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ASPECTS OF ADORNO'S THEORY OF MUSICAL FORM

By

Sebastian Wedler

ABSTRACT

This dissertation puts forward a musicologically-interested but philosophically-orientated reading of Adorno's concept of musical form, building from his critique of the traditional 'Formenlehre' seen in the light of his idiosyncratic self-reflexive notion of musical form, and culminating in his idea of a 'musique informelle' and his proposed 'material theory of musical form' (*materiale Formenlehre der Musik*). Adorno criticised the traditional 'Formenlehre' at a fundamental level for its ahistorical and reductionist assumptions. This critical attitude, which raises a number of philosophical, music-aesthetic, and music-analytical questions, serves as the foundation upon which the argument of this dissertation is built. After a survey of the historical context in which Adorno developed his critique of the traditional 'Formenlehre', his historical interpretation of musical forms is first considered in relation to his adoption of Hegel's concept of history, then developed further in terms of his discussion of J.S. Bach's music in relation to Viennese Classicism, and then in association with his idea of a 'musique informelle', within which Adorno envisaged the historical dissolution of formal types altogether. It is proposed that Adorno's concept of musical form is located between the technical sphere of music analysis on the one hand, and the philosophical and value-laden sphere of music aesthetics on the other. It is argued here that these two spheres cross over in Adorno's thinking about form, as is exemplified in his idiosyncratic treatment of the concepts of 'tonality' and 'consistency' ('Stimmigkeit'). That is to say, Adorno understood the analytical and music-theoretical concept of 'tonality' philosophically in terms of German Idealism, while the philosophical-aesthetic concept of 'consistency' is conceived as being technically grounded in the way in which handed-down material (which includes formal and generic types) are mediated within the formal configuration of the individual work. Given that musical form cannot be isolated from genre-specific considerations, it is also argued here that, while Adorno discussed the concept of genre at some length in *Ästhetische Theorie*, he does so at a level of generality that caused difficulties in his interpretation of Beethoven's late style. By providing a critical reading of his examination of Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, this dissertation attempts to develop a new perspective on Adorno's interpretation of this work through a critique of his concept of genre. Finally Adorno's late 'material theory of musical form' and his concept of musical time are considered as a new practice of music analysis, pointing beyond the traditional 'Formenlehre'.

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*'Because in the givenness of art,
aesthetics presupposes always
already the concept of form
which is its centre, aesthetics
must gather all its efforts to
think the concept through.'*¹

¹ 'Weil Ästhetik den Formbegriff, ihr Zentrum, in der Gegebenheit von Kunst immer schon voraussetzt, bedarf es ihrer ganzen Anstrengung, ihn zu denken.' (Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, p. 213.) In the following, Adorno's works are quoted according to the *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1997) with the corresponding volume (GS); publications from the estate appear separately (please refer to my bibliography for the full list of citations).

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1. THE APPROACH OF THIS STUDY

At the very core of Theodor W. Adorno's music aesthetics is the crucial concept of musical form: '[a]rt allows as much chance as its form allows, and no more'.² In this respect his thought stands critically in the long tradition of nineteenth century music-theoretical thought represented by Eduard Hanslick's famous theorem of 'tönend bewegte Formen': the *content* of music is solely determined through the *formal configuration* of the individual work. Adorno emphasised this thought adamantly: 'form is not to be conceived in opposition to content but through it if aesthetics is not to fall prey to abstraction.'³ His engagement with the 'entwinement'⁴ of form and content is hence discernible throughout his musical writings, based on the assumption that both concepts are closely (indeed, are arguably inextricably) related in a dialectical way: '[t]he content of music is solely what is happening [in it]—partial elements, motives, themes, and elaborations: changing situations. Content is not outside musical time but is essential to it, as time is essential to content; content is everything that takes place in time.'⁵ It is precisely this premise of considering the content of the individual musical work as inscribed in its formal configuration (or its structure⁶) which makes the concept of form the pivotal concept in Adorno's aesthetics of music.⁷

Yet though the concept of musical form is of such a pivotal significance in Adorno's music aesthetics, the conception itself nonetheless remains both complex

² 'Kunst hat soviel Chance wie die Form, und nicht mehr.' Ibid, p. 213.

³ '[...] nicht allein gegen ihn [i.e. den Inhalt] sondern durch ihn hindurch ist sie [i.e. die ästhetische Form] zu denken, wenn sie nicht Opfer jener Abstraktheit werden soll [...]' Ibid, p. 211.

⁴ 'Verflochtenheit'; ibid, p. 211.

⁵ 'Ihr Inhalt [ie. der Musik] ist allenfalls, was geschieht, Teilereignisse, Motive, Themen, Verarbeitungen: wechselnde Situationen. Der Inhalt ist nicht außerhalb der musikalischen Zeit sondern ihr wesentlich und sie ihm: er ist alles, was in der Zeit stattfindet.' Ibid, p. 222.

⁶ Please refer to Max Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 155-156.

⁷ In this context, Hermann Danuser has felicitously argued that, in Adorno, the 'category of form is quasi-materialistically predicated through [the category of] content.' (Hermann Danuser, "'Materiale Formenlehre' – ein Beitrag Adornos zur Theorie der Musik', in *Musikalische Analyse und Kritische Theorie: Zu Adornos Philosophie der Musik*, ed. Adolf Nowak and Markus Fahlbusch (Tutzing: Hans Schneider Verlag, 2007), 19-49 (p. 23 [my translation]).

and at times obscure. While Adorno's comments on form are scattered throughout his work—most prominently in *Philosophie der neuen Musik*,⁸ *Ästhetische Theorie*,⁹ his fragments on Beethoven,¹⁰ and the mature essays 'Vers une musique informelle'¹¹ and 'Form in der Neuen Musik'¹²; and in the context of his 'material theory of musical form' as partially developed in *Mahler: Eine musikalische Physiognomik*¹³ and his mature talk 'Zum Problem der musikalischen Analyse'¹⁴—these outputs do not sufficiently reflect the immense importance which the concept, with its wide reaching historical compass, had within his music aesthetics. One is tempted to approach this along the lines of what has recently been claimed for Adorno's concept of musical time (with which the concept of form is so closely connected): that the core of Adorno's music aesthetics is 'hollow', in the sense that his thought circles around a non-existent centre.¹⁵ Despite this fact, a theorisation of the concept of musical form cannot simply be dismissed as a blind spot in Adorno's oeuvre: I shall argue that Adorno developed a theory of musical form *immanently*—which is to say, in the *execution* of his music aesthetics— and, in the course of this, constantly re-negotiated with it. It is here that my thesis finds its starting point: it is my aim to distil aspects and axiomatic features of Adorno's concept of musical form from his writings.

This project entails at a very fundamental level a genuine challenge. Saturated with philosophical as well as musicological implications, the concept of musical form

⁸ In *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, GS 12, special attention may be given to a passage within his essay on Schoenberg which Adorno somewhat practically entitled 'Form' (pp. 93-101).

⁹ The most relevant passages in the *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, in which the concept of musical form is discussed can be found at pp. 193-226.

¹⁰ The concept of musical form is in particular well represented in Adorno's fragments on *Beethoven: Philosophie der Musik*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1993); special emphasis may here be given to those fragments which Tiedemann grouped together in the section 'Musik und Begriff' (pp. 31-54), 'Tonalität' (pp. 82-96), as well as in 'Form and Rekonstruktion der Form' (pp. 97-116).

¹¹ Adorno, 'Vers une musique informelle', GS 16, 493-540.

¹² Adorno, 'Form in der Neuen Musik', GS 16, 607-627.

¹³ Adorno, *Mahler: Eine musikalische Physiognomik*, GS 13, 149-319; in particular please refer to the third part which is entitled 'Charaktere', pp. 190-208.

¹⁴ Adorno, 'Zum Problem der musikalischen Analyse', in *Frankfurter Blätter VII*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (München: Edition Text und Kritik, 2001), 73-89.

¹⁵ The idea of a kind of 'concave centre' in Adorno's music aesthetics in the terms of the concept of musical time has been claimed by Richard Klein, 'Die Frage nach der musikalischen Zeit', in *Adorno-Handbuch: Leben – Werk – Wirkung*, ed. Richard Klein, Johann Kreuzer, and Stefan Müller-Doohm (Stuttgart: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 2011), 59-74 (p. 59); and Nikolaus Bacht, *Music and Time in Theodor W. Adorno* (Ph.D. diss., University of London, 2002), p. 6.

in Adorno is complex and multi-layered: it is in the very nature of the concept of musical form as he conceived it to go beyond the scope of musicological formal and generic norms. Indeed, Adorno made it firmly a part of philosophical thought. The question concerning the formal configuration of the individual work constitutes for him the central vehicle through which, roughly speaking, the ‘Great Tradition’ of music and the philosophical tradition of Idealism are connected, and—as equal spheres which have a mutual need of each other—are ultimately mediated. It is against this background that one might approach Adorno’s treatment of the concept of musical form quite sceptically, possibly even putting into question whether his understanding of it is of any musicological significance at all. Indeed, to dramatize this situation further one might make reference to Scott Burnham’s article, simply entitled ‘Form’ and written for *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory*,¹⁶ in which he examines the history of the traditional ‘Formenlehre’ from Heinrich Christoph Koch and Adolph Bernhard Marx up to Arnold Schoenberg and Erwin Ratz—Adorno, however, is not considered. This is in fact for good reason: Adorno’s musical writings can hardly be understood to have directly contributed to music theory. Adorno was (and one must not lose sight of this), in the first instance, an aesthete of music.

Yet while all this can be said with certainty, it would be too hasty to draw the conclusion that this also operates the other way round, and that Adorno’s understanding of musical form can be detached from the discourses of musicology. In fact, Adorno developed throughout his writings an elaborated concept of musical form that was not only intertwined with the discourses of the ‘Formenlehre’, but indeed gained its fundamental approach from an examination of them. Nevertheless, although Adorno’s treatment of the concept of form as a philosophical topos is certainly striking, this should not conceal the simple fact that it is fundamentally interwoven with music historical and music theoretical implications. Rather than focussing on the philosophical ramifications of Adorno’s treatment of it—as does the

¹⁶ Scott Burnham, ‘Form’, in *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory*, ed. Thomas Christensen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 880-906.

critical discussion of Carl Dahlhaus and Josef Früchtl¹⁷—I aim to approach Adorno’s understanding of the concept of musical form from a historical-musicological perspective. Thus I propose to return the concept of form to its original context and, in the course of this, to ask—to put it along the lines of Kofi Agawu’s felicitously entitled article¹⁸—what does Adorno’s understanding of the concept of form make possible for musicology? Difficult as Adorno’s relation to academic musicology may have been,¹⁹ to ignore him as someone who reflected constantly upon music and the academic discourses surrounding it would undoubtedly be a loss to the debates currently happening within musicology. This is why I believe that for musicology in general, and within the context of a history of music theoretical thought in particular, it would be valuable to elucidate the idiosyncrasies of Adorno’s understanding of the concept of musical form, and in the process to explore the potential that Adorno’s musical writings might have for a contemporary understanding of the concept of musical form, and to situate this within the broader discourses of ‘Formenlehre’.

2. ADORNO’S CONCEPT OF FORM IN CONTRAST TO THE TRADITIONAL ‘FORMENLEHRE’

What contributes to the complexity of the concept of form in Adorno is that, in music theoretical terms, form is not statically related to its content. Thus, in contrast to a static conception of form along the lines of formal types, Adorno’s concept of form challenges the general formal types of the traditional ‘Formenlehre’ through a direct confrontation with the particular form of the individual work. According to Adorno’s approach, music analysis has to grasp what form seeks to do: ‘to bring the particular

¹⁷ Their talk was published as Carl Dahlhaus, ‘Aufklärung in der Musik’, in *Geist gegen den Zeitgeist: Erinnern an Adorno*, ed. Maria Calloni (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), 123-135 (pp. 128-129). I will consider their critical position more closely in Chapter Three.

¹⁸ I refer to Kofi Agawu, ‘What Adorno Makes Possible for Music Analysis’, *19th-Century Music*, 29:1 (2005), 49-55.

¹⁹ Adorno’s taut relation to academic musicology from a historical perspective has been discussed by Albrecht Riethmüller, ‘Adorno Musicis’, *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, 47:1 (1990), 1-26 (pp. 1-13). Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf has examined the potentials which Adorno—whom he considered to be, in positive terms, the ‘dread’ (‘Schreckbild’) of musicology (*Kritik der neuen Musik: Entwurf einer Musik des 21. Jahrhunderts* [Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 1998], p. 86)—might provide to academic musicology, in his study *Kritische Theorie der Musik* (Weilerswist: Velbrück Wissenschaft, 2006), pp. 27, 32-35, and 238-249.

to speak through the whole'.²⁰ Thus it would be a misunderstanding to approach his concept of form along the lines of a deduced categorical system which only abstracts the individual phenomenon from music history in order to grasp, so to speak, the 'whole' itself. Rather, the concept of musical form for Adorno has to be constantly produced and re-produced in relation to the individual work. Thus Adorno's concept of form is to be understood as structurally determined in relation to the concrete sedimentations of music history in terms of the musical material, and cannot simply be reduced to merely abstract historical observations.

What further complicates matters is that Adorno's concept of musical form is conceived *dialectically*, mediating between the idiosyncrasies of the individual formal configuration of a work and the formal type which it apparently builds upon. This statement may indeed be illuminated when taken figuratively in terms of Schenkerian analysis: in defiance of all differences in detail between Adorno and Schenker, it is striking that Adorno's conception of musical form shares at this most fundamental level the same axiomatic background as Heinrich Schenker's approach. One might set Schenker's statement that 'all forms appear in the ultimate foreground, but all of them [have their origin in, and] derive from the background'²¹ next to a claim taken from Adorno's fragments concerning Beethoven:

The scheme is not just an abstract framework 'within' which the specific formal idea realises itself; but rather the latter emerges from the collision between the act of composing and the [pre-existing] schema, and at the same time it [i.e. the specific formal idea] stems from this collision and alters the schema, 'sublates it'. In this precise sense, Beethoven is dialectical.²²

By conceiving this divergence between the actualisation of the 'specific formal idea' ('Formidee') and the normative background of the formal types with which this

²⁰ '[Form versucht,] das Einzelne durchs Ganze zum Sprechen zu bringen.' Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, p. 217.

²¹ This quote from Schenker's *Der freie Satz* (§ 306) is taken from the translation provided in Charles J. Smith's encompassing study on Schenker's concept of form ('Musical Form and Fundamental Structure: An Investigation of Schenker's "Formenlehre"', *Music Analysis*, 15:2/3 [1996], 191-297 [p. 191]).

²² 'Das Schema ist nicht etwa ein abstrakter Rahmen, in dem die spezifische Formidee sich realisierte, sondern sie entsteht im Aufprall des Komponierens aufs Schema, geht zugleich aus diesem hervor und verändert es, hebt es auf.' In diesem genauen Sinn ist Beethoven dialektisch.' Adorno, *Beethoven*, p. 97.

actualisation is interwoven, an intermediate space is contrived which sets out the framework from which the idiosyncrasies of the individual formal configuration of a work can be recognised, and so take account of its formally grounded individuality. Thus Charles Smith's evaluation of Schenker, whom he considered to have developed a 'particularist approach',²³ in principle may also be considered valid in regard to Adorno, as both thinkers are equally concerned, on the basis of a dialectical concept of form, to account explicitly for the 'deformation'²⁴ of the individual work from its normative background. For Adorno this deformation is a result of mediation: '[i]n traditional music [...] each form corresponds to a type developed within certain stable borders. Precisely this mediation of the musical events through something which they themselves are 'not' in an immediate sense but which is encompassed by the process of mediation itself—like a linguistic concept encompasses the objects it signifies—and makes normal listening easier.'²⁵

In the context of Adorno's concept of mediation ('Vermittlungsbegriff'), Max Paddison has developed this axiomatic characteristic of Adorno's concept of musical form with reference to the 'normative' and the 'critical' levels between which a work mediates,²⁶ and encapsulating Adorno's approach: 'the basic geometry of Adorno's

²³ Smith, 'Musical Form and Fundamental Structure: An Investigation of Schenker's 'Formenlehre'', p. 193. Certainly we here touch upon a contentious question which at this juncture cannot be discussed in full. For an opposing view, see for example Ludwig Holtmeier's article 'Analyzing Adorno – Adorno analyzing' (Ludwig Holtmeier, 'Analyzing Adorno – Adorno analyzing', in *Adorno im Widerstreit: Zur Präsenz seines Denkens*, ed. Wolfram Ette, Günter Figal, Richard Klein and Günter Peters (Freiburg: Verlag Karl Alber, 2004), 184-198 [p. 197]). Adorno would have disputed the qualification of a 'particularist approach' in the terms of Schenker, cf. for example 'On the Problem of Music Analysis', p. 174.

²⁴ The concept of 'deformation' as used here relates to James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy's theory of aesthetic deformation (for an introduction to this theory, see James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth Century Sonata* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2006], pp. 614-621).

²⁵ 'In traditioneller Musik [...] jede Form entspricht einem in bestimmten Grenzen fest ausgebildeten Typus. Gerade diese Vermittlung der musikalischen Ereignisse durch etwas, was sie nicht unmittelbar selber sind, sondern was sie ähnlich unter sich befaßt wie ein sprachlicher Begriff die Gegenstände, die er bezeichnet, erleichtert das übliche Hören.' Adorno, *Der getreue Korrepetitor*, GS 15, p. 202.

²⁶ Max Paddison, 'Die vermittelte Unmittelbarkeit der Musik: Zum Vermittlungsbegriff in der Adornoschen Musikästhetik', in *Musikalischer Sinn: Beiträge zu einer Philosophie der Musik*, ed. Alexander Becker and Matthias Vogel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2007), 175-236 (pp. 192-195); idem, 'The Language-Character of Music: Some Motifs in Adorno', in *Mit den Ohren denken: Adornos Philosophie der Musik*, ed. Richard Klein and Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1998), 71-91 (pp. 81-85) (previously published in the *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 116:2 [1991], 267-279 [pp. 274-275]); idem, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*, pp. 152-154; idem, 'Music and Social Relations: Towards a Theory of Mediation', in *Contemporary*

theory of musical form is the dialectical interaction between the particular and the universal mediated in the structure of the work.²⁷ Thus the concept of form is considered to be a medium through which domination (in the Hegelian sense of ‘Herrschaft’) is executed.²⁸

From these considerations a dimension begins to emerge which is crucial in the context of Adorno’s concept of musical form (and which will be more closely examined in the course of this thesis in connection with the ‘historical dialectic of musical material’): ‘[a]ll composing up to now has been in conflict with something alienated, and music, in accordance with its own life, has hardly ever been at one with its schemata; rather it has triumphed in the appearance of such unity.’²⁹ Seen in this way, the individual work is not simplistically conceived as a break with the normativity of a heteronomous understanding of form, but the break is rather carried out immanently within the work itself. Adorno assigns the individual work a self-reflexive faculty, in that the crystallisation of the individual work on the one hand takes in and so reconstitutes the normative level of form as it is handed-down and, on the other hand, critically undermines this normative level.³⁰

All things considered, it becomes evident that Adorno’s ‘theory of musical form’ targets at what might seem at first glance to be adequately translated by the German term ‘Formenlehre’, but is not absorbed by it. Indeed, Adorno referred to such an understanding pejoratively as the ‘traditional’³¹ way in which to approach the concept of musical form, and one which he rejected in its merely didactically

Music: Theoretical and Philosophical Perspectives, ed. Max Paddison and Irène Deliège (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), 259-276 (pp. 266-268).

