

# To Be Confused III – Music

Music, as structure in time, is the opposite of confusion.

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*“Music’s exclusive function is to structure the flow of time and keep order in it.”*  
— Igor Stravinsky

I observe music as having similarities to brainwave training and these similarities offer insights important to your understanding of confusion.

## Cycle

Why should my observations be important to your understanding? The difference between my understanding and your understanding is what each of us does about it: I speak and you listen. In order to complete this cycle and create understanding, you must speak and I must listen. With the completion of that cycle, a new structure can take form. Without that completion, these ideas fall on fallow ground.

Music manifests cycles. It also manifests in cycles but that is different. When I say, “music manifests cycles,” I mean it makes the cyclic nature of our being evident to us. To say that music manifests in cycles only means that you’ll find music within repeating structures, and that is almost trivial.

Experimental music that violates cycles exists to demonstrate the necessity of cycles. Without cycles sound can claim to be music only by the reputation of its composer, but is just noise.

Cycles have a scale. Patterns can be cyclic at some scales and not others. Animal songs only sound musical once their repeating pattern emerge. Until that happens, they may be harmonic but they’re not musical.

What makes sound music is its entrainment of human beingness. It is the effect music has on the working of our brains that makes music important. Of all the things that define our humanness it is amazing that we overlook music as part of our definition. We are virtually the only animal that is musical.



## Tempo

*"Drums are to be felt and not heard."*

— **Max Roach**

Music and language share common elements, tempo being one. Language with tempo is said to be poetic, but tempo is an important part of all language.

Tempo is a form that encapsulates a structure, it is not a structure in itself. Tempo is the beat that is not heard that underlays music. A drum beat keeps tempo but tempo itself is not the beat.

The ideas contained in the language are measured in the musical sense: they emerge with the beats. The lack of tempo in speech is a primary sign of disorganized thought. Tempo is a container of organization that says nothing of the structure it contains.

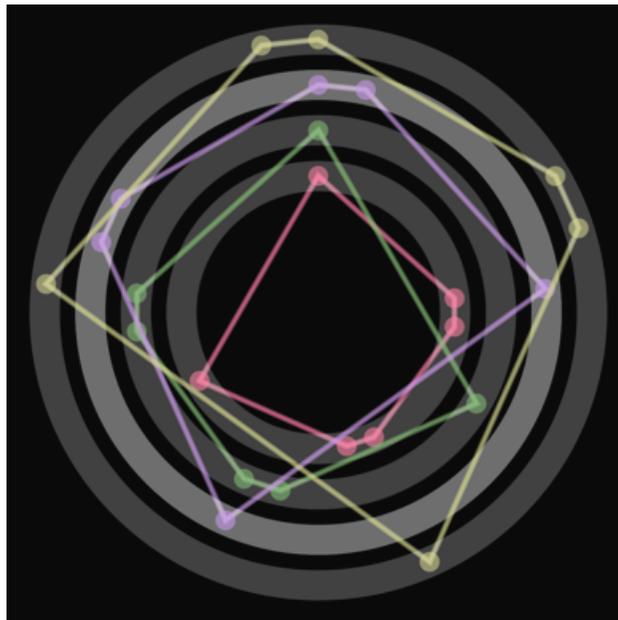
When you read a text your mind tries to recreate the tempo if the text has tempo. Texts that lack tempo lack an organized structure and are increasingly difficult not only to read but to comprehend. Tempo is an essential ingredient in what we call thought.

Readers of Western music think of tempo in terms of metre and measure, but that is little more than sentence structure. The full detail of tempo is in the repeating sound patterns which can exist outside or inside the measure.

Tempo exists in your thoughts but I doubt you're aware of it. For some reason, while we are acutely aware of the absence of tempo in speech and writing, we have little awareness in our own thought processes. Here is one place where my observation can play an important role in your understanding: your understanding stands or falls with tempo.

Tempo is so important to humans that we confuse it with being sentient. I suspect the disorganization in our thinking forces us to rely on tempo to hold our thoughts together. Animals whose thoughts are constrained to a rigid dictionary of signs don't rely on tempo. At least, we're not aware of the appreciation of tempo in most animals. The exceptions are those animals that can keep a beat, which includes parrots (Ceurstemont, 2009) and sea lions (Mullis, 2013) but few others.

