

Beyond Grammar: Multilevel-Grounded Semantics of Music



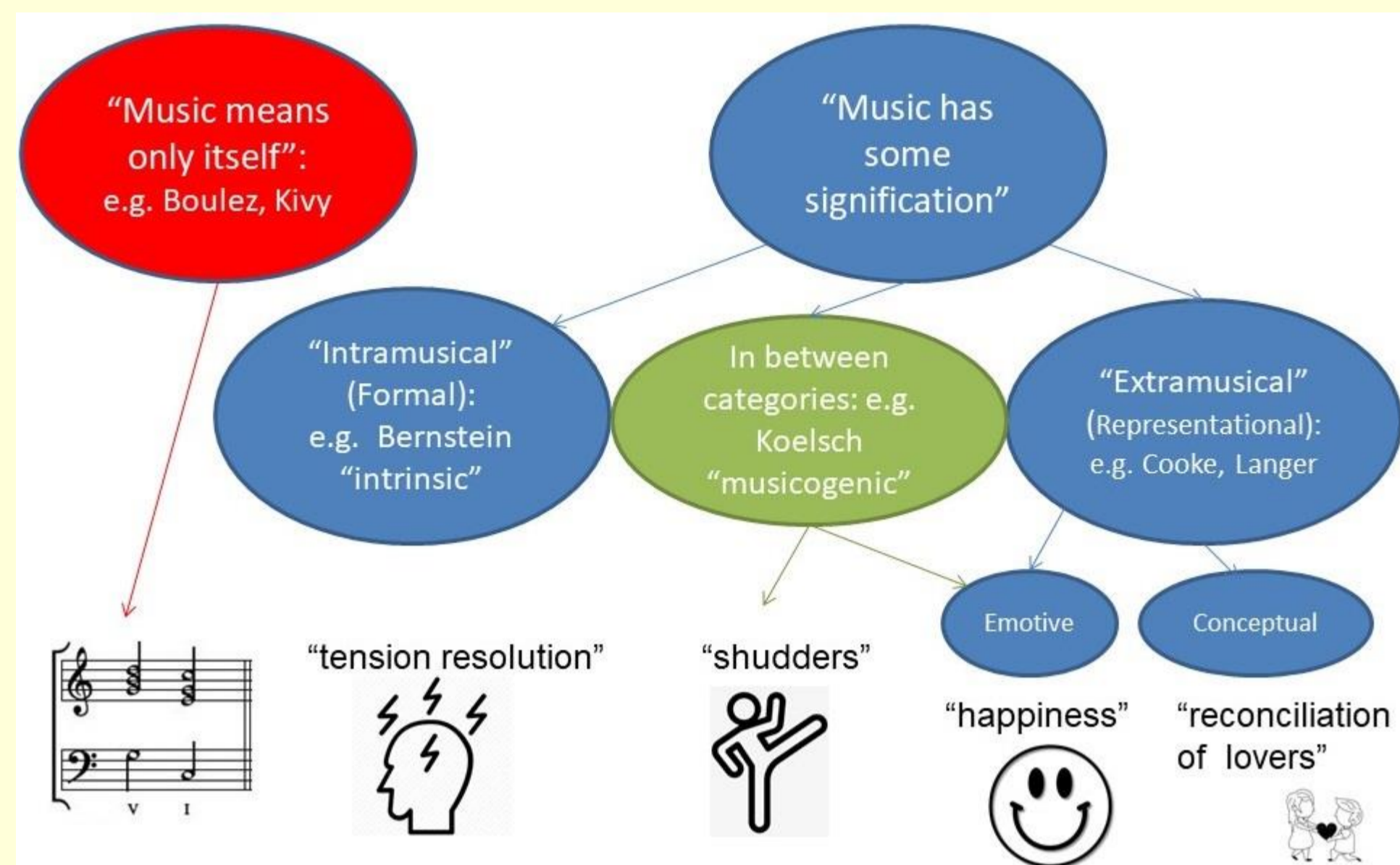
