



On the Problem of Musical Analysis

T. W. Adorno; Max Paddison

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T. W. ADORNO

ON THE PROBLEM OF MUSICAL ANALYSIS

Introduced and translated by Max Paddison

On February 24, 1969, a few months before his death, T. W. Adorno gave a public lecture, 'Zum Probleme der musikalischen Analyse', at the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst, Frankfurt-am-Main. There seems to have been no written text (at least, none seems to have been preserved) and it is most likely that Adorno delivered his talk, as was his custom, from minimal notes. That it has survived at all is due to a tape-recording made at the time by the Hochschule (Tonband Nr. 102, Bibliothek der Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst, Ffm.). I was allowed by the Hochschule to make a cassette copy of the recording, which I subsequently transcribed and translated. This is the first time, therefore, that the material of this talk has appeared in print.

Unavoidably, in view of the form of its original presentation as a lecture, a small amount of editing has been necessary. By all accounts Adorno had an impressive capacity to organize complex ideas spontaneously into coherent arguments, on the spot, so to speak. Nevertheless, there are inevitably a few purple passages where, it has to be admitted, the meaning is decidedly obscure in any but the most general sense. However, what is offered in the following translation is, to all intents and purposes, 'the whole', blemishes and all, and the only bits of Adorno's talk that I have cut out are the occasional 'Ladies and Gentlemen', and the odd aside which tended to interrupt the flow of the argument when read as written text: I have referred to the asides in the notes.

Stylistically, as a 'talk', 'Zum Probleme der musikalischen Analyse' cannot—and should not—be compared with Adorno's concentrated and elegant written texts (although the elliptical mode of expression, so much a feature of Adorno's prose, is also in evidence here). The justification for the publication of this lecture does not, of course, lie in any stylistic

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feature—such is not to be expected from what was, in all likelihood, a semi-improvised talk. Justification, if any be needed, lies instead in the subject-matter: nowhere else that I am aware of in his numerous writings on music is there to be found such an extensive account of Adorno's views on musical analysis. This alone makes it of historical and documentary interest. The ideas Adorno puts forward in this talk are not new in themselves and are at times on a rather general level, so that its most interesting aspect lies in the connections Adorno makes between ideas. He is providing, in effect, a critique of analysis—a 'philosophy of analysis' through which analysis may reflect upon itself, question and recognise its various aims and limitations, and attempt to go beyond 'mere tautology', as he puts it. His dialectical approach does not claim to be a system in its own right, and offers no solutions. It operates instead as a critique of existing ideas and theoretical systems, to reveal their inner contradictions and hidden assumptions.

There are, of course, many problems presented by the attempt to translate Adorno. It is not only that his sentences are long and involved, and that English—with its lack of gender in relative pronouns—does not take naturally to such complexity. It is also that Adorno's use of the German language is itself rather idiosyncratic. Bearing both these points in mind, I decided not to simplify his style and sentence structure too drastically merely in order to produce a translation which reads like smooth and effortless English. I have tried instead to retain something of the 'against the grain' feel of the original. The 'grain' and structure of his sentences are as much part of what Adorno is saying as are their apparent meanings—rather as the 'meaning' of a musical work cannot be taken apart from a consideration of the work's technical structure. It would perhaps not be too fanciful to suggest that the structure of the music he is discussing has parallels in the structure of Adorno's own convoluted prose.

Quite apart from such general translation problems, however, there are a number of individual terms, usually of a technical or philosophical nature, which present particular difficulties because they have no convenient or adequate English equivalents. The reader is therefore referred to the notes for a consideration of problematical terms like *Elementaranalyse*, *Auflösung* and *Wahrheitsgehalt*.

Finally, a few points on my use of italics and brackets in the text. Italics are used to indicate (i) certain basic concepts or categories which Adorno employs (particularly on their first appearance); (ii) foreign words (mainly German); (iii) stress (where it has seemed to me that Adorno is emphasising certain points in his manner of delivery on the tape); and (iv) titles of works, etc. Square brackets are used to indicate (i) reference to the original German word or phrase translated; and (ii) occasional extra words inserted into the English translation to fill out the implied sense of the original.

I should like to thank Emma Scheele, Peter Siebenhühner and Willy Bültermann for reading through and checking my transcription against the tape, as well as for their invaluable suggestions for improving the translation. I am also grateful to Professor Ludwig Finscher of Frankfurt University for his advice on certain particularly mystifying sections and to Frau Reul and the library of the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst, Frankfurt, for putting the material at my disposal.

The word 'analysis' easily associates itself in music with the idea of all that is dead, sterile and farthest removed from the living work of art. One can well say that the general underlying feeling towards musical analysis is not exactly friendly. The musician's traditional antagonism towards all so-called 'dead knowledge' is something that has been handed down of old, and continues to have its effect accordingly. One will encounter this antipathy again and again, above all in the rationalisation represented by that absurd though utterly inextinguishable question: 'Yes, everything you say is all very well and good, but did *the composer himself* know all this—was the composer *conscious* of all these things?'

I should like to say straight away that this question is completely irrelevant: it is very often precisely the deepest interrelationships that analyses are able to uncover within the compositional process which have been unconsciously produced; and one has to differentiate here—differentiate strictly—between the object itself (that is, between what is actually going on within the object itself) and the way in which it may have arisen in the consciousness or unconsciousness of the artist. Otherwise one ends up arguing on the level of the retired operetta director in Hamburg who once, in the course of an analytical talk I was giving, came up with the question as to 'whether Mozart had been conscious of all these things'. This concern with the unconscious seems to go only too naturally with the profession of operetta director or operetta composer.

