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*Values in the Air:
Musical Contagion, Social Appraisal and Metaphor Experience*

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ABSTRACT. Music can infect us. In the dominant approach, music contaminates listeners through emotional mimicry and independently of value appraisal, just like when we catch other people's feelings. Musical contagion is thus considered fatal to the mainstream view of emotions as cognitive evaluations. This paper criticizes this line of argument and proposes a new cognitivist account: the value metaphor view. Non-cognitivism relies on a contentious model of emotion transmission. In the competing model (social appraisal), we catch people's emotions by appraising value through their emotional expressions. Social appraisal debunks the main motivation for non-cognitivism and offers fruitful insights into musical contagion. Combining it with metaphor theory, I claim that musical contagion involves experiencing the music as a metaphor for emotions and values. Just like people infect us as we appraise value through their emotional expressions, music contaminates listeners because they hear it *metaphorically-as* some emotional expression and hereby appraise it *metaphorically-as* some value. As infectious music "sounds like" emotions and values, cognitivism is safe.

1. Emotional Contagion: Musical and Social

Music is infectious. One may perceive an Irish lament as sad, and this may fill one with sadness. One may feel jolly as one finds the *Looney Tunes* theme music merry. A tensed flamenco piece may evoke and provoke agitation. In musical contagion, the emotion felt mirrors the emotion *perceived* in or *expressed* by the music. In this respect, music is like people: people's feelings are contagious. For instance, you may catch a friend's anxiety by hearing their trembling voice.

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The emotion caught echoes the emotion *perceived* and *expressed* in other people's faces, voices, or posture. *Modulo* relevant differences (for one, music is not a person), musical and social contagion are analogous in important respects. These are two kinds of emotional contagion.

Emotional contagion can inspire poignant aesthetic experiences. Sometimes, listeners feel awe as they appreciate how a musical piece superbly expresses some feelings and even succeeds at stirring these feelings in them. For instance, the musical theme of Hitchcock's *Psycho* aptly portrays anxiety to the point that it may prompt anguish. Feelings particularly escalate when musical and social contagion operate jointly, for instance when the tense music mirrors the character's expressions of terror (Marion's screams, tremor, her eyes wide open). Feelings are even more acute in shared musical experiences. When listening to Barber's *Agnus Dei* in a concert hall, seeing my partner having tears in their eyes may amplify the sadness I felt in echo with the music so much so that I can't resist but dissolve into tears. Alongside cross-modal and collective aesthetic experiences, the joint power of musical and social contagion peaks in many social contexts. Consider how one's sorrow at a funeral can reach its climax when mournful music starts while one is crushed by other people's desolate faces, slumped posture, and weeping tears. Or consider how, as you joined a party, the catchy sound of Los del Rio's *Macarena* conspires with people's laughter, festive dancing, and other jubilant displays to exhilarate you. Contagion even shapes political feelings. For instance, in protests, both angry music and people's expressions of outrage magnify feelings of indignation. Last but not least, contagion plays a pivotal role in emotion regulation. When feeling sad, one may resort to, say, upbeat music to lift one's spirits, exploit social contagion and join playful friends, or combine both strategies and indulge in Rio de Janeiro's Carnival. Emotional contagion is powerful.

Most importantly, musical contagion is key to understand emotions, as it threatens the main theory of emotions in philosophy and empirical disciplines. Emotions involve many facets, such as physiological reactions, action tendencies, as well as facial, vocal, and postural expressions. Yet, according to cognitivism, emotions fundamentally are experiences of values or, at least, comprise cognitive evaluations (Tappolet, 2016, Deonna & Teroni, 2012). For instance, sadness is typically characterized by crying, frowning, slow walking speed, and the tendency to stay silent. Now, or so claim cognitivists, sadness fundamentally is (or at least

