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What is music good for? A dialogue on technical and ritual rationality

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What is music good for?

A dialogue on technical and ritual rationality

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Abstract

In different ways and in different contexts it has been and still is argued that music education should be prioritized because of its positive impact on pupils in terms of general development as good citizens and in terms of skills in other disciplines. In this article, the authors discuss whether this tendency is best interpreted as an example of technical or ritual rationality. Rather than presenting a univocal argument for one of the interpretations, they explore what arises when the two interpretations meet each other in a dialogue. The ways in which music education is legitimized is closely related to the values that are assigned to music and musical experiences. An important focus of this article is the different valuations of music that different ways of interpreting the legitimization of music education imply.

Keywords: technical rationality, ritual rationality, music education, citizenship

Introduction

What are the impacts of music education? This question has been answered in different ways throughout history and is still a *hot* issue for discussion. In different ways and in different contexts it has been and still is argued that music education should be prioritized because of its positive impact on pupils in terms of general development as good citizens and in terms of skills in other disciplines. Music education is regularly legitimized by its contribution to realize external goals.¹ In this article, we will discuss two different ways of interpreting this legitimization strategy. We discuss whether this tendency is best interpreted as an example of technical or

ritual rationality. Rather than presenting a univocal argument for one of the interpretations, we will explore what arises when the two interpretations meet each other in a dialogue. Therefore, we have chosen to write the article in a dialogue format where each of the two interpretations is formulated by each of the two authors. While Varkøy will give voice to the perspective of technical rationality, Røyseng formulates the perspective of ritual rationality.

The ways in which music education is legitimized is closely related to the values that are assigned to music. An important focus of the article is the different valuations of music that different ways of interpreting the legitimization of music education imply. Thus, the dialogue presented in the article does not only explore technical and ritual rationality as such. The dialogue also raises the question of whether the value of music is strengthened or weakened by the emphasis that is put on the role of music education in the realization of external goals. Is music devalued by the tendency to justify music education by non-musical effects? Our dialogue has *instrumentalism* in music educational thinking as a common starting point. However, we see this tendency as very closely linked to general trends in educational as well as cultural political thinking. More than focusing on music education and music educational thinking as such, our discussion will mainly focus on general trends of instrumentalism, technical rationality, and/or ritual rationality in educational and cultural policies. However, we see the general trends and music educational thinking as two sides of the same coin. Further, our interest in this article is mainly a theoretical one. We will raise some questions concerning some general tendencies in educational and cultural policies which we find problematic. In this text, we will not discuss practical implications for music education and music education policy. We will avoid giving guidelines of the “how to do it” kind, both concerning music educational policy and music education, since it would be contradictory to the very idea of our discussion. Our ambition is not to look for ‘absolute clarity’ and unambiguity, but rather to open up for both paradoxical and permanent ambiguities. Nevertheless, we hope that the dialogue presented in the article can stimulate fundamental discussion on justifications of music education within the community of music educators.

The structure of the article is as follows: First, Varkøy discusses the justifications of music education and outlines the perspective of technical rationality in line with the contributions of Weber, Heidegger, Arendt, and Pio. Second, Røyseng presents ritual rationality as an alternative interpretation to technical rationality. The perspective is primarily developed by use of the anthropological concept of rites of passage as introduced by Gennep (1960) and Turner (1970, 1974). Third, Varkøy explores some analytical possibilities achieved by the perspective of ritual rationality, but also asks if the two rationalities should be seen as a part of the same tendency of legitimizing music by their external effects rather than their inherent value. Fourth, Røyseng discusses the implications of the two different perspectives regarding the value of music. Finally, the article ends with some concluding remarks where the voices of the two authors merge.

Justifications for music education

Øivind Varkøy

A very fundamental element in music teacher education is the question of justification for music as a compulsory subject in general education. In dealing with such a topic we soon realize that there is a broad trend that justifies music education by referring to the usefulness of music teaching for general educational ends. Here are four examples from the history of ideas:

1. In his thinking concerning how good human music gives knowledge and understanding of the harmonic principles of the cosmos, and how this is followed by a process of *Bildung* in children and youth, Plato is focusing on how music helps to build a good personal character based on the good and harmonic principles of the cosmos (Plato 2008).
2. In the *Christian thinking* concerning this matter during the first centuries after Christ, as well as in the Middle ages and up to this very day, music on one hand is seen as a means to knowledge of the Christian faith, by singing psalms in churches and schools (Basilius, in Benestad 1976). On the other hand, human-made beauty, as perceived for instance by St. Augustine, is seen as a way of bringing knowledge of Divine Beauty (Augustin 2008).