The invalidity of this grudge against analysis is obvious, I think, to the musical experience of each person who attempts to come to terms with his or her experience. I'll begin with the experience of the performer, or interpreter. If he does not get to know the work intimately, the interpreter—and I think every practising musician would agree with me here—will not be able to interpret the work properly. 'To get to know something intimately'—if I may express it so vaguely—means in reality 'to analyse': that is, to investigate the inner relationships of the work and to investigate what is essentially contained within the composition. One could well say that, in this sense, analysis may be regarded as the home ground of tradition [*der Ort der Tradition*]. If, with an eye for these things, one examines Brahms, then one finds (and I regret that I have to refrain from showing this in detail here) just how much his compositions (especially the earlier works, which I consider to be extraordinarily important and significant) are actually the product of the analysis of works of

the past—especially those of Beethoven. One sees how this music in itself would be unthinkable without the analytical process which preceded it. Thus the infinite motivic economy which characterises the technique of the earlier Brahms (whereby practically no note occurs which is not in fact thematic) is really quite inconceivable without the dissolving process of analysis—a process which is, at first sight, apparently irreconcilable with such economy.¹

I should like to bring your attention to a further basic requirement of analysis here: that is, the reading of music. As everybody knows, this is a matter which is much more complicated than simply knowing the five lines and four spaces, the accidentals and the note-values—the whole system of signs, everything, that is to say, which is represented graphically to be read as the score (I won't go into more recent developments, where in many cases notation is more precise, although in other cases is also more vague in this respect). The signs and the music which they signify are never directly one and the same thing. And in order to read notation at all, so that music results from it, an interpretative act is always necessary—that is to say, an analytical act, which asks what it is that the notation really signifies. Already in such elementary processes as these, analysis is always essentially present. The façade—i.e., the score as 'picture' [*das Notenbild*—has to be unravelled, dissolved, [*aufgelöst*] (and this as reliably as possible) in order to arrive at that which is indicated by the score. And once such an analytical process has been set in motion (as is the case, for example, with even the most elementary reading of notation), then such an analytical process may not be stopped at will, as the result of some resolve or other which insists that, whatever happens, one is not allowed, for Heaven's sake!, to touch the unconscious. That correct reading of the score is the prerequisite for correct interpretation is obvious, but is by no means as self-evident as one might think. In the first place it is a feature of earlier musical practice that decisive musical elements like tempo and dynamics, and very often also phrasing, are not to be gathered from the score at all, and have to be extrapolated. They are to be discovered from that which is *not* written—that is to say, from an analytical act. But such an analytical process is still needed even in the case of composers where the score is already highly formulated. In this connection I'm thinking particularly of Beethoven—and perhaps it is a good idea to consider this for a moment, as there are questions here which, in my opinion, are far too seldom reflected upon.

Beethoven is relatively sparing in his use of markings in his scores. Apart from the bare musical text itself there is not much in the way of markings; what there is, however, is extraordinarily precise and carefully thought out, and to some extent one needs to be familiar with certain Beethovenian *Spielregeln* ('rules of play', 'rules of the game') in order to understand just how painstaking and precise the markings are. One needs to know, for example, that the marking *fp* within an overall *forte* field

indicates that, after an accent, the *piano* dynamic should then continue to be played, whereas something like *sf* within such a context indicates that the overall dynamic (*f*) should continue. There is, moreover, the whole question of the interpretation of dynamic markings in general: whether they are absolute—e.g., whether *crescendi* always lead up to *forte*—or whether they are only relative within particular dynamically-defined fields. This in itself is already an extraordinarily difficult problem in innumerable cases in traditional music, and can only be resolved—can only be answered—with recourse to the structure of the music. That is to say, therefore, that this is also an essentially analytical problem. Furthermore, the most important ‘rule’ for the—if I may so term it—‘elementary analytical reading’ of Beethoven is that, in his case, each marking is basically valid up to the next marking, and that only when a new marking is quite clearly indicated may the performer depart from the dynamic previously indicated. But even such a rule as this—which, I would suggest, may in general be applied to Beethoven—needs constant re-examination against the structure of individual works.

Analysis is thus concerned with structure, with structural problems, and finally, with structural listening. By structure I do not mean here the mere grouping of musical parts according to traditional formal schemata, however; I understand it rather as having to do with what is going on, musically, *underneath* these formal schemata. But this is also something that one dare not oversimplify, and it is already possible to see here how big the problems of musical analysis are. For, contrary to widespread belief, even that which is going on underneath is not simply a second and quite different thing, but is in fact mediated by the formal schemata, and is partly, at any given moment, *postulated* by the formal schemata, while on the other hand it consists of deviations which in their turn can only be at all understood through their relationship to the schemata. Naturally enough, this refers most directly to that traditional music in which such all-encompassing general schematic relationships exist at all. The task we have before us, therefore, is the realisation of this already complex relationship of *deviation* to *schema*, rather than just the one or the other alone; and as a first step in this direction it can well be said that what we understand as analysis is the essence of the investigation of this relationship.

Although forgotten today, partly due to certain follies of which he was guilty and partly due to his vulgar nationalism, Heinrich Schenker must surely, in spite of all, be given the greatest credit for having been the first to demonstrate that analysis is the prerequisite for adequate performance.² And within the Schoenberg circle, ever since the period of the *Verein für musikalische Privataufführungen*, this had already been placed quite consciously at the very centre of performance practice. This was probably first realised most fully by the Kolisch Quartet, the reason for whose famous practice and technique of playing from memory in some respects