involves) appraising something as unfortunate or bad news. Feeling sad about a separation is experiencing this event as unfortunate. However, this description is at odds with music. When sad music infects us, we do not appraise some unfortunate event. And rightly so: nothing bad happened. Therefore, musical contagion questions cognitivism (the *Musical Challenge*). In fact, the dominant conception – a dogma in the empirical sciences – is non-cognitivist: music infects listeners through mimicry of emotional displays independently of cognitive evaluation (Juslin & Laukka, 2003, Koelsch, 2014). This approach is motivated by an influential model of social contagion, namely primitive contagion: we catch other people's feelings by mimicking their emotional expressions without the resort of appraisals. As social contagion is non-cognitive, so is musical contagion. Cognitivism is thus flawed, or so goes the argument (Davies, 2013).

This article criticizes this anti-cognitivist line of argument in light of recent developments in affective sciences. Studies on emotion transmission reveal that social contagion is not as primitive as initially thought. Social appraisal is now an established framework that can model social contagion along cognitivist lines: we catch other people's emotions by perceiving their emotional expressions and hereby appraising value. People catch the tension in the air as they perceive, say, apprehensive faces and – through this perception – appraise some threat in the environment, which renders them tensed. Social appraisal thus debunks the main non-cognitivist line of argument. Moreover, it can be used to develop a new cognitivist account of musical contagion when incorporated with metaphor experience: the value metaphor view. Experiments reveal that music expressive of emotion is perceived as being *like* an emotional expression. When music sounds sad, it is perceived as being like a person sobbing and walking slowly in the manner characteristic of sadness. As such, because emotional expressions serve to indicate values (as per social appraisal), infectious music is perceived *as if* it portrays values, such as threats and unfortunate things. Developing this idea in terms of metaphor experience, I propose that music contaminates us because we experience it *metaphorically-as* some emotional expression and hereby *metaphorically-as* some value. Infectious music “sounds like” emotions and values. This explains its contagious power and a great deal of its charm.

I proceed in three steps. Section 2 clarifies the *Musical Challenge*. Section 3 criticizes the main motivation for non-cognitivism (primitive contagion) and contrasts it with social appraisal. In section 4, I present and develop the value metaphor view with the help of social

appraisal. Cognitivism is safe: social appraisal and metaphor experience can rescue it.

2. The Musical Challenge

To render the puzzle more poignant, I adopt five assumptions.

First, I assume that musical contagion elicits garden-variety emotions (e.g., sadness, joy, anxiety, tenderness, etc.). I thus ignore solutions to the challenge that appeal to being moved or moods (see Lauria, 2023's review).

Second, I assume that the felt emotion mirrors the emotion *perceived* in or *expressed* by music. This correspondence includes cases where the feeling is not strictly identical, yet is sufficiently similar, to the emotion portrayed (Cochrane, 2021).

Third, I assume that mirroring emotions can be fitting (whether they constitute musical understanding or not). Feeling sad in response to sad music can be appropriate (*pace* Kivy).

Fourth, I assume that musical contagion is (in important respects) analogous to social and physiognomic contagion (namely, contagion by non-sentient beings, such as the weather). For reasons of space, I leave aside physiognomic contagion.

Lastly, as common, I focus on pure music. Contagion by music with lyrics or programmatic music can be readily explained by the situations portrayed (consider love songs). But why would music *alone* elicit garden-variety emotions?

The problem appears clearly by presenting cognitivism. According to cognitivism, emotions essentially are representations of values (e.g., threats, losses, bad news, etc.) or, at least, involve value appraisals. Whether emotions are evaluative judgments, analogous to perceptions of value, or evaluative attitudes, they involve evaluative cognition. In this view, emotions have intentional content (e.g., you feel sad about a breakup). Emotional content is the object or situation evaluated: you're sad about the breakup because you evaluate *the breakup* as unfortunate. The relevant evaluation is the emotion's formal object (e.g., bad news for sadness). Of course, evaluations can go wrong, in which case the emotion is inappropriate (you shouldn't feel sad; this relationship was toxic). Cognitivism is incompatible with non-cognitivism, i.e., the claim that emotions do *not* involve evaluations, as in the idea that emotions are pure bodily feelings (Madell, 1996). It is compatible with some bodily feelings views as long as bodily feelings involve evaluations (Prinz, 2004). We are now in a position to formulate the challenge.