²⁷ Paddison, ‘Die vermittelte Unmittelbarkeit der Musik’, p. 202 (my translation).

²⁸ Please refer to Hans-Georg Nicklaus, ‘Gesang ohne Stimme? Musik ohne Klang? Adorno und die Medien’, in *Mit den Ohren denken: Adornos Philosophie der Musik*, ed. Richard Klein and Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1998), 321-336 (p. 329).

²⁹ ‘Alles Komponieren bisher war Konflikt mit einem Entfremdeten, kaum je war Musik dem eigenen Leben nach mit ihren Schemata einig, sondern triumphierte im Schein solcher Einigkeit.’ Adorno, ‘Vers une musique informelle’, GS 16, p. 525.

³⁰ See Paddison, ‘Die vermittelte Unmittelbarkeit der Musik’, pp. 199-200; idem, *Adorno’s Aesthetics of Music*, p. 213.

³¹ Adorno referred to the concept of a ‘traditionelle Formenlehre’ in *Mahler: Eine musikalische Physiognomie*, in GS 13, p. 194; idem, ‘Fragment über Musik und Sprache’, GS 16, p. 251; idem, ‘Musik, Sprache und ihr Verhältnis im gegenwärtigen Komponieren’, GS 16, p. 649. This is synonymous to the concepts of an ‘akademische Formenlehre’ (so in *Mahler: Eine musikalische Physiognomie*, GS 13, p. 193; idem, *Komposition für den Film*, GS 15, p. 93); and to ‘schulmäßige Formenlehre’ (‘Form in der neuen Musik’, GS 16, p. 607). Please compare with ‘On the Problem of Music Analysis’, p. 182, where Adorno referred to ‘ganzheitliche Betrachtung’ (‘holistic method’) and ‘Ganzheitkultus’ (‘totality cult’).

informed, schematic understanding as reductionist: '[t]he limitations of the concept of musical form resulted from the equating of form and schema as opposed to the particularity of what is going on [in the work itself]. Certainly the traditional forms, the schemata themselves, were not only schemata.'³² Although Adorno claimed that in order to demonstrate the underlying mechanisms and constitutive elements of form the so-called traditional 'Formenlehre' might illuminatingly be called upon,³³ for him such an understanding does not eo ipso take account of all the dimensions which the concept of musical form is supposed to bring to the fore, and is therefore limited. In contrast, he emphatically insists upon an *aesthetic* concept of form ('ästhetischer Formbegriff')³⁴ for which the 'whole' is not the formal type as such but the *mediation* of the 'general' (normative level) and the 'particular' (critical level).

In this respect Adorno's own position in relation to the concept of the traditional 'Formenlehre' is somewhat ambivalent (which is not to say that it is inconsistent). On the one hand, Adorno appreciated its principal purpose which was to account for the functional aspects of form, and he further accepted the simple fact that there is a normative element implicit in the concept of form. On the other hand, however, he rejected two fundamental characteristics of the 'Formenlehre': (i) its tendency to be blind to the richness of the particularity of the individual work due to the invariant categories of the 'Formenlehre'³⁵ and which, once applied to the individual work, fosters the 'increasing threat of empty abstraction',³⁶ and (ii) its tendency to regard musical form as an ahistorical concept, which fails to take into account the fact that a 'history of musical forms' is already present in the individual work itself in terms of the historical dialectic of musical material.

The task of determining elements of a theory of musical form from Adorno's writing is likely to depend upon the illumination of demarcation lines between his own critical concept of form and what he refers to as the traditional 'Formenlehre', and which by definition features an affirmative relation to handed-down formal

³² 'Die Einschränkung des musikalischen Formbegriffs folgte aus der Gleichsetzung von Form und Schema gegenüber dem spezifisch sich Zutragenden. Gewiß waren die traditionellen Formen, die Schemata selbst, Schemata nicht nur.' Adorno, 'Form in der neuen Musik', GS 16, p. 607.

³³ Ibid, p. 607.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 607.

³⁵ Cf. Max Paddison, 'Die vermittelte Unmittelbarkeit der Musik', p. 202.

³⁶ 'heraufsteigenden Drohung der leeren Abstraktion'; Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, p. 276.

norms. Thus I do not understand Adorno's conception of form simply as an abstract negation of the traditional 'Formenlehre', but rather I argue that his theory critically responds to it.

3. ADORNO'S TREATMENT OF FORM IN THE CONTEXT OF THE HISTORICAL SITUATION

In order to get a fuller picture of Adorno's general approach, it is illuminating in this context to contextualise his thought within the broader zeitgeist of his time. In a very general respect, Adorno's thinking on form might be understood in relation to conceptions of 'Formenlehre' that shift from those utilising static form-schematising images (e.g., A-B-A), and which were broadly established within the discourses of music theory and aesthetics at the end of the nineteenth or at very least the beginning of the twentieth century, to those conceptions of 'Formenlehre' that did not make use of form-schematising images, but became more sensitised to a more dynamic and less reductionist conception of form.³⁷ Indeed, at the end of the nineteenth century the more dynamic conceptions of the 'Formenlehre' began to prevail over the other conceptions of 'Formenlehre' which sought to describe form by utilising form-schematic images.³⁸ Although certainly not every use of form-schematic images is coterminous with a merely affirmative (that is to say, uncritical) approach, this is nevertheless clearly indicative of a paradigm change.

This can be seen to have found full acceptance in the Viennese circle around Arnold Schoenberg. Although Schoenberg, Anton Webern, and Erwin Ratz's writings and lectures had as their target a nuanced understanding of the form-constitutive means and functional elements of form (they might be referred to as representatives of the 'functional theory of form'), they nonetheless were sensitised to the field of problems that a 'Formenlehre' of any kind—whether 'traditional' or 'functional'—would entail by its very nature. Ratz reflected on this in a particularly remarkable way when he noted in his *Einführung in die musikalische Formenlehre* that

³⁷ Mark Evan Bonds, 'The Spatial Representation of Musical Form', *The Journal of Musicology*, 27:3 (2010), 265-303 (esp. p. 297).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 297.

[...] [a]s long as by the concept of musical form we understand only the schema of a particular ordering of parts, the crucial question remains unanswered: wherein this ‘totality’ lies that is greater than the sum of its parts. [...] To the extent that the functional theory of form offers the prospective composer a systematic overview of the individual formal elements, it can contribute to his development of that solid sense of form only to be gained from the great works of the classics, and which is the precondition for him, compelled by his aesthetic conscience to distinguish between right and wrong, to forge new directions.³⁹

The ‘functional Formenlehre’ was not an attempt just to merely (re)establish a dogmatic understanding of form but rather precisely the opposite: its aim was to provide composers with the knowledge and the craft of analysis necessary to develop in aesthetic-compositional terms an original understanding of musical form. In his *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*, written as a text book for his students, Schoenberg claimed that it is solely the ‘sensitive formal feeling of the artist [that] can determine the evolution of a motif into the fully elaborated masterpiece, stripped of excess, but fully realizing the composer’s vision.’⁴⁰ Further symptomatic in this context is that, within the circle around Schoenberg, ‘Formenlehre’ and ‘Kompositionslehre’ tended to merge into one another. This becomes evident, for example, in Anton Webern’s attitude (and which clearly informed Ratz’s study⁴¹) in allowing the lessons which he gave in analysis coincide with those in composition, an attitude which is also reflected in the very detailed examination of passages from

³⁹ ‘Solange wir unter dem Begriff der musikalischen Form nur das Schema einer bestimmten Anordnung von Teilen verstehen, bleibt die entscheidende Frage unbeantwortet, worauf denn jene “Ganzheit” beruht, die mehr ist als die Summe ihrer Teile. [...] Indem die funktionale Formenlehre dem angehenden Komponisten eine systematische Übersicht über die einzelnen Formelemente bietet, kann sie dazu beitragen, daß sich in ihm jenes sichere Formgefühl entwickelt, das allein aus den großen Werken der Klassiker gewonnen werden kann und das die Voraussetzung dafür bietet, daß er auch dort, wo sein künstlerisches Gewissen ihn zwingt, neue Wege einzuschlagen, das Richtige vom Falschen zu unterscheiden vermag.’ Erwin Ratz, *Einführung in die musikalische Formenlehre: Über Formprinzipien in den Inventionen J.S. Bachs und ihre Bedeutung für die Kompositionstechnik Beethovens* (Wien: Österreichischer Bundesverlag, 1951), p. 8.

⁴⁰ Arnold Schoenberg, *Fundamentals of Musical Composition* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1967), p. 213.

⁴¹ Ratz studied composition under the supervision of Webern and might have discussed aspects of his projected *Einführung in die musikalische Formenlehre* (see *ibid.*, pp. 23-24; and Anton Webern, *Über musikalische Formen: Aus den Vortragsmitschriften von Ludwig Zenk, Siegfried Oehlgieser, Rudolf Schopf und Erna Apostel*, ed. Neil Boynton Ratz, (Mainz: Schott Musik International, 2002), pp. 23 ff. and 80.)

classical works which he undertook with his students, instead of approaching form in isolation.⁴²

Yet we should not disregard the fact that when comparing Adorno's insistence on an 'aesthetic concept of form' ('ästhetischer Formbegriff') with the approaches of the 'funktionale Formenlehre' as commonly practised in the circle around Schoenberg, two different practical emphases come to the fore, and which in fact at that time occasionally produced contradictions. There is, for example, an illuminating anecdote which has been recounted by Albrecht Riethmüller: in 1930 Schoenberg had inquired of Adorno whether he might produce a lexicon providing definitions of crucial musical concepts as a précis for his composition students.⁴³ Yet Adorno did not respond to this opportunity, arguably because he felt an indifference to such a project. Although this is not to say that Adorno underestimated the significance of such a project in any way (and he had always insisted on the importance of the craft of music analysis), this anecdote might be indicative of Adorno's concern for the aesthetic dimensions with which he considered the concept of musical form to be interwoven. Riethmüller's conclusion sums this up well: the 'graspable ideal of musicological practice' (as represented by Schoenberg), and Adorno's philosophical project which aimed to interpret and decipher the social in the individual work, could not be reconciled.⁴⁴ However, despite all 'practical' differences, both approaches outlined above are equally sensitised to the same aesthetic awareness of problems (in terms of 'ästhetisches Problembewusstsein'), and which the Viennese circle around Schoenberg considered not to be sufficiently reflected in the traditional conception of 'Formenlehre'.

The awareness of these kinds of problems is mirrored in Adorno's own development: the contrast between his former training in traditional techniques in composition with Bernhard Sekles in Frankfurt and his composition lessons with Alban Berg in Vienna could not have been more formative for Adorno. His memories of Berg make clearly perceptible the great aesthetic authority which Berg represented for Adorno, and which was without any doubt of on-going significance for Adorno's

⁴² See for example Webern, *Über musikalische Formen*, pp. 61-65.

⁴³ Riethmüller, 'Adorno Musicus', p. 5.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 5.

music aesthetic thought. For Adorno there was probably no other composer who had internalised the basic compositional-aesthetic principle of the ‘developing variation’ (‘entwickelnde Variation’) to the same degree than Berg. This impression emerges from the essay ‘Erinnerung’ from Adorno’s monograph on Berg, according to which Berg decided—after Adorno had presented him excerpts from his compositional materials—

from the first lesson on not to go for textbook-studies or a theory of form (‘Formenlehre’), and what commonly is taught in courses at academies under the term ‘free composition’, but rather he decided only to discuss my own things. [...] He consistently developed the level of my sense of musical form, and inoculated me against what was not thoroughly articulated and was left to run idle, and in particular against mechanical and monotonous rudimentary remains left amidst a dissolved compositional material. [...] The main principle he taught me was that of the variation; everything should be developed from something else, and nonetheless be distinguishable from it and be distinctive in itself.⁴⁵

Although Berg never committed a ‘theory of musical form’ to writing (and indeed, to my knowledge, he never aspired to such a project), the idiosyncratic way in which he supervised Adorno’s compositional studies is clearly indicative of an attitude which aimed to treat form in terms of the Hegelian notion of a ‘becoming’ rather than privileging a ‘schematised’ or ‘static’ conception of it.⁴⁶ These first-hand experiences with Berg—and in a more general respect, his contemporary situation within the modernist musical thinking of the Vienna of the 1920s in general⁴⁷—might doubtlessly be considered to have substantially informed Adorno’s critical treatment

⁴⁵ ‘Berg entschied sich von der ersten Stunde an, als ich ihm einiges zeigte, dafür, nichts Schulmäßiges mit mir zu betreiben, auch nicht Formenlehre und das, was auf Akademien als freie ‘Komposition’ läuft, sondern nur meine eigenen Sachen mit mir durchzusprechen. Konsequenterweise bildete er mein Gefühl für musikalisches Formniveau, impfte mich gegen das nicht Durchartikulierte, Leerlaufende, vor allem auch gegen mechanische und monotone Rudimente inmitten eines aufgelösten Komponiermaterials. [...] Das Hauptprinzip, das er übermittelte, war das der Variation; alles sollte eigentlich aus einem anderen entwickelt sein und dabei doch in sich unterschieden.’ Adorno, *Berg: Der Meister des kleinsten Übergangs*, GS 13, pp. 364-365. Adorno also reflected on Berg in his essay ‘Alban Berg: Oper und Moderne’, GS 18, p. 653.

⁴⁶ Janet Schmalfeldt has referred to this axiomatic emphasis as the ‘Beethoven-Hegelian tradition’ (please see the first two chapters in her study *In the Process of Becoming: Analytic and Philosophical Perspectives on Form in Early Nineteenth-Century Music* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2011], pp. 3-58).

⁴⁷ Please refer to Albrecht Riethmüller, who has emphasized that Adorno’s music aesthetics have substantially taken in the topics by the musicological trends current in the 1920s; Riethmüller, ‘Adorno Musicus’, p. 5.

of the concept of musical form; here if taken in relation to Adorno's notion of the German term 'Idiosynkrasie' one may also aptly speak of an 'idiosyncratic consciousness' with which the concept of musical form is interwoven in Adorno.

The philosophical background against which this 'idiosyncratic consciousness' arises is familiar enough: Adorno's attitude—particularly shaped by his experience of the Nazi period and of enforced exile, and in fact already programmatically set up before this with his philosophical idea of a 'logic of decay'—can be described as extremely sensitive towards figures of thought in which the 'particular' is pushed right to the edge and so threatened with elimination by the 'universal'. Adorno was wary of any kind of structure that fosters a conception of undialectical 'universals' (Adorno referred to these as 'bad' universals) and, linked to this, any kind of reification of dialectics. It is this sensitivity (or idiosyncratic consciousness) which might help us grasp why Adorno was so hostile towards any suggestion that a merely schematic understanding of form could adequately capture the individual configuration of the aesthetic subject.

It is however arguably exactly this idiosyncratic consciousness which is something of a bitter irony in Adorno: his critique concerning the traditional 'Formenlehre' itself at times takes on the contours of a 'bad' generality. Considering the fact that Adorno never explicitly clarified precisely what kinds of traditional 'Formenlehre' he actually had in mind arouses suspicions as to whether his critique is perhaps little more than a case of shadow boxing.⁴⁸ Indeed, there are signs that he somewhat mistrusted the theoretical thinking of the founding fathers of modern musicology: it is for example a striking observation that neither Koch nor A.B. Marx were considered in Adorno's writings at all (though implicit references at least to A.B. Marx can certainly be demonstrated⁴⁹). Recalling how Adorno attempted to conceal the influence of Martin Heidegger's thought in his writings,⁵⁰ one may wonder whether an analogous treatment can indeed be detected in the case of A.B.

⁴⁸ Hermann Danuser has hinted at this aspect in "'Materiale Formenlehre' – ein Beitrag Adornos zur Theorie der Musik", pp. 28-31.

⁴⁹ By a close reading of Adorno's critique of formalism in relation to the concept of content as developed in *Ästhetische Theorie* (in particular please refer to pp. 218-222), one might be inclined to read A.B. Marx's position as the one implied in Adorno's criticisms.

⁵⁰ See for example Tilo Wesche, 'Dialektik oder Ontologie: Heidegger', in *Adorno Handbuch: Leben – Werk – Wirkung*, ed. Richard Klein, Johann Kreuzer and Stefan Müller-Doohm (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2011), 364-373 (p. 365).

Marx. Did Adorno possibly attempt to blur his connection to the historical roots of the fairly newly established academic discipline of musicology, in that he had sensed an undialectical understanding of the concept of musical form in the works of its pioneers?⁵¹ Yet it would be too hasty to conclude that Adorno was sceptical towards the discourses themselves: in fact we might contrast Adorno's sceptical position towards what he saw as an undialectical concept of form with Dahlhaus's claim that, on the contrary, A.B. Marx's theory actually does allow the 'particular' room to emerge in relation to the 'totality' in the course of a musical analysis.⁵² Adorno however did not bring considerations like this to the fore, choosing instead to remain silent about them. Indeed, one might even take this as a further indication of his indifference towards the traditional 'Formenlehre'. At the same time, turning the traditional 'Formenlehre' into something of a bogeyman (whether justifiable or not), this crude antagonism serves to throw the originality of Adorno's 'aesthetic concept of form' ('ästhetischer Formbegriff') into sharp relief. Viewed from the historical angle taken in this study, it is not so much a question of whether Adorno's polemic is actually justifiable or not in relation to musicologists like A.B. Marx; it is more a case of taking the antagonisms he sets up in their own terms, and to aim instead at the elucidation of his position from an emic perspective. The fact that his 'aesthetic concept of form' is underpinned by his idiosyncratic consciousness substantially informs my study.

At the same time, the extent of Adorno's idiosyncratic treatment of the concept of musical form is more far-reaching than it might seem at first glance: the concept of musical form in Adorno is not simply an 'external' concept which merely concerns the discourses of musicology and philosophy. Rather, his conception of form entails an inner dialectic that is the movement of the concept itself, but in musical terms; that is to say, it is precisely through its form that music can be said to be a mode of cognition, albeit without concepts. It is this dimension which can be shown to have directly informed Adorno's philosophical thought. Adorno was not

⁵¹ Riethmüller's observation according to which Adorno made particularly recourse to the (modern) 'mavericks' Ernst Kurth, Paul Bekker, and August Halm might substantiate this sentiment; Riethmüller, 'Adorno Musicus', p. 4.