stems from the simple fact that, if one has really studied works thoroughly and taken the trouble to analyse them, then one can play them from memory as a matter of course. That is to say, if each performer in a quartet plays according to the score as a whole and does not merely follow his own part, then this, in effect, already implies such an intimate understanding of the work's structure that playing from memory is essentially the natural outcome. Schenkerian analysis, distinguished as it often is by its extraordinary precision, subtlety and insistence, really amounts to an attempt to bring music down to certain fundamental structures of the most basic kind, among which the central position is occupied by what he called the Fundamental Line [*Urlinie*]²—a difficult concept which oscillates remarkably between step-progression [*Stufenfolge*] and basic thematic material [*thematische Urmaterial*]. In relation to this Fundamental Line all else appears to Schenker as being, so to speak, quite simply fortuitous—a kind of 'additive' [*Zusatz*], as it were—and it is this, I think, that already marks out the limitations of the Schenkerian form of analysis. For, in reducing music to its most generalised structures, what seems to him and to this theory to be merely casual and fortuitous is, in a certain sense, precisely that which is really the essence, the being [*das Wesen*] of the music. If, to take a rather unsubtle example, you examine the difference between the styles of Mozart and of Haydn, then you will not expect to discover this difference in general stylistic models and characteristics of the formal layout (although very significant differences do exist between the Haydnesque and the Mozartian sonata form). You will have to resort instead to examining small but decisive features—little physiognomic characteristics—in the way the themes themselves are constructed, features which, for Schenker, are of mere secondary importance but which make all the difference and constitute, in fact, the difference between Haydn and Mozart. Now what this means, therefore, is that what constitutes the essence, or 'Being' of the composition is for Schenker more or less its very abstractness, in fact, and the individual moments³ through which the composition materialises and becomes concrete [*sich konkretisiert*], are reduced by him to the merely accidental and non-essential. Thus such a concept of analysis intrinsically misses the mark, for if it is really to reveal the specific structure of the work, as I have maintained, it has to come to terms with precisely those individual moments which, in terms of Schenker's reductive process, merely supervene and which for him, therefore, are only of peripheral interest. He himself tried to defend himself against this criticism (of which he was naturally aware) and he particularly tried to justify the general nature of the Fundamental Line—or the identity of Fundamental Lines—by reference to certain basic relationships [*Urverhältnisse*] in the music—a point of view which disregards the thoroughly historical structure of all musical categories. But it also cannot be denied that, as far as Beethoven is concerned, Schenker's methods hit upon a valid moment; as Rudolf Stephan has remarked, the

Schenkerian method is actually only really fruitful in connection with Beethoven. The inadequacy of Schenker's approach can be seen very clearly in his attitude to Debussy. As a Francophobe, Schenker repeatedly attacked Debussy in a very shabby manner, and accused him (and others, including Richard Strauss) of the destruction of the Fundamental Line, without being able to see that, in Debussy's case, there are criteria for inner consistency and musical cohesion which are entirely different from the requirements of what he called the Fundamental Line, essentially derived as it is from the harmonised chorale. But it is possible to learn something from all this which I consider to be central to the whole idea of musical analysis: namely that analysis must be *immanent*—that, in the first instance, the form has to be followed *a priori*, so that a composition unfolds itself in its own terms. Or, to put it another way, one has to allow the composition something in advance: that is, one must let it *assert itself*, in order to be able to enter into its structure analytically. It never seems to have occurred to Schenker that his accusing Debussy of the destruction of the Fundamental Line could in any way have been connected with the crisis in motivic-thematic composition (which Schenker had made total and absolute).

Now, to get back to Beethoven, for whom, as I said, the Schenkerian approach is, in a certain sense, legitimate. One can perhaps account for this to a certain extent as follows: due to its artistically-planned indifference towards each of the individual aspects of the materials it uses, Beethoven's music amounts to something like a kind of 'justification' [*Rechtfertigung*]⁴ of tonality itself and of the forms associated with tonality. Beethoven, as it were, tried to reconstruct tonality through his autonomous and individualised music. In a manner not unlike Kant—where, if you will allow me a philosophical digression, the objectively-given world of experience is thrown into question and has then to be recreated once more by the Subject and its forms—in Beethoven the forms (particularly the large, dynamic forms like the Sonata) could be said to re-emerge from out of the specific process of the composition. It is actually *tonality itself* which, in Beethoven's case, is both theme as well as outcome, and in this sense the Schenkerian concept of the Fundamental Line to some extent correctly applies here. However, Beethoven's genius consists precisely in the fact that this process does not remain on a *general* level, but, on the contrary—and in a manner which corresponds exactly to the great tradition of German philosophy (the philosophy of Hegel above all)—it plunges itself from the most generalised and unspecific into the most extreme concretion in order thus to lead back to the binding forces of the Universal once more. The decisive factor in Beethoven's compositions is just this 'way to concretion', and it is precisely here, because of this peculiar change of emphasis, that Schenker has not gone the whole way. But it is exactly in this direction that the way—the idea of analysis—really does lie: that is to say, composition understood as a 'coherence', as a

dynamic set of interrelationships [*Zusammenhang*]. And it is within this set of interrelationships—if anywhere at all—that the meaning of the composition resides.

I should now like to draw a few conclusions from all this. Firstly, although analysis is certainly of decisive help in questions of performance and interpretation, it is not actually from interpretation that it is derived, but from the work itself. You could put it this way: analysis is itself a form in its own right, like translation, criticism and commentary, as one of those media through which the very work unfolds. Works need analysis for their ‘truth content’ [*Wahrheitsgehalt*]⁵ to be revealed. To return to Beethoven again: initially he achieved his effect through what I think has been called ‘titanism’, or through his expressivity; and only by means of intensive structural analysis did it then later become clear why his music can, with good reason, be called ‘beautiful’ and ‘true’, and also eventually where its limits were to be sought.

Aesthetic theories on music and, above all, aesthetic *programmes* (that is to say, claims made for and judgements pronounced on music) are quite inconceivable without analysis. Analysis is to be understood as an organ not only of the historical momentum of the works in themselves, but also of the momentum which pushes beyond the individual work. That is to say, all criticism which is of any value is founded in analysis; to the extent that this is not the case, criticism remains stuck with disconnected impressions, and thus, if for no other reason than this, deserves to be regarded with the utmost suspicion.

If one takes Wagner’s claim regarding music’s ‘coming of age’ seriously—that is, the inescapable relation of music to *reflexion*—then with this the significance of analysis as something immanent to the works themselves must also increase correspondingly, and has indeed done so. Given the presence of living experience, music unfolds itself through analysis; it becomes fuller for this experience, richer rather than poorer. Any interpreter who has initially made music only from what, precritically [*vorkritisch*], is called ‘musicality’, and who has then subsequently performed from an all-encompassing analytical consciousness, will, I think, have no difficulty in acknowledging here what an enrichment is to be discovered in the realisation of hidden relationships which, so long as the work is not analysed, cannot come to the fore.

