

## Comments on “Music Pluralism and Indifference Realism”

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First, let me say that I think this paper is really interesting both scientifically and philosophically. I really enjoyed it.

Second, I am skeptical of the plausibility of the *indifference realist*'s inference. The core claim here is that “when some legitimate investigation is indifferent in regards to some category, in a vindicatory sense, then we ought to be realists about that category” (quoted in section 3). The “ought” here would seem to be a *rational* ought. I think this inference is implausible for two reasons:

1. Consider the case of investigations into the activity of “ghosts” in some supposedly “haunted house.” Now there are many mutually-exclusive, but overlapping, definitions of “ghosts” and yet such investigations are surely indifferent to the particular conception of “ghosts” on offer. But it would be an odd inference to then be *realists* about the ontological category “ghosts” for just this reason alone. The author could reply that this is not a “legitimate” investigation, but then I fear that the word “legitimate” is doing all of the real philosophical work here. One could encounter the same result in relation to “God” in remote prayer studies. Such studies are indifferent concerning the exact conception of the divinity at issue, but should we be realists about the category of “divinity” simply for this reason? Such an inference implausible at best.
2. The author admits that there are many sub-categories of the genus “music” each of which picks out a set of events (e.g., the psychological concept, the physicist concept, the art critic concept, etc.) Call each of these a *species* of the *genus* “music.” Let’s grant that each *species* picks out a mind-independent set of events or objects. Does it plausibly follow from this claim alone that the *genus* must as well? I do not think so. All the “legitimate study” needs is to be indifferent as to *which* of the diverse species-concepts is chosen. The indifferent investigator *need not* have any claims about the ontological status of the relevant genus. The indifferent investigator could simply claim that whichever species-concept you use, the relevant arguments in this investigation remain unchanged. So, there is no need to specify which of the species concepts is at issue. For example, suppose we were studying whether a human can see a 1-foot square patch of color at 200 yards under certain conditions. Now suppose the indifferent investigator does not care what color the 1-foot square patch is. Ought this investigator to rationally be a realist about the genus *color* simply because she does not care what color the patch is? I see no reason to think so. Instead, this person could believe that there are only particular colors (e.g., red, blue, green, etc.), but there is no such category as color-itself. So the indifference realists inference seems implausible.