3. At the end of the 18th century *Friedrich Schiller*, like Plato, connects the knowledge of the arts in education and upbringing to the process of *Bildung*, that is the development of a harmonic personality. In its turn, harmonic personalities will be able to constitute harmonic societies (Schiller 1989).
4. In the *German Jugendbewegung* at the beginning of the 20th century, singing and playing together with people from different social backgrounds and classes is seen as a means to overcome social differences and polarities (Varkøy 1993).

Before Immanuel Kant (1985), the very idea of making distinctions between the value of music and aesthetic values in general on one hand, and personal, moral, religious and/or political values and development on the other, was not a topic. In the ancient Greek for instance we know that they in fact had only one common term for ‘the beautiful’ and ‘the good’: *kalokagathia* – ‘the beautiful-good’. It is of course “unfair” then to accuse, for instance, Plato and the Medieval Church of not having the intrinsic value of music in focus, but only the transfer outcomes.

When it comes to Schiller and the German *Jugendbewegung*, however, this is another story—of music as means to other ends. This even goes for the tendency in modern general education towards the justification of music by referring to the usefulness of music teaching for general educational ends. In the very first curriculum for schools in the kingdom of Denmark-Norway from 1790, the justification of the subject “singing”, for instance, can be summarized in one word: ‘God’ (Varkøy 1993, 112).

Throughout the 19th century, (Norwegian) nationalist ideas become the main justification for singing in schools (in addition to religious upbringing). The modern curricula of our time justify the subject of music based on the conviction of a number of general educational, social, health, and political gains by the teaching of music and other arts. The Norwegian National Syllabus for Primary and Secondary Education of today explicitly expresses the belief that teaching music has overall pedagogical, personal and social benefits (Kunnskapsdepartementet 2006). Music can be understood as a crossover between generations, music can create understanding and tolerance for foreign cultures, and it can contribute to the creation of a positive school environment. Music activities can, through co-operation, well-being, and

togetherness, create a sense of belonging and identity. Music is presented as a mirror for culture and society, and it is maintained that music activities contribute to the development of social communities. Music is considered to be an important element in all-round pedagogical efforts, and can in many ways be regarded as a means for achieving non-musical results. Music in modern Norwegian curricula appears to have become a ‘strategy for everything’, through an ever-widening perspective on the value of music and its functions in education. It is viewed as a method, a tool or a means in a number of pedagogical approaches and as a part of bringing up children in general (Varkøy 2002, 2003, 2007).

At the same time, Scandinavian cultural researchers claim that there has been an *instrumentalisation* concerning the concept of ‘culture’ as well. Cultural politics is, for instance, very often justified by being linked to economic growth. Art becomes the image of the nation's innovative audacity. ‘Culture’ becomes a means or an instrument for the production of adaptability, a pawn in a game of survival in the international market, it comes across even here as ‘a strategy for everything’ (Grothen 1996). If you have a problem, be it in education, in health, in industrial or commercial life, the medicine is ‘culture’ (Røyseng 2012). In this way there is a blending of cultural politics on the one hand, and health and social politics on the other. ‘Culture’ is valued as an element in a *technocratic* social planning, an integral element in the large modern project of coordination. In both educational and cultural politics we are facing *instrumentalism*. It is possible—and quite common—to see this general *instrumentalisation* as an expression of what is often called *technical rationality*.

Technical rationality

Instrumentalism is the tendency to look at everything and everyone as a means to another goal. An instrumentalist never values music as an end in itself, nor does he or she appraise human development as an end in itself. *Things* such as subjects and people are always seen as means and instruments. For the instrumentalist, the school's aim is the *production* of useful citizens. To achieve this goal the instrumentalist is always hunting for better *techniques*.

Concepts such as ‘things’, ‘production’ and ‘techniques’ show that this way of thinking is derived from industrial and business life. It is an approach where pupils and students are no longer primarily people or individuals, but rather products or things. A main critical point concerning this kind of *instrumentalism* is that education and teaching are often seen as being a question of techniques or methods. I think it is very important to critically discuss any tendency to consider education as constituted mainly by technical reflections concerning teaching methods.

