



GREG FOX

It seems to me that music is a powerful example of how a phenomenon well understood at the physical level can provoke, through those purely material means, the very experiences we're so tempted to think of as spiritual. We know that an instrument produces pressure waves in the air in a particular way: that is how we can build, fine-tune, and improve them. We also have a certain aesthetic faculty: mainly based around being able to recognize degrees of simplicity and complexity, in the relations between frequencies and in durations. Our perception of music isn't a representation of what's happening, so much as an interpretation of what it is in what's happening that "*matters*" to us. The story of this adaptation in our biology isn't completely clear, but what we can be sure of is that it wouldn't be the only time in evolution where today's purpose isn't the same as yesterday's purpose. Perhaps the content of our aesthetic endowment has to do with mate selection, with status, with demonstrations of sincerity, with suitability assessments of locations for settlements and so forth; or perhaps it's a good deal more obscure. Either way we know, through music theory among other sources of insight, a good deal about how it works. Indeed a criticism sometimes leveled at commercial composers is that they knowingly "*tug the heartstrings*". So if this combination of more or less predictable responses and entirely material stimuli can produce the same richness of spiritual experience produced by more religiously transcendent situations, we can be sure those feelings are rooted in the real, material, non-supernatural world. I believe music is strong evidence in support of an entirely naturalistic worldview.

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