emphasized the mirroring function of music listening in particular. I have argued that music not only regulates but also mirrors our affective experiences and thus promotes the capacities of *mentalization*, *articulation*, or *affective self-understanding*. Moreover, clarifying how musical scaffolding unfolds in the register of vitality forms enabled me to argue that musical scaffolding presupposes that the vital quality of the piece of music is close enough to—that is, within the parameters of—the affective situation of the listener. Differently put, in order to function as a *modifying mirror*, music must at once function as a *mirror*. In this sense, the mirror function has a constitutive primacy with respect to the regulating function. As with the attuned caregiver, it is only by sufficiently reflecting back to me how I feel, only by resonating with my current affective experience, that a piece of music can have its modifying effect. The alternative version has to be an alternative version of *my feeling*—it must be close enough. Consequently, music listening not only *can* be shared; whenever there is a sense of match, music listening *already is an experience of sharing*.

While the similarities between music and an attuned caregiver seem rather pronounced—both are "used" in the mirroring and in the regulating function, in both the importance of parameters is crucial, and both entail a sense of sharing—it is also worth underlining the differences between the two cases. For one, unlike the caregiver, music can (to some extent) be *controlled*. While, in favorable cases, the caregiver, too, is more or less predictable, with music the outcome is nonetheless more firmly under one's control. After all, when putting on certain familiar song, you know what to expect; and you can always change the song. On the other hand, given the developmental continuum between the two phenomena, we might suspect that by *controlling* music, the individual is unconsciously satisfying his or her unconscious phantasy of controlling the caregiver. A related note can be made vis-à-vis the search for the *perfect song for our current situation*: while, in truth, the attuned caregiver is not omnipotent (she cannot remove unpleasant affects and replace them with enjoyment), and thus is necessarily disappointing, could our search for the "perfect song" be ultimately telling of the fantasy of an attuned caregiver who, after all, has such a capacity? The detailed analysis of questions like these will be left for further studies, however.

C14P55

C14S6

C14P56

C14P57

As a final note, I want to repeat something I started with. Early interaction has often been accounted for by using metaphors related to music listening. In the light of what has been presented above, the picture can be turned upside down. Perhaps it is not just the case the music provides a fitting vocabulary for infant-caregiver interaction; perhaps early interaction serves as a suitable model for analyses of music listening as well.

C14P58

Acknowledgments

C14P59

I am obliged to Henrik Enckell for his generous comments to an earlier version of the article. Also, I want to thank Henna-Riikka Peltola and Jussi Saarinen for their feedback on the article. I want to thank Jessica Hurme for a series of inspiring discussions during the intensive week in Konnevesi, when I was putting together the first draft of the chapter. Lastly, I want to thank Jessica Wiskus and Jonathan de Souza for their insightful notes and helpful suggestions, which significantly enhanced the chapter.

C14P60

Bollas, Christopher. *The Shadow of the Object*. London: Routledge, 1987.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Bruschweiler-Stern, Nadia. "The Music of Dan's Life." *Psychoanalytic Inquiry* 37, no. 4 (2017): 220–227.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Clarke, David, and Eric Clarke eds. *Music and Consciousness: Philosophical, Psychological, and Cultural Perspectives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Colombetti, Giovanna, and Joel Krueger. "Scaffoldings of the affective mind." *Philosophical Psychology* 28, no. 8 (2015): 1157–1176.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Colombetti, Giovanna. "Emoting the Situated Mind. A Taxonomy of Affective Material Scaffoldings." *JOLMA: The Journal for the Philosophy of Language, Mind and the Arts* 1, no. 2 (2020): 215–236.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Dilthey, Wilhelm. "Plan for the Continuation of the Formation of the Historical World in Human Sciences." In *Selected Works, Volume 3: The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences*, edited by Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi, 213–311. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.