You hear Daft Punk's *Veridis Quo* for the first time. It starts with a simple sonic structure that lasts the entire song. The melody is ethereal. It immediately strikes you as melancholic and grave. As it progresses, it's as if the music is wandering through a journey of turmoil and desolation. It evokes bittersweet tenderness. Yet your ultimate feelings are sadness, melancholy, and nostalgia.

How are we to understand these emotions? Consider sadness. According to cognitivism, sadness is experiencing a situation as unfortunate/bad news. Applying this view to *Veridis Quo*, you should experience the music as unfortunate/bad news. But this seems far-fetched. For one thing, it sounds odd to say that you feel sad *about* the music (you rather enjoy it). Surely you do not appraise the music as unfortunate/bad news. The challenge generalizes. For instance, anxious and happy music may infect you, yet there is no threat nor good news. There is nothing to be sad, anxious, or happy about. Musical contagion does not involve the relevant evaluation.

The *Musical Challenge* consists in two challenges.

Content Challenge: Emotions have intentional content. Yet the contagion-induced emotion is not *about* the music.

Value Challenge: Emotions involve evaluations/formal object. Yet the contagion-induced emotion does not involve evaluation/formal object.

If emotional content is the object evaluated (as per cognitivism), the *Content Challenge* depends on the *Value Challenge*. You're not sad about the music because you do not appraise it as unfortunate. I focus here on the *Value Challenge*, as it threatens cognitivism's core.

- (i) Musical contagion elicits garden-variety emotions.
- (ii) Cognitivism: Emotions involve formal objects/evaluation.
- (iii) (i), (ii): Musical contagion involves formal objects/evaluation.
- (iv) (iii) is false.
- (C₁) Cognitivism does not capture musical contagion.
- (C₂) Cognitivism is false.

Most scholars embrace C₁ (Koelsch, 2014). C₁ supports C₂: If cognitivism cannot capture contagion, it is false (Davies, 2013). Conversely, C₁ supports non-cognitivism: emotions (including contagion-induced emotions) are pure feelings. Let us explore non-cognitivism.

3. Non-Cognitivism: The Argument of Social Contagion

Examining non-cognitivism about musical contagion in detail goes beyond the scope of this paper. In this section, I modestly present – and debunk – one of its main motivations, i.e. non-cognitivism about social contagion. The canonical argument for non-cognitivism runs as follows:

- (i) Musical and social contagion are analogous.
- (ii) Social contagion is non-cognitive (primitive contagion).
- (C) Musical contagion is non-cognitive.

Recent developments on emotion transmission – particularly social appraisal – offer reasons to doubt (ii): cognitivism can explain social contagion. This undermines the aforementioned argument and opens the path for a cognitivist approach to musical contagion.

3.1 Primitive Contagion

To scrutinize (ii), let us present an influential account of social contagion.

Mary enters a coffee shop. The barista is anxious: he is fidgeting and his voice is shaky. Mary synchronizes with him and starts to feel anxious; the barista contaminated her. This is an illustration of primitive contagion, i.e., the tendency to automatically mimic and synchronize with other people's facial, vocal, and bodily expressions of emotions, which induces the same emotion (Hatfield et al., 1993). This process is typically unintentional, uncontrollable, and unconscious. It involves two stages:

- (1) *Mimicry*: One unconsciously mimics another person's emotional expressions (Mary's muscles tense in synchrony with the barista).
- (2) *Feedback*: Physiological feedback induces an emotional feeling (Mary feels anxious as she feels her muscles tensed).