⁵² Carl Dahlhaus, 'Zur Theorie der musikalischen Form', *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, 34 (1977), 20-37 (pp. 22-23); idem, 'Some Models of Unity in Musical Form', *Journal of Music Theory*, 19: 1 (1975), 2-30 (p. 6).

only concerned with writing *about* dialectics, he was constantly involved in an attempt to *enact* the dialectic itself through his writing, aiming to do justice to what he had himself once demanded from philosophy: to compose, in the sense in which music is ‘composed’.⁵³ That this demand is directly interwoven with the aesthetic attitude which Adorno absorbed from Berg becomes evident, for example, in the observation of Peter von Haselberg’s, according to which ‘he [i.e. Adorno] liked to say that his literary work was essentially influenced by the fact that he had once learned to compose.’⁵⁴ In Adorno the concept of form (whether as musical form or literary form in terms of ‘Der Essay als Form’) makes the movement of dialectical thinking in the thing itself—that is to say, in the musical work—aesthetically accessible. It is exactly this conception that gives Adorno’s ‘aesthetic concept of form’ (‘ästhetischer Formbegriff’) a dimension that points beyond the usual musicological context.

4. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Given the above considerations, it becomes evident that there are particular difficulties which directly concern the development of my thesis. If one wants to perceive Adorno’s writings not only as a kind of poetry—and indeed I would consider this to be a misconception of Adorno’s philosophy—it is necessary to cut through the complex surface of his writing and to illuminate, so to speak, what the ‘core material’ actually is. Indeed, as Paddison has highlighted, there is this (apparent) paradox in Adorno’s thought that, though his writing is so rich, Adorno employed certain pivotal concepts quite consistently over the entirety of his work, and it is these concepts that serve as stabilising factors throughout the range of

⁵³ This claim as can be found in the *Negative Dialektik*, GS 6, p. 44, is not a rhetorical exaggeration but rather a fact of Adorno’s own biography. On that note, cf. Hans-Klaus Jungheinrich, *Theodor W. Adorno: Der Komponist (Musik-Konzepte 63/64)*, ed. Heinz-Klaus Metzger and Rainer Riehn (München: edition text + kritik, 1989), pp. 140 and 143; and further Martin Blumentritt, ‘Adorno, der Komponist als Philosoph’, in *Theodor W. Adorno: Der Komponist (Musik-Konzepte 63/64)*, ed. Heinz-Klaus Metzger and Rainer Riehn (München: edition text + kritik, 1989), 8-25 (esp. pp. 19-24).

⁵⁴ ‘Er [i.e. Adorno] selbst hat gern gesagt, seine literarische Tätigkeit sei wesentlich davon bestimmt worden, daß er einmal komponieren gelernt habe.’ Peter von Haselberg, ‘Geist und Aristokratie’, in *Geist gegen den Zeitgeist: Erinnern an Adorno*, ed. Josef Früchtel and Maria Calloni (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1991), p. 11.

different contexts in which they are invoked.⁵⁵ Certain concepts are then, so to speak, the ‘pillars’ by means of which he constructed his dialectical thought.⁵⁶ In this sense I think that, despite the difficulty in finding a shape to Adorno’s concept of form—which is certainly a consequence of both the genuinely complex nature of the way he presented his thought—an interpretation of Adorno’s aesthetic concept of form (as opposed to the traditional ‘Formenlehre’) is nonetheless possible insofar that the axiomatic structures and the pivotal concepts with which his understanding of form is underpinned are revealed. It is this which informs my methodology: I shall take Adorno’s writings as my primary texts of study,⁵⁷ and attempt to elucidate pivotal concepts which substantially inform his discussion of the concept of musical form. In so doing, I hope to shed light upon crucial aspects which I perceive as fundamental to his understanding of musical form.

I will thus provide a systematic-hermeneutic approach to these sources as has been methodologically established most prominently by Paddison in his pioneering study *Adorno’s Aesthetics of Music*,⁵⁸ and also broadly carried out within Alastair Williams’s study *New Music and the Claims of Modernity*,⁵⁹ as well as Nikolaus Urbanek’s extensive study of Adorno’s fragments on Beethoven.⁶⁰ We can contrast these systematic-hermeneutic approaches to Adorno’s music aesthetics with the music-analytically orientated approach favoured by Michael Spitzer,⁶¹ and the historiographic approach as developed, for example, by Nikolaus Bacht.⁶²

While I nevertheless appreciate the value of the music-analytical approach, my study will be informed by the systematic-hermeneutic approach, as my object, namely the concept of musical form, has a different ‘ontological status’ than Spitzer’s object, which is the music of the late Beethoven itself informed by the perspective provided by Adorno. Although I will indeed take some of Adorno’s analytical

⁵⁵ Paddison, *Adorno’s Aesthetics of Music*, p. 14.

⁵⁶ Please refer to Jungheinrich, ‘Wie kompositorische Praxis in Sprach-Kunst übergeht’, p. 140.

⁵⁷ Please refer to n. 8-14 of this chapter.

⁵⁸ Paddison, *Adorno’s Aesthetics of Music*.

⁵⁹ Alastair Williams, *New Music and the Claims of Modernity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997).

⁶⁰ Nikolaus Urbanek, *Auf der Suche nach einer zeitgemäßen Musikästhetik: Adornos ‘Philosophie der Musik’ und die Beethoven-Fragmente* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2010).

⁶¹ Michael Spitzer, *Music as Philosophy: Adorno and Beethoven’s Late Style* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

⁶² Bacht, *Music and Time in Theodor W. Adorno*.

observations into account, this will be as a means to an end rather than a springboard from which to launch some rather more concrete music-analytical reflections.

I have made the decision not to draw on the historiographic approach in this study as a consequence of two primary considerations. Firstly, although Adorno emphatically avoided any systematising methodology himself, his theories can indeed be understood systematically due to the consistency with which he uses these concepts within his conceptual framework, which is to say, the specific meanings he ascribed to certain pivotal concepts. Secondly, the narrative component favoured by the historiographic approach in its chronological examination of concrete surface phenomena impedes the a priori possibility of making the concept of form accessible in its entirety, especially given Adorno's insistence on the constellatory relationship of concepts, and his avoidance of linear sequential relationships. The emphasis on surface phenomena emphasised by narrative approaches tends to leave the theoretical underpinning that is so crucial for a history of music theory or for a history of aesthetic thought untouched. Nevertheless the kind of awareness emphasised by the historiographic approach should not to be disregarded. Every theory passes through certain stages of historical development, which are likely to involve some changes of emphasis—an example of this is the late appearance of Adorno's 'material theory of musical form' in the 1960s and his increasingly critical attitude to his own previous musical analyses. I shall take this aspect into account by making explicit the developments of Adorno's approach to musical form and the significance of his reappraisal of still unresolved problems.

Inevitable and fundamental difficulties are raised by a detailed examination of Adorno's pivotal concepts through consideration of all the relevant passages on form to be found in his voluminous writings. A complicating factor in my research has been the fact that Adorno's work has not been translated in its entirety. Moreover, the inadequacy of some of the existing translations has created problems. As is commonly known, Adorno's writings can hardly be translated into English without losing many of the features that are so significant in enabling us to grasp the subtlety of his thinking. This is why Samuel E. Weber, one of the earliest translators of Adorno, felt compelled in his translation of *Prisms* to address the difficulties with

which he felt himself confronted in his felicitously entitled foreword, ‘Translating the Untranslatable’.⁶³ Considering these difficulties, I provide my own translations of Adorno in the body of my text. I also provide the German original from which I quote in the corresponding footnote. Where English translations have been available to me, I have checked these against my own for accuracy; however divergences in preferred renderings will not be made explicit. In so doing, I hope to provide an acceptable compromise, for a reading which, on the one hand tries to preserve the original representation of Adorno’s thinking, while on the other also tries to achieve a readable English translation.

5. STRUCTURE OF THIS THESIS

Throughout, the perspective taken of this thesis is that of Adorno’s critique of the traditional ‘Formenlehre’ seen in the light of his idiosyncratic self-reflexive notion of musical form, culminating in his idea of a ‘musique informelle’, his proposed ‘material theory of musical form’ (*materiale Formenlehre der Musik*), and Adorno’s notions of ‘musical time’. Adorno criticised the traditional ‘Formenlehre’ at a fundamental level for its ahistorical and reductionist assumptions. This critical attitude, which raises a number of philosophical, music-aesthetic, and music-analytical questions, serves as the foundation upon which the following chapters which I shall subsequently develop are built.

Thus far, I have surveyed the historical context in which Adorno developed his critique of the traditional ‘Formenlehre’; the consequences of this will be explored in Chapter Two, where his historical interpretation of musical forms is first considered in relation to his adoption of Hegel’s concept of history, then developed further in terms of his discussion of J.S. Bach’s music in relation to Viennese Classicism, and then in association with his idea of a ‘musique informelle’, within which Adorno envisaged the historical dissolution of formal types altogether. Chapter Three will propose that Adorno’s concept of musical form is located between the

⁶³ Samuel E. Weber, ‘Translating the Untranslatable’, in Theodor W. Adorno, *Prisms* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT, 1981), 9-16; on the difficulties of translating Adorno, please also refer to Susan Gillespie, ‘Translating Adorno: Language, Music, and Performance’, *The Musical Quarterly*, 79:1 (1995), 55-65.

technical sphere of music analysis on the one hand, and the philosophical and value-laden sphere of music aesthetics on the other. It is argued here that these two spheres cross over in Adorno's thinking about form, as is exemplified in his idiosyncratic treatment of the concepts of 'tonality' and 'consistency' ('Stimmigkeit'). That is to say, the analytical and music-theoretical concept of 'tonality' is understood by Adorno philosophically in terms of German Idealism, while the philosophical-aesthetic concept of 'consistency' is conceived as being technically grounded in the way in which handed-down material (which includes formal and generic types) is mediated within the formal configuration of the individual work. Taking both the concept of tonality and the concept of consistency together, an idea might emerge of how the concept of form in Adorno is axiomatically adjusted within its locative situation on the edge of music analysis and music aesthetics.

Given that musical form cannot be isolated from genre-specific considerations, I argue in Chapter Four that, while Adorno discusses the concept of genre at some length in *Ästhetische Theorie*, he does so at a level of generality that caused difficulties in his interpretation of Beethoven's late style. By providing a critical reading of his examination of Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, I shall attempt to develop a new perspective on Adorno's interpretation of this work through a critical examination of his concept of genre. Finally in the concluding essay of this thesis I will consider Adorno's late 'material theory of musical form' and his concept of musical time, as a new practice of music analysis, to point beyond the traditional 'Formenlehre'.

CHAPTER 2

ADORNO'S HISTORY OF MUSICAL FORMS

1. INTRODUCTION

Fundamental to Adorno's theory of musical form is the idea that the formal configuration of the individual work implies in the a priori a historical dimension. Thus Adorno claims that music analysis has to account for both (i) the 'concrete materials' utilised by and developed in the individual work (such as chord progressions, the overall formal design, etc.), and (ii) the relation of these 'concrete materials' to music history through which they are immanently mediated.¹ Only if the second aspect is taken into account is music analysis able to bring the musical material as developed in the individual work to the fore. In a note which Adorno had written in the context of his *Ästhetische Theorie* we read: '[t]he formal analysis of an artwork [...] only has meaning in relation to the work's concrete material';² and he goes on to argue that it is '[p]recisely when form appears emancipated from any pre-established content [that] the forms themselves acquire their own expression and content'.³ Thus for Adorno meaning ('Sinn') and content ('Inhalt') as inscribed and expressed in the individual formal configuration of the work can only be adequately revealed if music analysis concerns itself with all dimensions of the musical material which the individual work always already embodies. It is the *relationship* between the analytical 'facts' and the historical dimension with which they are immanently tied up which serves as the point of focus for aesthetic interpretation.

As this immanent historical dimension is one of the very crucial axioms within Adorno's understanding of musical form, I shall begin my study with an account of his treatment of the concept of musical form in its relation to the concept of musical material.⁴ It is this axiomatic connection which opens up a perspective on

¹ These axiomatic considerations regarding Adorno are discussed in more detail by Paddison in *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*, pp. 149-152.

² 'Die Formanalyse des Kunstwerks [...] ist sinnvoll allein im Verhältnis zu seinem konkreten Material.' Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, p. 433.

³ 'Gerade wo Form von jedem ihr vorgegebenen Inhalt emanzipiert erscheint, nehmen die Formen von sich aus eigenen Ausdruck und eigenen Inhalt an.' Ibid, pp. 433-444.

⁴ In the course of my discussion, while I shall make recourse to the crucial figure of thoughts with which Adorno's concept of musical material is conceived, I shall not be able to concern myself with the ramifications of Adorno's concept of musical material itself. For a more detailed development of

what I shall develop as ‘Adorno’s history of musical forms’. In this context I maintain that Adorno’s ‘history of musical forms’ should not be understood as a ‘history of formal types’. Rather, it raises the question of how the formal type is actually treated in the individual work. In pursuing this question we will see that Adorno did not simply point to the reification of formal types as such (as, for example, in the context of the traditional ‘Formenlehre’) but instead also emphasised the ‘Auskonstruierung’ of formal types as characteristic of the dynamic movement of music history.

In the second section of this chapter I develop this argument in more detail by considering Adorno’s discussion of Viennese Classicism, in particular Mozart and Beethoven, in relation to his discussion of Johann Sebastian Bach. Here I highlight the fact that Adorno distilled certain general principles and elements from sonata form (such as motivic-thematic work, and the problem of recapitulation) which he then applied to other earlier formal types (in particular, the fugue). In so doing, in his historical conception of musical forms Adorno takes an approach that ‘reads history in reverse’, so to speak, and which, at its core, aims to transcend the aesthetic problems which arise from sonata form and to see them as all-encompassing aesthetic problems that arguably affect all formal types. Of course in taking this approach, Adorno lays himself open to the criticism that he is merely interested in legitimising his own position on the all-pervading influence of the sonata principle by attempting to argue, for example, that earlier formal types already manifest features like motivic-thematic development or the recapitulation in their own terms and in advance of the emergence of sonata form per se. This field of tension is particularly reflected in Adorno’s interpretation of Beethoven’s *Missa Solemnis*, which I shall address in

Adorno’s concept of musical material, please refer in particular to Paddison’s chapter ‘The historical dialectic of musical material’ in his study *Adorno’s Aesthetics of Music* (pp. 218-262); Gunnar Hinrich’s article ‘Der Fortschritt des Materials’ in the *Adorno-Handbuch: Leben – Werk – Wirkung*, ed. Richard Klein, Johann Kreuzer and Stefan Müller-Doohm (Stuttgart: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 2011), pp. 47-58; Gianmario Borio, ‘Material: Zur Krise einer musikästhetischen Kategorie’, in *Ästhetik und Komposition: Zur Aktualität der Darmstädter Ferienkursarbeit* (Mainz: B. Schott’s Söhne, 1994), pp. 108-118 (esp. pp. 109-112); and Reinhard Kager’s article ‘Einheit in der Zersplitterung: Überlegungen zu Adornos Begriff des “musikalischen Materials”’ in *Mit den Ohren denken: Adornos Philosophie der Musik*, ed. Richard Klein and Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1998), pp. 92-114, see especially pp. 94-98). Special emphasis should be given to Heinz-Klaus Metzger’s critical adoption and examination of Adorno’s concept of the musical material in his famous essay ‘Das Altern der Philosophie der Neuen Musik,’ in Heinz-Klaus Metzger, *Musik wozu: Literatur zu Noten*, ed. Rainer Riehn (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1980), pp. 61-89, which was the impulse for his conversation with Adorno, published as ‘Disput zwischen Theodor W. Adorno and Heinz-Klaus Metzger’ (idem, pp. 90-104).

Chapter Four. In the present chapter I shall use the examples of motivic-thematic work, the problem of the recapitulation, the dichotomy between open and closed formal types, and the concept of musical time in order to support the fact that Adorno interpreted music history ‘against the grain’.

In the concluding section I develop the idea of what Adorno referred to as the ‘emancipation of the subject’ through the formal process of development (‘Durchführung’), and I relate this historical tendency to Adorno’s famous late essay ‘Vers une musique informelle’, where I propose that Adorno anticipated a kind of ‘emancipated form’ that did not exhibit any direct or explicit reference to identifiable formal types, by putting forward the idea that these could be completely dissolved by the immanent process of the unique form of the autonomous work itself.

2. ON THE RELATION OF THE CONCEPT OF FORM TO THE CONCEPT OF MATERIAL

In *Ästhetische Theorie* we find Adorno emphasising the fundamental idea that musical form is subjected to the concept of musical material:

Material is [...] the sum of all that is available to artists, including words, timbres, sounds, associations of every sort and every technique ever developed. To this extent, forms too might become material; it is everything that ‘stands over against’ artists and about which they must take a decision.⁵

Thus every attempt to develop a ‘history of musical forms’ from Adorno’s musical writings needs to start off with the basic consideration that the concept of musical form is embedded in the concept of musical material and its historical dialectic. In so doing, the concept of musical form becomes the subject of a philosophical conception of history whose mechanism of historical development Adorno had already reflected on in *Philosophie der neuen Musik* as ‘the *claims* which stem from the material and

⁵ ‘Material [...] ist, womit die Künstler schalten: was an Worten, Farben, Klängen bis hinauf zu Verbindungen jeglicher Art bis zu je entwickelten Verfahrensweisen fürs Ganze ihnen sich darbietet: insofern können auch Formen Material werden; also alles ihnen Gegenübertretende, worüber sie zu entscheiden haben.’ Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, p. 222.

concern the subject'.⁶ Likewise we find Adorno emphasising in *Ästhetische Theorie* the 'compulsion of the material',⁷ and finally we find him corroborating this idea once more when he stated explicitly that '[t]he substantial element of genres and forms has its locus in the historical *needs* of their materials.'⁸

This implies that for Adorno the process of the 'immanent tendency of the material'⁹ entails that the new is always already historically mediated through its material: the individual work, which negotiates with 'pre-formed materials' (or, to paraphrase one of Adorno's metaphors, which is plagued by the scars of the old¹⁰) itself becomes sedimented as part of the state of the material ('Materialstand'). In so doing, the 'subjectivity' of the individual work, as a particular, becomes 'objectified' and indeed reified as part of the material, as the general:¹¹ '[i]n the history of forms subjectivity, which produces this history, is qualitatively transformed and disappears into them.'¹² This figure of thought corresponds to what Hegel referred to as 'Entäußerung': once the 'subject' has emerged from the claims of the material, it is 'objectivised' or 'entäußert', and so in this respect is no longer 'subjective'. That is to say, by encountering the tradition critically, the new might proceed to sublimate—in all three senses of the German term 'Aufhebung' signifying denial ('Verneinung'), preservation ('Bewahrung'), and elevation ('Emporhebung')—the old: '[a]ll forms in music [...] are sedimented contents. Within them survives what otherwise would be forgotten and would not be able to speak directly.'¹³ In this respect, Adorno proposes an understanding of a 'history of musical forms' that can in general terms be

⁶ 'Forderungen, die vom Material ans Subjekt ergehen'; Adorno, *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, GS 12, p. 39 (my emphasis).

