CHAPTER 2

Philosophical Foundations of Music Education

WHAT DOES THE TOPIC of philosophy have to do with music teaching? Philosophical inquiry is fine for philosophers, but why do teachers of beginning instrumental classes and high school choral directors need to think about philosophy? Such questions are logical ones to raise, and therefore a discussion of the important role of philosophical thinking opens this chapter.

Reasons for Considering Philosophical Matters

There are at least three practical reasons for teachers to probe some fundamental issues about the nature of the world in which they live.

1. Music teachers (and almost everyone else) must make decisions and take actions. They cannot avoid doing so, even if they can avoid thinking or talking about the reasons for doing something. In a very real sense, each person defines a philosophy when he or she makes a decision. Therefore, it is not a question of whether decisions are made and actions taken, but of whether the person making a decision is aware of its larger implications and how one action relates to another. The difference between teachers and most other people is that the decisions teachers make affect not only

themselves but also a number of students. Furthermore, these decisions and their associated actions are made under a broad authorization from society in the form of tax funds for education and compulsory attendance laws.

2. A comprehensive, systematic understanding of what one is trying to do serves as a guide for action. It is somewhat like a rudder on a ship. The ocean may move the boat back and forth and try to push it off course, but the rudder guides the ship toward the desired destination. Also, an understanding of what one is doing will help a teacher through the tough places of teaching. Every teacher encounters days and situations that are discouraging and frustrating. A solid philosophy gives one a sense of direction and perspective, which in turn aids in overcoming problems and disappointments.

3. Teachers need to be consistent in what they do. Inconsistency at best leads to a lack of follow-through and completion; at worst it can lead to undoing the work of previous classes. The need for consistency does not mean that one should never change one's mind, but it does mean that the reasons for changing one's goals or viewpoint should be known.

Why should music teachers delve into the esoteric world of Plato, Descartes, Dewey, and the other giants of philosophy? Granted, teachers need a sense of direction in their work, but can't they find it on their own without getting into the subject so deeply? The answer is that they can, but they can do a much better job of understanding fundamental issues and applying them in their teaching if they have the benefit of the thinking of some of the great philosophical minds. Like trying to design and construct, for example, an alarm clock, it is a great deal easier if you don't have to invent it but instead can build on the experience and knowledge of others. Therefore Plato, Descartes, and Dewey are included in this book because they have devoted their considerable abilities to dealing systematically and deeply with the fundamental intellectual issues of life and education.

Three Basic Philosophical Viewpoints

Philosophical approaches have been grouped in a variety of ways under a variety of titles. Three have been selected for discussion in this book: rationalism, empiricism, and pragmatism. These three philosophical viewpoints are not, of course, all-inclusive. However, they are the most systematic and comprehensive ones, while philosophical views such as existentialism and others are narrower in scope. Categorizing philosophies into schools has the same benefits and drawbacks as does the division of music history into style periods such as Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and so on. The classifications allow for generalizations about characteristics that exist

in common among works of music or philosophical ideas. Unfortunately, the terms used for the categories in philosophy seem less standardized than the names of historical periods in music.

Caution should be exercised in the application of philosophical categories, however. There is some overlap among music styles and among philosophical schools; they do not differ on every point. Some of the differences among philosophical viewpoints are a matter of emphasis; some points are more important to some philosophies than to others. Nor are the viewpoints uniform among proponents of a particular position; each one possesses many interpretations and shades of opinion. Finally, none is without its strengths and weaknesses; each contains some valid ideas, and each has its problem areas.

Differences among philosophical viewpoints include differing explanations about *why* something is so. For example, one philosophical viewpoint favors teaching masterpieces of music because it sees them as the best musical manifestations of the eternal and therefore "real" world; another favors them because people knowledgeable about music generally agree on who some (but not all) of the master composers are.

The three philosophical viewpoints differ on two fundamental questions. One is *metaphysics*, the question of what is real and true. The other fundamental matter is *epistemology*, the study of knowledge, including how we find out what is real. Although the questions of what is real and how people find out what is real may appear to have obvious answers, that is not the case, as will soon become apparent.

Rationalism

Rationalism is often referred to as *idealism*, and it has several variants, including *phenomenonology*, which maintains that a person's consciousness of what is perceived is an integral part of reality (Reese, 1980, p. 428). The central thesis of rationalism is that knowledge is a fixed body of truth that applies in all times and places. It began with Socrates (470?–399 B.C.) and Plato (427–347 B.C.) in ancient Greece, and proponents include René Descartes (1596–1650), Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), Georg Hegel (1770–1831), and a number of English and American philosophers. According to Plato (who wrote down many of his and Socrates's thoughts), some ideas are so real and lasting that, in comparison, things that we know about through the senses are only fleeting and transitory. The basic reality is thought, not external objects, as represented in the phrase of Descartes *Cogito, ergo sum* ("I think, therefore I exist"). Physical objects are just imperfect embodiments of the ideas they represent, which are universal and eternal. For example, the chair that you are sitting on as you read this page is merely an imperfect rendition of the "ideal" chair, which can only be realized through thought and is perfect throughout the world—for all

time. Some ideas, of course, cannot be represented in physical form—beauty, goodness, truth, and so on.