As mentioned above, it is quite common to see *instrumentalism* as an expression of what is often called *technical rationality*. *Technical rationality* is a sort of rationality from the areas of technology and economy, which undoubtedly has become an important part of our modern society’s ideals of life as a whole. Few areas of education seem to have been able to avoid inspirations from the technical rationality of our time, which is also true for parts of the field of music education (Pio and Varkøy 2012). One example of this situation is instrumental thinking within music education—as stated above. In music educational thinking, as in educational thinking in general, instrumentalism promotes focusing on technical solutions and teaching methodological issues. In music education the philosophical “why-questions” of justification and the “what-questions” of content, are not only subordinated by the “how-questions” of teaching methods, they seem to be marginalized and even excluded. I consider this moving away from “what” and “why” towards “how” to be an “instrumentalist mistake” in much music educational thinking (see Skjervheim 1996, 241–50).

When focusing on *technical rationality* the ‘academic classic’ is Max Weber. Weber (2011) points out that the very concept of ‘rationality’ is a historical term that contains a world of contradictions. Human life can be rationalized based on very different values and in many different directions. The point is that what from one point of view is rational may from another point of view be seen as irrational. Weber’s aim is to understand the character of modern Western rationality and to explain how it has been developed. In this context, it becomes clear that the rationality from the areas of technology and economy undoubtedly has become an important part of modern bourgeois society’s ideals of life as a whole. Weber

emphasizes how the mathematically founded, rationalized empiricism in Protestant asceticism is an important aspect of the Puritan spirit of capitalism. This implies, for instance, that sports are valued only if they serve a rational purpose, along with a general distrust of cultural goods that cannot be directly connected to religious values. This is connected to what Weber defines as the general processes of disenchantment of the world and existence since the time of the Reformation in Europe. Weber even focuses the well-known significance of these ideas for the development of upbringing.

According to Martin Heidegger (1954, 1962), the modern technical understanding of the world makes the world present itself to modern man in a very particular way. The world becomes a resource that is possible to put into a calculation. And, as is the fact with all kinds of discourses, we are enshrouded by this discourse of *technical rationality* to a degree of which we are hardly fully aware. Technical rationality is *The Way* of thinking; taken for granted. We don't see that we can exist as something more than producers, consumers and resources. The human individual is more and more perceived as a technical resource, both by others and by him/herself, characterized by endless optimization and development (i.e. lifelong learning) (Pio 2012).

The Danish music educator, Frederik Pio (2012), points out how technical rationality today arrives in educational thinking in terms of buzzwords, such as "evidence-based", "new public management", "control" and "measurable ends". As an illustration of the technical rationality that pervades educational thinking, we can take a look at supranational institutions such as the OECD, The World Bank, UNESCO and the EU, from which discourse has developed which to a great extent regards education as a game with people as resources (Pio 2012). Education and people are increasingly thought of in an instrumental way. Education in general is becoming a technical instrument for economic growth, and the people within education are at risk to end up as a means for achieving ends for economic growth.

Technical rationality is in many ways linked to a dream of the thoroughly rationalized society, closely associated with modernity, the modern project itself. A critical discussion of technical rationality is a criticism of modernity, as is extremely evident in Zygmunt Bauman's discussions of the

Holocaust as an expression of a perverted modernity and technical rationality (Bauman 1989).²

It might be appropriate to underline that serious criticism directed against total mastery and perversions of technical rationality should not be mistaken for outpourings of reactionary political ideologies—attacking modernity as such. This point becomes particularly evident in the writings of Hannah Arendt. According to Arendt (1958), in modernity solely the activity that produces a product is seen to be important. It is *useful*. If an activity does not give rise to a product it is deemed *useless*. Following this kind of logic, the human activities *labor* and *work* are seen as useful because they produce a product. The kind of human activity which Arendt calls *action* on the other hand, is not a means to produce something, and this makes the activities of *action* useless. *Actions* are social activities, things people do together with other people. While things produced by *labor* and *work* have no end in themselves—they are means—*actions* are instead characterized by being ends in themselves. When *actions* in this kind of logic are seen as useless, Arendt claims that this thinking holds an anti-humanistic tendency. It does not take into account any activity that has no end beyond itself—any activity which is free and unfettered and which therefore expresses human freedom. Modernity's tendency to deny human freedom is, according to Arendt, a cornerstone of totalitarian ideology. According to Arendt's critique of modernity, and the mastery of instrumental thinking, related to the Aristotelian concepts 'poiesis' and 'praxis'—as well as the Kantian concepts 'pragmatic' and 'practical actions' (Aristotele 1999, Kant 1999), the thinking of life in terms of *labor* and *work* only, produces an experience of life as an unending chain of means. One is unable to distinguish between utility and *the meaning* of that utility. This underscores the dilemma of meaninglessness as experienced by modern men and women. Everything is useful for something else. Even activities that traditionally have had "intrinsic values" are given instrumental functions. In contrast to this, Arendt emphasizes the value of the form of activity that has its ends in itself: practical *action*; social activity.