*"Making sense of sound is profoundly governed by how we feel, think, see, and move."*  
— **Nana Kraus** (2021)



## Rythym

*"Music creates order out of chaos: for rhythm imposes unanimity upon the divergent, melody imposes continuity upon the disjointed, and harmony imposes compatibility upon the incongruous."*  
— **Yehudi Menuhin**

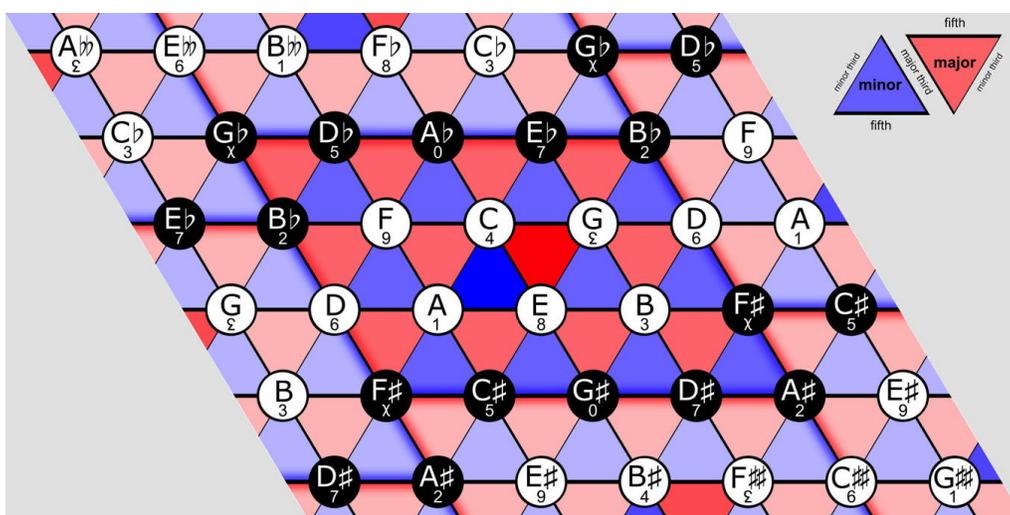
Recognizing a tempo in a situation is the first step in creating organization; the first step in lifting oneself out of confusion. Finding rhythm is the next step.

Rhythm is the pattern that follows the tempo. It is a structure, not a pattern. While tempo is infinitely repeatable, rhythm is a structure of tempo, something particulate that's built out of waves. Rhythm is what you hear, tempo is what you feel.

The feeling of being confused gradually remits as we add more structure. It can be a mistake to try to isolate particular confusing elements when there is no overall pattern. Rhythm is the first localized pattern one can create within the tempo.

Finding a rhythm to your thoughts enables an incipient sense of meaning to emerge. While both tempo and rhythm are patterns, rhythm is the pattern that reflects thought. Signals coming from outer space are full of tempo, but rhythm is rare. It indicates some structure that's localized in space or time, and this is one of the requirements of thought.

Rhythm is not enough, however. You must find rhythm in your confusion if you're going to achieve clarity and, if you never find anything beyond rhythm, at least you have something to work with. Depending on your level of confusion, finding rhythm may be enough to settle you.



## Pattern

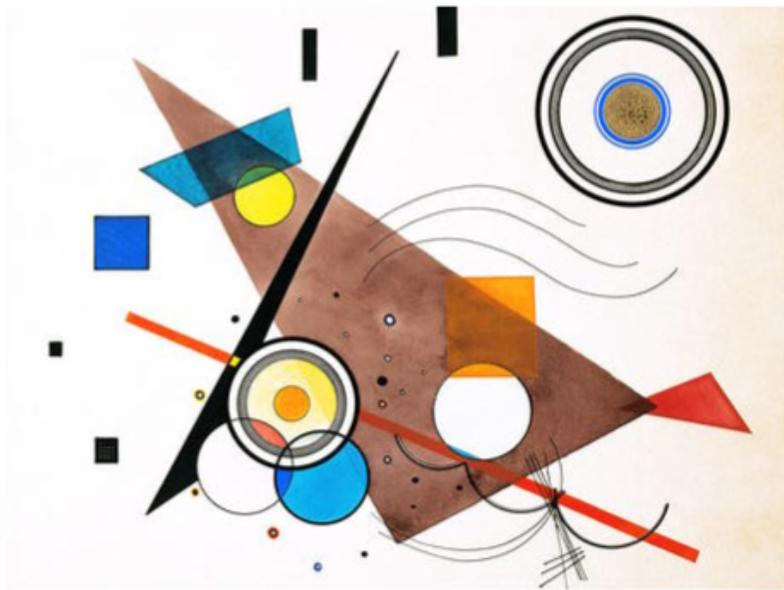
*"I often think in music. I live my daydreams in music."*  
— Albert Einstein

Animals use sound as songs that sign, but they don't modulate their song patterns into unique thoughts.