Numerous studies support (1) and (2) (Hatfield et al., 2011). Emotional expressions, such as smiles and laughter, are highly contagious. For instance, newborns tend to cry when hearing

other newborns cry. Mimicry is pervasive. Moreover, physiological feedback impacts emotional experience. For instance, people are more amused by jokes when they have to contract zygomatic muscles and hereby adopt amusement's facial expression (e.g., by holding a pen in their mouth). Mimicry and feedback explain social contagion irrespective of cognitive appraisal.

Similarly, studies suggest that musical contagion involves mimicry (Koelsch, 2014). For instance, contagion with sad (vs. happy) music activates corrugator (vs. zygomatic) activity as in frowning (vs. smiling). Strictly speaking, musical mimicry differs from interpersonal mimicry: for one thing, music has no body to imitate (Davies, 2013). Nevertheless, scholars consider that the mechanism is similar: perceiving emotional displays automatically induces emotions independently of cognitive evaluation. For instance, Davies (2013) argues that emotional contagion is the transmission of an emotional state or appearance via the perception of the emotional display. Mary catches the barista's anxiety simply by perceiving his trembling voice. Her emotion is caused by the emotion perceived but is not *about* it; she feels anxious *tout court*. The emotion has no content because it does not involve the relevant evaluation: Mary doesn't appraise, say, the barista as menacing. Similarly, with music, the mirroring emotion is caused by the music but is neither *about* it nor involves evaluation, because the music is not appraised as, say, unfortunate or menacing. Listeners catch the emotion by perceiving the emotional display. Despite Davies's qualms about primitive contagion's focus on motor mimicry, the canonical argument remains. As social contagion is non-cognitive, so is musical contagion.

3.2 Social Appraisal

Things are more contentious, however. Recently, psychologists have described in detail when and why people mimic emotions (Hess & Fischer, 2014). Contagion and mimicry are more selective than was initially assumed. For instance, they do not happen in adversary relationships: seeing one's enemy struggling may elicit *Schadenfreude* rather than struggle. Emotional mimicry requires affiliative bonds – it is displayed more often towards friends than strangers – and involves appraising emotional expressions as appropriate. For instance, at funerals, laughter mimicry is reduced because laughter is deemed inappropriate (Kastendieck et al., 2021). As mimicry involves interpreting the expression in the social context, contagion

is not so primitive. Moreover, although mimicry and feedback impact the emotion's intensity, whether they suffice to arouse emotion alone is disputed.

Social appraisal is now the influential and cognitivist alternative model of emotion transmission: emotions are transmitted via indirect value appraisal (Manstead & Fischer, 2001; Scherer & Grandjean, 2008). This involves two steps. First, one perceives another person's emotional expression. Second, one appraises value through this perception, which elicits the same emotion. By perceiving the barista's trembling voice, Mary appraises some threat and, as a result, feels anxious. Indeed, emotional expressions have the function of communicating emotions but also of indicating values. Perceiving emotional expressions thus provides information about value appraisals. In fact, people constantly infer evaluative significance from emotional expressions (Dukes & Clément, 2019). When one integrates information drawn from other people's emotional expressions into one's own appraisals of situations, one feels the same emotion. This may occur automatically and unconsciously or in a top-down and conscious manner. Of course, we do not always uptake people's expressions into our own appraisals. Social appraisal requires appraising expressions as reliable (e.g., appraising emoters as trustworthy). Social appraisal can be used to model social contagion as follows:

Social Appraisal: Contagion with a subject S feeling the emotion E results from (1) perceiving S's emotional expressions, and (2) appraising the situation as instantiating value (E's formal object) through (1), which induces E.

Let me draw two important conclusions. First, *Social Appraisal* undercuts the motivation for non-cognitivism that invokes primitive contagion. This argument relies on a contentious model of emotion transmission that competes with *Social Appraisal*. This suffices to switch the burden of proof. Non-cognitivists should explain why their model is preferable to the cognitivist alternative. Appealing to social contagion *per se* cuts no ice. Even if emotion transmission can take both routes (primitive contagion and social appraisal), non-cognitivists should explain why musical contagion takes the former (vs. latter) route.