How are these ideas to be known? They can be found by rigorous intellectual examination for logic and consistency. When Socrates taught as he sat on the steps of the Academy (in ancient Greece there were few formal classes), he usually answered a question from a student by asking the student another question. His purpose in doing this was not to develop a better teaching method (although in fact that may have been what happened), but to probe with the student for truth, much as one might peel away the layers of an onion. Over the centuries these philosophers developed intricate logical structures to help determine truth. One such technique was the *syllogism*, which consists of two true statements and their logical conclusion.

All men are mortal,
Socrates is a man,
Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

Many rationalists concern themselves a great deal with questions of ethics and values. In a sense, the utopian ideas of Sir Thomas More (1478–1535) are one result of rationalistic thinking. Rationalistic aesthetic values are also expressed by the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860). He viewed the arts as the "flower of life," because through them the individual can rise above everyday struggles and tedium (Schopenhauer, 1896, p. 345). He believed that it is through the arts that one can sense, even if for only a short period of time, the eternal and lasting Platonic ideas—the realities behind the physical objects we see and touch. When this happens, the observer or listener loses his or her preoccupation with personal feelings and mundane matters and becomes a part of something far greater, more lasting, and more satisfying.

Empiricism

The roots of *empiricism* (often called *realism*) reach back to Aristotle (384–322 B.C.), who was a pupil of Plato but differed with him on a number of matters. Aristotle did not agree with the notion of the ultimate reality being ideas; instead he wrote such phrases as "It is clear to everyone that there are many kinds of things . . ." and indicated the need to "distinguish what is and what is not evident" (Aristotle/Ross, 1930, Book II, Section I, p. 193a). The heart of realism is the acceptance of "what is clear to everyone." Things are what they appear to be, not representations of some greater but invisible reality.

Over the centuries this rather simple idea has been subjected to a wide variety of interpretations, so the empirical viewpoint is by no means a homogeneous one. Some of the important names associated with it include Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677), John Locke (1632–1704), and the American

philosopher-psychologist William James (1842–1910). Despite differences in emphasis and explanation, these philosophers agreed on the reality of the physical world "out there" beyond the mind, and the mirror-like character of the mind in receiving images, which it then organizes and tries to interpret. The mind is grounded in the existence of the body, and cannot probe into worlds beyond what the senses perceive, as the rationalists claim. The road to truth is through observation and scientific evidence.

An important variant of the empirical philosophic viewpoint is often called *naturalism*—the belief in the reality and rightness of the natural world. Its roots also reach back to ancient Greece, but its beliefs were refined and expanded by Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), and Herbert Spencer (1820–1903).

The belief in the ultimate reality of the natural world led logically to the belief that the most acceptable life is achieved by staying close to the ways of nature. The chief spokes-person for this position was Rousseau. Partly in reaction to the excesses of the court of Versailles, he spoke out for the simple, "natural" life. He believed in the natural goodness of the human race and the corruption of humans by society. Mankind in society was bad; individuals were naturally good, unless spoiled by society. Nature yielded many good things, but society and especially governments perverted and misused them. Rousseau was influential in bringing about the revolution in France, and his thinking affected Thomas Jefferson and other founders of the United States. Some naturalist language even found its way into the American Declaration of Independence: "the separate and equal station to which the laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them. . . ."

Naturalist empiricists believe that the arts should be natural in character and not carry any great meanings or truths. They reject complexity in art: thematic development, complex counterpoint, and similar features found in some music. Rousseau himself composed quite a bit of music, including a folk opera.

Empiricists generally have an interesting position on aesthetic matters. They see a close relationship between a person's ability to perceive what is really there and the enjoyment of aesthetic objects. For example, if someone does not find Beethoven's Fifth Symphony interesting, the problem lies in the inability of that person to hear all that is present in the music: the manipulation of themes, the subtle changes of harmony, the changes of timbre, and so on. Because it is "known" that Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is great music, the problem is, therefore, with the listener, who is not perceiving adequately (Sellars, 1932, pp. 451–52).

Pragmatism

Although the roots of *pragmatism* go back to Heraclitus (sixth to fifth centuries B.C.) and the Sophists in ancient Greece, this philosophic viewpoint did not flower until it reached nineteenth- and twentieth-century America.

Heraclitus emphasized the idea that all things change; nothing is permanent (Heraclitus/Bakewell, 1939, p. 33):*

> *All things flow; nothing abides.*
> *One cannot step twice into the same river.*
> *Into the same river we step and do not step;*
> *We are and are not.*

The early predecessors of pragmatism were often subjected to criticism for this view, and with some justification. If nothing can be known in a lasting way, that is just a short step from saying that nothing can really be known—a type of nihilism.

Although Francis Bacon (1561–1626) and Auguste Comte (1798–1857) anticipated some of the features of pragmatism, it was the American Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914) who began its systematic formulation. His main contribution was this idea: "To determine the meaning of any idea, put it into practice in the objective world of actualities and whatever its consequences prove to be, these constitute the meaning of the idea" (Butler, 1968, p. 367). To Pierce, it was pointless to accept the conclusions of logic or the opinions of authorities. What made sense to him were the results of an idea when tested.