We don't know if this is really true as there are some animals that do make up unique song patterns that they use like we use words. The "whup" pattern in the song of the humpback whale is not uttered in exactly the same way by each whale. The sound is spoken differently by each whale because it appears to refer to each whale or pod by name. What we hear as a single "whup" is actually an infinity of different names, none of which our ears can distinguish (Science Friday, 2021).

For an animal to revise their song into words that conveyed new thoughts, would be like a human making up new words to express themselves. An animal's song is one thought in the way the word is one thought. For an animal to make up their own song would be like a human making up their own words. It would be gibberish to other animals in the way uttering your invented words would sound like gibberish to us.

For us to distinguish confusion from understanding means we can distinguish chaos from structure. Chaotic thoughts are confusing, while structured thoughts may be understandable. Chaotic sounds are noise while structured sounds may be musical. Structure alone is not sufficient to make meaning or music, but it is necessary.



## Structure

*“A new language requires a new technique. If what you're saying doesn't require a new language, then what you're saying probably isn't new.”*

— **Philip Glass**

Structure is the final form in thought and music, it is the statement that has meaning. Most of our confusion will not generate structure as that is not its nature. Like panning for gold, we may find some structure in our confusion but it should be sufficient that we've created a kind of sluice, something that will help us find the gold.

There has to be confusion in order for there to be novelty. The confusion itself is not the problem. Our problem is our need for order in a situation that lacks order. This is similar to staying afloat when you don't know how to swim. Swimming is the structure of movement and buoyancy that one needs when immersed. You need some structure in order to keep your head above water.

As a counselor, therapist, or coach—all versions of the same—my task is to find rhythm in the confusion, but not to find structure. Structure is the individual stuff of intentional thought and from structure emerges our rough attempt to portray it in words.

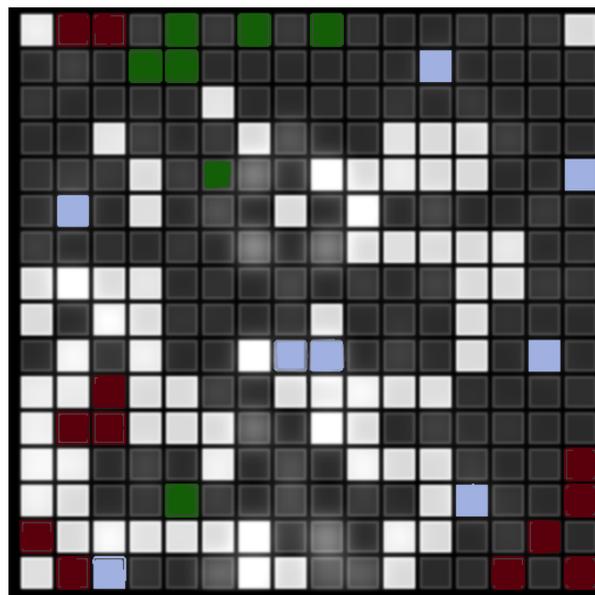
A person's authentic structure can't be expressed verbally any more than an animal's true feelings can be expressed in its song, any more than your true feelings can be expressed in a cry. My task is not only not to create structure, but also not to presume that I will be able to understand your structure.

Psychotherapeutic modalities that aim to corral behavior do just that: they create fences. They take the wild animal of your greater perception and train you to stay in your stall. This feels better than chaos in the sense that being in a lithium-induced stupor is better than suicide. And, no doubt, it is better, but it's a form of animal training, not understanding.

Think about music, don't just listen to it. Listening to music entrains you, like reading someone else's story. Thinking about music creates it, like writing your own story, and that's what you want to do.

Musicians are better thinkers if they both think and make music (Ying, et al., 2018, Kraus, 2021). That doesn't mean you'll be good at either if you do both, but you'll think better if you do. In particular, your ability to appreciate emotion will be enhanced. That being said, I know at least one musical person who is emotionally disabled, so music can be a crutch. Music is just a way of finding structures, not a guaranteed way of creating good ones.

Try this experiment. When you are next in touch with your confusion, try making music. Forget that dumb idea that only musicians make music, that's a despicable idea. Simply go to this website, <https://tonematrix.audiotool.com/>, and play with the interface for a few minutes. Then, return to your confusion and see what you can make of it.



Cherish your confusion. It's the realm of your wilding. Consider the structures it may contain. I'd like to hear your confusion. Write me at [LS@mindstrengthbalance.com](mailto:LS@mindstrengthbalance.com) or call me. 30-minute calls are free. My phone number is 250-885-8677.

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