Eerola, Tuomas, Jonna Vuoskoski, Henna-Riikka Peltola, Vesa Putkinen, and Katharina Schäferb. "An Integrative Review of the Enjoyment of Sadness Associated with Music." *Physics of Life Reviews* 25 (2018): 100–121.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Eerola, Tuomas, and Henna-Riikka Peltola. "Memorable Experiences with Sad Music—Reasons, Reactions and Mechanisms of Three Types of Experiences." *PLoS ONE* 11, no. 6 (2016): e0157444.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Freud, Sigmund. *Civilization and its Discontents. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XXI (1927–1931): The Future of an Illusion, Civilization and its Discontents, and Other Works*. Edited by James Strachey. London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-analysis, 1930.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Gergely, György, and John Watson. "The Social Biofeedback Theory Of Parental Affect-Mirroring: The Development of Emotional Self-awareness and Self-control in Infancy." *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 77, no. 1 (1996): 1181–1212.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Herbert, Ruth, David Clarke, and Eric Clarke, eds. *Music and Consciousness 2: Worlds, Practices, Modalities*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Ikonen, Pentti, and Eero Rechartt. "The Vicissitudes of Thanatos: On the Place of Aggression and Destructiveness in Psychoanalytic Interpretation." *Scandinavian Psychoanalytic Review* 1 (1978): 79–114.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Ikonen, Pentti, and Eero Rechartt. "Binding, Narcissistic Pathology and the Psychoanalytic Process." *Scandinavian Psychoanalytic Review* 3 (1980): 4–28.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Ikonen, Pentti, and Eero Rechartt. *Thanatos, Shame, and Other Essays*. London: Karnac, 2010.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Jaffe, Joseph, Beatrice Beebe, Stanley Feldstein, Cynthia L. Crown, Michael D. Jasnow, Philippe Rochat, and Daniel N. Stern. "Rhythms of Dialogue in Infancy: Coordinated Timing in Development." *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development* 66, no. 2 (2001): 1–149.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Krueger, Joel. "Music as Affective Scaffolding." In *Music and Consciousness 2: Worlds, Practices, Modalities*, edited by Ruth Herbert, David Clarke, and Eric Clarke, 55–70. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Maiese, Michelle. "Affective Scaffolds, Expressive Arts, and Cognition." *Frontiers in Psychology* 7 (2016): 359.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, edited by Raymond Geuss and Ronald Peirs. Translated by Ronald Peirs. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Malloch, Stephen. "Mothers and Infants and Communicative Musicality." *Musicae Scientiae* 3, no. 1 (1999): 29–57.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Malloch, Stephen, and Colwyn Trevarthen, eds. *Communicative Musicality: Exploring the Basis of Human Companionship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Malloch, Stephen, and Colwyn Trevarthen. "The Human Nature of Music." *Frontiers in Psychology* 9 (2018): 1680.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (1960). *Signs*. Translated by Richard McCleary. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Mössler, Karin, Wolfgang Schmid, Jörg Aßmus, Larua Fusar-Poli, and Christian Gold. "Attunement in Music Therapy for Young Children with Autism: Revisiting Qualities of Relationship as Mechanisms of Change." *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* 50, no. 11 (2020): 3921–3934.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Rechardt, Eero. "On Musical Cognition and Archaic Meaning Schemata." *Scandinavian Psychoanalytic Review* 8, no. 2 (1985): 95–113.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Rechardt, Eero. "Experiencing Music." *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 42, no. 1 (1987): 511–529.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Saarinen, Jussi. *Affect in Artistic Creativity: Painting to Feel*. London: Routledge, 2020a.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Saarinen, Jussi. "What Can the Concept of Affective Scaffolding Do for Us?" *Philosophical Psychology* 33, no. 6 (2020b): 820–839.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Slaby, Jan. "Mind Invasion: Situated Affectivity and the Corporate Life Hack." *Frontiers in Psychology* 7 (2016): 266.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Stein, Edith. *On the Problem of Empathy*. Translated by Waltraut Stein. Washington: ICS Publications, 1989.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Stern, Daniel. "Affect attunement." In *Frontiers in Infant Psychiatry*, Vol. 2, edited by Justin D. Call, Eleanor Galenson, and Robert L. Tyson, 3–14. New York: Basic Books, 1984.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Stern, Daniel. *The Interpersonal World of the Infant: A View from Psychoanalysis and Developmental Psychology*. New York: Basic Books, 1985.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Stern, Daniel. *The Present Moment: In Psychotherapy and Everyday Life*. New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Stern, Daniel. *Forms of Vitality: Exploring Dynamic Experience in Psychology, the Arts, Psychotherapy, and Development*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Taipale, Joona. "Empathy and the Melodic Unity of the Other." *Human Studies* 38, no. 4 (2015): 463–479.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Taipale, Joona. "Self-regulation and Beyond: Affect Regulation and the Infant-Caregiver Dyad." *Frontiers in Psychology* 7, no. 889

Taipale, Joonas. “Social Mirrors: Tove Jansson’s *Invisible Child* and the Importance of Being Seen.” *Scandinavian Psychoanalytic Review* 39, no. 1 (2016b): 13–25.