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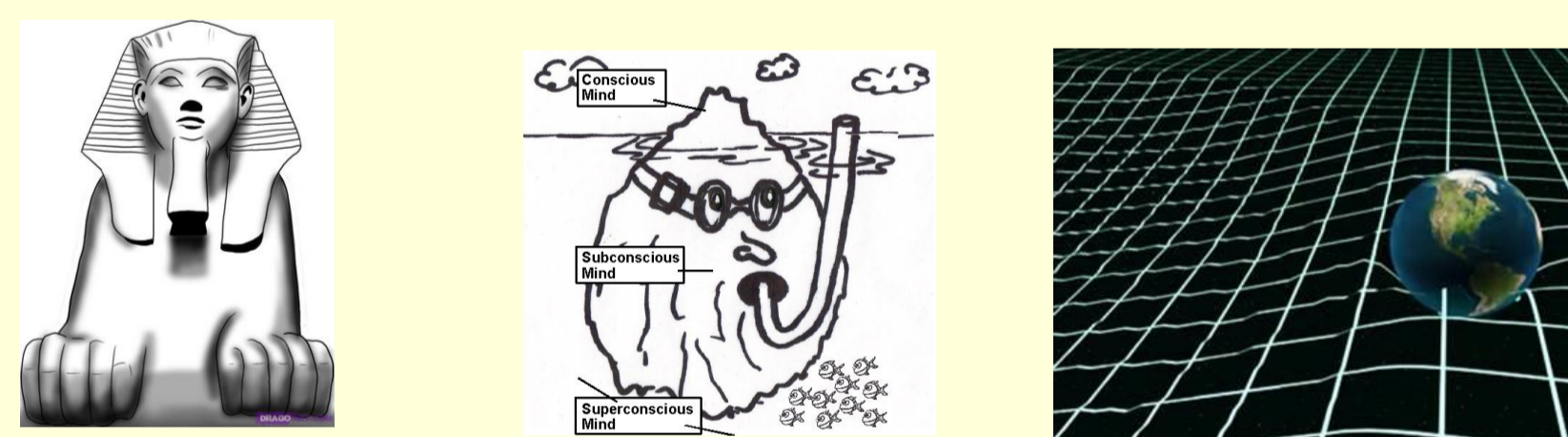
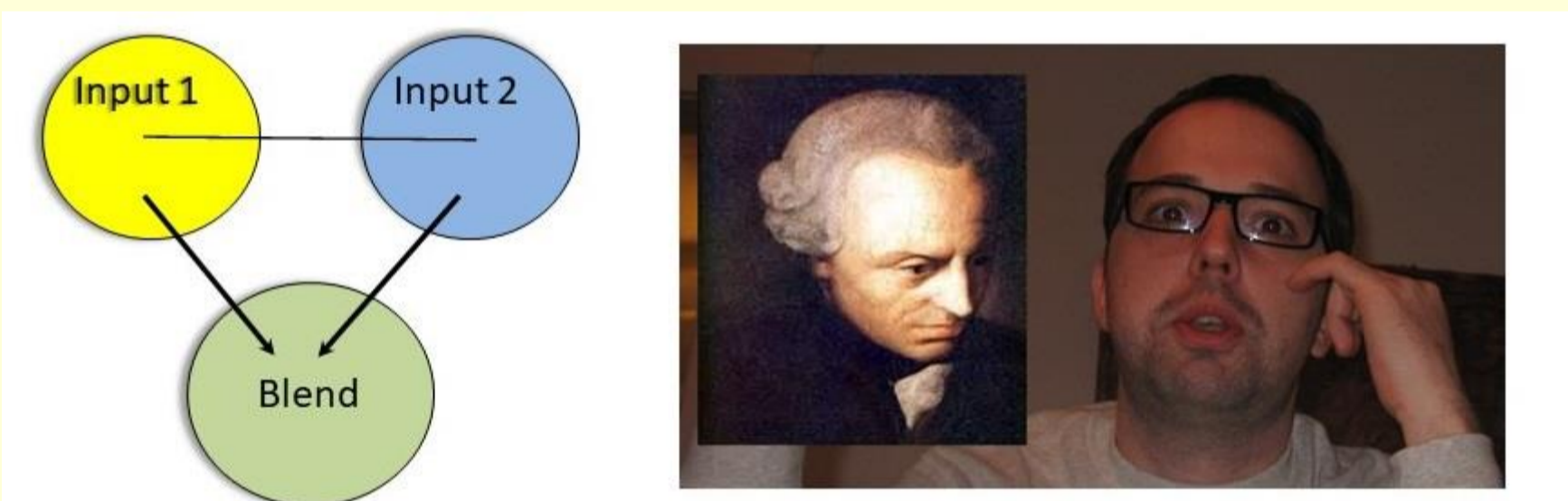