Second, if musical and social contagion are analogous, social appraisal offers a new approach to musical contagion: music contaminates listeners through indirect value appraisal. Just like Mary feels anxious because she appraises threats by hearing the barista's tone of voice,

tense music infects listeners because they appraise threats by hearing tensed emotional expressions in music.

Indirect Appraisal: Contagion with music M expressing the emotion E results from (1) perceiving M's emotional expressions, and (2) appraising the acoustic situation as instantiating value (E's formal object) through (1), which induces E.

This proposal assumes that perceiving musical expressiveness is (to some extent) comparable to perceiving emotional expressions. This is plausible. Studies reveal that perceiving musical expressiveness relies on the similarity music bears to emotional expressions, particularly affective prosody (Peretz, 2001). For instance, sad music is similar to the way sad people talk (e.g., low pitch, low volume, slow tempo, dark timbre, descendent intonations, and minor mode). Both contrast with the acoustic profile of cheerful music and happy voices (high pitch, high volume, fast tempo, high pitch range, ascendant intonations, major mode, and staccato articulations). Music is thus somehow perceived as if we were hearing a person vocalizing their emotions. If perceiving expressiveness is similar to perceiving emotional expressions, and if the latter involves value appraisal (*Social Appraisal*), musical contagion may involve value appraisal as well. Music expressive of emotion would indicate values, like people do when expressing emotions (see, however, Huron, 2015).

Indirect Appraisal implies that mirroring emotions are illusory, as there is no relevant value. Tense music cannot indicate threats; there aren't any. This is problematic if one thinks that mirroring emotions can be appropriate. Nevertheless, there is a grain of truth in this proposal. After all, sad music sounds *as if* someone were expressing sadness and thus *as if* something sad had happened. Although no one is sad and nothing bad happened, it nonetheless sounds like it. Let us articulate this idea.

4. The Value Metaphor View

Sometimes, music sounds *like* emotions and emotional expressions, say, grief and weeping; but it also sounds *like* values, say, awful things. In listening to *Veridis Quo*, it is *as if* a tormented person were expressing her feelings – *as if* the music were running erratically, looking down heavily, and mourning. The music sounds *as if* something deplorable and tragic

happened. Hence it makes me feel sad. This idea is analysed in terms of metaphor experience: infectious music is experienced metaphorically-as emotions and values.

This proposal embraces cognitive metaphor theory: metaphors are not merely linguistic devices; they primarily are ways of *conceiving* or *experiencing* the world (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). It cultivates the burgeoning interest in metaphor to elucidate music's emotional power (Lauria, 2023). For instance, Peacocke (2009) argues that expressiveness consists of hearing music *metaphorically-as* emotion. The main originality of my proposal is its cognitivist emphasis on metaphors for values.

4.1 Clarifying the Proposal

In musical contagion, listeners attribute a property to the music, namely that of being isomorphic to emotion and to value in the way characteristic of metaphor.

Value Metaphor: Contagion with music M expressive of emotion E results from experiencing M *metaphorically-as* the emotion E and, thus, *metaphorically-as* the value V (the formal object of E), which induces E.

Leaving aside issues concerning the content of the experience (Peacocke, 2009), my proposal is liberal regarding the determinate property attributed. The mapping between music and emotion hinges on various properties of emotions, such as prosody, posture, and physiological changes. Sad music can be experienced as isomorphic to a sad person, sad voice, sad posture, or sad arousal. Similarly, music can be mapped into thick value concepts, axiological prototypes (e.g., death for bad news), or situations where values stand out (e.g., funerals). That said, since my argument recruits social appraisal, I focus here on the mapping between music and emotional expressions.