Is *technical rationality*, however, the one and only explanation of our problematic tendency of valuing everything related to some useful outcomes?

Ritual rationality

Sigrid Røyseng:

If we study music education policy as well as cultural policy in detail, I find that it is not unambiguously an instrumental reasoning that is most prominent in the tendency to introduce music as a solution to different problems in society. Technical rationality can be defined as a specific form for rationality focusing on the most efficient or cost-effective means to achieve a specific end. Given that instrumentality in this way presupposes that decisions are based on knowledge and on calculations of the effectiveness of alternative means in realizing goals, it is not crystal clear that the logic behind music education and cultural policy is purely instrumental. It can be argued that what we are facing rather are beliefs in the transforming powers of art and music.

When politicians introduce music education as a way to create co-operation, well-being and togetherness, as referred to earlier, they seldom base their schemes and thinking on solid knowledge that confirms the causality between the experiences of or activities within music and the wanted outcome. Although it is disputed among scholars, I want to argue that, in general, there is little evidence in the research literature that art and culture generate positive effects on different social problems. In fact, the lack of a knowledge-base from which to develop a cultural policy has been acknowledged, at least in Norwegian public policy documents lately (Enger 2013). Although positive findings from some studies have triggered a discourse on the good effects of music, the same studies are often fundamentally critiqued when they are examined more closely (Dyndahl et al. 2013). A crucial question in studies that demonstrate the positive effects of art and culture is the question of causality. It is difficult to isolate music education or the experience of music or other forms of art from other independent variables. How can we be certain that it really is the experience of music that led to the positive effect that was observed?

Existing research that indicates that art and culture actually generate positive effects has been heavily criticized for methodological weaknesses and inadequacies and for ideological biases. In cultural policy, for example, it has been argued that arts

and culture generate economic growth and contribute to strengthening the attractiveness of cities and regions. However, studies that “prove” such relations have been dismantled methodologically by the research community (Hansen 1993, 1995; Puffelen 1996). Studies that show the positive effects of art and music have also been criticized for having an ideological agenda where positive effects of art and music have been overestimated and the negative dimensions underestimated (Puffelen 1996, Vareide and Kobro 2012). The lack of research based knowledge on the relation between music education and external effects does of course not mean that there is no such relation or causality, but it means that music education policy as well as cultural policy is not built on that kind of knowledge.

Against this background, it is relevant to claim that what we are dealing with is not knowledge-based policy making, but political beliefs. Music education policy as well as cultural policy is built on beliefs in the positive effects of artistic and cultural experiences in general and music education in particular. This logic can be named ritual (Røyseng 2007, 2012). Ritual logic is based on the idea that music possesses magical powers that transform and heal. In this way, we use the concept of *ritual* developed by anthropologists. More specifically we draw on the concept of “rites of passage”.

Following Arnold van Gennep, rites of passage are ritual events that mark a person’s transition from one status to another (Gennep 1960). Typically, many cultures have rituals that mark a person’s transition from childhood to adulthood. Other rituals are more strictly targeted for example towards illnesses or childlessness. Gennep claimed that rites of passage have a common structure of three phases. In the first phase of the ritual the person who is about to change social status is separated from the group where she had her original social status. In the second phase the transition takes place. And finally the person is reintegrated with her new status in the third phase.

The second phase of the ritual is of special interest in my exploration of the concept of ritual logic in music education policy and cultural policy. The second phase is often called the liminal phase. The participant is at the threshold of a new social status. Liminality is seen as a quality of ambiguity or disorientation that occurs when the participants in the ritual no longer hold their original status, but have not

yet been reintegrated with a new social status. In the liminal phase the participants of the ritual will often meet some kind of (supernatural) powers. The ritual establishes a new way of structuring their identity, time or community.