Peirce's notion was adopted and promoted by two other famous American philosophers: William James, who in many respects was an empiricist, and John Dewey (1859–1952), who is the figure most often associated with pragmatism today. Both James and Dewey followed Heraclitus in believing that nothing is lasting, and that it is impossible to gain knowledge of ultimate reality. Dewey believed that the testing of hypotheses was the best approach to finding truth that human beings could have. Therefore, not science, which had fascinated intellectuals since Aristotle, but rather the scientific method was to be applied in all possible situations. Although it may seem like hairsplitting to emphasize the difference between the results of a scientific observation and the process of scientific experimentation, the distinction is very crucial to Dewey and the followers of pragmatism. According to their beliefs, truth is not permanent, so what is most useful is the process of arriving at information. For this reason, Dewey emphasized means as being equal to ends; that is, the way in which one gains information is as important as the information itself. Clearly, pragmatism's long suit is its epistemology.

The logic of pragmatism is the scientific method, which is quite a change from the reasoning that had been traditionally associated with philosophy. Dewey proposed five steps of thinking: activity, awareness of the

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problem, observation of data, formulation of a hypothesis, and testing of a hypothesis (Dewey, 1933, p. 107).

Dewey also argued that values are derived from the experiences of society and life, not from a supernatural mandate. He wrote specifically about aesthetic values. Most experiences have an aesthetic side, he believed, as well as a practical side. That is, they possess and yield meanings that people may want to preserve. Aesthetic values are often retained and communicated (in the broad sense of that word) by means other than words, because words are used for communicating everyday experiences. Ultimately, Dewey wrote, the enjoyment of beauty is related to the cycles of life, the "ups and downs," the "rhythms." At times, life is stable and we feel content, while at other times it is disturbing and difficult. It is in such a world that aesthetic values can exist. If everything were finished, perfect, and complete, there would not be unknowns or struggles. Without difficulties to reflect back on, there would be no present moments of satisfaction to enjoy. It is the artist and musician who through their media allow us to contemplate the experiences of overcoming difficulties and tensions and to enjoy the times of satisfaction. In that sense, the arts express human experience, and they make life richer because they make us more conscious of its qualities (Dewey, 1934, p. 56). That is why humanity finds the arts valuable. Therefore, pragmatism puts the arts in the middle of life, not "up in the clouds" of some ultimate or cosmic scheme of things.

Pragmatists place much emphasis on education, which is consistent with their interest in the process of determining truth. Dewey established the Laboratory School in Chicago in 1896 and took an active part in the education of the children. His writings were very influential in American education for the first half of the twentieth century. What Dewey said (or was purported to have said—some of his followers misinterpreted him) was a part of virtually every curriculum in teacher education during those years. Some of his views on education will be discussed shortly.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Three Viewpoints

The following discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of each of the three basic philosophical viewpoints is from the point of view of their effect on what happens in classrooms. It is not a technical discussion such as is found in writings on philosophy. Those matters are important to philosophers, but of only limited value to music educators.

Rationalism

Probably the greatest strength of rationalism is its conscious intellectual approach to reality, the way in which reality is known, and the values that

should be held. It is more systematic and thorough in seeking answers to the difficult questions of philosophy than the other philosophic viewpoints. Few scholars question the intellectual qualities of rationalistic philosophers, although their conclusions have been vigorously disputed.

Another strength of rationalism is its stability. It provides conclusions that are not going to be buffeted about by each novel breeze or whim. What is true is true, always was true, and always will be. It will not go out of fashion like a suit of clothes.

However, that notion of lasting truth also presents some major problems. If there are certain eternal verities, why in over 2,000 years has it been so difficult to arrive at some agreement about what those truths are? Granted, seeking what is eternal and true is no easy task, but 2,000 years would seem to be an adequate amount of time.

Furthermore, how do rationalists account for the diversity of views and beliefs found throughout the world? If truth be truth, why is it so different in so many times and places? Different societies display too much diversity for one to be impressed with the universal nature of ideas.

Also, rationalists have a difficult time accounting for new developments and change. There is little disagreement that Bach and Mozart composed great music, music that has met the "test of time" and therefore has demonstrated outstanding qualities. But has all the great music now been written? Should no new music be accepted? If so, on what basis? Are there universal criteria that can be used to evaluate music from all places and ages? If there are, musicologists, theorists, and aestheticians have had a difficult time agreeing on what those criteria are.

Finally, logic—the main means of rationalist philosophers to determine truth—has proved to be a less precise tool than they would like to admit. Not only is the process itself subject to error, but people generally make judgments according to their personal values rather than on the basis of rational deductions. For example, it can be demonstrated economically and logically that it would be an efficient practice to terminate everyone's life once he or she reaches the age of 65 or 70. The idea is, of course, abhorrent. Why? Because in our system of values, human life is far more important than economic gains. (That has not always been true at all times in all places—not by any means!) Logic is a good and useful way of examining issues, but it is not a solution for philosophical and moral problems.

Empiricism

The main strength of empiricism lies in its practical quality. Empiricists take whatever information they have and work with it as best they can, even though they realize their knowledge is not perfect or complete. Because no one can know what lies beyond what the senses are able to perceive, there is no use worrying about it. Empiricists do not wonder if

the wall in front of them is the ultimate, "real" wall; they simply realize that if they bump into it, that experience will be one of reality. In short, this philosophic position deals with reality as it can best be known.