My account is also liberal regarding consciousness. The property can be attributed consciously or unconsciously, and explicitly or implicitly. In my description of *Veridis Quo*, the property is consciously attributed. But it needs not be so (e.g., when contagion is unconscious). Besides, in my description, the attentional focus covers both the music-emotion and the music-value isomorphism. But it needs not be so; listeners may only attend to one dimension of the isomorphism (say, the music-emotion mapping) or oscillate between both.

Phenomenologically speaking, the music-emotion mapping is the most salient. In fact, the evaluative mapping is based on the emotional mapping: listeners experience the music metaphorically-as value *in virtue of* experiencing it metaphorically-as emotion.

4.2 The Argument from Social Appraisal

Let me develop my proposal by offering one line of argument that appeals to social appraisal. Social appraisal is only one route the evaluative mapping can take: there are other relevant interplays between emotions and values. Roughly, the argument runs as follows:

- (i) Experiencing metaphor is experiencing an isomorphism between two entities that involves the selection and transfer of their salient properties.
- (ii) Listeners map acoustic features of infectious music into emotional expressions.
- (C₁) Listeners experience infectious music metaphorically-as emotional expressions.
- (iii) Perceiving emotional expressions elicits the same emotion through social appraisal.
- (C₂) Listeners experience infectious music metaphorically-as values.

Let me present each premise.

The first premise is a minimal definition of metaphor experience that recruits three typical features of linguistic metaphors. (1) Metaphors rely on isomorphism or structural similarity between two objects that typically belong to distinct domains. When one says “life is a journey”, one means that human existence is made of discoveries and obstacles, delights and struggles, just like, say, a 12-hours train journey. Human existence is similar to journeys in some respects. (2) Importantly, metaphors involve the detection of *salient* properties of objects, i.e., features that immediately come into mind when people think about them (Black, 1955). When you think about journeys, you immediately think about excitement, obstacles, destinations, etc. Salient features may not be actually exemplified by the objects; commonplaces suffice. (3) Crucially, metaphors exploit the isomorphism, i.e., they invite one to transfer the salient features from one domain onto another, which results in thinking of say,

life in terms of a journey. Experiencing metaphor is experiencing this kind of isomorphism. Although the transfer of properties occurs at the subpersonal level, it is phenomenologically salient: you experience something in terms of another.

Back to music. As mentioned, studies on expressiveness reveal that musical features are systematically mapped into emotions, at least for basic emotions such as sadness, joy, fear, anger, and tenderness (Juslin & Laukka, 2003). The most influential theories explain these data by the correspondence between music and emotional expressions, particularly vocal and postural expressions (Davies, 2013). This is premise (ii). These findings support C_1 : listeners experience infectious music metaphorically-as emotional expressions. As studies describe the isomorphism between music and emotional expressions, the first criterion for metaphor experience is satisfied. Moreover, perceiving expressiveness relies on salient features of music and of emotional expressions. When thinking about expressions of sadness, weeping and slow movement immediately come to mind. As these correspond to salient features of sad music, the second criterion is met. Lastly, the transfer of properties is phenomenologically salient: sad music *sounds* sad. This interpretation of the data is disputable and there are alternative interpretations, notably in terms of resemblance (Davies, 2013). Still, empirical evidence clearly fits our minimal definition of metaphor experience, which suffices to highlight the plausibility of C_1 .

The third premise is social appraisal, viz.:

Social Appraisal: Contagion with a subject S feeling the emotion E results from (1) perceiving S's emotional expressions, and (2) appraising the situation as instantiating value (E's formal object) through (1), which induces E.

Combining (iii) with C_1 (infectious music is experienced metaphorically-as emotional expressions), *mutatis mutandis*, yields C_2 :

Value Metaphor: Contagion with music M expressive of emotion E results from (1) perceiving M metaphorically-as the expression of E, and (2) appraising the acoustic situation metaphorically-as instantiating value (E's formal object) through (1), which induces E.