Musical meaning?

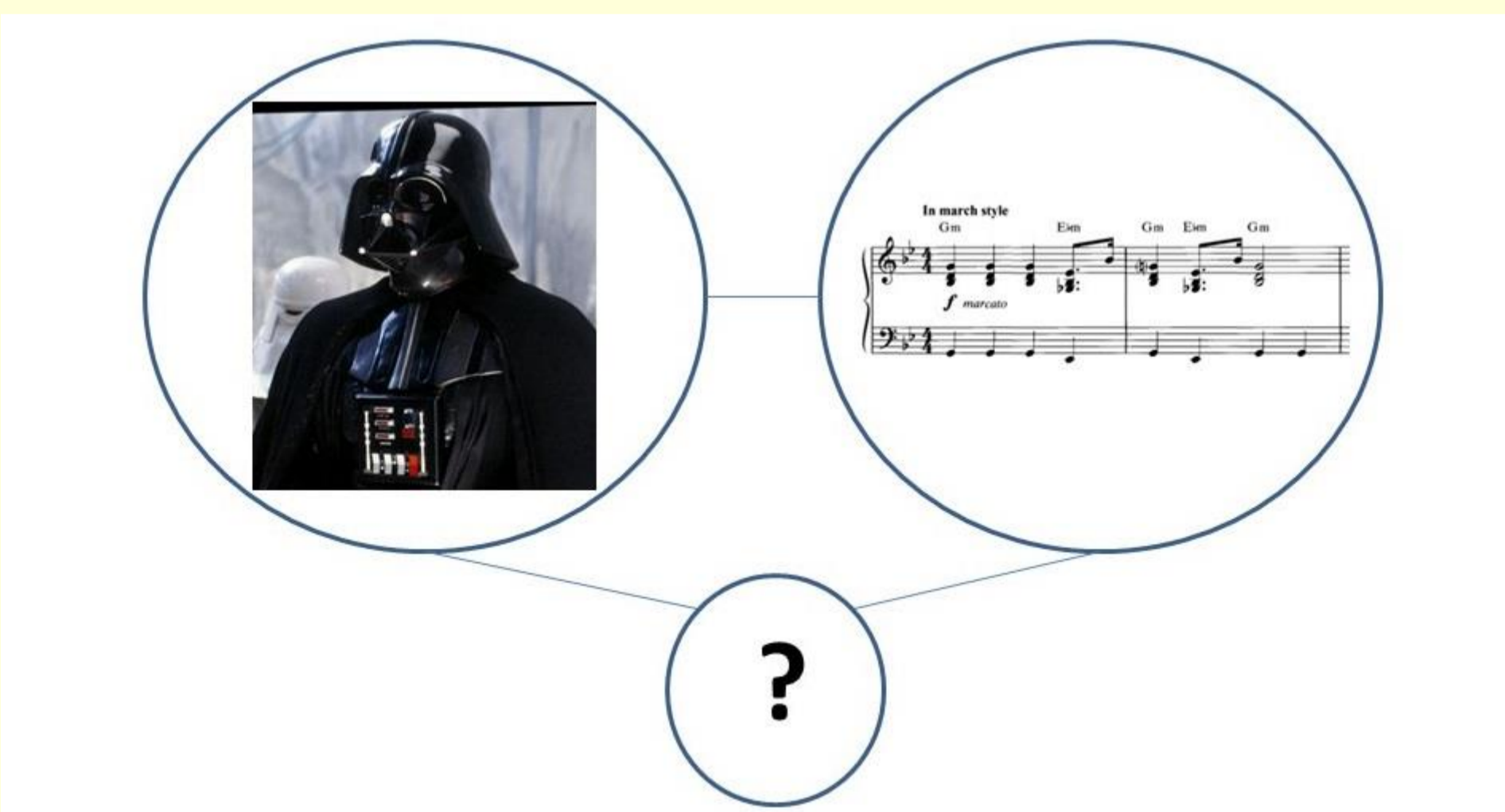


Typically: connections with *linguistic semantics* are discouraged (cf. e.g. phonology, syntax)

Conceptual Blending (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002)