The practical, direct nature of empiricism is also its weakness. Our knowledge of reality as perceived through the senses is subject to error. A stick in the water appears to bend at the surface; the pitch of the horn on the diesel railroad engine appears to change as it goes by; when our hands have been in hot water, warm water seems cool by comparison, while the same water seems warm if our hands have been in cold water. The portion of the physical and psychological world that can truly be known, even with sophisticated scientific equipment, is probably only a small part of what is actually there—if one wants to think about it as a empiricist.

Empiricists place more reliance than any other philosophic positions on the opinions of experts and authorities. If, for example, you want to know what should be included in the content of a chemistry course, you should listen to recognized chemists, not to people who have little knowledge of the discipline of chemistry. As Harry Broudy states: "We rely upon the expert or the *consensus of the learned* and hopefully, the wise. . . . A roster of the learned societies furnishes our culture with definitions of norms within each of the intellectual disciplines" (Broudy, 1967, pp. 10–11). The importance attached to authorities is one of the strengths of empiricism.

However, the reliance on experts also has some negative aspects. Who decides who is an expert? In some cases there are specific standards, such as those maintained by state board examinations in medicine and law and certification procedures for teachers. In other cases there are no guidelines established by the state; the ministry is one example. What happens when the experts disagree? No science or profession has a fund of knowledge so complete and final that there are no instances of disagreement. One doctor may recommend surgery, while another doctor may not; psychiatrists often appear on different sides of a court trial or hearing to determine a person's mental condition; on the same day one economist predicts that things will improve while another economist says they will grow worse. The music profession's experts disagree on everything from the correct embouchure for playing the trumpet to the content of freshman theory courses. Another problem is the possibility that one group of experts may become restrictive and reject valid ideas that do not agree with theirs. Such a practice may keep a profession or academic discipline "pure," but it also shuts out other legitimate viewpoints. The troubles encountered thirty and forty years ago in including jazz in the curricula of university departments of music is one example of this phenomenon.

The naturalistic branch of empiricism presents different strengths and weaknesses. Its main appeal is its simplicity. It seeks to ignore or reduce the complexities and artificialities of life. Such views are fueled in this century by the fact that there is much about contemporary civilization that is

not very heartening. Pollution, wars, hatred, and other vices of society tend to cause people to become disillusioned and to believe that somehow humanity has gotten from its true destiny.

But the strength of these views is also its weakness. At first glance it may seem easy to decide what is natural, but it is not. Is it natural for people to cooperate or compete with each other? Is it natural to try to save lives through medication or surgery? Furthermore, nature is by no means simple and good. Although it produces beautiful mountains, birds, gentle rain, and flowers, it also produces earthquakes, animals that kill and eat each other, and diseases. Finally, if children are allowed to develop "naturally," will they become good and unselfish people who are competent to operate in society? Or will their knowledge and skills be a mosaic of personal desires and experiences?

Pragmatism

The strength of pragmatism lies in its attention to the process of uncovering the truth. It does not depend on what one thinks is natural, or on mental cogitation, or on the perception of the world. Instead, it proposes the scientific method as the best means for determining reality. The results of science—ranging from atomic energy to kidney transplants—are truly impressive. The notion of testing hypotheses does seem to have succeeded, if one considers it from a pragmatic point of view. Nor is pragmatism burdened with the problem of who is an expert. The process itself determines truth; truth is not determined by persons.

The weakness of pragmatism lies in its devotion to a single means for determining truth. That process works well in small, tightly controlled situations. One can apply the scientific method and find out about the effect of a certain fertilizer on fields of corn or the behavior of atoms in a critical mass. Unfortunately, many questions, especially the important ones in life, are too large or too unwieldy to be subjected to experimental examination. No one can set up the conditions to test experimentally the causes for World War I or World War II, or the 1992 riots in Los Angeles, or the dominance of the Austro-German style of music during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Nor can the scientific method answer questions of value any better than logical thinking. It provides information to aid in making decisions, which can be very useful, but it cannot tell which decision is the right one. Pragmatism can also be faulted for its lack of concern for values. In many respects the notion of lasting values is inconsistent with the pragmatic view of continual change. Without values and goals, teachers have little guidance as to what should be taught. It may be somewhat helpful to say that the schools should prepare young people to be able to function in the society, but that guideline is not very useful if the nature and goals of society are themselves unstable.

Eclecticism

As can be seen, no philosophical position is without its strengths and weaknesses. This fact may tempt one to consider the idea of taking the best points of each philosophical view and then combining them into a virtually faultless system. The idea of synthesizing the best of several different styles or systems is called *eclecticism.* Unfortunately, it works little better with regard to philosophy than it would in the world of music. The combination of the best features of the music of Bach, Mozart, Brahms, Bartók, and Dave Brubeck would probably be more comical than impressive; it would end up being a goulash of styles. While one may consider points from various philosophical schools, in the end people must make decisions that reveal a tendency to subscribe principally to one of these schools.

If pressed for their opinion *as music educators,* the authors admit to finding the empiricist viewpoint without naturalistic inclinations the most useful of the three. The idea of accepting what can be known and working with it as best one can seems defensible, practical, and reasonable. This is not to deny the possible existence of the great and eternal truths of rationalism. There is considerable evidence for believing that there is more to life and the world "than what meets the eye," as du Noüy and others have established through scientific dialectics (du Noüy, 1947, p. 36). The problem is that not enough is known about things beyond human perception on which to operate in a systematic way. The nature of an eternal verity (God) or verities is as much a matter of faith and intuition as of reason and observation, and therefore is more a matter of religion than philosophy. Pragmatism and its reliance on scientific method is very attractive in restricted situations, but seems inadequate for the larger questions.