The anthropologist Victor Turner (1970, 1974) who is well known for having re-discovered the work of Gennep, argued that liminality should not be applied only to rites of passage in small-scale societies. In his work he made numerous connections between tribal and non-tribal societies. I argue in a similar way that arts and culture in cultural policy and music in educational policy can be seen as rituals in the anthropological sense. As anthropological studies of so-called “primitive culture” describe how people who struggle with for example illness and childlessness through rituals come into contact with supernatural forces that can make them healthy and fertile, the ritual rationality in music education policy connects the problems that burden the societal body with the transformative powers of music. Rather than using music as an objectified instrument, music is believed to have a power to bring human beings into a state of transition. In this perspective music education provides a possibility for pupils to experience music and through this experience be brought into a state where they can develop positively. We now present some examples of how the belief in the transformative powers of music in particular and culture in general is formulated in Norwegian educational policy and cultural policy.

The latest reform in the 10-year compulsory school program and in upper secondary education and training is called Knowledge Promotion. The goals and reasoning of the subject of music are formulated in various ways. One example:

Music integrates, expresses and communicates atmospheres, thoughts and feelings with all aspects of being a human being. Music is therefore a source of self-knowledge and interpersonal understanding across time, space and culture (Kunnskapsdepartementet 2006, 99)

In this way music is formulated as something that leads to a greater understanding of oneself and of others. Music is seen as a power that leads us to a better place both as individuals and as a society. Music changes us. This understanding of music is also formulated more specifically:

The subject of music plays a central role in adapted training in an inclusive school. By the content and activities seeking to meet the pupils' needs of

expression and giving room for aesthetic experience, the subject contributes to knowledge, empathy, expression and participation. (Kunnskapsdepartementet 2006, 99)

Music is seen as having qualities that *do something good* to us. This power is seen as a solution to some of the greatest challenges of our society—how to live in multi-cultural society. According to Knowledge Promotion, music can contribute to the development of positive identities. Music helps us to develop a sense of belonging to our own culture and heritage. At the same time, music is seen as a way to develop tolerance and respect for the culture of others. Music is seen as a transformative power. The experience of music and music activities can be interpreted as a ritual phase of liminality where we are outside our original status and on our way to a new and better condition. While emphasis is put on the potentials of music education in positive transformation, the extent to which different teaching methods are adequate in order to realize those potentials is not specified.

The belief in transformative power is not only restricted to music education policy, but can also be found in cultural policy more generally. A favorite example is from the former Minister of Culture, Trond Giske (2005–2009). In a chronicle in *Aftenposten*, the biggest daily newspaper in Norway he claimed the following:

A ... precondition for being able to live with differences is the possibility to get to know the unknown. This requires the ability to meet what is different with an open mind and it requires arenas where you actually can meet something different. The culture sector offers both. There are few arenas that in the same degree as art and culture give people training in meeting the unknown. The result is new experiences, new knowledge and maybe you realize that the unknown is not frightening, but exciting and interesting. (Giske 2006a)

The Minister appeals to the understanding of the artistic experience as an experience that challenges our usual ways of seeing things and opens us up for new knowledge. In turn the artistic experience can be transferred to the way in which we should meet the new situation of society. Giske (2006a) specifies this transfer in the following way; if we experience cultural forms and genres we do not know well, we can overcome genre chauvinism, and “if we overcome genre chauvinism in itself, we are one step further in overcoming other kinds of chauvinism.” If we learn to enjoy music we did not know we actually could enjoy, we can also learn to appreciate people and

cultures we did not think we appreciated. If we no longer fear the unknown, but rather let the unknown fascinate us, we will be able to develop a culturally diverse community. “We have not reached the goal until a Pakistani actor can play Peer Gynt or Nora without anyone thinking that there is something special”, Giske (2006a) writes. Following this logic what we see on the stages of Norwegian theatres are seen as lessons to be learned on how we should meet a new cultural situation. In the debate that followed, Giske further specified his views on the role of art and culture in society:

Art and culture can wake us up and make us conscious, create good growing up conditions, build bridges between people and fight racism. People can become more whole by the challenge and stimulation that art gives. Art can change society to the better. (Giske 2006b)

This way of arguing for the role of arts and culture in society can be seen as a form of justification where arts and culture are seen as representing transformative powers. The transformative powers are working both on the individual and the societal level. In anthropological terminology the experience of art and culture can be interpreted as a form of liminality where individuals or social groups are outside their normal social statuses. It is believed that the experiences of art and culture are transformative in a way that makes us better people and a better society.