In music semiotics

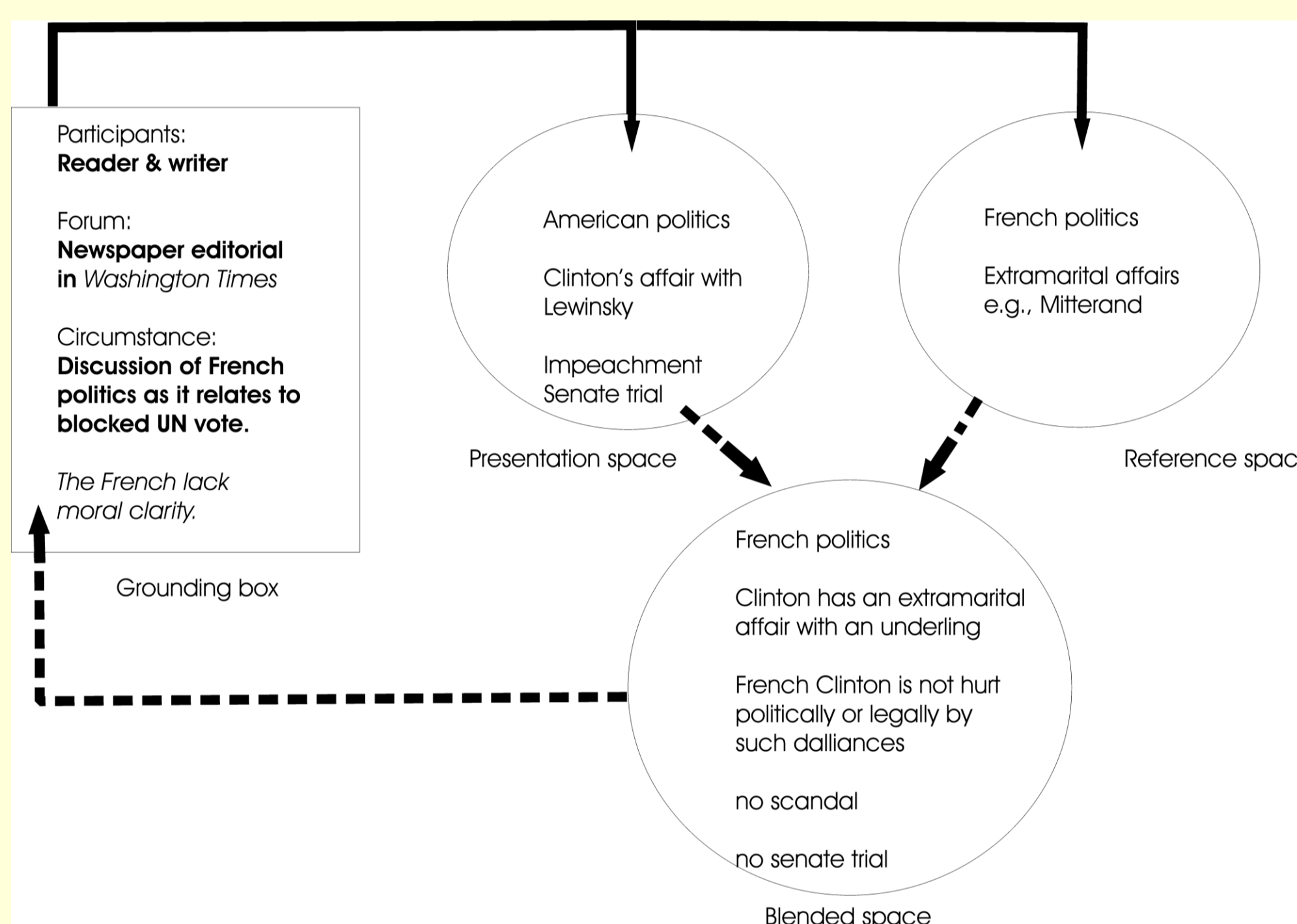


Emergent meaning: e.g. a marching warlord causing additional uneasiness, even dread...

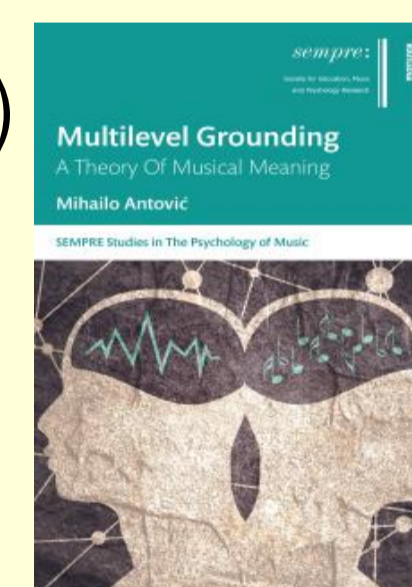
But what is it that *grounds* meaning (in both language and music)?

The "grounding box" model (Coulson & Oakley, 2005)

"In France, the Lewinsky affair wouldn't have hurt Clinton."