Philosophical Viewpoints and Education

What practical effects do these three philosophic viewpoints have on what happens in music classes and rehearsals? To answer this question, each viewpoint is examined here in relation to four aspects of teaching: curriculum and content, methods of instruction, evaluation, and the roles of teachers and students.

Rationalism

Rationalists are eager for those aspects of music that are great and lasting to be learned. What good does it do the students to learn something that is only transitory and ephemeral? It is only by learning things of lasting value that the students are properly served. Therefore, much attention is given to the organization and planning of what the students are to learn. The

curriculum should include general knowledge (definitely including the arts), moral and scientific truth, and the development of critical and logical thinking.

Rationalists have a rather great interest in evaluating students' learning. They see evaluation as an important part of education. Although they assess the learning of specific information, they are especially concerned about comprehensive understandings. They want the students to be able to synthesize and apply knowledge and to have the "big picture" of the material covered.

Traditionally the rationalists, especially Socrates, followed the dialogue procedure in which teacher and student probed and searched together to uncover truth. Over the ages the emphasis changed more to the students learning what was believed to be valuable and lasting. Methods that are effective in achieving the learning of the material are the ones favored. Often this means listening to lectures or reading books. Student originality and exploration are acceptable under certain conditions, one of which is that the student be well grounded in the subject.

Many rationalists see the students as part of a larger scheme of things. Herman Harrell Horne writes: "Our philosophy dares to suggest that the learner is a finite person, growing, when properly educated, into the image of an infinite person, that his real origin is deity, that his nature is freedom, and that his destiny is immortality" (Horne, 1942, p. 155). If Horne's words sound like quite an assignment for a teacher, they are intended to be, for the rationalistic viewpoint places much emphasis on the teacher. Not only do teachers have the obligation to impart knowledge, they are also to be models for the students. Teachers personify the reality of the adult world, are capable of commanding respect, learn along with the students, are specialists in their field of study, and awaken in the pupils the desire to learn. Rationalists realize the limitations of teachers. Horne also has written:

> The development of mind is from within out, not from without in. . . . The teacher may lead the pupil to the fonts of learning, but he cannot make him drink. Teaching is not so much the cause of learning . . . as it is the occasion or condition of learning. The cause of learning is the pupil himself and his effort. . . . The ultimate responsibility for winning at education rests with the will of the pupil. (Horne, 1930, pp. 273–74)

Rationalists see discipline as a part of teaching. However, discipline is not an end in itself, but rather a means of securing patterns of behavior that will eventually benefit the students.

RATIONALISTS AND TEACHING MUSIC. Music teachers who operate from the rationalistic viewpoint tend to pay much attention to choosing music. They favor the established "classics," especially the recognized works that

have stood the "test of time." They have little use for marching bands and swing choirs.

Rationalistic music educators also place emphasis on the intellectual understanding the students gain in music classes. While these teachers do not reject or ignore the performing of music, they do not attach as much importance to playing and singing as do their empiricist colleagues. And the type of information rationalists favor is not so much factual as it is the acquisition of concepts and broad understandings. Such music teachers are more interested in having students understand sonata form, for example, than they are in students learning how many piano sonatas Beethoven composed. Grades are not looked upon as being very important.

Rationalists see teachers as role models for students, and therefore avoid improper or slovenly behavior or what is sometimes called the "artistic temperament." In addition, they are more interested in the subject of music than they are in satisfying their egos.

Rationalists strongly favor good discipline in classes because more effective learning can take place in an organized situation. Good student behavior, they believe, results from healthy student involvement in the search for understanding. The selection of students, if any, is based on the student's desire to learn and willingness to put forth the appropriate effort.

Rationalist music teachers are more inclined to engage in question-and-answer sessions with their students. They are also more likely to encourage individual student projects. Student learning is evaluated not just on factual knowledge or skill development, but rather from more subjective, more probing, and comprehensive evaluations of the students' work by both students and teachers. The motivation for learning is seen as coming largely from the student.

Empiricism

Because empiricists see the mind as functioning in relation to objects outside the mind, they also emphasize the learning of subject matter. As F. S. Breed writes, "There is no perception without the perception of *something*; no memory without remembering *something*. This condition prevails in every mental function" (1939, p. 135). A. N. Whitehead makes the point even more bluntly: "The ordered acquirement of knowledge is the natural food for a developing intelligence" (1929, p. 47).

In totalitarian countries empiricists see the learning of what is prescribed by the state as of primary importance, because that is what is essential in those societies. Empiricists in democratic societies believe in teaching what authorities in an academic discipline say is worth knowing, as was mentioned earlier. For example, the "America 2000" federal educational effort of the early 1990s had as its goal the achievement of "world class" standards by American students in the various areas of the curricu-

lum. Sizable grants were awarded by appropriate governmental agencies to professional associations, including MENC, to develop curriculum and assessment standards for their academic disciplines ("MENC leads effort," 1992, pp. 17–18). These standards documents, when completed, will emphasize the acquisition of information and the development of concepts and skills.