An art aware of itself is an *analysed* art [*die ihrer selbst bewusste Kunst ist die analysierte*]. There is a kind of convergence between the analytical process and the compositional process—I have tried to show this in my book on Berg,⁶ using him as a model whereby the music, in a certain sense, can be looked upon as being its own analysis. So, the less it is that works operate within a pre-existing medium and with pre-existing forms—and this is certainly the overall tendency in the development of modern music, particularly since *Tristan*—the more it is that, for the sake of their own ‘livingness’ [*um ihres eigenen Lebens willen*], they are in need

of specifically tailored analysis. A piece by Handel—broadly speaking—may to some extent be grasped without analysis; Beethoven's Diabelli Variations, on the other hand, are already much less likely to be understood without it, whereas the *Bagatelles* of Webern cannot be grasped at all in this way. If Webern's *Bagatelles* are performed unanalysed, though with faithful attention to all markings in the score but without uncovering the subcutaneous relationships—a merely respectable rendering of the score as it stands, that is—then the result, as is not difficult to imagine, is utter nonsense [*ein vollkommener Galimathias*]. On the other hand, the moment these pieces are analysed, and performed after having been analysed, they make sense and the light dawns.⁷ . . . If, without analysis, such music cannot be presented in even the simplest sense as being meaningful, then this is as much as to say that analysis is no mere stopgap, but is an essential element of art itself. As such it will only begin to be able to correspond to the status of art when it takes the demands of its own autonomy upon itself. Otherwise, in the words of Heinz-Klaus Metzger, it remains 'mere tautology'—that is to say, a simple translation into words of that which everyone can hear in the music anyway. Analysis has to do with the *surplus* [*das Mehr*] in art; it is concerned with that abundance which unfolds itself only by means of analysis. It aims at that which—as has been said of poetry (if I may be permitted a poetic analogy)—is the truly 'poetic' in poetry, and the truly poetic in poetry is that which defies translation. Now it is precisely this moment which analysis must grasp if it is not to remain subordinate. Analysis is more than merely 'the facts' [*was bloss der Fall ist*], but is so only and solely by virtue of *going beyond* the simple facts [*die einfachen Tatbestände*] by absorbing itself into them. Every analysis that is of any value, therefore—and anyone who analyses seriously will soon realise this for himself—is a squaring of the circle. It is the achievement of imagination through faith; and Walter Benjamin's definition of imagination as 'the capacity for interpolation into the smallest details' applies here.⁸

Now, the ultimate 'surplus' over and beyond the factual level is the *truth content*, and naturally it is only critique that can discover the truth content. No analysis is of any value if it does not terminate in the truth content of the work, and this, for its part, is mediated through the work's technical structure [*durch die technische Komplexion der Werke*]. If analysis hits up against technical inconsistency, then such inconsistency is an index of the work's untruth—I have attempted elsewhere to demonstrate this in concrete terms in certain specific aspects of the music of Wagner⁹ and of Richard Strauss.¹⁰ At the moment, I wish only to put forward these thoughts in their theoretical generality, however—although with the immediate further qualification that the work of art insists that one put this question of truth or untruth *immanently* and not arbitrarily bring some yardstick or other of the cultural-philosophical or cultural-critical varieties to the work from outside.

I now want to come to the point I have really been leading up to so far: analysis, as the 'unfolding' of the work, exists in relationship to the work itself and to its genre or 'compositional archetype' [*Typus*]. This is perhaps most clearly to be seen in the first of the more primitive forms of analysis to have become generally effective—the so-called 'guide literature' [*Leitfadensliteratur*] to the music of Wagner and the New German School, as associated with the name of Hans von Wolzogen. Here the intention was simply to ease orientation in the kind of music which avoids traditional forms but which is held together by the drastic means of *Leitmotive* which, though admittedly varied, are always essentially recognisable. This aim is achieved by the simple procedure of picking out the *Leitmotive*, labelling them and identifying them in their different forms. (It may be noted in passing that this kind of analysis contradicts its own aim, and serves, in fact, to further that external, superficial type of listening which so characterises the old-style Wagner listener, proud if he is able to recognise the 'Curse Motif' in the *Ring* every time somebody gets murdered, given the necessary references—if he doesn't recognise it on the darkened stage anyway—while in doing so he misses what is really happening in the music.) This reified form of analysis, as represented by the 'guide' to themes and motifs, serves a reified and false consciousness of the object. Because of its inadequacy, however, it has at least served to promote another, and much more justifiable, type of analysis—in particular that associated above all with the Viennese classics and for which Riemann could be said to have supplied the best-known examples. I am going to label this type 'elemental analysis' [*Elementaranalyse*].¹¹ With progressive energy it turns to the smallest single elements from which a piece is built up—roughly in the same way in which knowledge, according to Descartes, has continually to divide up its object into the smallest possible elements. Now, just as the principle of *economy* can be said to dominate in the music of Viennese Classicism (that is, the Viennese tradition since Haydn, but particularly Beethoven and Brahms, and in a particular sense also Schoenberg and his school)—that is to say, that a maximum of different appearances [*Erscheinungen*] has to be derived from a minimum of basic shapes [*Grundgestalten*]¹¹—so can the 'elemental' type of analysis be seen, in fact, to have its support in that kind of music which can be categorised under the concept 'motivic-thematic' composition. Implied here there is also, of course, a hidden criticism of this type of composition, obligatory as it was for more than 150 years.