⁷ 'Zwang des Materials', Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, p. 222 (my emphasis); see also *ibid.*, p. 40 (my emphasis): 'The new is not a subjective category, rather it is a *compulsion* of the object itself which cannot in any other way come to itself and resist heteronomy.' ('Das Neue ist keine subjektive Kategorie, sondern von der Sache *erzwungen*, die anders nicht zu sich selbst, los von Heteronomie, kommen kann.')

⁸ 'Das substantielle Moment der Gattungen und Formen hat seinen Ort in den geschichtlichen *Bedürfnissen* ihrer Materialien.' *Ibid.*, p. 297 (my emphasis).

⁹ 'geschichtliche[] Tendenz der musikalischen Mittel'; Adorno, *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, GS 12, p. 38; Adorno also spoke of the 'immanent tendency of the material' ('immanente[] Tendenz des Materials') in *idem*, 'Voraussetzungen', GS 11, p. 440.

¹⁰ Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, p. 59.

¹¹ I refer to *ibid.*, p. 202.

¹² 'In der Geschichte der Formen schlägt Subjektivität, die sie zeitigte, qualitativ um und verschwindet in jenen.' *Ibid.*, p. 300.

¹³ 'Alle Formen der Musik [...] sind niedergeschlagene Inhalte. In ihnen überlebt was sonst vergessen ist und unmittelbar nicht mehr zu reden vermag.' Adorno, *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, GS 12, p. 47.

understood, as Urbanek has put it, along the lines of a ‘*determinate negation* of tradition’.¹⁴

The concept of ‘determinate negation’ (‘bestimmte Negation’) as utilised in Adorno’s music aesthetics can be shown to be borrowed from Hegel, in particular in regard to its application to history. This becomes strikingly evident when Adorno’s understanding of musical material is held in mind while reading the following passage taken from the introduction to Hegel’s *Phänomenologie des Geistes*:

The necessary progression and interconnection of the forms of the unreal consciousness will by itself bring to pass the completion of the series. [...] [W]hen [...] the result is conceived as it is in truth, namely, as a *determinate* negation, a new form has thereby immediately arisen, and in the negation the transition is made through which the progress through the complete series of forms comes about of itself. [...] But the *goal* is as necessarily fixed for knowledge as the serial progression; it is the point where knowledge no longer needs to go beyond itself, where knowledge finds itself, where Notion corresponds to object and object to Notion. Hence the progress towards this goal is also unhalting, and short of it no satisfaction is to be found at any of the stations on the way. Whatever is confined within the limits of a natural life cannot by its own efforts go beyond its immediate existence; but it is driven beyond it by something else, and this uprooting entails its death.¹⁵

This passage can be read as the quintessential philosophy which underlies Adorno’s understanding of musical material. Here all crucial components which constitute the historical dialectic between the ‘object’ and the ‘subject’ (Hegel referred in this

¹⁴ Urbanek, *Auf der Suche nach einer zeitgemäßen Musikästhetik*, pp. 102-103 (my emphasis). It is insightful to acknowledge that the concepts of ‘determinate negation’ (‘bestimmte Negation’) and ‘critique’ (‘Kritik’) are closely related in Adorno; in fact they are occasionally employed synonymously (see for example Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, GS 6, p. 161).

¹⁵ Georg W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by Arnold V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), pp. 50-51. The German original reads: ‘Die Vollständigkeit der Formen des nicht realen Bewußtseins wird sich durch die Notwendigkeit des Fortganges und Zusammenhanges selbst ergeben. [...] Indem [...] das Resultat, wie es in Wahrheit ist, aufgefaßt wird, als *bestimmte* Negation, so ist damit unmittelbar eine neue Form entsprungen und in der Negation der Übergang gemacht, wodurch sich der Fortgang durch die vollständige Reihe der Gestalten von selbst ergibt. [...] Das *Ziel* aber ist dem Wissen ebenso notwendig als die Reihe des Fortganges gesteckt; es ist da, wo es nicht mehr über sich selbst hinauszugehen nötig hat, wo es sich selbst findet und der Begriff dem Gegenstande, der Gegenstand dem Begriffe entspricht. Der Fortgang zu diesem Ziele ist daher auch unaufhaltsam, und auf keiner früheren Station ist Befriedigung zu finden. Was auf ein natürliches Leben beschränkt ist, vermag durch sich selbst nicht über sein unmittelbares Dasein hinauszugehen; aber es wird durch ein Anderes darüber hinausgetrieben, und dies Hinausgerissenwerden ist sein Tod.’ (Georg W.F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, vol. 3 of *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970), pp. 73-74.)

passage to ‘Gegenstand’ and ‘Begriff’) are put into relationship: (i) the mechanism of the ‘determinate negation’; (ii) the teleological orientation (or ‘goal’-directedness); (iii) the immanent compulsion (or ‘drivenness’); and (iv) the transition of the new away from its status as a norm as soon as this is about to become objectified. By reading these components from the introduction of *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, one can grasp the extent to which Adorno’s concept of musical material is indebted to Hegel. In view of this strong connection, we can understand the way in which Adorno considers, in concrete terms, form itself to be ‘the locus of spirit’.¹⁶ Thus the common view that Adorno has ‘Hegelised’ music history is indeed borne out by his concept of musical material and its relation to musical form.

Thus far we have developed the idea that Adorno’s ‘history of musical forms’ is axiomatically embedded in the dynamic historico-philosophical conception of musical material. However, such a conception of the *dynamic* movement of music history might appear to contradict the idea of the existence of formal types, as something essentially *ahistorical* and *static*. Yet although Adorno’s understanding of musical form, as we have seen, is interwoven with the dialectic of musical material, and is thus understood as being subjected to the historical process of permanent ‘re-formation’ (in the literal sense of ‘Um-formung’), Adorno does not in fact deny the existence of formal types.¹⁷ The supposed contradiction between, on the one hand, the historically dynamic embeddedness of musical form and, on the other hand, the static conception of musical form in terms of formal types, can indeed be seen as being brought together in Adorno.

In *Ästhetische Theorie* Adorno discusses both concepts in their contradictory and oppositional relationship: ‘[t]he construction of pre-given form acquires an “as if”-quality that contributes to its destruction. The historical tendency on its part has a

¹⁶ ‘Sein Ort [i.e. der des Geistes] ist die Konfiguration von Erscheinendem.’ Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, p. 135; this aspect has been illuminatingly highlighted in Paddison, *Adorno’s Aesthetics of Music*, pp. 114-116 (esp. p. 115).

¹⁷ This becomes evident, for example, in *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, p. 186, where Adorno states that ‘[t]he term sonata signifies a highly articulated, motivic-thematically worked-through, and in itself dynamic construction, whose unity consists of clearly distinguishable manifolds, including the formal unit of the development and the recapitulation.’ (‘Der Terminus Sonate geht auf hochartikulierte, motivisch-thematisch gearbeitete, in sich dynamische Gebilde, deren Einheit eine von deutlich unterschiedenem Mannigfaltigen ist, mit Durchführung und Reprise.’) Thus Adorno can indeed be demonstrated to have taken on the normative elements of formal types.

momentum of the universal. Fugues became fetters historically. The effect of forms is at times inspiring.’¹⁸ These observations open up perspectives on how both contradictory aspects are negotiated. Adorno ascribed the attribute of historically given facts to formal types, which is to say that formal types are considered to be historically pre-established, and in this respect to form part of the ‘pre-formed’ material. But even so, the normative matrix with which formal types are tied up, though ahistorically conceived, nevertheless cannot be detached from the fact that composers over the course of music history constantly negotiate with formal types. What seemed in the beginning to be something of a contradiction now turns out to be two sides of the same coin: Adorno argued that it is *due to* the very fact that the static normative matrix forms part of the ‘pre-formed’ material which makes music history progress through a process of attenuation, and indeed destruction of formal types.

We are now in a position to understand what I shall refer to as Adorno’s two-fold position regarding the historicity of musical form. On the one hand, he accepts the historical emergence of formal types through a process of what are ostensibly different forms taking over similar principles of construction at the level of detail, arguing, for example, that the underlying developmental principle of the sonata form is actually a historical consequence of the tendency in fugal technique to break down material into small motivic units: ‘[t]he totalisation of motivic work, and hence the concrete formal elaboration of music, is predicated on the general [principle] of the fugal form.’¹⁹ Yet on the other hand, Adorno did not idealise this kind of diachronic reading of music history, and did not suggest that musical ‘progress’ is solely to be determined in terms of later music being in some way ‘better’ than earlier music. This emerges most strikingly from his treatment of Beethoven’s increased output of fugues during his period of the late style. Adorno did not critically embrace Beethoven’s idiosyncratic, arguably ‘backward-looking’ orientation towards an archaic formal type. For Adorno, a composer of the Enlightenment could indeed make use of, for example, fugal forms in an aesthetically justifiable way, providing that the aesthetic

¹⁸ ‘Konstruktion der vorgegebenen Form [...] wird zum Als ob und trägt bei zu ihrer Zerstörung. Die historische Tendenz ihrerseits hat das Moment des Allgemeinen. Fugen wurden erst geschichtlich zu Fesseln. Formen wirken zuzeiten inspirierend.’ Ibid, p. 298; see further idem, p. 222 f.

¹⁹ ‘[d]ie totale motivische Arbeit, und damit die konkrete Durchbildung von Musik, hatte das Allgemeine der Fugenform zu ihrer Voraussetzung.’ Ibid, p. 298.

concern was to ‘construct out’ (‘auskonstruieren’)²⁰ or even—to put it in the terms that Adorno developed in relation to Berg—to ‘liquidise’ (‘liquidieren’)²¹ this formal type from within.

3. ADORNO’S META-REFLECTIONS ON THE PRINCIPAL ELEMENTS OF FORMAL TYPES: VIENNESE CLASSICISM IN RELATION TO J.S. BACH

I have emphasised that Adorno’s concept of musical form does not simply correspond to the traditional understanding of form along the lines of formal types, but goes beyond it to posit a critical concept of form in relation to his notion of the ‘historical dialectic of musical material’. Furthermore I have stressed that his discussion of formal types is set out in a way that appears to blur the boundaries between the individual formal types by proposing that the principles of one type may be taken up in new ways as the principles of a different formal type. To a considerable degree Adorno tended to refer to formal types in an all-encompassing and rather general way. In this section I shall highlight the principal mechanisms and elements by which Adorno considered all formal types to be pervaded, and which he ultimately extrapolated to a larger field of aesthetic problems. While I do not want to suggest that these could be treated in a completely systematic way, or even that they are exhaustive, the crucial aspects raised by Adorno can nevertheless be developed along the lines of the following topoi:

- (1) the work-character (‘Arbeitscharakter’) concerning motives and themes;²²
- (2) the problem of the recapitulation (‘Reprise’);
- (3) the dichotomy between closed and open forms; and
- (4) musical time and the different ways in which it has been generated over the course of music history.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 298. Considering that the common translation of the Schenkerian original term ‘Auskomponierung’ is ‘composing out’, I hope that, by analogy, a translation of Adorno’s original ‘Auskonstruierung’ may likewise be translated as ‘constructing out’. Nevertheless, an actual connection between both concepts is not suggested.

²¹ I will introduce the concept of ‘liquidisation’ in more detail at the beginning of the third section of this chapter.

²² I propose to refer to ‘motivisch thematische Arbeit’ as ‘motivic-thematic work’.

I propose to connect all these elements under the heading ‘Adorno’s meta-reflections on the principal elements of formal types’. I will comment on these topoi by focussing in particular on the interrelation between Adorno’s interpretation of Viennese Classicism and Johann Sebastian Bach.

3.1. *Motivic-Thematic Work*

In one of his fragments on Beethoven, Adorno argues that the momentum for development in Beethoven’s music was the result of the motivic-thematic work,²³ and he went on to say: ‘the “spirit”, the mediation, is the whole as form. The key concept which, in this context, is identical between philosophy and music is that of *work* [*Arbeit*].’²⁴ When associating the compositional-aesthetic and music-theoretical category of ‘motivic-thematic work’ with the central philosophical concept of ‘work’ as found in Hegel’s *Logic*, Adorno does not simply superimpose a layer of philosophical thinking on to music, but rather he sees the philosophical concept as actually inscribed within music itself: ‘The theme is (in true dialectical fashion) *both*: it is not independent, in that it is a function of the whole, *and* it is independent—that is to say, memorable, vivid, and so on. [...] [D]evelopment only exists as development of a theme, which is “worked through”’.²⁵

²³ Adorno, *Beethoven*, p. 33.

²⁴ ‘[...] der “Geist”, die Vermittlung, ist das Ganze als Form. Die zwischen Philosophie und Musik hier identische Kategorie ist die der *Arbeit*. Was bei Hegel Anstrengung, oder Arbeit des Begriffs heißt, ist thematische Arbeit.’ Ibid, p. 33. Special attention may here be given to Tiedemann’s references to Hegel’s *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, pp. 56 and 65 (n. 35). Furthermore, the distinction in German between the concept of *Arbeit* (work as *process*) and the concept of *Werk* (work as *object*) needs to be kept in mind here. This can be confusing in English translation, especially when Adorno refers both to the *Arbeitscharakter* and to the *Werkcharakter*, both of which are usually and confusingly translated as ‘work-character’.

²⁵ ‘Das Thema ist (echt dialektisch) *beides*: unselbstständig d.h. Funktion des Ganzen, *und* selbstständig d.h. behaltbar, plastisch usw. [...] [E]s gibt Entwicklung nur als die eines Themas[,] an dem sie sich “abarbeitet” [...]’ Adorno, *Beethoven*, pp. 38-39. For Adorno it is precisely this dialectic which—and here the middle Beethoven’s understanding of the sonata form serves as paradigm—constitutes social totality: it is the idea that the dialectical mediation of the ‘individual process of production’ is ‘made comprehensible only in terms of its function within the reproduction of society as a whole.’ (‘jeder individuelle[] Produktionsvorgang in der Gesellschaft [...] wird nur aus seiner Funktion in der Reproduktion der Gesellschaft als ganzer [verständlich]’; Adorno, *Beethoven*, p. 34.) This specific social dialectic inscribed in the formal design has been discussed by Robert Witkin, ‘Composing society in Sonata-Form: Analysis and Social Formation’, in *Musikalische Analyse und Kritische Theorie: Zu Adornos Philosophie der Musik*, ed. Adolf Nowak and Markus Fahlbusch (Tutzing: Hans Schneider Verlag, 2007), pp. 85-101 (pp. 88-92).

Although certainly Adorno did not develop anything new here in music-theoretical terms, this point is nonetheless worth mentioning as it helps us to understand the background from which Adorno drew other all-encompassing and (from a historical point of view) untenable consequences, particularly with regard to Mozart. One may assume that it is precisely the fact that Adorno struggled to see Mozart's treatment of motives and themes as characterised by motivic-thematic work²⁶ that made him, though nonetheless holding Mozart in high regard,²⁷ ultimately retreat from his music. At the same time, as remarkable as it might seem to query Mozart's aesthetic attitude for the relative lack of philosophical (and so, arguably, music historical) significance it attributed to the motivic-thematic work, it is equally remarkable that Adorno's idiosyncratic approach to J.S. Bach also lays correspondingly greater weight on the importance of motivic-thematic work. Adorno referred to Bach as arguably the first composer in music history who had made the dynamisation of motivic-thematic work the general law of his music.²⁸ This approach is particularly evident in Adorno's essay 'Bach gegen seine Liebhaber verteidigt' ('Bach Defended Against His Devotees'). Discussing the 'modern' elements of Bach's music, Adorno writes:

The art of composing fugues is an art of motivic economy: to generate an integrated whole through the utilisation of the tiniest elements of a theme. It is an art of dissection [...]. In his last book Schoenberg refers to Bach's technique, with good reason, as developing variation, which then became the ultimate compositional principle of Viennese Classicism.²⁹

²⁶ Adorno, *Beethoven*, p. 63.

²⁷ In fact Adorno's picture of Mozart is permeated by paradoxes. While reading *ibid*, one should also acknowledge for example Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, p. 327.

²⁸ I refer to: 'The dynamisation of the motivic thematic work, which in Bach has been given the status of universality—and which as "work" already elevates from the static nature of the so-called musical Baroque—, is the consequence of Bach as much as it is the consequence from the gallant style considerate of variety after him. [...]' ('Die Dynamisierung der von Bach zur Universalität erhobenen motivisch-thematischen Arbeit, die als "Arbeit" bereits das statische Wesen des sogenannten musikalischen Barocks übersteigt, ist die kompositorische Konsequenz aus Bach ebenso wie die aus dem galanten, auf Abwechslung bedachten Stil nach ihm [...].') Adorno, *Einleitung in die Musiksoziologie*, GS 14, p. 407.

²⁹ 'Die Kunst der Fugenkomposition ist eine der motivischen Ökonomie: durch Ausnutzung der kleinsten Bestandteile eines Themas aus diesem ein Integrales herzustellen. Es ist eine Kunst der Zerlegung [...]. Schönberg spricht in seinem letzten Buch mit Recht von Bachs Technik der entwickelnden Variation, die dann im Wiener Klassizismus zum Kompositionsprinzip schlechthin geworden sei.' Adorno, 'Bach gegen seine Liebhaber verteidigt', GS 10, vol. 1, pp. 142-143. One may give also refer to *ibid*, p. 140.