Taipale, Joonas. “Controlling the Uncontrollable. Self-regulation and the Dynamics of Addiction.” *Scandinavian Psychoanalytic Review* 40, no. 1 (2017): 29–42.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Taipale, Joonas. “The Illusion of Contact: Insights from Winnicott’s 1952 Letter to Klein.” *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 102, no. 1 (2021): 31–50.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Taipale, Joonas. “Sharing and Other Illusions—Asymmetry in ‘Moments of Meeting.’” In *Empathy and Ethics*, edited by Magnus Englander and Susi Ferrarello. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, forthcoming.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Trondalen, Gro, and Finn Skårderud. “Playing with Affects ... and the Importance of ‘Affect Attunement.’” *Nordic Journal of Music Therapy* 16, no. 2 (2007): 100–111.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Varga, Somogy. *Scaffolded Minds: Integration and Disintegration*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2018.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Winnicott, Donald. *Playing and Reality*. London and New York: Routledge, 1971.

[Google Scholar](#) [Google Preview](#) [WorldCat](#) [COPAC](#)

Zepf, Siegfried. “Where Are We When We Listen to Music?” *Canadian Journal of Psychoanalysis* 21 (2013): 326–350.

[Google Scholar](#) [WorldCat](#)

Notes

- 1 See Joonas Taipale, “Self-regulation and Beyond: Affect Regulation and the Infant-Caregiver Dyad.” *Frontiers in Psychology* 7, no. 889 (2016a): 1–13. C14N1
- 2 Stephen Malloch, “Mothers and Infants and Communicative Musicality.” *Musicae Scientiae* 3, no. 1 (1999): 29–57; Joseph Jaffe, Beatrice Beebe, Stanley Feldstein, Cynthia L. Crown, Michael D. Jasnow, Philippe Rochat, and Daniel N. Stern, “Rhythms of Dialogue in Infancy: Coordinated Timing in Development,” *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development* 66, no. 2 (2001): 1–149; Stephen Malloch, and Colwyn Trevarthen, eds., *Communicative Musicality: Exploring the Basis of Human Companionship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Stephen Malloch and Colwyn Trevarthen, “The Human Nature of Music,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 9 (2018): 1680. C14N2
- 3 David Clarke and Eric Clarke, eds., *Music and Consciousness: Philosophical, Psychological, and Cultural Perspectives*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Ruth Herbert, David Clarke, and Eric Clarke, eds., *Music and Consciousness 2: Worlds, Practices, Modalities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Joel Krueger, “Music as Affective scaffolding,” in *Music and Consciousness 2: Worlds, Practices, Modalities*, ed. Ruth Herbert, David Clarke, and Eric Clarke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 55–70. C14N3
- 4 Gro Trondalen and Finn Skårderud, “Playing with Affects ... and the Importance of ‘Affect Attunement,’” *Nordic Journal of Music Therapy* 16, no. 2 (2007): 100–111; Karin Mössler, Wolfgang Schmid, Jörg Aßmus, Larua Fusar-Poli, and Christian Gold, “Attunement in Music Therapy for Young Children with Autism: Revisiting Qualities of Relationship as Mechanisms of Change,” *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* 50, no. 11 (2020): 3921–3934. C14N4
- 5 György Gergely, and John Watson, “The Social Biofeedback Theory Of Parental Affect-Mirroring: The Development of Emotional Self-awareness and Self-control in Infancy,” *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 77, no. 1 (1996): 1181–1212. C14N5
- 6 For exceptions, see Taipale 2016a, 2016b, Saarinen 2020a, 31–52. C14N6
- 7 See Daniel Stern, *Forms of Vitality: Exploring Dynamic Experience in Psychology, the Arts, Psychotherapy, and Development* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). C14N7
- 8 Giovanna Colombetti, and Joel Krueger, “Scaffoldings of the Affective Mind,” *Philosophical Psychology* 28, no. 8 (2015): C14N8

1157–1176; Michelle Maiese, “Affective Scaffolds, Expressive Arts, and Cognition,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 7 (2016): 359; Somogy Varga, *Scaffolded Minds: Integration and Disintegration* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2018); Krueger, “Music as Affective Scaffolding”; Giovanna Colombetti, “Emoting the Situated Mind: A Taxonomy of Affective Material Scaffolds,” *JOLMA: The Journal for the Philosophy of Language, Mind and the Arts* 1, no. 2 (2020): 215–236.