Like rationalists, empiricists are interested in evaluating the results of instruction. However, they are more interested in the acquisition of specific information and skills—the ones deemed necessary to function in society and in an area of work. The empiricist piano professor, for instance, would have his or her student learn the Beethoven piano concertos because that is what is perceived as essential repertoire for successful concert pianists.

Whatever works in getting the material over to the students is favored. Often this consists of lecturing or reading, or in more contemporary settings working with a computer on a learning program.

Although empiricists emphasize imparting knowledge, in their view the teacher has the responsibility for molding the pupils like an artisan forming an object.

A logical outcome of the realists' view of instruction and molding the young is an impatience with distracting behavior. Time is too short to allow for fooling around. Empiricists, with the exception of those with naturalist leanings, are strong believes in orderly classrooms.

Empiricists see teachers as central in the educational process. Teachers (or the state in totalitarian societies) largely decide what will be taught and how it will be taught. If they are not the only source of information, teachers tell the students where to locate it.

Empiricists who take a naturalistic view of reality come to some quite different conclusions regarding education. They, too, believe that reality is "out there," but it is a very different reality that they perceive. Instead of to society and authorities they think that reality is best determined by looking to nature, especially to how children are believed to evolve "naturally."

To begin with, they feel that children learn best when they are interested in a topic, and if they are not, it does little good to impose the topic on them. For this reason, teacher-prepared curricula and courses find little favor.

Followers of this outlook are not very interested in the evaluation of learning, either. They tend to see the goals and objectives being evaluated as society's goals, which often are not valid in their eyes. Evaluation—and this includes grading—is also seen as a force encouraging conformity and reducing individuality. Since learning is an individual matter, anything that detracts from individual interest is undesirable.

Persons with naturalistic inclinations favor letting pupils learn on their own with a minimum of teacher intervention. The way of learning is largely the responsibility of the student, not the teacher. The learning process should proceed according to these guidelines:

1. Education should conform to the natural growth and mental development of the child.
2. Education should be pleasurable.
3. Education should utilize a great deal of spontaneous self-activity.
4. The acquisition of knowledge is an important part of education.
5. Education is for the body as well as the mind.
6. Learning should generally follow the inductive approach; that is, children should generalize from particular bits of information.
7. Punishments should be the result of natural consequences of doing the wrong thing, but the teacher should be sympathetic when this happens. (Butler, 1968, pp. 92–95)

It is easy to see the similarity of several of these statements with some present-day thinking on education. Most advocates of "open education" would support the previous list with enthusiasm. The admirers of Jean Piaget (discussed in chapter 7) would also point out the first statement about the natural order of maturation and its importance in education.

The teacher's role, therefore, is more that of a benevolent helper than a dispenser of information. Discipline is viewed as the result of the natural consequences of actions (e.g., letting the plants in the classroom die if the students forget to water them). It definitely does not consist of teacher-imposed rules.

EMPIRICISTS AND TEACHING MUSIC. The division between those empiricists who think that students should learn what they ought to and those who believe in the natural development of children leads to quite different practices in music lessons, classes, and rehearsals. Most empiricists teach what it takes to have a good band or choir, to be a fine pianist, or to fulfill the curricular demands of the state or school district. Their subject matter is determined by what they think the reality "out there" requires, whether that reality is a contest list or the opinions of experts. They are not so concerned about broad understanding as the rationalists are. For example, if the student can play Beethoven's "Waldstein" Sonata, whether or not he or she understands the forms of its movements is not all that vital.

The empiricists who believe that a child's natural development is the meaningful reality reject such structured learning in favor of the individual

development and motivation of each child. In addition, they are far more tolerant of individual differences and favor pursuing individual interests over group demands. If a child wants to play the bells instead of sing, that is fine with teachers who hold this view.

The empiricist views of teaching music seem to differ more among various grade levels than expressed philosophical differences, probably because the nature of music instruction differs somewhat according to age level. Teachers of children of preschool or primary age are more inclined to favor natural development. On the other hand, directors of performing organizations at the secondary school level are much more inclined to use teaching methods that meet the realities as determined by experts and other demands, like performances for school events, that are expected of the group.

These differences, in turn, affect the type of discipline the teacher favors. The naturalist empiricist favors self-discipline and self-direction. Most empiricists believe in having students adhere to the rules so that learning can take place.

Different views are also held about motivation. Most empiricists believe in extrinsic motivation, ranging from pep talks to rewards such as favorable ratings at contests, medals, and certificates. The group favoring the naturalist view sees motivation as coming from within each student according to his or her interests. The child who is interested in playing the bells doesn't need additional motivation.

The teaching methods of empiricists also differ depending on what they believe to be the primary reality "out there." Most favor whatever is most effective in getting the students to learn the particular material—lectures, authoritarian commands, computer-assisted instructional programs, questions to reinforce the correct answers, and so on. If the clarinet players are suppose to play certain notes, then they should learn to do so as quickly as possible. If a teacher has to be a bit of an autocrat to get them to learn the clarinet parts, then so be it. What matters most is that the students learn to play those parts.

Those who believe in following the natural development and interests of children rely a great deal on student discovery. In fact, some of them believe that such learning is virtually the only truly effective type of learning, especially with younger students. They believe that trying to teach students things they are not interested in is about as useful as asking them to memorize the license plate numbers of the next five cars they see.