From a strictly music-historical point of view, one might treat this apparently ‘anachronistic’ attitude with some caution, and criticise the fact that these considerations take place against the background of the sonata principle and indeed the entirety of the nineteenth century as grounds for bias. This critical argument certainly has validity: the dominant background against which Adorno, and indeed, more generally the whole circle around Schoenberg, set up their interpretation of Bach’s music is obviously tinged with such pre-conceptions. The so-called Second Viennese School’s interpretation of music history has been broadly criticised as a desire, ideologically disguised, merely to legitimise a particular development in music history for which the Schoenberg circle (including Adorno himself) is ultimately considered to form the historical spearhead.³⁰ In this respect, Martin Geck has concluded in his article on Adorno’s understanding of Bach that Adorno referred to the composer ‘as if [looking] through a keyhole: this focuses [narrowly] upon some things but does not let other things even come into the picture.’³¹ In fact one might argue that Adorno had recourse to Bach solely for the purpose of justifying his own

³⁰ Thus, for example, Tobias Plebuch’s argument in his article ‘Musikhören nach Adorno: Ein Genesungsbericht’, *Merkur*, 65 (2002), 675-687: ‘The one-dimensional history of progression and decay is a dominating myth which relentlessly leads the critical consciousness to sort and suppress worthless works, genres, styles, and whole cultures. The assumption of *one* history is the ideology of the ideological critics.’ (‘Die eindimensionale Fortschritts- oder Verfallsgeschichte ist ein herrschsüchtiger Mythos, der das kritische Bewußtsein unablässig zum Aussortieren und Verdrängen unwürdiger Werke, Gattungen, Stile, ganzer Kulturen verleitet. Die *eine* Geschichte ist die Ideologie der Ideologiekritiker.’ [p. 680]). This assumption of historical reductionism in Adorno is commonly accepted by thinkers who are broadly associated with critical theory itself, critically arguing that Adorno has constructed music history teleologically; see for example Peter Bürger, ‘Das Vermittlungsproblem in der Kunstsoziologie Adornos’, in *Materialien zur ästhetischen Theorie Th. W. Adornos: Konstruktion der Moderne*, ed. Burkhardt Lindner and W. Martin Lüdke (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1980), 169-184 (p. 181); Albrecht Wellmer, ‘Über Negativität und Autonomie der Kunst: Die Aktualität von Adornos Ästhetik und blinde Flecken seiner Musikphilosophie’, in *Mit den Ohren denken: Adornos Philosophie der Musik*, ed. Richard Klein and Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1998), 237-278 (p. 256 ff.). In contrast, in Paddison’s theorisation of the concept of musical material, aspects have been brought to the fore which demonstrate that indeed Adorno’s supposedly teleological understanding of music history has dialectically incorporated nonetheless the ‘opposed’ historical development (refer to his discussion of Adorno’s understanding of Bach and the ‘style gallant’, Paddison, *Adorno’s Aesthetics of Music*, pp. 225-232, and the relation of Beethoven to Berlioz, *ibid*, pp. 233-242). Seen in this way, Adorno’s concept of ‘historical progress’ as ‘the dialectic of musical material’ is rather ‘more a spiral than a straight line’ (*ibid*, p. 231). Hence Paddison has argued for a more differentiated conception of Adorno’s theorisation of the musical material than has been thus far broadly acknowledged.

³¹ Martin Geck, ‘Via Beethoven & Schönberg: Theodor W. Adornos Bach-Verständnis’, in *Mit den Ohren denken*, ed. Richard Klein and Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1998), 229-239 (see especially p. 239), my translation.

aesthetic position, and indeed the position of the entire circle around Schoenberg (one might thereby draw similarities to Schoenberg's famous essay 'Brahms the Progressive').

It is not my goal at this stage to provide an in-depth examination of these critical arguments. Rather, the simple fact that such difficulties arise in this context is itself something of an insight. As a result of considering his context of ideas in this way, we get some sense of the fact that Adorno treated the concept of 'motivic-thematic work' in quite unusual terms, which leads me to a fundamental issue: I suggest that in Adorno the distinction between the fugue and the sonata principle is to a considerable extent blurred in the final instance by the disconnection of both from their historical situation—something which the traditional 'Formenlehre' avoids. Although Adorno did not deny that the fugue and the sonata principle have two distinctly different form-typological designs, his approach essentially attempts to demonstrate that both likewise share the same field of aesthetic problems (in the sense of Adorno's understanding of the term 'Problem'): that is to say, the problem of the 'work-character' ('Arbeitscharakter') as the process of 'motivisch-thematische Arbeit'. Taking these concepts ('Arbeitscharakter' and 'motivisch-thematische Arbeit') as the focal points through which to approach both these formal types (fugue and sonata form), the dimension of their actual historical setting is, in aesthetic terms, side-lined: Adorno's claim regarding the 'constructing out' ('Auskonstruierung') of formal types applies to the sonata form as it does to the fugue.

3.2. *Recapitulation*

The view that Adorno's approach to the interpretation of music history is certainly not impartial but tends to take place against the background of the nineteenth century (for which Adorno might indeed be regarded as the 'aesthetic authority'³²) can also be shown as valid in regard to the concept of recapitulation. Again, this is a concept which is obviously closely associated with the sonata principle. Nevertheless, Adorno considered the recapitulation to be a feature which pervades all kinds of formal types: in his essay 'Form in der neuen Musik' he claims that '[a]ll musical form, no matter

³² 'ästhetischer Gewährsmann'; Geck, 'Via Beethoven & Schönberg', p. 239.

what means are utilised, involves recapitulation in the broadest sense of the term.³³ In order to understand Adorno's argument (which certainly at the first glance might provoke some reservations), we need first to accept his extension of the scope of this concept. For Adorno, the concept of recapitulation genuinely carries with it a fundamental aesthetic problem, the question concerning the closure of a work. In this sense, Adorno considered music (and indeed not only music³⁴) to be genuinely concerned with the aesthetic problem of closure and, closely connected to this, repetition.

Having said this, Adorno did not only put forward an extended understanding of the recapitulation but also—as with the concept of ‘motivic-thematic work’—applied this concept as it actually stems from the sonata principle, in a way that again signifies a reading of history in reverse. Here Bach, once again, serves as the historical point of focus. In his fragments on Beethoven, Adorno sketches a thought which is significant:

[The predominance of the recapitulation] is not *yet* found in Bach. [...] The primacy of the recapitulation is neither undeveloped nor is it negated, nor avoided. He *knew* about the recapitulation. But he did not use it as an a priori [element] of form, but as an artistic means, a device: either in the sense of a ritornello in a rondo, of a *rhyme* [...], or of making a clearly felt and affirmative arrival [...]. Bach was thus indeed familiar with the effect of the recapitulation, but he restricted it with great critical severity. [...] It is especially illuminating that the avoidance of the recapitulation forms part, not only of the archaic fugal form, but also of the “gallant” modern character of the suite, with its symmetrical division into eight-bar periods. This is at its finest not only in the allemandes and sarabandes, but even in a genre piece in almost the nineteenth-century style, such as the Gavotte of the G major French Suite. In such pieces the perfect formal equilibrium, established without any trace of A-B-A rigidity, is perhaps the greatest triumph of Bach's mastery of structure.³⁵

³³ ‘[a]lle musikalische Form, gleichgültig mit welchen Mitteln sie umgeht, involviert in erweitertem Sinn Reprise’; Adorno, ‘Über einige Relationen zwischen Musik und Malerei’, GS 16, p. 613.

³⁴ See for example, Adorno's interpretation of Beckett, where repetition and closure form a central motif (*Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, pp. 204 and 221). Christine Eichel has developed Adorno's interdisciplinary understanding in her study *Vom Ermatten der Avantgarde zur Vernetzung der Künste: Perspektiven einer interdisziplinären Ästhetik im Spätwerk Theodor W. Adornos* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1993).

³⁵ Bei Bach herrscht er [sc. der Primat der Reprise] noch *nicht*. [...] [B]ei Bach ist nicht sowohl die Herrschaft der Reprise noch unterentwickelt als verneint, oder vermieden. Bach *kennt* die Reprise wohl. Aber sie ist von ihm nicht als Apriori der Form, sondern als Kunstmittel, als Pointe gehandhabt: entweder also im Sinne des Rondorefrains, als *Reim* [...], oder als deutlich empfundenes,

This passage is remarkable in two different ways. Firstly, Adorno refers to Bach as if he had *reacted* to the problem of the recapitulation. Unlike his discussion of motivic-thematic work in the context of Bach's music, this suggests that, just as he regarded Hegel's philosophical 'work concept' ('Arbeitsbegriff') to have become broadly established historically in the nineteenth century, he treats the recapitulation as if it were an entirely all-encompassing phenomenon which, in the context of the sonata principle, is considered to have ultimately become objectivised as an 'a priori [element] of form' ('Apriori der Form').

Secondly, this fragment shows evidence that the 'gallant style'—which Adorno approaches essentially in terms of the emergence of a logic of consumption in music, and which at one level might be seen as falling outside the immanent logic of progression as entailed in the concept of musical material and its historical dialectic—is at another level included within Adorno's historical dialectic of material. Adorno attributes value to the 'gallant style' in regard to the aesthetic problem of the recapitulation. Thus here we see a remarkable indication of the as yet broadly underestimated fact that Adorno indeed considered the 'gallant style' to have contributed to the concept of musical material.³⁶ Taking the view that individual works over the course of history—and explicitly including even those which are not commonly considered to have formed part of Adorno's conception of 'progression' in music history—have 'reacted' over and over again and in different ways to the fundamental aesthetic problem that the concept of recapitulation in the wider sense addresses, I suggest that a systematic analysis of these 'reactions' as based on

bestätigendes Anlangen [...]. Reprisenwirkungen sind also Bach durchaus vertraut aber kritisch aufs strengste beschränkt. [...] Es ist besonders aufschlussreich, dass die Vermeidung der Reprise nicht nur der archaischen Fugenform angehört sondern gerade auch den symmetrischen, achttaktigen periodisierten, "galant"-modernisierten Suitencharakteren. Am schönsten in den Allemanden und Sarabanden[,] aber selbst einem fast im Sinne des 19. Jahrhunderts genrehaften Stück wieder Gavotte der französischen G-dur-Suite. Wie in solchen Stücken das vollkommenste formale Gleichgewicht ohne alle Spur von a-b-a hergestellt wird, ist vielleicht der größte Triumph von Bachs konstruktivem Vermögen.' Adorno, *Beethoven*, pp. 117-118.

³⁶ This supports Paddison's theorisation of the concept of musical material (refer back to n. 30 of this chapter).

Adorno's extended concept of recapitulation would greatly add to a conception of music history in these terms.³⁷ Adorno laid the foundations for just such an approach.

3.3. *Open Versus Closed Forms*

The aesthetic issues raised in our consideration of both the process of 'motivic-thematic work' and the problem of recapitulation leads directly to a further field of discussion which is defined by what I shall call the dichotomous constellation of 'open versus closed forms'. In one of his fragments on Beethoven, Adorno developed a chiasmic structure 'open/closed' contrasting (simple) rondo and (first-movement) sonata formal types. According to this, the rondo was seen as an 'open' formal type (in that there is no reason why the alternation of rondo theme and contrasting episodes should not go on forever) while at the same time it is made up of the alternation of 'closed' theme and 'closed' episode sections; the sonata form principle, in contrast, he considered to be a 'closed' formal type (in that its structure and final closure is defined by its inner teleological musical logic as 'development' or 'developing variation') while at the same time it has an 'open' motivic-thematic field that is not the outcome of simple repetition and contrast.³⁸ The basic idea is perhaps contentious: while the numbers of repetitions of the rondo's 'ritornello' are not essentially determined in the final instance, the sonata principle generates an internal logic on the basis of 'motivic-thematic work' to enable it to 'arrive' at an apparently 'necessary' closure from within. That is not to say that the rondo is totally devoid of any work-character ('Arbeitscharakter') however, but rather that Adorno's chiasmus takes on the dominant feature of the (simple) rondo: that its overall repetition/contrast structure tends to curtail any essential inner logic of final closure per se in terms of formal types.

³⁷ Wolfram Steinbeck has developed this topic in "Das eine nur will ich noch – das Ende": Prolegomena zu einer Kompositionsgeschichte des Schließens', *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, 69:3 (2012), 274-290.

³⁸ See Adorno, *Beethoven*, p. 107. See also Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, pp. 327-329, where he further reflects upon the 'sonata rondo' in the terms of establishing a balance between formal constrictions and necessary formal engagement: one might therefore, of course, regard the sonata rondo as a mediation of the two types of 'openness' and 'closedness'.

Given these considerations, I am of the view that, with this chiasmic figure of thought ‘open/closed’, Adorno is also able to negotiate with J.S. Bach’s fugal forms in hardly any less significant a way than with the rondo and sonata forms themselves. Against this background, and having highlighted both the process of the ‘work-character’ (‘Arbeitscharakter’) which Adorno considered to pervade Bach’s fugal forms and the non-nominalistic ‘treatment’ of the recapitulation, we are now in a position to raise the philosophical-speculative question of to what extent J.S. Bach’s fugal forms keep the dichotomous constellation as such in abeyance. Is it therefore perhaps conceivable that Bach’s fugal forms challenge the paradoxical idea that both characteristics—‘open’ themes on the one hand and yet an ‘open’ formal design on the other hand—are unified? Although Adorno never explicitly discusses J.S. Bach’s fugal forms in terms of ‘openness’, against this background we might nonetheless use the case of Bach to raise crucial aspects of Adorno’s attempt to draw demarcation lines between the ‘archaic’ fugal forms of the Baroque (but with a focus on Bach), and the rondo and sonata principle (as developed in the historical context of Viennese Classicism).

To begin with, it is worth acknowledging that Adorno considered J.S. Bach’s treatment of fugal forms to be, in aesthetic terms, of somewhat higher value than the rondo, because for him the ‘preceding [ritornello] forms in Bach, such as the Presto of his Italian Concerto, were more flexible, less static, more complexly elaborated than were Mozart’s rondos which belonged to a later stage of nominalism’.³⁹ The demarcation line that Adorno suggested between Mozart and J.S. Bach becomes particularly evident when reading the above quotation against the following, taken from the same passage in *Ästhetische Theorie*: ‘[t]he feeling for form in Bach—who in many regards opposed bourgeois nominalism—did not stem in any respect from traditional forms but consisted in the fact that he kept them in motion, or rather, did not let them petrify: Bach was nominalistic on the basis of his feeling for form.’⁴⁰

³⁹ ‘Vorformen bei Bach wie das Presto des Italienischen Konzerts waren flexibler, weniger starr, mehr ineinander gearbeitet als die einem späteren Stadium des Nominalismus zugehörigen Mozartschen Rondos.’ Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, p. 328.

⁴⁰ ‘Das Formgefühl Bachs, der in manchem dem bürgerlichen Nominalismus opponierte, bestand nicht im Respekt sondern darin, daß er die tradierten Formen in Fluß hielt oder richtiger: sie gar nicht erst sich verfestigen ließ: nominalistisch aus Formgefühl.’ Ibid, p. 327.

As we have seen in the context of the recapitulation, Adorno approached closure warily, in particular if the composer relied solely on the fact that the closure of the individual work could indeed actually be aesthetically ‘legitimised’ in heteronomous (that is to say, schematised) terms. Instead he tended to esteem individual solutions concerning the aesthetic problem of closure that were not geared to any formal typology (he referred to such individual solutions in terms of ‘non-nominalism’). This is the background against which Adorno considered Bach’s treatment of the fugue to be ‘better’ than Mozart’s treatment of the rondo, because it was more flexible and less schematic. In view of the idea that Bach could have partially generated formal ‘consistency’ (‘Stimmigkeit’) devoid of any normative/schematic reassurances, he thus appeared to Adorno to have ‘avoided’ the nominalism of Viennese Classicism. In his fragments on Beethoven, Adorno described Bach as

more sensitive, less mechanical, more differentiated than the forthright subjectivism of the classical composers. In the fifty years after Bach’s death this ability was entirely lost, and in this very central sense the whole of classicism, including Beethoven, was *regression* in relation to Bach [...] The regression is connected to the *mechanistic* element which spread further and further in bourgeois music and finally imposed its diabolical power even on Schoenberg.⁴¹

In this respect, Adorno even hesitated to refer to the fugal form as an ‘actual’ formal type at all: ‘[i]n Bach’s œuvre, the formal schemata have not been concealed to the same degree as in Viennese Classicism. With regard to the fugue one might wonder

⁴¹ ‘[...] empfindlicher, unmechanischer, differenzierter als der handfeste Subjektivismus der Klassiker. Dies Vermögen ist in den 50 Jahren nach Bachs Tod völlig verlorengegangen und in diesem sehr zentralen Sinn ist die Klassik samt Beethoven gegen Bach ein *Rückschritt* [...]. Der [i.e. der Rückschritt] hängt aber mit dem *mechanistischen* Moment zusammen das in der bürgerlichen Musik immer weiter sich entfaltet und schließlich auf diabolische Weise selbst über Schönberg Macht gewinnt.’ Adorno, *Beethoven*, p. 118. Concerning the question of whether Bach is superior to Beethoven or vice versa, please acknowledge Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, p. 316. Here Adorno argues that this question is in itself otiose. In regard to precisely this comment, Günter Seibold has argued that on the one hand Adorno set up the progression of music history from his concept of musical material (and indeed, he himself spoke of an ‘abstract trajectory of progression’ (‘abstrakten Bahn des Fortschritts’; Adorno, ‘Kriterien der neuen Musik’, GS 16, p. 180)), but on the other hand this logic in itself, according to Seibold, has for Adorno always been ‘highly suspect, as a fact which cannot be accepted’ (‘äußerst fragwürdige, eine nicht zu akzeptierende Angelegenheit’; Günter Seibold, *Kreative Zerstörung: Theodor W. Adornos musikphilosophisches Vermächtnis* (Bonn: DenkMal Verlag, 2003), p. 20).

whether this is a formal type in the strict sense or rather a model for polyphonic construction in the field of the figured bass.’⁴² Yet this argument cannot be maintained: when approaching the fugue in terms of its harmonic organisation and procedures, Adorno considered the fugue to be a formal type as well as embodying the principle of ‘dissection’ (and in this respect one might say that he saw it as a parallel to his view of the sonata form as formal type, as well as the sonata principle as embodying the process of developing variation). In this context Adorno raised the aspect that the fugue ‘not only requires a change of development (*Durchführung*) and episode (*Zwischenspiel*) but—and thereby it is not unlike the sonata principle (*Sonate*)—it also follows a modulation scheme’.⁴³ When taking this aspect into account, the fugue appears indeed to be virtually a formal ‘type’ rather than only a ‘model’. Certainly, the attempt to provide a firm answer to the question as to whether the fugue is a formal type or not cannot be discussed adequately at this juncture (and in fact in the course of such a discussion, Adorno’s understanding of the sonata principle also as *formal type* would then require further scrutiny). But it may be concluded at this stage that Adorno extrapolated to J.S. Bach’s fugal forms the aesthetic problems encapsulated in the abstract dichotomy of ‘closed’ versus ‘open’ forms (what I have here called his use of the ‘chiasmus’) as developed in the first place in the context of Viennese Classicism. Furthermore, it could be said that his high regard for the aesthetic attitude represented in J.S. Bach’s music has to a considerable degree to be seen against the historical backdrop of the music and aesthetics of the beginning of the nineteenth century.

3.4. *Musical Time*

In order to understand more closely how Adorno treats the topos of musical time in relation to a ‘history of musical forms’ as this is subjected to the historical dialectic of musical material, it is useful to examine his comments regarding the *transitions* of

⁴² ‘In dessen [Bachs] Werk waren die Formschemata längst noch nicht so geronnen wie im Wiener Klassizismus. Bei der Fuge mag man schwanken, ob sie strikt ein Formtyp oder ein Modell polyphonomischer Konstruktion im Generalbaßraum sei.’ Adorno, ‘Form in der neuen Musik’, GS 16, p. 620.