On a general level, art and culture are introduced into regional policy, integration policy, health policy and innovation policy. When this is done, it is because it is believed that art and culture can make people want to move to rural districts, that art and culture can create cohesion between social groups with little or no common cultural references, that art and culture can make ill people healthy and that art and culture can supply commodities with irresistible cultural excess value that contribute to economic growth. The problems of society are placed before art and culture, and one is hoping and wishing for the best, as you have to when it is the logic of magic you deal with. The magic sometimes works, and sometimes does not. When art and culture are introduced in regional policy, integration policy, health policy and innovation policy, it is not primarily utility estimation that is the rationality involved. It is the belief in the transforming powers of art and culture.

As suggested earlier, the claim that music education policy has become increasingly instrumental can be understood as similar to Weber's analysis of the development of modern society as a rationalization and disenchantment of the world. Weber (2011) argued the process of disenchantment which started with the Renaissance and the Reformation was a process that made the world more prosaic and predictable, and less poetic and mysterious. Rational thinking spread to a growing number of social spheres. However, this is a fairly univocal description of the process. A more nuanced perspective would be to see rationalization as only one aspect of modernity. This would imply that other kinds of processes go on at the same time.

Sociologists, such as Colin Campbell (1987) and George Ritzer (2010), have both made contributions in which they add nuances to the rationalization and disenchantment theses. Campbell did not contest the basic argument of Weber. However, Campbell maintained that Calvinism, the religious movement that in the analysis of Weber played a central role in triggering the rationalization process, was more emotional than Weber assumed. In addition, emotion became even more prominent in late Calvinism. Following Campbell, the later Protestant Ethic led to the spirits of modern consumerism starkly contrasting the asceticism of the early Protestants. A key in Campbell's understanding of modern consumerism is individual fantasies; compared to reality, fantasies can be much more rewarding. Where Weber's capitalism represents a cold and efficient world, the romantic capitalism of Campbell is a world of dreams and fantasies. With this argument, Campbell did not replace the rationalization theory of Weber, but he extended it by claiming that processes of enchantment continued to exist side by side with processes of disenchantment. In a similar way, Ritzer has drawn on Weber and Campbell in his work. After having published his famous book on *The McDonaldization of Society* (Ritzer 2004), a book which was highly inspired by Weber's rationalization thesis, Ritzer started to study the enchantment of the world through contemporary consumer culture (Ritzer 2010). In this way, it is possible to see disenchantment and enchantment as parallel and dialectical processes.

“Oh Lord, won’t you buy me a Mercedes Benz...”*Øivind Varkøy:*

I find this nuanced perspective—where it is possible to see disenchantment and re-enchantment as parallel and dialectical processes—very thought provoking and fruitful. However, if instrumental rationality is related to the ‘Entzauberung der Welt’ translation, and ritual rationality is about ‘re-enchanting a disenchanted world’, what is then this ‘enchanting’ (or ‘Wiederzauberung’) about—when it comes to music education?

A reflection concerning ‘ritual rationality’ opens up some paths for continued discussions and reflections. I would like to raise some questions which I find interesting and stimulating in a further reflection: If we see re-enchantment as some kind of ‘countermovement’ to the proclaimed disenchantment (by Weber), what kind of ‘countermovement’ are we then facing? I will introduce some possible answers to that question.

There have always been countermovement(s) to processes of disenchantment. The romanticism of the 19th century followed times of Enlightenment. Concerning ideas about music, Romanticism certainly included some very specific ideas on music as some sort of language which exceeds oral language—and which gives insights and understandings beyond the spoken word—and into a spiritual world. The genius musician became some sort of prophet or even ‘shaman’. Sometimes ‘the ritual arguments’ concerning ‘good music’ remind me of ‘shamanism’—maybe connected to what is often called ‘new age’ spirituality. While instrumentalism truly is a child of Modernity, the ritual logic of today’s cultural politics can be seen as related to Postmodernity. While modernity entails radical secularization, it tears apart any aura of sacredness. Countermovements are easy to find. As stated by Slavoj Žižek:

One of the most deplorable aspects of the postmodern era and its so-called ‘thought’ is the return of the religious dimension in all its different guises: from Christian and other fundamentalisms, through the multitude of New Age spiritualism, up to the emerging sensitivity within deconstructionism itself. (Žižek 2008, xxiv)

I even find it interesting to discuss re-enchantment related to reflections concerning what in theological circles is labelled ‘prosperity theology’ or ‘glorification

theology'. In this kind of understanding of the Christian faith—not least as we know from evangelical and charismatic churches—the attitude towards the Holy can be summarized in the famous song line of Janis Joplin: “Oh Lord, won’t you buy me a Mercedes Benz?”... In prosperity theology, ‘God’ seems to be valued primarily as some sort of butler, a mega-handyman and a party fixer of existence (Eagleton 2009, Jenkins 2011).

In ritual logic concerning the positive outcomes of art, art is ‘God’ the party fixer. I will however argue that it seems appropriate to raise a question as to whether even this kind of ritual logic represents instrumentalism. When it comes down to it, both instrumental and ritual tendencies end up focusing on music as a useful means to some other end than experiencing music. It seems like ritual as well as instrumental rationality primarily value music as a means. If so: is it possible to even discuss ritual thinking concerning values of music related to the deep and mighty river or tsunami of technical rationality of our culture? As mentioned above: according to Martin Heidegger (1954, 1962) we are engulfed by this discourse of *technical rationality* to a degree of which we are hardly fully aware. The modern technical understanding of the world is *The Way* of thinking—taken for granted. Is ritual thinking even, then ‘a victim’ of the end-means-thinking of technical rationality, always asking what everything ‘is good for’? I think so. The paradox is that the tsunami of technical rationality today necessitates a consumerist ideology even when it comes to ritual logic, at the same time as this very ideology undermines the Protestant ethical attitude which made our modern Western societies possible (Žižek 2011, xiii).

Sigrid Røyseng:

I think the question of whether ritual rationality is just a version of technical rationality is difficult to answer in an unambiguous way. On the one hand, both the technical and ritual rationality are oriented towards fulfilling explicit goals. On the other hand, the two rationalities represent radically different ways of understanding what is going on in processes where goals are pursued. When we use the concept of technical rationality we assume that calculation is the core mentality. By introducing the concept of ritual rationality, we make ourselves able to see that hopes, beliefs and dreams are equally as important as calculation.

On this background, I think it is interesting to follow up with another question: Why is the belief in the transformative power of music so strong? It is interesting that this belief has grown strong without any solid knowledge base. The British cultural analyst, Oliver Bennett (2011), argues that every society needs optimism. In sociological terms this is a functional perspective. The same goes for the concept of ritual rationality in music education and cultural policy. This perspective differs in its nature from the cultural critique put forward by theorists such as Weber, Adorno and so forth. Bennett argues that the cultural critique of intellectuals is only to a very limited degree reflected in the everyday understandings outside academia. Following Bennett, there seems to be an eagerness to produce hope in our daily life, in education and in politics. Bennett thus argues that societies manufacture hope in various ways. Not least, hope and optimism are manufactured through religion and the arts.

What is it then, with the arts, or music more specifically, that creates hope or belief in positive transformation? I think Christopher Small's concept of musicking (Small 1998) can be helpful in order to discuss how we can value musical experience—not in terms of its usefulness, but in terms of its intrinsic value—as Varkøy (2012 and in progress) is arguing related to Hannah Arendt's concept of 'action' (Arendt 1958).

The concept of musicking draws the attention to music as a process rather than as an object. Further, Small sees musicking as a ritual where participants explore and celebrate the relations that make up the basis for their social identity. Here I see an interesting connection between my concept of rituality in policy-making and the experience and performance of music in which hopes and beliefs are created. A ritual is a process in which the participants invest in the idea that good things will happen in their life. Hope for positive change is produced.

I think the question of the social effects of music will continue to be asked over and over again. Why? Following the functional perspective of Bennett (2011), it is because societies need hope and optimism. The next question is then: what does this tendency mean for the value of music? Is music devalued? I think it is worth considering the opposite. When so many dreams and so much hopes and beliefs are projected into music, the societal strength of music in relation to other parts of

society might also be growing. If we continue to think in parallel perspectives as with Campbell's and Ritzer's disenchantment and re-enchantment, we can argue that music is not univocally subsumed into the logic of other sectors. The logics of other sectors are also subsumed under music.