'Elemental analysis' confirms a suspicion which irritates everyone who persists in occupying himself with [motivic-thematic] music: namely—and I'm going to say something blasphemous here—its similarity to the jig-saw puzzle, constructed as it is out of elements over against which dynamic development (which on the face of it predominates to such an extent in this music) reveals itself in many ways to be merely a contrived appearance. It could be said that the character of this 'aesthetic ap-

pearance' (which even applies, in spite of all, to an art as far removed from illusion as music, and through which music has integrated itself into the development of European culture as a whole) has occurred as the consequence of an unceasing 'Becoming'—or development—from out of itself [*aus sich Herauswerdendes*]. In reality, however, such music could more accurately be said to have been 'put together' [*zusammengesetzt*] in the quite literal sense of having been 'composed', contrary to the impression more usually associated with it. And incidentally, this may also be said to a certain extent to apply to Bach, producing at times in his case—due to the absence of the aspect of 'Becoming' [*Aspekt des Werdens*]*—that impression of mechanicalness which can be dispelled only by an ideological effort [of interpretation] which actually glorifies the apparent mechanicalness as a special kind of logicity. Indeed, all 'Becoming' in music is in fact illusory, insofar as the music, as text, is really fixed and thus is not actually 'becoming' anything as it is already all there. Nevertheless, music is actually only a 'coherence' [Zusammenhang] when regarded as a 'Becoming', and in this there lies a paradox for musical analysis: analysis is, on the one hand, limited by what is actually fixed and available to it; but, on the other hand, it has to translate this back again into that movement as coagulated in the musical text. But the 'elemental' type of analysis is also inadequate as far as Viennese Classicism is concerned. Schoenberg's sentence: 'music is the history of its themes', serves to remind us of this. May 'Becoming' continue always to have its problematic existence!*

All this applies particularly to Beethoven. In his case the germinal cells [*die Keime*] are very often—as initially stated—ingeniously indifferent, in order that they may smoothly [*bruchlos*] and seamlessly lead up to the whole; in fact, they simply represent the fundamental relationships of tonality itself. And it is particularly the case with Beethoven that, just for this very reason, it is much more important what the themes *become*—what happens to them and *how* they develop—than what the basic elements themselves actually are. The real weakness of analysis up to now lies in the fact that it neglects this 'moment of Becoming' for the reduction [of music] to its elements. In this connection I would like to refer once more to what I said earlier about analysis being an essential prerequisite of criticism. I have just spoken of the 'indifference' of the material in Beethoven. With Wagner, the basic motifs [*Urmotive*] which are supposed to represent the primeval world [*das Urweltliche*] of Wotan and the Valhalla domain in the *Ring* are kept within a certain—how shall I put it?—undifferentiated, or 'unspecific Universality'. But in Wagner's case they are not, by a long way, as legitimate as they are with Beethoven because Wagner's individual motifs have the significance and weight of symbols, and contain basically the whole idea of the germinal cell of the Romantic *Lied*. For this reason they have pretensions to a 'Beingness' [*Sein*] 'in and for themselves' much more than is ever the case with Beethoven. And this weakness, inherent in the themes and contra-

dicting their own claim to just 'being there' [*da zu sein*], points, moreover, to their real weakness as regards *substance*, in view of *what happens* to them and what they *become*—something that one would not think of in connection with Beethoven, because with him the priority of 'Becoming' over that which simply *is* is already established right from the start. Yes, a really true and adequate analysis would have to point out such differences, and it is possible to see from this how an analysis of this type merges into criticism, into critique.

Any adequate analysis of Beethoven has to grasp the music as an *event*, as 'a something which is happening' [*als ein Geschehendes*], and not only as the elements flanked by this event. In the recapitulation of the first movement of the Ninth Symphony, for example, it is not the return of the theme and the components, the basic constitutive elements [*Urbestandteile*] of which it is formed that matters; what is important is that this recapitulation appears as the *result* of the foregoing development. It is a similar situation in the *Appassionata* concerning the overwhelming effect of the recapitulation over the dominant pedal point in the first movement. Analysis would have to show *why* these kinds of effects are achieved, and not simply that here, at this point, this or that theme recurs. To demonstrate this is in reality extraordinarily difficult; but by the very posing of this question you may already be able to recognise that the tedium and aridity of analysis in general is a consequence of the fact that analysis has not yet really begun to grapple with its own problems—something, in fact, which should be its proper concern.

Now, from all that I've been saying so far it may have become plain to you just how much any particular kind of analysis and its legitimacy are actually themselves dependent upon the particular music which is being analysed. It goes without saying that radical serial and aleatory music cannot be grasped by traditional analytical approaches, and particularly not by means of the 'elemental' type of analysis, because concepts like 'dynamic coherence' [*dynamische Sinnzusammenhang*] and so on are far removed from its basic assumptions. It is precisely here, when faced with aleatory and serial music, that analysis is frequently confused with the mere recording of facts [*blasse Tatbestandsaufnahme*]. This then results in the kind of absurdity once reserved for me at Darmstadt, where a composer (who, to his credit, has since given up the vocation) showed me a composition which seemed to me to be the purest nonsense. When I asked him what this or that meant, what meaning, what kind of musical sense this or that particular phrase or development had, he simply referred me to correspondences between dynamic markings and pitches and so on—things which have nothing whatever to do with the musical phenomenon as such. This kind of description of the compositional process, of what the composer has done in the composition, is totally unproductive, just as are all those kinds of aesthetic examination which are unable to extract from a work any more than what has been put into it, so to speak—what it says in

the Baedeker guide. All such approaches are doomed from the outset as worthless and irrelevant.