⁴³ ‘[Die Annahme, es sei die Fuge keine Form, ist allein deshalb schon problematisch, weil die Fuge] nicht nur den Wechsel von Durchführungen und Zwischenspielen verlangt, sondern auch, darin der Sonate gar nicht so unähnlich, einem Modulationsplan folgt.’ Adorno, ‘Musiklexikon ohne Staub’ [review], GS 19, pp. 415-416.

music history: that is, the transitions from one period of music history to the next. Adorno discusses in particular (i) the transition from the pre- and early Baroque music to its crystallisation with J.S. Bach;⁴⁴ and (ii) the transition from the late Baroque to the music of Viennese Classicism.

In regard to the transition from the pre- and early Baroque to J.S. Bach, we read in Adorno's *Ästhetische Theorie*:

To the extent that Bach produced the form of the fugue on the basis of the initial efforts of his predecessors, and to the extent that it was his subjective product and in a sense fell mute after him, so the process in which he produced it was objectively determined: the jettisoning of what was rudimentary and insufficient. What he achieved drew the consequences from what awaited and was demanded, yet was still inconsistent in the older *canzona* and *ricercare*.⁴⁵

From a purely historically-oriented perspective, one might at first wonder at what Adorno might have meant by the claim that the canzones and ricercarta of the Baroque display 'unfinished rudimentaries', that remain 'undeveloped' ('unausgebildet') and 'inconsistent' ('unstimmig'). Presumably this assessment did not reflect the contemporary perception of these formal types at all, but Adorno's philosophical evaluation of canzones and ricercarta as historical precursors which terminate in J.S. Bach's understanding of the fugue. Although the historical trajectory of the development of the canzones—as is the case with the ricercarta—can be traced through several different phases of development, Adorno went beyond such a purely descriptive narrative of these historical changes: he tended to provide a speculative understanding through which the general characteristics of this historical development might have been generated. Although Adorno did not exactly specify in this context how the idea of the historically 'unfinished' might be substantiated, his abstract notion of historical development is unmistakably based on his concept of development ('Entwicklungsbegriff') in music, which aims to see the inherent logic of the individual work legitimise the musical events that occur within it. Seen against

⁴⁴ Please refer to Bacht, *Music and Time in Theodor W. Adorno*, pp. 122-123.

⁴⁵ 'So gewiß Bach die Form der Fuge aus Ansätzen seiner Vorgänger produzierte; so gewiß sie sein subjektives Produkt ist und eigentlich als Form nach ihm verstummte, so sehr war der Prozeß, in dem er sie hervorbrachte, auch objektiv determiniert, Beseitigung des unfertig Rudimentären, Unausgebildeten. Das von ihm Vollbrachte zog die Konsequenz aus dem, was unstimmig in den älteren Canzonen und Ricercaren wartete und forderte.' Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, p. 300.

this background, Adorno considered Bach's fugal forms to feature just such a concept of development, while the concept of development in the canzones and ricercata is, in contrast, rather weak.⁴⁶ In anticipation of the final essay of this study, I put forward a reading of Adorno's critique according to which J.S. Bach's fugues are more 'dialectically' constricted than the rather 'un-dialectical' canzones and ricercata of the earlier Baroque.⁴⁷ Adorno touched upon this aspect when he argued (and note the normative implications of his claim): '[a] fugue by Bach is, as a fugue, first and foremost better, more ordered, more complexly elaborated, and more consistent than the rudimentary forms of the seventeenth century'.⁴⁸

Moreover the same structure of argument is at work when Adorno discusses the transition from the Baroque ritornello and rondo to the sonata principle:

The contrasts between the tutti and the solo, as these are part of the rondo, [that is the contrast between] the particular and the universal, had been dynamised via the concerto and became an essential part of the formal type, the sonata form, which is so distinctive of modern times.⁴⁹

The German term 'wesentlich' may in this context—that of the rondo—be taken to refer literally to the construction of its parts: the dynamised contrasts of the rondo led, in Adorno's speculative reading, to the increasing pressure to generate a dialectical logic of musical time, something essentially encoded into (so 'wesentlich') the formal type of the sonata. For Adorno, the sonata as 'sonata principle' is not only the ultimate formal type which conveys and dialectically mediates between contrasts (in terms of the Hegelian logic); rather, it has taken into itself the process of motivic-thematic work as its fundamental principle, whereby the sonata principle gains the potential to reflect critically upon its own 'normativity', understood as the sonata as

⁴⁶ In this context, Geck's sharp contrast that while Vivaldi or Telemann used formal types such as the Baroque concerto or the aria as vehicles through which original ideas could be generated, but that Bach treated these formal types as materials which needed to be critically approached is indeed along Adorno's lines. Geck, 'Via Beethoven & Schönberg', p. 237.

⁴⁷ We will more closely address what I understand in this context by the term 'dialectical' in Chapter Four.

⁴⁸ '[e]ine Bachische Fuge ist als Fuge zunächst einmal besser, gefügter, in sich durchgebildeter und konsequenter als die rudimentären Gebilde des siebzehnten Jahrhunderts.' Adorno, 'Ohne Leitbild', GS 10, vol. 1, p. 293.

⁴⁹ 'Die Kontraste von Tutti und Solo, wie sie im Rondo stecken, von Einzelem und einem Gesamten, wurden über das Konzert dynamisiert und wesentlich für den in der neueren Zeit entscheidenden Formtypus, die Sonate.' Adorno, 'Form in der neuen Musik', GS 16, p. 608.

formal type, and the musical material as historically handed-down procedures and reified conventions. The formal type of the rondo in contrast does not provide this potential to the same degree (at least, the simple rondo). Thus, by examining the way in which Adorno discussed both of these historical transitions, as discussed above, we might conclude that the concept of musical time is given crucial significance: as a kind of meta-criterion, where questions concerning musical time also break down the retention of formal types. It is precisely this feature of the concept of musical time not to be strictly affiliated with a particular formal type that allows Adorno to apply this concept over larger spans of music history.

4. TOWARDS THE END OF A HISTORY OF FORMAL TYPES? ADORNO'S ANTICIPATION OF A 'MUSIQUE INFORMELLE'

Thus far we have attempted to shed some light on Adorno's conception of an immanent history inscribed in the development of forms, and the idea that he distilled elements and mechanisms from formal types and related these to a wider field of aesthetic problems. In this context, the idea of 'constructing out' or 'liquidisation' has been addressed as a crucial motif in both of my previous sections in this chapter. Developed in particular in his monograph on Berg, Adorno's concept of 'liquidisation'⁵⁰ signifies the culmination of what he considered to be the dynamisation of the 'subject' (as 'subjectivity') within the 'object' as the 'objectivity' of the sonata form. Adorno opened up this perspective in a fragment on Beethoven from 1948, self-critically referring to ideas first expressed in the earlier drafts of *Philosophie der neuen Musik* (1940-1941). He claimed that in addition to his early examination of the 'subject-object-dialectic [...] between the composer and handed-down form'⁵¹ (and here he referred to the historical dialectic of musical material), there was another subject-object-dialectic 'in the *strictest* sense'⁵² at work,

⁵⁰ Liquidisation is one of the pivotal concepts in Adorno's book on Berg. Please refer in particular to Adorno's essay on Berg's String Quartet, op. 3, in Adorno, *Berg*, GS 13, pp. 391-401 (esp. p. 392). Central to his thought here is the idea of liquidisation in the notion of 'Verflüssigung' or 'to dissolve something in liquid'.

⁵¹ 'Subjekt-Objekt-Dialektik [...] zwischen dem Komponisten und der tradierten Form'; Adorno, *Beethoven*, p. 98.

⁵² 'im *strengsten* Sinn'; *ibid.*, p. 99.

to the extent that a kind of ‘hollow space’⁵³ is allocated where the ‘subjective’ can develop (hinting here at the formal unit of the ‘development’) and which is reserved within the ‘objectivity’ of the overall schematised design of the sonata form. He writes: ‘[t]he scheme of the sonata principle contains parts which are already *aimed at* with the subjective [...]. The dialectic of the subject and of the object in music springs from this relationship to the schematic aspects of form.’⁵⁴ For Adorno, the development is—and he illustrated this thought by utilizing the older English language concept of ‘[f]antasia section’⁵⁵—the only formal unit of the sonata form which is free from formal compulsions as ‘it is not predetermined by rules concerning themes, modulations, or routes, etc.’⁵⁶ It is against this background that Adorno finally considered the development, understood in Hegelian terms, to be—and, indeed, this could arguably be a philosophical definition of it—‘the movement of the concept in the object itself’.⁵⁷

If we take this tendency towards an increase in the significance of the development (‘Durchführung’) of the sonata form to its fullest articulation we reach a crucial motif in Adorno’s highly significant late essay ‘Vers une musique informelle’. Here Adorno argued that the historical dialectic of musical material is enacted by the tendency of the ‘subjective’ to take over the ‘objective’ frame of formal types, correspondingly leading to the suspension of any formal typology and so signifying the historical dismissal of any formal heteronomy. With a ‘musique informelle’ he anticipated a type of music

which has discarded all forms which are external or abstract or which confront it in an inflexible way; a type of music which indeed constitutes itself, completely free of anything irreducibly alien to itself or heteronomously superimposed on it, in an objectively compelling way, and not in terms of heteronomous laws.⁵⁸

⁵³ ‘Hohlraum’; *ibid.*, p. 98.

⁵⁴ ‘Das Sonatenschema enthält Partien[,] die schon aufs Subjekt *angelegt* sind [...]. Die Dialektik zwischen Subjekt und Objekt in der Musik entspringt [...] im Verhältnis jener schematischen Momente der Form.’ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

⁵⁵ ‘Fantasia section’; *ibid.*, p. 100; see also the term ‘Phantasie-Sektion’, *ibid.*, p. 101.

⁵⁶ Adorno, *ibid.*, p. 100.

⁵⁷ ‘die Bewegung des Begriffs in der Sache an sich’; *ibid.*, p. 99.

⁵⁸ ‘[Gemeint ist eine Musik,] die alle ihr äußerlich, abstrakt, starr gegenüberstehenden Formen abgeworfen hat, die aber, vollkommen frei vom heteronom Auferlegten und ihr Fremden, doch

Seen through the lens of Adorno's Hegelian definition of the formal unit of the development, one might conceive his aesthetic position as expressed in terms of a philosophical realisation of the concept ('Begriff') in the object itself. In concrete terms, if the typological (which is to say, the normative) dimension of the concept of form were to be fully abolished, there would no longer be a heteronomous object corresponding to the concept of form in any generalised sense. In this context Adorno cogently invokes the 'stage when an unconstrained musical nominalism, the rebellion against any generalised musical form, becomes aware of its own restrictions.'⁵⁹ The idea that the historical moment is achievable when form becomes aware of its limits (in terms of the notion of 'sich selbst innewerden') serves to inform Adorno's understanding of the concept of musical form. That is to say, the idea that by liquidising the formal type from within, the essence of the formal type emerges through the individual formal configuration itself, in the process gaining a self-reflexive faculty ('Selbstbewusstsein'), is a conception that could be understood as both the endpoint and the vanishing point of Adorno's 'theory of form'.

In this way, Adorno anticipates that the 'objective constriction' as this had once emerged in the period of the 'Great Tradition' from the schematic understanding of form has to be shifted into the individual work, whereby the individual work is ultimately required to define and develop the 'objective' within itself. In other words, the 'objective' must be yielded up from the inside, so to speak; the form-constitutive momentum has to spring solely from the inherent logic of the individual work. Adorno put this idea quite poetically when he claimed that, in the case of a 'musique informelle', due to the abandonment of 'abstract forms and the bad universality of the inner-compositional categories, the general categories recur within the most inner sense of particularisation, and make them shine forth.'⁶⁰

objektiv zwingend im Phänomen, nicht in diesen auswendigen Gesetzmäßigkeiten sich konstituiert.' Adorno, 'Vers une musique informelle', GS 16, p. 496.

⁵⁹ 'Stadium, da der vollendete kompositorische Nominalismus, die Auflehnung gegen das musikalisch Allgemeine, seiner eigenen Beschränktheit innewird.' Ibid, p. 496.

⁶⁰ 'Verzichtet informelle Musik auf abstrakte Formen, auf musikalisch schlechte Allgemeinheit der innerkompositorischen Kategorien, so kehren die allgemeinen im Innersten der Besonderung wieder und machen diese aufleuchten.' Ibid, p. 496.

Connected to this is arguably one of Adorno's most radical ideas within this context: that the liberation of the subjective from its objective-heteronomous determinacy 'should—wherever this can be achieved without running into a new form of oppression—also strive to do away with the system of co-ordination which has crystallised in the innermost recesses of the musical phenomenon itself.'⁶¹ Thus Adorno argued that the form-generating nucleus of the work needs to get rid of its identifiable traces. While formal types might have provided a 'crutch' to reveal the 'context of meaning' ('Sinnzusammenhang') encoded in the individual configuration of a traditional work, this 'crutch' in the 'musique informelle' is not only to be *adjusted* to stem from its particularisation ('Besonderung'), but rather it is to be *discarded* completely. One might sense in this argument a somewhat solipsistic, or even a hermetically sealed aesthetic position: the individual work, in which form gains a self-reflexive faculty—in the full sense of the Kantian concept of autonomy—ends up marooned on a desert island.

Having said this, the immanent philosophical problem which emerges from the liberation of the 'subjective' from its heteronomous constrictions is that the 'subjective' only gains its potential to 'congeal' or indeed, to 'objectivise' itself when mediated through the objectivity of the heteronomous. That is to say, the idea of an absolute and dynamised subjectivity shatters its own self-determination, and is hence incapable of constituting itself as such. With the identification of this philosophical paradox—one might possibly consider it rather to be an aporia—Adorno sets up a figure of thought which strives to challenge the extent to which it might be possible for the formal determination of the 'subjective' dialectically to be disentangled (as in the German term *entwinden*) from its 'objective' determination:

With the increasing mastery of the material, the events at the subjective pole of music inevitably unsettle the opposite pole, the musical material itself. Misunderstandings arise because of the tenacious resistance of the concept to any

⁶¹ '[...] müßte [...], soweit das ohne abermalige Unterdrückung möglich ist, auch der Niederschläge des Koordinatensystems im Innern der Phänomene sich zu entledigen suchen.' Ibid, p. 496.

abstract designation. But this resistance is historically carried out within the concept of form itself.⁶²

Here we arrive at a fundamental point within my attempt to outline a ‘history of musical forms’ in Adorno’s writings: as a corollary of the anticipated ultimate liberation of the subject and, inextricably interwoven with this, the anticipated extinction of any formal typology, the historical subject-object dialectic between which the musical material negotiates has itself been historically overcome. In a quite literal sense, Adorno conceived the idea of a ‘*musique informelle*’ to be ultimately directed against what actually constitutes it, which is the concept of musical material.⁶³ In fact, Adorno’s concept of a ‘*musique informelle*’ can be read as a fundamental reflection on the idea that a ‘history of *formal types*’ might have come to a historical end: formal types arguably would have been fully ‘constructed out’. This would not of itself, however, signify the end of a ‘history of musical *forms*’.

⁶² ‘Was am subjektiven Pol geschah, erschüttert, mit steigender Materialbeherrschung, den Gegenpol, das musikalische Material selbst. Zum Mißverständnis verleitet der zähe Widerstand seines Begriffs gegen die abstrakte Benennung. Den aber leistet er als ein historischer.’ Ibid, p. 503.

⁶³ Already Peter Bürger had theorised the end of the ‘unilineal’ progression of music history towards a decay and therein a fragmentation of the concept of musical material; see Peter Bürger, *Theorie der Avantgarde* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1980). The dilution of the concept of material by the period of postmodernism is controversial; Claus-Steffan Mahnkopf, for example, is representative of an interpretation of the concept of musical material beyond the postmodern period. See for example, Claus-Steffan Mahnkopf, ‘Theorie der musikalischen Postmoderne’, *Musik & Ästhetik*, 46 (2008), pp. 10-32; and idem, *Kritische Theorie der Musik*, pp. 101-110 and 140-149.

CHAPTER 3

MUSICAL FORM ON THE EDGE OF MUSIC ANALYSIS AND MUSIC AESTHETICS: ON THE CONCEPTS OF ‘TONALITY’ AND ‘CONSISTENCY’

1. INTRODUCTION

In conversation with Josef Früchtl in February 1988, one year before he died, Carl Dahlhaus—for whom Adorno’s musical writings had been the subject of a lifelong employment—reflected upon Adorno’s philosophy of music:

Adorno’s thinking is at its strongest when reflecting upon musical details; it is at its weakest, in my opinion, in his understanding of music theoretical basic terms, an understanding which is obscurely conservative. In other words, the fundamental music theory on which he builds upon is rather simplistic, yet the reflections which he elevates to are extremely differentiated.¹

At a later point of time during this conversation, in response to Früchtl—who had asked Dahlhaus to specify exactly which music theoretical concepts he was thinking about—Dahlhaus stated:

Fundamental concepts such as polyphony, counterpoint, harmonics, rhythm: concepts which Adorno—who as a rule was normally occupied by the compulsion to reflect upon these categories dialectically—simply took for granted. He had very fixed notions about counterpoint and polyphony, ideas which stemmed from Schoenberg or Berg; and he did not put into consideration that these are understandings which you have to put effort into reflecting upon.²

The crux at which Dahlhaus has so insightfully hinted—that Adorno’s music aesthetics are pervaded by a basic disequilibrium, or to put it more critically, a

¹ ‘Am stärksten ist Adorno in der Reflexion über musikalische Details. Am schwächsten ist er, nach meinem Gefühl, in seiner Auffassung musiktheoretischer Grundbegriffe, einer Auffassung, in der er sich als seltsam konservativ erweist. Mit anderen Worten: Die musiktheoretischen Fundamente, auf denen er baut, sind eher einfach: die Reflexionen, zu denen er sich dann erhebt, außerordentlich differenziert.’ Dahlhaus, ‘Aufklärung in der Musik’, p. 124.

² ‘Ganz elementare Begriffe wie Polyphonie, Kontrapunkt, Harmonik, Rhythmus; Begriffe, die Adorno, der doch sonst gewißermaßen von dem Drang besessen war, Kategorien dialektisch zu reflektieren, schlicht und unbefragt voraussetzte. Er hatte ganz feste Vorstellungen von Kontrapunkt und Polyphonie Vorstellungen, die von Schönberg oder Berg stammten, und er kam gar nicht auf die Idee, daß es sich um Auffassungen handelte, die man der Anstrengung der Reflexion unterwerfen sollte.’ Ibid, p. 128.

maladjustment—refers according to Dahlhaus neither to just a blind-spot nor a theoretical facet which might be easily corrected. Rather for Dahlhaus this supposed discrepancy between the understanding of music theoretical concepts and their philosophical reflection makes explicit a basal characteristic of Adorno’s music aesthetics: the social decipherment (‘gesellschaftliche Dechiffrierung’) which is immanent in the autonomous work of art—as Adorno had substantially developed this concept in *Einführung in die Musiksoziologie*—could only succeed if, so Dahlhaus’s conclusion, ‘one maintains a very high level of abstraction’.³

We touched upon the background of this observation in the introductory chapter: although, as we have seen, within the circle around Schoenberg a general field of problems (in the notion of ‘kritisches Problembewusstsein’) concerning the treatment of the concept of form is very evident, the ‘practical’ emphasis upon how to approach the concept of form was somewhat divided. While Schoenberg, Webern, and Ratz developed elements of a ‘functional’ theory of form in aim to analytically capture the form-constitutive means which generate musical contexts (in the terms of ‘Funktionszusammenhänge’) and by which the concept of form is interwoven, peculiarly enough Adorno kept a certain distance to their analytically oriented approach (though he had nonetheless taken in the music analytical categories and elements which the functional theory of form provided). Instead he seemed to elevate somewhat from the mere analytical craft itself, in order to bring broader philosophical dimensions of the concept of form to the fore.