- 9 Krueger, “Music as Affective Scaffolding.” C14N9
- 10 Jussi Saarinen, “What Can the Concept of Affective Scaffolding Do for Us?” *Philosophical Psychology* 33, no. 6 (2020): 831. C14N10
- 11 Jan Slaby, “Mind Invasion: Situated Affectivity and the Corporate Life Hack,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 7, no. 1 (2016): 266. C14N11
- 12 Joona Taipale, “Controlling the Uncontrollable. Self-regulation and the Dynamics of Addiction,” *Scandinavian Psychoanalytic Review* 40, no. 1 (2017): 29–42. C14N12
- 13 See Stern, *Forms of Vitality*, 20. C14N13
- 14 Eero Rechartt, “Experiencing Music,” *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 42, no. 1 (1987): 529. C14N14
- 15 Ibid, 524, 529. C14N15
- 16 To be sure, the *deliberate* use of such mismatch can serve various expressive means. For instance, artists often use mismatches between music and lyrics to create a sense of *irony*—just consider sad music with witty lyrics, or happy music with dark lyrics. Relatedly, one might also refer to deliberate mismatches between *music (with lyrics)* and the events in a film or in a theater play, for instance—for example, think of the famous concluding scene from the comedy *Monty Python’s Life of Brian*, where the protagonist is being crucified whereas the soundtrack is playing the joyful and optimistic song “Always Look On the Bright Side of Life.” C14N16
- 17 See Joona Taipale, “Empathy and the Melodic Unity of the Other,” *Human Studies* 38, no. 4 (2015): 463–479. C14N17
- 18 In the course of history, various significant musicians (e.g., Debussy, Mozart) have been credited for statements like this. Miles Davis is also known to have said: “It’s not the notes you play, it’s the notes you don’t play.” When it comes to the role of the listener’s expectations and “protentions” in experiencing music, one could also refer to John Cage’s silent piece, 4’33. For our purposes, however, it does not matter who said or did not say something like this; it suffices to note that the idea is an old one. C14N18
- 19 Daniel Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant: A View from Psychoanalysis and Developmental Psychology* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 56. C14N19
- 20 Stern, *Forms of Vitality*, 23. C14N20
- 21 Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*, 55. C14N21
- 22 Rechartt, “Experiencing Music.” C14N22
- 23 Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*. C14N23
- 24 Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*, 54; cf. Stern, *Forms of Vitality*, 42. C14N24
- 25 Rechartt, “Experiencing Music,” 524–529; Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*, 57, 154; Stern, *Forms of Vitality*, 81. C14N25
- 26 Stern, *Forms of Vitality*, 20; cf. Stern, *Forms of Vitality*, 6. C14N26
- 27 Stern, *Forms of Vitality*, 7, 23. This perhaps reminds us of what Merleau-Ponty once said about interpreting Husserl: we must not limit ourselves to the *explicit content* of his writings, but to try to discern the *direction* of his thinking (see Merleau-Ponty 1964, 159–160). C14N27
- 28 Joona Taipale, “Empathy and the Melodic Unity of the Other,” *Human Studies* 38, no. 4 (2015): 463–479; see also Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, trans. Waltraut Stein (Washington: ICS Publications, 1989), 84. C14N28
- 29 Wilhelm Dilthey, “Plan for the Continuation of the Formation of the Historical World in Human Sciences,” in *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences*, ed. Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 254. C14N29
- 30 Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*, 54; Stern, *Forms of Vitality*, 116. C14N30
- 31 Stern, *Forms of Vitality*, 7. C14N31
- 32 Ibid, 2. C14N32
- 33 Nadia Bruschweiler-Stern, “The Music of Dan’s Life,” *Psychoanalytic Inquiry* 37, no. 4 (2017): 220. C14N33
- 34 Stern, *Forms of Vitality*, 138. C14N34