With so-called 'athematic', free atonality the relationships are quite different, and I mention this precisely because I feel myself to be on much firmer ground here, analytically speaking, than when faced with serial and post-serial music. Here—and I'm thinking above all especially of Webern in this connection—one encounters once more particular transformations of the categories of traditional thematic-motivic compositional methods. I have elsewhere attempted to develop this in some of the most daring of Webern's works, like the *Bagatelles* and the violin pieces.¹² Here the transmutation of the traditional (i.e. thematic-motivic) categories of musical coherence into something quite opposed to them can be traced and demonstrated. The thematic technique of 'developing variation'—a technique which necessitates the unceasing derivation of the 'new', indeed the *radically* new, from the 'old'—is 'radicalised' to become the *negation* of that which used to be called the 'thematic development' or 'working-out' [*thematische Arbeit*]. And it is this coherence—this transmutation—that analysis has to meet in such music. Its task, therefore, is not to describe the work—and with this I have really arrived at the central issue concerning analysis generally—its task, essentially, is to reveal as clearly as possible the *problem* of each particular work. 'To analyse' means much the same as to become aware of a work as a *force-field* [*Kraftfeld*] organised around a *problem*. Having said this, however, we must now be quite clear about one thing: whether we like it or not analysis is inevitably to some extent, of its very nature, the reduction of the unknown, the 'new'—with which we are confronted within the composition and which we want to grasp—to the already known, inasmuch as it is the 'old'. However, in that every modern composition contains an essential, inbuilt moment that combats this mechanism of the familiar and the known, in so far can it be said that the analysis of modern works is also always a betrayal of the work—although at the same time it is also actually demanded by the work itself. From this there also arises the question as to how analysis puts right this wrong it inflicts on the work; and the way to an answer lies, I believe, precisely in the fact that analysis serves to pin-point that which I call the 'problem' of a particular composition—the paradox, so to speak, or the 'impossible' that every piece of music wants to make possible. (Rather as in Schoenberg's *Phantasy* for violin and piano: how in the end the radically-dynamic process of composition itself results in a composition in co-ordinated fields, and how the categories of the composition transform themselves into the balance, the equilibrium of those fields, and then finally, through this equilibrium, an effect is brought about which fulfils the dynamic.¹³) Once the problem—I was almost going to say the 'blind spot'—of the work has been recognised, then the individual moments will thereby be clarified in a quite different manner than by the so-called 'reductive' methods of traditional practice.

Now all this has to be differentiated, of course—and I must emphasise this—from the so-called ‘holistic’ method of examination [*ganzheitliche Betrachtung*¹⁴] so popular with the educationalists. With musical compositions it is obviously the *Whole* that matters; but the *Whole* is not something which simply reduces the individual single moments to insignificance. The *Whole*—if I may be permitted to express it in Hegelian terms—is itself the relation between the *Whole* and its individual moments, within which these latter obtain throughout their independent value. Analysis exists only as the uncovering of the relationship between these moments, and not merely by virtue of the obtuse and aconceptual priority of the *Whole* over its parts. It is particularly in new music, moreover, that analysis is concerned just as much with dissociated moments [*Dissoziationsmomente*], with the works’ ‘death-wish’ [*Todestrieb*]¹⁴—that is to say, with the fact that there are works which contain within themselves the tendency to strive *from* unity back into their constituent elements—as it is concerned with the opposite process; and these are questions which have been totally neglected in the name of the so-called ‘holistic’ method, within which there are usually disturbingly positivist implications. Just as analysis should no longer dare be of the ‘elemental’ type, it is also equally wrong that it should disregard the individual moments and reduce them all to the same level of indifference by taking a rigid and overriding concept of the totality as its point of departure. If one really takes the *Whole* as one’s point of departure then also simultaneously implied here is the obligation to grasp the logic of the individual moments—that is, the concretion of the isolated musical ‘instants’. And correspondingly, if one takes the constituent elements as the point of departure one’s task is to understand how these elements in themselves, and frequently in contradiction to each other, and then through this contradiction, also simultaneously generate the *Whole*.

In this sense—that is, relative to *Whole* and to *part*—analysis is always a double process [*ein Gedoppeltes*]. Erwin Ratz—to whom we are indebted for some excellent analyses of certain very complex movements by Mahler (the Finale of the Sixth Symphony and the first movement of the Ninth, for example)¹⁵—once formulated this very nicely in one of his analyses as follows: there are really *two* analyses always necessary; that which advances from the part to the *Whole*—i.e., just like the way in which the innocent listener has no choice but to listen in the first instance, willy-nilly; and then that which, from the already-won awareness of the *Whole*, determines the individual moments. And this is not merely a genetic difference, determined by the time-factor; the difference is also determined by the object—the compositional structure itself—in which both these valid moments necessarily intermesh.

Moreover—and this is of further importance in distinguishing it from any ‘totality cult’ [*Ganzheitskultus*]¹⁵—the relationship of whole to part is *never* to be understood as the relationship of an ‘all-embracing’

[*Umfassenden*] to an 'all-embraced' [*Umfassten*], but is, instead, *dynamic*, which is to say a *process*. This means to say, on the one hand, that—in music, as an art which unfolds through time—all moments have, generally speaking, something *evolving* about them, something 'becoming' [*Werdendes*], and thus reach out beyond themselves. The sense and aim of an analysis which takes the individual moment as its point of departure is not only—as tends mostly to be the case—the indication and fixing of the individual moments (or more extreme, their mere recognition); it is also the indication of that within them which propels them onward. Take, for example, the well-known counter-subject to the first theme of Mahler's Fourth Symphony:¹⁶



Already, right from the very beginning, one has to listen to this in terms of *the direction it wants to go in* and for which it yearns, in terms of the fact that it is striving ultimately beyond itself towards the high B,¹⁷ in order to fulfil itself; and if one doesn't hear this in its individual elements, if one doesn't hear the theme's own directional tendency within each single element, then the description of the individual moments can already, for this very reason, be said to have missed the point.

If one analyses the main theme of the first movement of the *Eroica*, for example, then one sees that the point which occurs almost immediately and leaves the music hanging suspended on the C#—that damming-up of forces which invests the initial *Grundgestalt* with tension after its first few bars—is decisive and of much more importance than the indifferent broken major triad with its closing minor seconds, the so-called material of this theme (and of most of the themes of the so-called Viennese Classics).