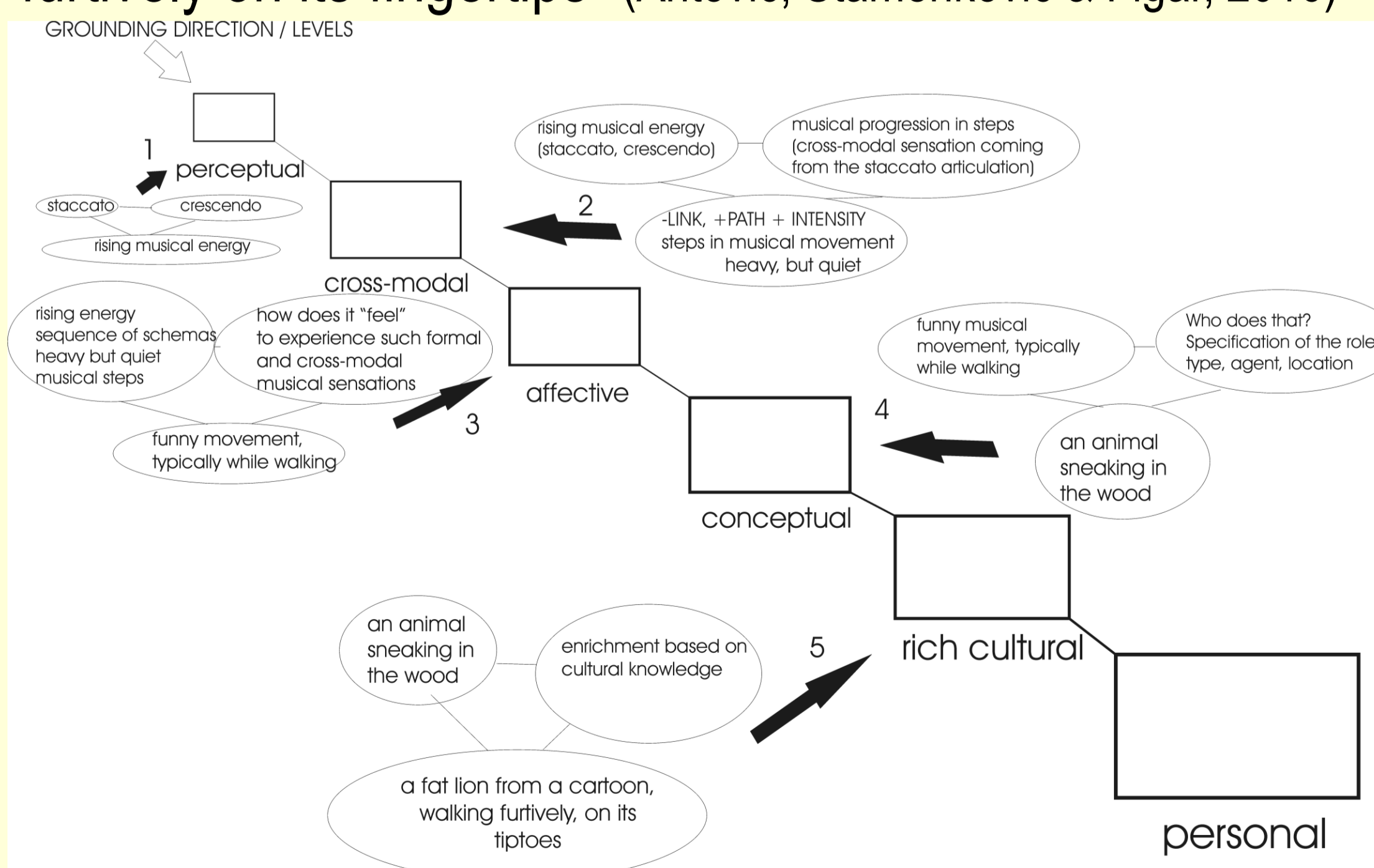
Multilevel-Grounded Semantics (Antović, 2022)