35	Bruschweiler-Stern, "The Music of Dan's Life," 223.	C14N35
36	This enables the passive aggression embedded into many lullaby songs, which remains hidden beyond an enjoyable and soothing vital form of the tune. For instance, even though a bedtime song includes "the Sandman"—a terrible character that threatens to come and rub sand into the eyes of the children if they are still open!—the song is sung in a soothing <i>manner</i> , and the infant enjoys this dimension of musical expression, ignorant of the explicit verbal content, to say nothing of the historical dimension of the song. The mismatch between explicit expression and vitality form is (more or less emphatically) present to the adult alone.	C14N36
37	Stern, <i>The Interpersonal World of the Infant</i> , 141.	C14N37
38	Stern, <i>Forms of Vitality</i> , 114.	C14N38
39	Stern, <i>Forms of Vitality</i> , 113–114, cf. 42–43.	C14N39
40	Stern, "Affect attunement," 4.	C14N40
41	Daniel Stern, <i>The Present Moment: In Psychotherapy and Everyday Life</i> (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004), 84; Stern, <i>Forms of Vitality</i> , 41.	C14N41
42	Stern, <i>The Interpersonal World of the Infant</i> , 142; Stern, <i>The Present Moment</i> , 241.	C14N42
43	Stern, <i>The Present Moment</i> , 84.	C14N43
44	Donald Winnicott, <i>Playing and Reality</i> (London and New York: Routledge, 1971), 152.	C14N44
45	Pentti Ikonen and Eero Rechartt, <i>Thanatos, Shame, and Other Essays</i> (London: Karnac, 2010), 38.	C14N45
46	Stern, <i>Forms of Vitality</i> , 114.	C14N46
47	Stern, <i>Forms of Vitality</i> , 115.	C14N47
48	See Joona Taipale, "The Illusion of Contact: Insights from Winnicott's 1952 letter to Klein," <i>The International Journal of Psychoanalysis</i> 102, no. 1 (2021): 31–50; and Joona Taipale, "Sharing and other Illusions—Asymmetry in 'Moments of Meeting,'" in <i>Empathy and Ethics</i> , ed. Magnus Englander and Susi Ferrarello (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, forthcoming).	C14N48
49	Joona Taipale, "Self-regulation and Beyond"; c.f. Joona Taipale, "Social Mirrors: Tove Jansson's Invisible Child and the Importance of Being Seen," <i>Scandinavian Psychoanalytic Review</i> 39, no. 1 (2016b): 13–25.	C14N49
50	Stern, <i>The Interpersonal World of the Infant</i> , 140.	C14N50
51	Christopher Bollas, <i>The Shadow of the Object</i> (London: Routledge, 1987), 23–38; Taipale, "Self-regulation and Beyond."	C14N51
52	See Tuomas Eerola and Henna-Riikka Peltola, "Memorable Experiences with Sad Music—Reasons, Reactions and Mechanisms of Three Types of Experiences," <i>PLoS ONE</i> 11, no. 6 (2016): e0157444; Tuomas Eerola, Jonna Vuoskoski, Henna-Riikka Peltola, Vesa Putkinen, and Katharina Schäferb, "An Integrative Review of the Enjoyment of Sadness Associated with Music," <i>Physics of Life Reviews</i> 25 (2018): 100–121.	C14N52
53	See Eero Rechartt, "On Musical Cognition and Archaic Meaning Schemata," <i>Scandinavian Psychoanalytic Review</i> 8, no. 2 (1985): 107.	C14N53
54	Rechartt, "On Musical Cognition and Archaic Meaning Schemata," 107; Zepf, "Where Are We When We Listen to Music?" 328.	C14N54
55	Stern, <i>The Present Moment</i> , 157.	C14N55
56	Rechartt, "On Musical Cognition and Archaic Meaning Schemata," 96.	C14N56
57	Siegfried Zepf, "Where Are We When We Listen to Music?" <i>Canadian Journal of Psychoanalysis</i> 21 (2013): 328–329.	C14N57
58	See György Gergely and John Watson, "The Social Biofeedback Theory," 1195–1196.	C14N58
59	Sigmund Freud, <i>Civilization and its Discontents</i> (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-analysis, 1930), 75.	C14N59
60	See Taipale, "Self-regulation and Beyond."	C14N60
61	Ikonen and Rechartt, <i>Thanatos, Shame, and Other Essays</i> , 67.	C14N61
62	See Friedrich Nietzsche, <i>The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings</i> , ed. Raymond Geuss and Ronald Peirs, trans. Ronald Peirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).	C14N62
63	Stern, <i>Forms of Vitality</i> , 81.	C14N63

64	Ikonen and Rechartt, "The Vicissitudes of Thanatos: On the Place of Aggression and Destructiveness in Psychoanalytic Interpretation," 84; Ikonen and Rechartt, "Binding, Narcissistic Pathology and the Psychoanalytic Process," 3.	C14N64
65	Ikonen and Rechartt, <i>Thanatos, Shame, and Other Essays</i> , 67.	C14N65