On the other hand, attention has also to be paid to the way in which the individual motifs are pre-formed by the Whole, as is mostly the case with Beethoven. Beethoven's music is not in fact formed, or built up, out of themes and motifs at all, as the 'elemental' type of analysis would lead us to believe; it is rather that these themes and motifs are instead already—I almost said 'prepared', anachronistically, as one talks of 'prepared piano': they adapt themselves to become part of the pervading idea of the whole. Beethoven's work was, in fact—as may be easily recognised from the sketchbooks—essentially to tinker with the themes and motifs until they finally became capable of meeting their function within the Whole. In reality this function always has priority in Beethoven, although it seems as though everything develops out of the 'motive-power' [*Triebkraft*] of the individual elements. And in this his music is no mere analogy for, but is in fact directly *identical* to, the structure of Hegelian logic. While one should not overvalue the genesis of music [i.e., the way in which it comes into being] and should not, above all, confuse it with the inner dynamics of the

composition, with Beethoven, at least, this genesis nevertheless suffices to demonstrate just how much the conception of a Whole dynamically conceived 'in itself' [*die Konzeption eines in sich dynamisch vorgestellten Ganzen*] defines its elements, and how, through this, the task facing analysis right from the start will naturally be totally different from that which the 'elemental' type of analysis makes it out to be.

All in all, therefore—if you will allow me a very rough generalisation—two types of music can be distinguished: 1) the kind which goes, in principle, from 'above' to 'below', from *totality* to *detail*; and 2) the kind which is organised from 'below' to 'above'. Thus, according to which of these dominates the structure of the music, the same will correspondingly direct the analysis itself. If I may speak from my own experience for a second: I hit upon the necessity for extensive modifications to the concept of analysis through the study of the music of my teacher, Alban Berg. The Berg analyses which I wrote some 30 years ago, directly after his death, were traditional analyses of the kind which brings the 'whole' down to the smallest possible number of what one calls 'germinal cells' [*Keimzellen*], and then shows how the music develops out of them.¹⁸ And there is no question but that Berg himself, from his own understanding [of the term], would also still have approved of this traditional kind of analysis. However, as I came to revise and prepare the book last year [1968], and so to occupy myself with Berg's music with renewed intensity, I saw something that I had, of course, dimly sensed for a long time: namely, that Berg's music is not at all a 'Something' [*ein Etwas*] which forms itself, so to speak, out of a 'Nothingness' [*ein Nichts*] of the smallest possible, undifferentiated component elements. It only seems like this at first glance. In reality it accomplishes within itself a process of *permanent dissolution*¹⁹ [*permanente Auflösung*], rather than achieving a 'synthesis'—a term which any self-respecting person should hardly be able to get past his lips these days. So then, not only does Berg's music start out from the smallest component elements and then immediately further subject these to a kind of 'splitting of the atom', but the whole character of his music is that of *permanent re-absorption* back into itself [*permanente Selbstzurücknahme*]. Its 'Becoming', if I may term it thus—at all events, where it crystallises-out its idea in its purest form—is *its own negation* [*ihre eigene Negation*]. This means that such a structuring of the inner fibre of a music also calls for an analytical practice completely different from the long-established 'motivic-thematic' approach—and I should like expressly to say that it was in the Berg book that I became particularly aware of this necessity. However, I don't in the slightest flatter myself as in any way having succeeded in fulfilling this demand, and what I say here as criticism of analysis in general also applies without reservation as a criticism of all the countless analyses that I myself have ever produced.

Analysis, therefore, means much the same as the recognition of the way in which the specific, sustaining structural idea of a piece of music realises

itself; and such a concept of analysis would need essentially to be derived from each work anew. Nevertheless, I have no wish to stop short here with this demand for the absolute singularity or absolute individuation of analysis. There also lies in analysis a moment of the Universal, the General [*des Allgemeinen*]¹—and this goes with the fact that music is certainly also, in essence, a language—and it is, furthermore, precisely in the most specific works that this moment of ‘Universality’ is to be sought. I might attempt to summarise or codify this universality in terms of what I once defined as the ‘material theory of form in music’ [*materiale Formenlehre der Musik*]: that is, the concrete definition of categories like statement [*Setzung*], continuation [*Fortsetzung*], contrast [*Kontrast*], dissolution [*Auflösung*], succession [*Reihung*], development [*Entwicklung*], recurrence [*Wiederkehr*], modified recurrence [*modifizierter Wiederkehr*], and however such categories may otherwise be labelled. And so far not even the beginnings of an approach have been made regarding such a ‘material theory of form’ (as opposed to the architectonic-schematic type of theory). These [i.e. dialectical] categories are more important than knowledge of the traditional forms as such, even though they have naturally developed out of the traditional forms and can always be found in them. Were this conception of analysis such as I have in mind, and which is in accordance with structural listening—were this conception to be consistently realised, then something else, a further level, something like such a ‘material theory of musical form’, would necessarily emerge out of it. It would not, to be sure, be fixed and invariable—it would not be a theory of form for once and always, but would define itself within itself historically, according to the state of the compositional material, and equally according to the state of the compositional forces of production.

The crisis in composition today—and with this I should like to close—is also a crisis in analysis. I have attempted to make you aware of why this is the case. It would perhaps not be too much of an exaggeration to say that all contemporary musical analyses—be they of traditional or of the most recent music—have remained behind the level of contemporary musical consciousness in composition. If analysis can be raised to this level without thereby lapsing into a vacuous obsession with musical fact-collecting, then it will, in its turn, very probably be capable of reacting back on to, and critically affecting, composition itself.

NOTES

1. It may seem that Adorno is contradicting himself here. What he means is that, although the motivic economy of the early Brahms is dependent upon the analysis which preceded it, there does at first sight appear to be something irreconcilable about these two processes. That is to say, on the one hand there is the process of composition and integration which attempts to conceal the technical steps which went into its own construction, while, on the other hand, there is the step-by-step process of analysis which, through

dissection, dissolution and 'dis-integration', attempts to reveal and lay bare the technical structure of the integrated work once more.