Iteration of the grounding-box concept

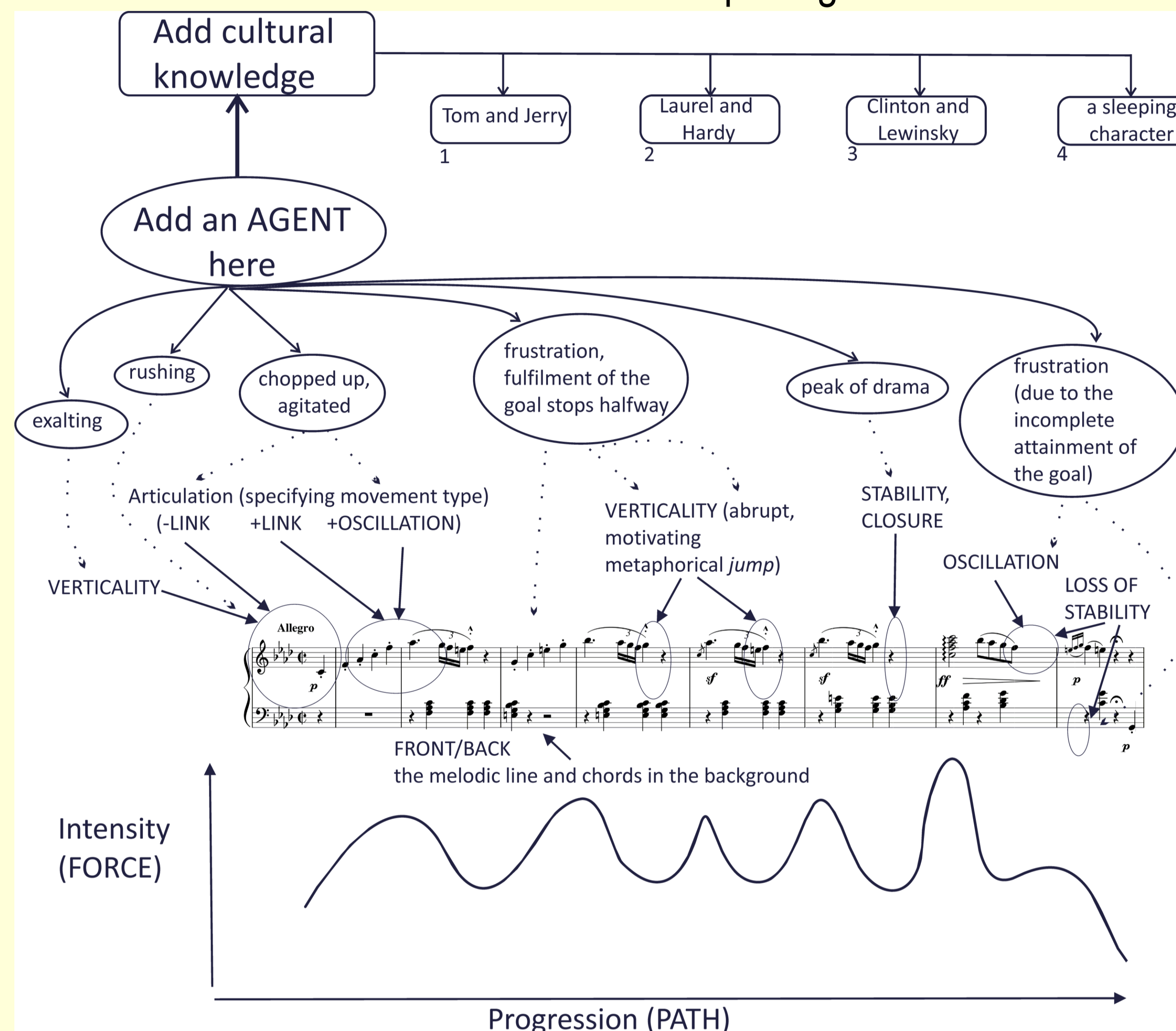
Recursive blending: results become inputs

Grieg's *In der Halle...* – "A fat lion from a cartoon, walking furtively on its fingertips" (Antović, Stamenković & Figar, 2016)



tense – heavy steps – funny walking – a sneaking animal – a fat lion...

A test case: Beethoven's Sonata No. 1 opening



5.
4.
3.
2.
1.

More examples

Mozart, 40th symphony: 1. deceptive/true peaks, 2. FORCE, DISTANCE, PATH, 3. effort, frustration, success, 4. agent succeeding, 5. opening a door (Sloboda, 1998)

Pärt, Spiegel im Spiegel: 1. group boundaries/progression, 2. PATH, CYCLE, 3. sluggish, torpid, 4. fulcrum, pendulum, 5. infinite mirror (waves, Sisyphus...)

Polodouris, Wheel of Pain: 1. slow ostinato / crescendo, upward modulation 2. CIRCULAR PATH, FORCE, 3. prolonged, repetitive agony, 4. movement with added effort, 5. slaves pushing a mill. Screech: stabilizing the blend (Brandt, 2008)

IMPLICATIONS

1. Connection between generative and cognitive linguistic models (e.g. schematicity, blending,... but based on GTTM, hierarchical, recursive)
2. The "cognitive path" to reaching higher tiers takes up more resources – thus, lower-level meanings are ubiquitous, and higher-level ones rarer, sometimes idiosyncratic
3. The approach does away with many dichotomies: form-content, affect-concept, universal-relative, biological-social,...
4. Huge creative potential of meaning construction, but not anything goes!