Concluding remarks

Sigrid Røyseng & Øivind Varkøy:

In this article we have discussed how the perspectives of technical and ritual rationality shed light on the same phenomenon, i.e. the tendency to legitimize music education in particular and arts in general, by their social impact. The aim has been to explore these perspectives in a dialogue. In our view the article illustrates that both of the perspectives make us able to see important aspects of frequently used legitimization strategies in music education policy and in cultural policy. Is it as a conclusion possible to say something about the relation between the two perspectives? Our discussion illustrates that it is possible to see the relation of the two perspectives in different ways. First, the perspectives can be understood as mutually exclusive. This would lead to a conclusion where one of the two perspectives is pointed out as the most significant and the other one as non-valid. Second, the perspectives can be seen as a version of the same rationality. From the vantage point of the perspective of technical rationality, ritual rationality could also be seen as a rationality that has the same structure as the technical in terms of an underlying structure of objectives and means. Third, the perspectives can be seen as reflecting parallel social processes of disenchantment and re-enchantment. Each of the perspectives will in this way be seen as ways to capture two coexisting directions of the development of the social world. This indicates an approach not looking for 'absolute clarity' and unambiguity, but rather opening the way for both paradoxical and permanent ambiguities.

As we pointed out in the introduction, this article has *instrumentalism* in music educational thinking as a starting point. However, we find these trends closely linked to general trends in educational and cultural politics. Our discussion has mainly focused on these general trends of instrumentalism, technical rationality

and/or ritual rationality in educational and cultural politics. We see the general trends and music educational thinking, however, as inseparable.

Our interest throughout the article has mainly been theoretical. Rather than giving guidelines to how our theoretical exploration may be implemented in the practices of music education and in music educational policy, our ambition has been to contribute to a fundamental discussion relevant to practice. Our aim has not been to formulate clear-cut recipes, but to open up reflections on the paradoxical and permanent ambiguities concerning the justification of music education.

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Notes

¹ The volume of research focusing the question of non-musical outcomes of music education is overwhelming. Research concerning for instance learning in other school subjects, emotional and social development, general creativity, cognitive skills, social intelligence, group solidarity, learning motivation, self-esteem etc.—as well as critical discussions of this research—has been done both in Europe and in the US (see among others Simpson 1969, Dantlgraber 1970, Kormann 1972, Madsen and Forsythe 1973, Weber; Spyckiger and Patry 1993, Bastian 2000, Knigge 2007, Hanna-Pladdy and Mackay 2011, Knigge and Niessen 2012, Bamford 2008 and 2012, Winner, Goldstein and Vincent-Lancrin 2013, Dyndahl, Graabræk-Nielsen and Karlsen 2013. See even Mark 2002, Goldberg and Scott-Kassner 2002, and Bresler 2002, as well as Varkøy 1993 and Ehrenforth 2005 – for overviews concerning thinking and research on outcomes of music teaching in general education.

² Among other thinkers who focus on technical rationality in different ways in our time, we find Christopher Lasch, Charles Taylor and Georg Henrik von Wright. Lasch (2006) focuses on the decline and trivialization of sports, from the valuing of “useless play”—to ideas of sports as in the service of education, character development or social improvement. Taylor (1998) speaks of the mastery of instrumental rationality, the kind of rationality we use when we calculate the most economical application of means to reach a given goal. And von Wright (2009) asserts that the manipulative and controlling kind of rationality of which modern science is originally a result, has been in such a dominant position that other forms of human spirituality – be it artistic, moral or religious, are deported to the field of irrational beliefs or the world of uncontrolled emotions. The concerns of von Wright, Taylor and Lasch, bring to mind the criticism we know from Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer (2011) concerning the objectification of the subject. According to Adorno objectification is spreading to other areas of society, damaging true and genuine human relationships and products. It is only avant-garde art that represents a possible defense strategy towards this process of objectification. Modernist art is tearing itself away from the objectified society by denying it, by presenting alternatives, or by making itself strange, breaking with familiar aesthetical codes. When Jürgen Habermas (1968) discusses technical-instrumental, hermeneutic and emancipatory interests of knowledge respectively, his discussions also hold critical aspects concerning the dominance of the technical-instrumental interest.

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