This kind of elevation is reflected in his contemplation of analytical details (and his musical writings are indeed in many places extremely rich in analytically gained insights): one might consider his tendency to immerse himself in the single analytical observation, and to ultimately transfer these to aesthetics, as a kind of ‘refuge’ from otherwise being confronted with the necessity to integrate the particular into the overall large-scale architecture or, in a more general sense, to reflect upon the music theoretical basis from which these observations emerge.⁴ In this context

³ ‘wenn man sich auf einem hohen Abstraktionsniveau hält’; *ibid.*, p. 129.

⁴ Whether this is a strong or weak aspect in Adorno’s music aesthetics must remain at this juncture an undiscussed question. For an opposing evaluation please refer to Agawu, ‘What Adorno Makes Possible for Music Analysis’, 49-55, who has provided a broadly positive evaluation of this idiosyncrasy in Adorno; and to Regina Busch’s critical view as developed in her article ‘Adornos

Paddison has argued that Adorno indeed had a knack for somewhat ‘transcend[ing] the inadequacies of his analytical method’.⁵ Here we exactly touch upon the general discrepancy that Dahlhaus has so felicitously highlighted, and which challenges any attempt of an elucidation of Adorno’s theory of musical form.

Yet although Adorno did not reflect upon music analytical categories in music theoretical terms, he nonetheless had an honest concern not only to transfer the single observation to aesthetics but indeed to make the music theoretical categories themselves an object of philosophical thought. That is to say, he gained rich aesthetic insights on the basis of a profound philosophical understanding of particular theoretical concepts. In fact we have already addressed scattered aspects in the course of the previous chapter where I argued that Adorno, at a fundamental level, charged theoretical concepts with a philosophical dimension (so, for example, we raised the fact that for Adorno the motivic-thematic work was conceived in analogy to Hegel’s philosophical concept of work).

It is argued here that both these spheres, music analysis on the one hand and music aesthetics on the other, cross over in Adorno’s thinking about form. In aim to develop this perspective to a more elaborated degree, I shall in the course of this chapter focus on Adorno’s treatment of the concept of tonality as this is, generally speaking, of crucial significance in the context of musical form. The transition of tonality from a music theoretical concept to a philosophical topos becomes particularly evident in Adorno’s fragments on Beethoven: in this context, Adorno addresses tonality in the terms of the ‘Idealistic “system”’.⁶ Vice versa, Adorno can further be shown to have attempted to pursue exactly the opposite line as well: he also claimed that from music aesthetic considerations, significance for analysis might emerge. This can be demonstrated in regard to his concept of consistency (‘Stimmigkeit’):⁷ conceived essentially as an aesthetic category, it is ultimately set up

“analytische Befunde””, in *Musikalische Analyse und Kritische Theorie: Zu Adornos Philosophie der Musik*, ed. by Adolf Nowak and Markus Fahlbusch (Tutzing: Hans Schneider Verlag, 2007), 123-144.

⁵ Paddison, *Adorno’s Aesthetics of Music*, p. 170.

⁶ I refer to Adorno, *Beethoven*, p. 40: ‘The idealistic “system” within Beethoven’s work is tonality, through the specific function it takes on as itself being fully worked out.’ (‘Das idealistische “System” ist bei Beethoven die Tonalität in der spezifischen Funktion, die sie bei ihm gewinnt, als auskomponierte[.]’).

⁷ The German Original ‘Stimmigkeit’ is translated in different ways: so for example in the translations of Robert Hullot-Kentor (Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, ed. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann [London:

to operate as criterion of value, helping to explain whether the individual formal configuration is 'authentic' when reflected against the historical dialectic of the musical material. That is to say, the music theoretical concept of tonality is understood by Adorno philosophically in terms of German Idealism, while the philosophical-aesthetic concept of consistency is conceived as being technically grounded in the way in which handed-down material (which includes formal and generic types) is mediated within the formal configuration of the individual work. Thus if we take both the concept of tonality and the concept of consistency together, an idea might emerge of how the concept of form in Adorno is axiomatically adjusted within its location on the edge of music analysis and music aesthetics.

By pursuing the approaches of both concepts in the course of this chapter in two distinctive parts, I hope to account for the contributions of both concepts within Adorno's theorisation of the concept of musical form. In so doing, the disequilibrium, as Dahlhaus hinted at, between music theory and music aesthetics in Adorno's thought is certainly not reconciled, but the idiosyncrasies of this constellation as such constitutes an axis which may ultimately open up parts of the the complex discourses with which Adorno's concept of musical form is tied up, and therein critically respond to the traditional 'Formenlehre'.

2. FORM AND TONALITY

2.1. *On the Interrelation of Form and Tonality*

Within Adorno's conception of the musical material as outlined in the previous chapter, tonality is, needless to say, a crucial concept: from the origins of tonal thinking up to the increasing level of emancipation of the dissonance, ultimately

Athlone Press, 1997]); and Anne Mitchell and Wesley Blomster (Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Philosophy* [London: Sheed & Ward, 1987]). The term 'Stimmigkeit' is not consistently translated as 'consistency' but also referred to as 'coherence' or 'accuracy and correctness'. This evokes difficulties: (i) the consistency of the concept as such remains hardly perceivable when translated with various terms; and (ii) in particular the supposed indistinction resulting from translating 'Stimmigkeit' with 'coherence' is misguided. Adorno's conception of 'Stimmigkeit', as I shall argue, is in the later section of this chapter 'On the Relation Between "Consistency" and "Coherence" Around 1800 and 1900' set up in contrast to notions of 'Kohärenz'. Considering these difficulties, I will subsequently give privilege to Paddison's consistent translation of 'Stimmigkeit' as 'consistency' (please refer for example to Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*, p. 89).

resulting in the development of post-tonality, the concept of tonality *immanently* carries out a historical dimension. Crucially serving as one of the conceptual carriers of the historical dialectic of the musical material, in Adorno tonality is thus conceived to be a ‘historically pre-established medium’,⁸ and therein to take on—as a ‘system of co-ordination’ (‘Koordinatensystem’)⁹ or ‘musical idiom’¹⁰—a characteristic by which it itself quasi protrudes from the historical dialectic of the musical material. Hence, at this most general level, tonality is conceived to be somewhat ahistorical, constituting a normative matrix upon which the historical dialectic of the musical material can be traced in its execution.

In this way, for Adorno tonality informs the ‘bad’ universality of a mere formal typology:¹¹ ‘[t]he mightiest formal types—through which music crystallises and is fulfilled, the fugue and the sonata—are begeted to the innermost by tonality.’¹² This becomes particularly evident for Adorno in the sonata form, within which, as he put it, the tonal basic cadence virtually ascends to a kind of Platonic idea.¹³ Adorno compared ‘tonality as a system’ to ‘form as a schematism’, and so tonality takes on the characteristic of an established ‘universality’ to which the musical particularities are subordinated.¹⁴ In this context, Adorno argued that ‘the simplest harmonic

⁸ ‘geschichtlich prästabiliertes Medium’; Adorno, ‘Parataxis’, GS 11, pp. 477-478.

⁹ In Adorno’s music philosophical writings the concept of ‘Koordinatensystem’ is extensively used in reference to tonality, see for example *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, GS 12, p. 78; ‘Tradition’, GS 14, p. 141; ‘Atonales Intermezzo?’, GS 18, p. 95; ‘Warum Zwölftonmusik?’, GS 18, p. 117; ‘Zum Verständnis Schönbergs’, GS 18, p. 431; once Adorno even utilised the term ‘Koordinatensystem der Diatonik’ (‘system of co-ordination of the diatonic scale’), see ‘Improvisation’, GS 16, p. 261.

¹⁰ Adorno used the concept of ‘idiom’ in many different situations throughout the entirety of his music philosophical writings; although in the context of tonality Adorno’s usage of the concept of the ‘idiom’ suggests it to be approximated to the concept of ‘Koordinatensystem’, it nevertheless brings another cluster of implications to the fore; in particular I would like to emphasise that the usage of tonality is, when referred to as ‘idiom’, emphatically made a subject of historically gained conventions, and is further ascribed a considerable dimension of ‘language-character’ (in the notion of Adorno’s term ‘Sprachcharakter’). Please refer for example to Adorno, ‘Form in der neuen Musik’, GS 16, pp. 609, 611, 624; ‘Schubert’, GS 17, p. 30; *Berg: Der Meister des kleinsten Übergangs*, GS 13, pp. 370 and 371; ‘Neue Musik heute’, GS 18, p. 128; ‘Über das gegenwärtige Verhältnis von Philosophie und Musik’, GS 18, p. 161; ‘Der mißbrauchte Barock’, p. 421; *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, GS 12, p. 20 and p. 166; ‘Kriterien der neuen Musik’, GS 16, p. 184.

¹¹ ‘Kriterien der neuen Musik’, GS 16, p. 188.

¹² ‘Die mächtigsten Formtypen, welche die Musik auskristallisiert hat und in denen sie sich erfüllte, Fuge und Sonate, sind bis ins Innerste von der Tonalität erzeugt.’ Adorno, ‘Zum Verständnis Schönbergs’, GS 18, p. 435.

¹³ Adorno, ‘Dritter Mahler-Vortrag’, GS 18, p. 605.

¹⁴ Adorno, ‘Zum Verständnis Schönbergs’, GS 18, p. 431; in *Beethoven* we find this vice versa expressed: ‘all its moments [ie. of Beethoven’s music] can be defined as basic characters of tonality’

relations, as these are concentrated in the cadence, are the archetypes, of which form—itself a synthesis of form and content—deploys.’¹⁵ Thus Adorno considered the aesthetic ‘guarantee of unity’ concerning the music of 1800 to stem to a considerable degree from the form-constitutive power of tonality.¹⁶ However, if a work does not any longer build upon the normative matrix of tonality, these constitutive means of formal types would be ‘deleted’.¹⁷ It is due to this reason that for Adorno the usage of traditional formal types in post-tonal music lacks aesthetic legitimation. His famous critique of Schoenberg’s arguably affirmative employment of the sonata form in the *Bläserquintett* arises against this background: post-tonal music cannot, in Adorno’s perspective, simply retrieve traditional formal schemes, and all the more so when obviously treated in an uncritical way.¹⁸

At this most general level, the normative matrix of tonality in Adorno’s music aesthetics is analogously conceived to word language: similar to one of Jacques Derrida’s central considerations according to which word language is in the a priori constituted by the other—indicating that language is always already the language of the other—and thereby constitutes the medium through which ‘individuation’ is made

(‘alle Momente [ie. der Musik Beethovens] lassen sich als Grundcharaktere der Tonalität bestimmen ’ [p. 40]).

¹⁵ ‘Die einfachsten tonalen Verhältnisse, wie sie in der Kadenz sich konzentrieren, waren die Urbilder dessen, was in der Form, ihrerseits der Synthesis von Form und Inhalt, sich entfaltetete.’ Adorno, ‘Form in der neuen Musik’, GS 16, pp. 608-609.

¹⁶ Adorno, ‘Zur Vorgeschichte der Reihenkombination’, GS 16, p. 76.

¹⁷ ‘ausgelöscht’; Adorno, ‘Zum Verständnis Schönbergs’, GS 18, p. 444.

¹⁸ In this context it is important to acknowledge that Adorno’s position changed over the course of time; although I refer to the late Adorno, one might nonetheless also note his famous essay on Schoenberg in *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, where Adorno still approached the *Bläserquintett* in quite optimistic terms, as if Schoenberg had conceived of the sonata form historically for the last time; Adorno perhaps even forced himself to consider Schoenberg’s work in the light of might have ‘constructed out’ (‘auskonstruiert’) the sonata principle (p. 97), which can hardly be cogently maintained when it comes down to analysis. My reading of this controversial aspect is that Adorno’s later critique became tinted by the increasing disappointment which he felt when recognising that in particular Schoenberg and the late Webern, broadly speaking, did not seem to develop a critical aesthetic attitude regarding their usage of formal types (in regard to Berg, however, Adorno did not develop this critique to the same extent). As I will attempt to demonstrate later, in the context of his critique the late Adorno himself somewhat tended to reify the sonata principle, the door was then closed for him to consider any further possibilities of critical potentials emerging from the usage of traditional formal types in the context of post-tonal music. This supposed reification is based on the consistent line of argument, which the middle Adorno had not yet at that time conducted to the same emphatic level; the argument that formal types can hardly be aesthetically ‘legitimised’ in post-tonal music as their constitutive momentum, as outlined, has been ‘deleted’ (see n. 18) is emphatically argued by the late Adorno to whom I give privilege in my presentation of his thought.

possible,¹⁹ so it is the case with tonality for Adorno. It is in this sense that the music theoretical concept of tonality gains the philosophical feature of a genuinely dialectical topos: ‘[t]onality [...] mediates between [...] *direct musical language* and *norms* that have crystallised from within this [system of] language.’²⁰ Indeed, Adorno compares the harmonic form-constitutive means (such as cadences, formation of melodic phrases) with rhetorical means, and he argues that they are ‘cured from their abstractedness *by means of the context*’.²¹ In so doing, the composer gains the capability to ‘speak’ his own musical language:

While tonality as a spoken language has command over the general formulas—from the single tone and the interval progression up to the large-scale architecture—it supplely affords room for the particularity in the combination of these elements (and this is to say, the shaping of the individual character, and the individual expression). Indeed tonality had pre-organised all of its phenomenological manifestations similarly in terms of an objective language, and so is similar to word language; at the same time tonality contained a countless amount of possibilities of combinations, and in particular the possibilities to saturate language with expression; so that the universality of tonality could meet the particularity, and so that the particularity frequently could be yielded by the universality.²²

¹⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Le monolinguisme de l'autre: ou la prothèse d'origine* (Paris: Galilée, 1996).

²⁰ ‘Tonalität [...] vermittelt[] zwischen einer [mehr oder minder spontan von den Menschen, wenn man so sagen darf, gesprochenen,] unmittelbaren Musiksprache und Normen, die innerhalb dieser Sprache sich auskristallisiert hatten.’ Adorno, ‘Schwierigkeiten’, GS 17, p. 278 (my emphasis). In his fragments on Beethoven, tonality is explicitly declared to be a concept of mediation: ‘tonality does not remain abstract but is mediated: it is becoming; that is to say, tonality is only constituted through the coherence between its moments.’ (‘[...] sie [ie. die Tonalität] bleibt nicht abstrakt sondern ist *vermittelt*: sie ist das *Werden*, d.h. konstituiert sich nur im Zusammenhang der Momente.’ [*Beethoven*, p. 40]). This double character (conceived in an undialectical way) of being both a ‘bad’ universality and at the same a concept of mediation occasionally results in Adorno in paradoxical but nonetheless illuminating remarks: ‘“The Absolute” in Beethoven is tonality. And it is no more absolute than Hegel’s absolute.’ (‘“Das Absolute” bei Beethoven – das ist die Tonalität. Genau so wenig absolut wie das Hegelsche. Auch: Geist.’ [ibid, p. 45]). It is exactly in this sense that he stated, as aforementioned, that tonality is the ‘idealistic “system”’ (see n. 7).

²¹ ‘von ihrer Abstraktheit geheilt *kraft des Zusammenhangs*’; Adorno, ‘Fragment über Musik und Sprache’, GS 16, p. 252 (my emphasis); see also idem, ‘Neue Musik heute’, GS 18, p. 128.

²² ‘Während die Tonalität so wie die gesprochene Sprache über allgemeine Formeln vom Einzelklang und der Intervallfolge bis hinauf zur Großarchitektur verfügte, bot sie schmiegsam in der Kombination dieser Elemente dem Besonderen, will sagen: der charakteristischen Einzelprägung und dem individuellen Ausdruck, Raum. Zwar hatte Tonalität im Sinn einer objektiven Sprache alles Erscheinende vororganisiert, ähnlich wie die Wortsprachen; gleichzeitig aber enthielt sie ungezählte Möglichkeiten von Kombinationen und vor allem die, sich mit Ausdruck zu sättigen, so daß in jenes Allgemeine das Besondere eingehen konnte, ja vielfach vom Allgemeinen gezeitigt wurde.’ Adorno, ‘Schwierigkeiten’, GS 17, pp. 280-281.

Hence Adorno conceived the grammar of word language in congruity with tonality as the normative matrix of musical language.²³ This comparison is ultimately reflected in Adorno's consideration that tonality has at its substance a trait of syntactic actualisation: 'punctuation [derived from word language] is bound to the schema of tonality'.²⁴ Thus he recognised that an immanent trait of tonality is to set free the potentials for formations (and so being the impetus of 'Ausformung'), as if tonality headed—or, so to speak, was intrinsically motivated—towards performance, and in this sense features punctuation and structurally performed music.²⁵ By raising Adorno's considerations concerning the potentials 'Ausformung' as ascribed to tonality, tonality embodies—in aesthetic terms—a language system in its own terms.

2.2. *On the Dialectic of Tonality and 'Idea' ('Einfall')*

In dialectical correspondence to the concept of tonality is, in Adorno's thought, the individual or subjective 'idea' ('Einfall'), in traditional music the motivic-thematic material (Schoenberg would refer to this as 'Grundgestalt'). The formal configuration may thus be understood as a *mediation* between the 'objective system' of tonality and the positing of the 'subjective idea'. Along the lines of this dialectical constellation, Adorno developed different stages in music history, which I shall subsequently elucidate in more detail.

2.2.1. *Beethoven*

The idea that a composer might 'speak' his own musical language is, as hinted at, in Adorno's terms not a supposedly romantic idealisation of music; such an understanding of 'musical language'—which would be a misunderstanding in terms of Adorno's conception of it—would only result in an idealised, and so hemmed in capacity for music to be able to actually say what cannot be expressed by word

²³ For an introduction on the relation of music and language in Adorno, please refer to Susanne Kogler, 'Musik und Sprache', in *Adorno Handbuch: Leben – Werk – Wirkung*, ed. by Richard Klein, Johann Kreuzer and Stefan Müller-Doohm (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2011), 167-174; Urbanek, *Auf der Suche nach einer zeitgemäßen Musikästhetik*, pp. 134-164; special emphasis may be given to Albrecht Wellmer, *Versuch über Musik und Sprache* (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2009), esp. pp. 15-73.