Most empiricists favor admitting only qualified students to music groups. No one is helped, they believe, by accepting students with substandard preparation, ability, or interest. Such students detract from the level of performance or study of the group, and the substandard student is frustrated because he or she is not able to keep up with the other students.

Pragmatism

Pragmatists place much emphasis on learning how to acquire skills and gather information, and they see experiences as the basis of learning. Because things are always changing, in their view, all knowledge lacks permanence and will need to be replaced—hence the emphasis on process rather than product. Pragmatists are also interested in the nonmusical outcomes of music study. If music contributes to nonmusical goals such as citizenship or health, that is fine, even if these are not a part of the subject matter.

Logically, pragmatists are more interested in evaluation than are the holders of other philosophical positions, since consideration of the results is a part of the scientific process. The evaluation, however, is not concerned solely with what content has been learned, but concentrates on the methods of learning employed by the students.

Pragmatists place much importance on the means of learning, because that is at the heart of their philosophy. Their process of education is similar to Dewey's steps of thinking, which were described earlier in this chapter. A problem is encountered, information gathered, solutions considered, hypotheses tested, and data analyzed. (The basic procedure will be examined again in chapter 11 in conjunction with research.) Such thinking has led to the institution of "general methods" courses in many departments of education. The rationale is that essentially the same process is employed whether the subject be a foreign language, music, or science.

Dewey stressed the need for the consistency of means and ends; e.g., one cannot hope to teach students to conduct themselves in a democratic manner by using autocratic teaching methods. Even if one does not agree with the pragmatic philosophy, there is much to commend in the idea of consistency. To music teachers, it says that consistency is needed between the subject of music and the manner in which that subject is taught. If the nature of music is organized sound and silence—an often-used definition of music—then it seems that music classes should deal with and relate to organized sounds as much as possible. For example, the learning of rhythmic values in notation, which is something that is experienced in terms of time and sound, is not effectively achieved when the note values are treated as mathematical fractions. One may add $1/4 + 1/4 = 1/2$ and know little about quarter and half notes in music (or about sixteenths and eighths, depending on the association attempted).

Pragmatists see pupils as biological, psychological, and sociological beings caught up in the flow of history and life. Growth is considered as beginning with biological birth, followed by physiological growth and development. The development of language is believed to be the great socializing force in personality, which is followed by the gradual acquisition of a concept of self. Pragmatists also see youngsters as individuals. To

a greater degree than holders of other philosophical viewpoints, they consider the influences both within and without the individual. As a result, each person, young and old, is to be treated as someone worthy of dignity and esteem.

Pragmatists see teachers as agents who impart to the young the techniques for living and acquiring knowledge. Teachers also instruct students how to meet the new situations that will inevitably arise; in a sense, the students are educated for change. In the course of their education they are expected to pursue information and to be occupied in constructive activity. The conventional ideas of discipline (e.g., no talking without permission, no throwing spitballs) are not as important as the results of the learning activity. Pointless and/or disruptive fooling around is not tolerated, however, although pragmatists have often been accused of being too lenient.

PRAGMATISM AND MUSIC TEACHING. The thing that makes pragmatist music teachers different from rationalists and empiricists is their interest in helping the students to learn how to learn. They know that they will not always be around to tell the students what to do, and they also realize that their students will encounter new music in new situations. Therefore, teaching the "right" answers, whether those answers are products of the mind or outside of it, is a false goal, because the right answers of today may not be the right answers of tomorrow. The ease of transposing to any key on the better electronic keyboards and organs today, for example, was unknown fifty years ago, and many new works of music have been composed in the past fifty years.

Pragmatist music teachers do not even have a set method for teaching their students how to learn, because situations change. Methods are different for each student because of individual backgrounds, interests, and abilities. What works with one student sometimes does not work with other students. However, the basic principle prevails for pragmatists of giving students as much responsibility for learning as they can handle, given their experience and ability.

According to pragmatists, the role of the teacher is not one of collaborator in the search for truth (as it is with rationalists) or dispenser of knowledge (as it is with most empiricists), but rather one of being a combination organizer-cheerleader in helping students to learn. For example, the students might be taught an approach for learning unfamiliar music such as: (1) look at the meter and key signatures; (2) scan the work for special problems, features, and patterns; and (3) run through a portion of it mentally before attempting to play or sing it. Such a procedure could have been developed by the students after much trial and error, but the pragmatist teacher provides such an approach to save time and avoid student (and teacher?) frustration and resulting loss of interest.

Other aspects of teaching are secondary to the main goal of teaching students to become musically more independent. Aspect such as subject matter, selection of students, and grading practices are not major concerns. Student motivation is seen as arising from successful and meaningful experiences. When a student learns the correct use of the pedals on the piano, for example, his or her playing is improved, which is motivating to the student.

Classroom behavior is also a minor matter, as long as student activity is purposeful and "on task." It's all right for the students to talk in class, for example, if their talking pertains to the task at hand and is not social chatter.

Coda

Your decisions about a philosophical viewpoint are not likely to be a process of saying to yourself "Now I have decided that I will be a rationalist" or a believer in some other philosophical viewpoint. Instead, it is more often a matter of realizing, after analyzing a pattern of decisions you have made, that you are more of an rationalist than anything else. Furthermore, it is not so much a matter of rejecting other philosophies as it is of agreeing with a particular philosophy's priorities. For example, if you are an empiricist with naturalistic tendencies, you will give priority to the interests of the students as they unfold naturally; if you are inclined toward pragmatism, you will be more concerned about how students learn. That does not mean that you must reject the process of inquiry and the scientific method.