If one prefers, this argument can be formulated with the idea that emotional expressions serve to *indicate* values. If emotional expressions indicate values, hearing music metaphorically-as some emotional expression amounts to experience it as metaphorically-indicating value. Here is another gloss. As listeners process infectious music in terms of emotional expressions, and as processing infectious expressions involves appraising value (*Social Appraisal*), infectious music is processed in terms of value. To put it in phenomenological terms, music can sound *as if* some value were instantiated, because it can sound *as if* some emotion were expressed, and because perceiving infectious emotional expressions comes with value seemings. This argument assumes that social appraisal can be literal or metaphorical, and that both kinds operate similarly.

4.3. Unfolding the Analogy

Social appraisal elegantly illuminates musical contagion. Let me elaborate by using six facets of social appraisal.

1. In social appraisal, the value appraisal depends on the perception of emotional expressions. Similarly, in musical contagion, the music-value mapping depends on the mapping between music and emotional expressions.

2. As in social contagion, the “value appraisal” in music can be unconscious and automatic or conscious and effortful. As Peacocke (2020) describes, articulating the music-emotion mapping sometimes requires effort; titles offer important cues. The same holds for the music-value mapping. Social appraisal espouses the diverse forms of musical contagion.

3. As emphasized, mimicry and contagion do not always happen when perceiving emotional expressions; they require affiliative bonds. Similarly, musical contagion does not always occur when perceiving expressiveness (*pace* arousal theorists); musical bonds are required. Indeed, unlike the perception of expressiveness, musical contagion depends on listeners’ musical preferences, personality traits, and current mood (Peretz, 2001), which are various dimensions of musical bonds.

4. As in social contagion, music may fail to contaminate listeners when they deem the emotional display inappropriate. For instance, one may perceive *Macarena* as happy, yet fail to catch joy, because one finds the song annoying. There are various aspects of aesthetic

(in)appropriateness, such as the accuracy of the music-emotion mapping, musical skills, originality, and aesthetic values.

5. In both social appraisal and musical contagion, the interpretation of the emotional display is shaped by social context. Like laughter may not spread at funerals, hearing a techno song in the same context may exasperate rather than invigorate one. Musical contexts also matter. For instance, a musical performance may succeed at expressing some emotion yet fail to respect the codes of relevant musical genres or period, which may prohibit contagion (the performance is deemed inauthentic, clumsy, or outrageous).

6. Importantly, just like social appraisal induces mirroring emotions, the music-induced emotion is elicited by the music-value mapping.

The value metaphor view can thus rebut the *Value Challenge*. After all, musical contagion involves evaluative cognition – just like social contagion does in *Social Appraisal* – albeit through the veil of metaphor. Unlike *Indirect Appraisal*, mirroring emotions are not necessarily illusory. They are fitting when music truly is isomorphic to emotional expressions and thus to values. Just as feeling tension in the air may be appropriate when threats are lingering, feeling anxious in listening to tense music can be the right response to the interplay between music, anxious displays, and threats. As social contagion can disclose the evaluative significance of situations, musical contagion can disclose the significance of music. Explaining how my proposal differs from accounts that appeal to moods and to imagination, and how it can illuminate physiognomic contagion, will wait for another occasion.

5. Conclusion

Approaching musical contagion through the lenses of social contagion proves insightful. Whereas scholars have adopted this line of thought to champion non-cognitivism, I have used it to offer a new cognitivist account that incorporates metaphor into social appraisal. As musical contagion involves appraising music in terms of values, cognitivists need not surrender. Just like one may enter a space and feel threats or other values in the air, listeners may feel *as if* there were threats or values floating in the musical air. Sometimes the two kinds of emotional contagion enhance each other. While we resonate with music, we may as well catch the aesthetic emotions of other people, the emotion expressed in another artistic modality, the emotion conveyed by a group, or the affective tone of the environment. These explosions of

emotional displays and “values in the air” can crystallize into profound experiences.²⁶⁶

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