

Thomas Noll is a distinguished scientist working at the interface between mathematics and music (applied Mathematics, performing arts, music education, music aesthetics). In his work, TN follows the idea already expressed by Herbart that musical apperception could be a special key to understanding mental activity in general, which means nothing other than that musical apperception meets "bodily hearing" halfway. Further, TN is a subtle expert of the music theory of Jacques Handschin, which also plays an important role in his own research.

In his research, he avoided to follow the mainstream of traditional music psychology and, instead, he is following a strictly Fregean attitude of highlighting the rationality and purely mathematical side of his object of investigation. This led him to quite novel ideas combining mathematical conceptions with real and deep research topics of theoretical musicology. (Reinhard Blutner)

Excerpt from the reply by Thomas Noll

I'm very thankful and glad for this nice recognition of my work.

And I feel sorry for not being with you in Berlin today.

Let me share a few thoughts on the intersection between Mathematical Music Theory and Experimental Philosophy.

What I'm mainly doing is the investigation of traditional musical knowledge through the mathematization of the underlying concepts. Sometimes I characterize this work as an *experimental philology* as opposed to historical philology. The latter traces the history of ideas around these concepts, while the mathematization seeks to find logical relations between them. And I imagine that some of you might suspect an attitude of „Armchair“-reasoning behind this.

However, I can think of three reasons why this work can eventually become part of the interdisciplinary domain of experimental philosophy.

1. Firstly, I believe that creation of music can be regarded as a philosophical experiment in its own right. Musicians continually make new discoveries of what we - humans - may do to our minds (souls), when we listen to music. And therefore, the understanding of music theory might contribute to the understanding of the mind.
2. Herbart argued that the apperceiving musical mind meets bodily hearing (das „leibliche Hören“) half way. And I tend to believe that our musical capacities rely on a natural law of apperception, which still needs to be discovered. A law that explains how the mind accesses its own activity. This argument reminded me of the song „Body and Soul“, which my musician friends Gregoire, Joachim and I spontaneously recorded for you.
3. Handschin argues that tones live in a society and that therefore tones do not only differ in their pitch height but also in their musical character. And although the piano is out of tune, it does not matter so much for the understanding of these different characters. The recent interest in scale degree qualia in music cognition, music theory and music philosophy is a challenging new subject area for investigations where these disciplines may meet each other „half way“ in new productive ways. I'm particularly enthusiastic about the new quantum approach to tonal attraction by Peter, Reinhard and Maria and I am eager to participate in this pioneering work.