The topics that have been discussed in this chapter are certainly fundamental in life—and in teaching. In a real sense, a teacher's decisions about what to do begin with what he or she thinks is real and true, and how that reality is known and learned. Although the connection between Plato, Aristotle, and other philosophers and music instruction in the classrooms of American schools today may not be easily and immediately visible, it is there. Fundamental beliefs and understandings make a significant difference in what teachers do.

Summary

The chapter opened by listing some of the reasons why all music educators should think about philosophical matters as they relate to teaching music. One reason for doing this is that all teachers make decisions as a part of their work, and most of these decisions have philosophical implications. A second reason for considering such matters is the fact that basic understandings and beliefs provide, or at least should provide, a sense of

direction and perspective. A third reason for thinking about philosophical topics is that teachers should be consistent in the different actions they take.

Three basic philosophical approaches were presented in terms of what each considers real and true ("metaphysics") and how that truth is determined ("epistemology").

Rationalism is based on a belief in the reality of thought, not objects. The eternal and universal world of ideas is known through rigorous intellectual examination and logic, including formal propositions such as syllogisms. The arts are thought to be of value because they reveal a bit of ultimate reality in their expression of the quality of human experience.

Empiricism is based on the idea that things are what they appear to be, and that the human mind is incapable of knowing anything beyond what the senses perceive or science reveals. Truth is what those who are most knowledgeable in a particular academic area say it is. The enjoyment of the arts depends on the viewer or listener perceiving what is actually present in the art object.

Pragmatism is based on the proposition that the truth of an idea is determined by the process of testing the idea in the real world. Whatever the results of that testing, these constitute the truth of the idea, at least for the situation in which the testing occurs. The arts are valued because they are manifestations of the feelings associated with experiencing life.

Each of these philosophical schools has its strengths and weaknesses, as are indicated in table 2.1.

Eclecticism—the idea of taking features from different philosophies and combining them into a new philosophy—has also been found wanting. The results of such efforts are often an incongruous mixture.

Each of the three philosophical viewpoints contains implications for education. These implications—for curriculum and content, evaluation, methods, and teachers and students—are presented in table 2.2.

STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is it important for music teachers to have clearly thought out goals for what they want to accomplish and why are those goals significant?
2. Why is it useful for music educators to be familiar with the fundamental ideas of Plato, Dewey, and other recognized philosophers?
3. Which philosophical position is represented by the following statements? Be prepared to offer reasons for your choice of position.

   (a) "The basic reality is thought, not external objects."

   (b) "The need is to distinguish what is and what is not evident."

TABLE 2.1
Comparison of Strengths and Weaknesses of the Four Philosophies

	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Rationalism	Conscious intellectual approach	Unable to determine reality in 2,000 years.
	Stability of ideas	Cannot explain different forms of truth found around the world.
		Has trouble accepting new truths.
		Logic is not infallible.
Empiricism	Practical	Perception is sometimes inaccurate.
	Realistic	Matter of who is expert is debatable.
Pragmatism	Method of determining reality	Devotion to only one means of determining truth.
		Method is not adequate for "big" questions.
		Lack of interest in values.

(c) "To determine the meaning of any idea, put it into practice in the objective world of actualities, and whatever its consequences prove to be, these constitute the meaning of the idea."

4. What is the main weakness of eclecticism?
5. Dewey strongly emphasized the need for consistency between ends and means. What examples (other than the one cited on page 57) of inconsistent ends and means have you observed in the teaching of music (by others, of course)?
6. What are the strengths and weaknesses of relying, as Broudy suggests, on the "consensus of the learned"?
7. How does each of the three basic philosophical positions determine aesthetic values?
8. What are the epistemological (concerned with the way of knowing the truth) strengths and weaknesses of each of the three philosophies?

TABLE 2.2
Four Philosophical Viewpoints on Various Aspects of Education

Philosophy	Curriculum and Content	Evaluation	Methods	Teachers and Students
Rationalism	Very important. Learn what is lasting and eternal. Interested in general knowledge.	Important. Looks for comprehensive understandings.	Logical inquiry to uncover ultimate truth, often resulting from dialogue between student and teacher. Lectures and readings often used.	Teacher and prescribed sources provide knowledge. Teacher is model for students. Students have ultimate responsibility for learning. Discipline exists so that students may learn.
Empiricism	Very important. Learn prescribed subject matter determined by experts.	Important. Wants to be sure specified content has been learned.	Lectures and readings usually used.	Teacher and prescribed sources provide knowledge. Schools and teachers mold students. Discipline exists so that students may learn.
Naturalistic Empiricism	Not much interest in content.	Does not like it. Should be only in terms of student.	Minimum of teacher intervention. Follows child's natural development.	Students and teachers work together as equals. Teacher is enabler or helper.
Pragmatism	Interested in process of learning, not particular subject matter.	In terms of student's ability to learn. Seen as part of scientific process.	Learning how to learn through methods of inquiry and testing ideas. Methods and goals should be consistent. Learning is lifelong process.	Views students as individuals. Teachers help students to acquire skills in gathering information. Results are more important than orderliness.