2. It has to be remembered that Adorno is speaking in 1969, but Schenker still remains relatively neglected in Germany.
3. 'Moment' in the sense refers to the German *das Moment*, defined in Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination* (London: Heinemann, 1973), p. 54, as 'a phase or aspect of a cumulative dialectical process. It should not be confused with *der Moment*, which means a moment in time in the English sense'.
4. Although 'justification' is perhaps an unexpected word in this context, it is nevertheless the correct translation of *Rechtfertigung* here. It seems clear enough what Adorno means.
5. 'Truth content' [*Wahrheitsgehalt*] is a difficult concept as Adorno uses it. The following two quotations from Adorno's *Ästhetische Theorie* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1970) may help to provide a few clues:

The truth content of the work of art is the objective solution of the riddle contained in each work. . . . It is only to be obtained through philosophical speculation. This, and nothing else, justifies aesthetics—[and, by implication, analysis] (p. 193).
 Art aspires to Truth, though is not Truth directly; to this extent is Truth its content. Art is Knowledge through its relationship to Truth (p. 419).

The notion of 'truth content' ties up with the conception of the art work as being primarily a form of *cognition*, of knowledge (albeit, in the case of music, in purely musical-structural terms). This particularly Hegelian position of Adorno's calls to mind Schoenberg, in Ch. 6 of *Fundamentals of Musical Composition* (cf. Alexander Goehr, 'Schoenberg's *Gedanke* Manuscript', *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute*, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 16): 'The real purpose of musical construction is not beauty, but intelligibility'. It is tempting also to connect the 'truth content' of the work with the 'problem' around which the work, as 'force field', forms itself (see p. 181 of the present translation).

6. Adorno, *Berg: der Meister des kleinsten Übergangs* (Vienna: Lafite, 1968). Parts of this book originally appeared as contributions to Willi Reich's *Alban Berg: mit Bergs eigenen Schriften und Beiträgen von Theodor Wiesengrund-Adorno und Ernst Krenek* (Vienna: Herbert Reichner, 1937).
7. In an aside (which I have omitted in the text) Adorno suggests we follow up the points he is making here by referring to the chapter on Webern's *Bagatelles* ('Interpretationsanalysen neuer Musik [Webern, Schönberg, Berg]') in *Der getreue Korrepetitor (Gesammelte Schriften, Vol. 15; Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1976)*.
8. In an aside Adorno mentions at this point that Walter Benjamin's son is present in the audience.
9. T. W. Adorno, *Versuch über Wagner* (written 1937/38, published Berlin and Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1952). English translation by Rodney Livingstone, as *In Search of Wagner* (London: NLB, 1981). See also 'Zum "Versuch über Wagner"' in appendix to *Gesammelte Schriften, Vol. 13* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1971); 'Wagners Aktualität', and 'Nachschrift zu einer Wagner-Diskussion' in *Gesammelte Schriften, Vol. 16, Musikalische Schriften III* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1978).

10. T. W. Adorno, 'Richard Strauss', in *Musikalische Schriften III, Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 16 (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1978). An English translation, by Samuel and Shierry Weber, appeared in *Perspectives of New Music*, Fall-Winter 1965, pp. 14–32 and 113–129.
11. There are problems in finding an adequate translation for Adorno's term *Elementaranalyse*. 'Formal-motivic analysis' perhaps comes as close as anything. However, I have opted for 'elemental analysis' in the text, unsatisfactory as it is, as I felt it necessary to retain the notion of 'element', 'elementary' and 'elemental', in the sense of 'reduction to constituent elements'.
12. See note 7.
13. Adorno is probably referring to the fact that Schoenberg composed the violin part of Op. 47 before the piano part.
14. Adorno is certainly referring to *Gestalt* psychology here—but in particular, it would seem, to that school of *Gestalt* known as '*Ganzheitspsychologie*' (i.e. the Second Leipzig School of *Gestalt* Psychology associated with F. Krueger). This was a diluted form of *Gestalt* which deified the Whole over its parts.
15. Erwin Ratz, 'Zum Formproblem bei Gustav Mahler: eine Analyse des ersten Satzes der IX. Symphonie', in *Musikforschung*, Vol. 8, 1955, p. 169; '—eine Analyse des Finales der VI. Symphonie', in *Musikforschung*, Vol. 9, 1956, p. 156. Also: *Gustav Mahler* (Berlin: 1957).
16. Adorno simply sings his example at this point. It is the five-note motif, which appears on clarinets and bassoons at b. 20 of the first movement of Mahler's Fourth Symphony.
17. The 'high B' referred to by Adorno is most certainly that on the cellos in b. 94, the high point of this 'counter-subject' (i.e., the five-note motif referred to in note 16 above) as it is ultimately extended in the cellos in bs 90–101. Adorno seems to have expected a lot from his audience, that they should be able to make this connection on the spot, from the rather sparse indications he gives.
18. See note 6.
19. It is not easy to find a satisfactory translation for *Auflösung*, as it can mean, among other things, disintegration, solution, and also liquidation. I have decided on *dissolution* as this is the term used by Alexander Goehr in his discussion of Schoenberg's *Gedanke* manuscript (*Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute*, Vo. 2, No. 1, pp. 4–25). It is illuminating to consider Schoenberg's use of the term *Auflösung* (as well as of the term *liquidieren*) in the following extract from the *Gedanke* manuscript (p. 24):

Dissolution [*Auflösung*] is the exact counterpart of establishment [*Aufstellung*], firm formation, shaping. If in these the main objective is, through variation of the basic shapes [*Gestalten*], to bring out their characteristics as sharply as possible, to interconnect the single *Gestalten* as closely as possible, to keep the tension among the tones high, the most important thing in dissolution is to drop all characteristics as fast as possible, to let the tensions run off and to liquidate [*liquidieren*] the obligations of the former *Gestalten* in such a way that there will be, so to speak, a 'clean slate', so that the possibility for the appearance of other materials is given.