²⁴ 'sprachliche Satzzeichen [sind] an das Schema der Tonalität gebunden'; Adorno, 'Satzzeichen', GS 11, p. 107.

²⁵ Adorno, 'Der mißbrauchte Barock', GS 10, vol. 1, p. 418.

language, thus to go ‘beyond’ it.²⁶ But for Adorno there is no ‘beyond’. Rather he conceived ‘musical language’ to be solely a technical phenomenon, entailing the subjective content (‘subjektiver Gehalt’) purely in terms of the musical structure.

Given these general considerations of the dialectical relationship between ‘tonality’ and ‘Einfall’, we touch upon a crucial aspect concerning why Beethoven was of such crucial significance for Adorno. He self-programmatically claimed that his projected study on Beethoven ‘can only come into being by developing the concept of tonality’;²⁷ and, vice versa, ‘[t]o understand Beethoven means to understand *tonality*’.²⁸ Thus Adorno found both concepts of tonality and ‘Einfall’ at their substance inextricably intertwined in Beethoven: for Adorno, Beethoven seemed to have *narrowed* the genuine dialectical distance between ‘tonality’ and ‘Einfall’ up to the point where both poles converged into one another. That is to say, Adorno considered Beethoven not to have merely utilised tonality in order to gain musical particularities (Adorno would speak of ‘*musikalische Einzelcharaktere*’), but rather to have made tonality itself ‘thematic’.²⁹ In other words, Adorno argued that Beethoven, so to speak, expressed the ‘essence’ of tonality, ‘rather than to negate it through expression’.³⁰

Certainly, it is no coincidence that Adorno substantially developed this aspect of his interpretation of Beethoven in the essay ‘Parataxis’, actually devoted to Hölderlin. Here the idea is negotiated that language has cut off the subject, and so speaks for—and one might add, through—the subject ‘which is not any longer able to speak for itself’.³¹ It is this figure of thought, originally raised in the context of Hölderlin’s language criticism, which Adorno ultimately extrapolated to Beethoven: by ‘working through’ (‘*durcharbeiten*’) the motivic-thematic materials—even though

²⁶ Cf. Wellmer, who has emphatically criticised such a misconception in *Versuch über Musik und Sprache*, pp. 37-38.

²⁷ ‘Die ganze Arbeit [über Beethoven] muß eine über die Tonalität werden.’ Adorno, *Beethoven*, p. 82.

²⁸ ‘Beethoven verstehen heißt die Tonalität verstehen.’ Ibid, p. 82.

²⁹ Adorno, *Berg: Der Meister des kleinsten Übergangs*, GS 13, p. 370; see further idem, *Beethoven*, p. 84-85.

³⁰ ‘anstatt sie vom Ausdruck her einzig zu negieren’; Adorno, ‘Parataxis’, GS 11, p. 478.

³¹ ‘[Indem die Sprache die Fäden zum Subjekt durchschneidet, redet sie für das Subjekt,] das von sich aus [...] nicht mehr reden kann.’ Ibid, p. 478. See Johann Kreuzer who has touched upon the approximation between Hölderlin and Beethoven in Adorno in his article ‘Hölderlin: Parataxis’, in *Adorno Handbuch: Leben – Werk – Wirkung*, ed. Richard Klein, Johann Kreuzer and Stefan Müller-Doohm (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2011), 183-192 (p. 191, col. 1-2).

their actual ‘materiality’ is already from the beginning almost negligible³²—through all imaginable ways of variations, ‘the naked reference frame of tonal basic relations’³³ ultimately emerges.

If we follow Adorno’s figure of thought to its fullest articulation, we can soften the sharp contrast which he conceived between the middle Beethoven and Beethoven’s late style.³⁴ The escape of ‘subjectivity’ which Adorno saw in several gestures and the abruptness of modulations in, for example, Beethoven’s *Six Bagatelles*, op. 126,³⁵ would hence have to be considered already foreshadowed in the middle Beethoven (albeit in a different way): for Adorno the middle Beethoven brings the ‘nakedness’ of tonality to the fore (that is, naked in the sense that tonality is not any longer ‘superimposed’ by the urge for individuations or ‘Einfall’). Beethoven, Adorno concluded, disclosed the ‘relative indeterminacy of the mere basic relations of tonality’,³⁶ whereupon he not only implicitly criticised the ‘bad’ universality of tonality, but in fact subdued the paradox to transcend the ‘bad’ universality to its dialectical opposite, the subjective ‘idea’ (‘Einfall’). Thus Beethoven is considered to have contorted the dialectic poles ‘tonality’ and ‘Einfall’. This is the aforementioned moment when tonality becomes itself ‘thematic’, or causes itself to ‘speak’.

2.2.2 Schubert

Adorno saw the dialectic of ‘tonality’ and ‘idea’ (‘Einfall’) newly negotiated and determined in the transition from Viennese Classicism to the so-called ‘romantic era’. Adorno’s diagnosis for Viennese Classicism was that in general the potentials for the

³² In his fragments concerning Beethoven, Adorno referred to Beethoven’s themes as if they were devoid of quality (‘qualitätslose[] Themen’); Adorno, *Beethoven*, p. 49. For a detailed discussion of Adorno’s idea in relation to the first movement of Beethoven’s *Eroica*, please refer to Urbanek, *Auf der Suche nach einer zeitgemäßen Musikästhetik*, pp. 174-177.

³³ ‘[d]as nackte Bezugssystem der tonalen Grundverhältnisse’; Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, p. 267. Here a reference to Schenker is conspicuous when comparing this to Adorno, ‘On the Problem of Music Analysis’, *Music Analysis*, 1:2 (1982), 169-187: ‘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.’ (p. 175)

³⁴ Adorno, *Beethoven*, p. 36.

³⁵ I refer to Adorno’s essays ‘Ludwig van Beethoven: Sechs Bagatellen für Klavier, op. 126’, GS 18, 185-188; and idem, ‘Spätstil Beethovens’, GS 17, 13-17 (esp. p. 16).

³⁶ ‘relativen Unbestimmtheit bloßer Grundverhältnisse der Tonalität’; Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, p. 276.

subjective 'idea' ('Einfall') to emerge were significantly determined by, as well as limited through, tonality:

The possibilities of "invention", which in the age of competition seemed for the aestheticians to be indefinite, are almost countable within the schema of tonality: on the one hand broadly defined by broken triads, on the other by the diatonic sequences of the second. During the period of Viennese Classicism, when the totality of form had more weight than the melodic "idea" [*Einfall*], the composer has not stumbled against the limitedness of the available.³⁷

At the same time, for Adorno the status of the musical material ('Materialstand') concerning ca. 1800 did not articulate the pressing need to create individual musical entities ('musikalische Einzelcharaktere') which would aim to elevate over the heteronomous binding of formal types and, so to speak, to superimpose them: in a certain sense, these motives and themes do not provide character enough to 'rebel' against the heteronomy by which they are significantly constituted. The 'Einfall' is rather primarily regarded as serving the overall integral design. Adorno even argued in this context that due to this formal binding in conjunction with the basic context which tonality provided, there was not even a need for a kind of surplus or a change of timbre ('Klangfarbe'):³⁸ the 'stages and perspectives of modulation suggest development even there [...], where what has been developed rests weak and unspecific.'³⁹ Instead of composing an 'exuberance' of the 'subjective', Adorno argued that this aesthetic attitude made use of the fact that tonality genuinely affects the formal configuration.⁴⁰ At this stage of music history, according to Adorno, the composer could rely upon the form-constitutive character provided by tonality. Thereby Adorno saw the nature of the randomness of the 'idea' ('Einfall') in terms of

³⁷ 'Die Möglichkeiten von "Erfindung", die im Konkurrenzzeitalter den Ästhetikern unbegrenzt schienen, sind im Schema der Tonalität fast zählbar: weitgehend definiert einerseits vom zerlegten Dreiklang, andererseits der diatonischen Sekundenfolge. Zur Zeit des Wiener Klassizismus, als die Formtotalität mehr galt denn der melodische "Einfall", hatte man an solcher Enge des Verfügbaren sich nicht gestoßen.' Adorno, *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, GS 12, p. 196; see further *ibid.*, p. 55.

³⁸ Adorno, 'Die Instrumentation von Bergs frühen Liedern', GS 16, pp. 101-102.

³⁹ 'Stufen und modulatorische Perspektiven [suggerierten] Entwicklung auch dort [...], wo das Entwickelte schwach und unspezifisch sich hielt' Adorno, 'Kriterien der neuen Musik', GS 16, p. 217.

⁴⁰ Adorno, 'Schwierigkeiten', GS 17, p. 282.

an indifference reflected in the large-scale architecture which is carved out up to the middleground solely in the extent of very basic tonal relations.⁴¹

Here a main characteristic of Adorno's considerations concerning the transition to the so-called 'romantic period' becomes evident, and which can be ascertained along the dialectic constellation of the topoi 'tonality' and the subjective 'idea' ('Einfall'). Although for Adorno the 'Einfall' is a phenomenon that emerges by means of the form-constitutive context ('Zusammenhang') which tonality provides, he considered the creative room for manoeuvre of the 'Einfall' concerning ca. 1800 to be still somewhat constrained: as much as tonality is constitutive for the 'Einfall', so it also at the same time tends to curtail the developmental potentials of the 'Einfall'. At this juncture Schubert has a crucial position in Adorno's interpretation of music history. On the one hand Adorno argued already in his early essay on the composer that 'Schubert's themes stand in early scorn to the architecture of tonality',⁴² and that he had developed musically individual entities ('musikalische Einzelcharaktere') whose weight 'threatens the life of the integral form of the Viennese Classicism [...]'.⁴³ On the other hand—and despite the fact that for Adorno the significance of the subjective content ('subjektiver Gehalt') in Schubert had significantly increased—he nonetheless still perceived a limitation of the creative room for the 'Einfall' to set its potentials free, due to the fact that the elaborations of tonality as a system still remained to be fully developed at that time (in this sense, tonality was little 'auskonstruiert[]'⁴⁴)—a limitation, as we will subsequently ascertain, Adorno no longer saw to be the case to the same degree with, for example, Brahms and Berg.

2.2.3. *Brahms and Berg*

What comes along with the increasing emancipation of the dissonance and, and as a corollary to this, the increasing dissolution of tonality, is a new ascertainment of the relationship between the subjective 'idea' ('Einfall') and tonality. Adorno understood

⁴¹ Adorno, *Der getreue Korrepetitor*, GS 15, p. 343.

⁴² 'Schuberts Themen [...] in frühem Hohn auf die Architektur der Tonalität'; Adorno, 'Schubert', GS 17, p. 28.

⁴³ 'der integralen Form des Wiener Klassizismus ans Leben will'; Adorno, 'Kriterien der neuen Musik', GS 16, p. 212.

⁴⁴ Please refer to Adorno, 'Dritter Mahler-Vortrag', GS 18, p. 615.

that the more the extension (or, dissolution) of tonality increased, so did the scope of ‘Einfall’, leading to the following figure of thought: where a large-scale architecture determining the basic musical context was historically no longer a given due to the increasing emancipation of the dissonance—and we have very good reason to see the dialectic coherence of the sonata form already unhinged and hence in limbo in Schubert⁴⁵—the composer must generate, in order to obtain formal consistency (‘Stimmigkeit’), the musical cogency of a large-scale context through means of the motivic-thematic work. For Adorno the historical truth of this axiomatic structure is strikingly evidenced in the period of post-tonal music: ‘[p]articularly seen in regard to the compositional techniques, there is no “chaotic detachment of contexts” which is dominating in atonality, but the strictest dialectic of question and answer.’⁴⁶ Therein to a certain degree Adorno considered the essential momentum of the ‘Einfall’ to be repeated and converted at the same time: the ‘subjective’ to some extent soars and so more and more becomes the exorbitant force up until the moment is reached when everything is sheer ‘Einfall’ in a fully ‘legitimised’ way. In order to better grasp this consideration, Adorno developed the neologism of the ‘panthematism’ (‘das Panthematische’), for him already evident in Brahms,⁴⁷ and ultimately executed par excellence by Berg:

Berg’s music is—like that of the Schoenberg school in general—panthematic, which is to say, there is no note which has not been derived and which has not been educed from the motivic context of the whole; at least not since Berg shook off the heavy weight of the tonal harmonies, which is contrary to the panthematic technique.⁴⁸

Here Adorno touched upon arguably one of the most crucial aesthetic aspects of the Second Viennese School, and which Webern ultimately made explicit in his famous

⁴⁵ I allude to Adorno, ‘Kriterien der neuen Musik’, GS 16, pp. 172-173.

⁴⁶ ‘Gerade innertechnisch gesehen, herrscht in der Atonalität keine “chaotische Bindungslosigkeit”, sondern die strengste Dialektik von Frage und Antwort.’ Adorno, ‘Gegen die neue Tonalität’, GS 18, p. 104.

⁴⁷ This becomes evident for example in Adorno, ‘Zum Verständnis Schönbergs’, GS 18, p. 436; please refer to Adorno, ‘Kriterien der neuen Musik’, GS 16, pp. 217-218.

⁴⁸ ‘Bergs Musik ist, wie die der Schönbergschule insgesamt, panthematisch, will sagen, es gibt keine Note, die nicht abgeleitet wäre, die nicht aus dem Motivzusammenhang des Ganzen folgte; jedenfalls nicht, seitdem Berg das Schwergewicht der tonalen Harmonik abschüttelte, die dem panthematischen Verfahren entgegen ist.’ Adorno, *Quasi una fantasia*, GS 16, p. 416.

claim to generate as many musical relationships as possible, and so to obtain an unimaginably condensed musical context. In a certain sense, Adorno considered the Second Viennese School to have historically redeemed what under the ‘dictum’ of tonality had not previously been possible: to understand the musical context from *within* itself, that is to say ‘without having been provided an exterior system of coordination which only releases pressure, and wherein the specific is nothing but minimal variance.’⁴⁹

Adorno’s aversion to a return to traditional formal types in post-tonal music implicitly points at the blank space which the end of the era of traditional ‘Formenlehre’ leaves behind. Since tonality had become ‘extinct’, for Adorno a theorisation of form had to begin anew under historically altered signs. This is the *desideratum* which Adorno faced. In this context Adorno’s philosophical concept of ‘consistency’ (‘Stimmigkeit’) gains particular significance: it has taken in the critical consciousness that any heteronomous conception of form needs to be substituted with in favour of a ‘sense of form’ (‘Formgefühl’). Having said this, though the concept of ‘consistency’ is certainly not a fully satisfying response to the blank space aforementioned, it is, as I shall develop in the following section, nonetheless informed by the honest effort to understand musical form in a historically more liberated way than in any heteronomous terms.

3. ‘CONSISTENCY’ (‘STIMMIGKEIT’) AND FORM

3.1. *On the Concept of Consistency*

The concept of consistency (‘Stimmigkeit’) is one of the core concepts within Adorno’s theory of musical form (though this remains as yet widely undiscerned).⁵⁰

⁴⁹ ‘[...] ohne daß einem von außen her bereits ein Koordinatensystem beigelegt würde, das einen entlastet und in dem das Spezifische nichts ist als minimale Abweichung.’ Adorno, ‘Zum Verständnis Schönbergs’, GS 18, p. 431.

⁵⁰ The conjuncture between the concept of form and the concept of consistency has been highlighted by Gianmario Borio, ‘Fortschritt und Geschichtsbewußtsein in den musiktheoretischen Schriften von Krenek und Adorno’, in *Ernst Krenek (Musik-Konzepte 39/40)*, ed. Heinz-Klaus Metzger and Rainer Riehn (München: text + kritik, 1984) p. 130. To my knowledge only Max Paddison (Paddison,

It needs to be seen in the context of the principal discomfort which he felt in regard to a heteronomously oriented understanding of form (along the lines of the traditional ‘Formenlehre’⁵¹), which might have motivated the efforts which he made in attempt to escape, and ultimately to overcome any reductive ‘formalism’: ‘[t]he non-reflected concept of form, with its hue and cry over formalism, sets form in opposition to the content of poems, compositions, and paintings, and so deduces from the individual work the universal organisation.’⁵² Shortly before this passage in the *Ästhetische Theorie*, Adorno had developed the conceptual net of form, content, and consistency as follows:

Incontestably the quintessence of all elements of logicity, or, more broadly, consistency in artworks, is form. It is astonishing, however, how little aesthetics reflected on the category of form, and how much it, the distinguishing aspect of art, has been believed to be unproblematically given. The difficulty in getting a grasp on it is in part due to the entwinement of all aesthetic form with content; form is not to be conceived in opposition to content but through it [...].⁵³

These remarks can clearly be read as a critique of any heteronomous understanding of form, particularly as any notion of ‘becoming’ can hardly be encompassingly discerned along the dialectical axis of the ‘fulfilment’ and ‘non-fulfilment’ of a formal schematism. Even if the individual work is explicitly emphasised in its deformed (and that is to say, deviated) characteristic, the late Adorno—who might have anticipated a music theoretical equivalence to the ‘musique informelle’—would

Adorno's Aesthetics of Music, pp. 89 and 93-94) and Adolf Nowak (Adolf Nowak, ‘Stimmigkeit als analytisches Kriterium’, in *Musikalische Analyse und Kritische Theorie: Zu Adornos Philosophie der Musik*, ed. Adolf Nowak and Markus Fahlbusch [Tutzing: Hans Schneider Verlag, 2007], 176-196) have developed this concept thus far.

⁵¹ Referring to the heteronomous character of formal types in this section, the dimensions of tonality as they are absorbed in the formal configuration of the individual work are also implicitly applied.

⁵² ‘Der unreflektierte, in allem Gezeter über Formalismus nachhallende Formbegriff setzt Form dem Gedichteten, Komponierten, Gemalten als davon abhebbare Organisation entgegen.’; Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, p. 213.

⁵³ ‘Unstreitig ist der Inbegriff aller Momente von Logizität oder, weiter, Stimmigkeit an den Kunstwerken das, was ihre Form heißen darf. Erstaunlich, wie wenig diese Kategorie von der Ästhetik reflektiert ward, wie sehr sie ihr, als das Unterscheidende der Kunst, unproblematisch gegeben dünkte. Die Schwierigkeit, ihrer sich zu versichern, ist mitbedingt von der Verflochtenheit aller ästhetischen Form mit Inhalt; nicht allein gegen ihn sondern durch ihn hindurch ist sie zu denken [...].’ Ibid, p. 211.

highlight (arguably in critical reflection upon his own music theoretical background⁵⁴) that such a heteronomous approach still tended to fall short. Locating the individual formal configuration upon this dialectical axis hence became suspicious to him, as its axiomatic structure is in the a priori affirmative and therefore a confirmation of any schematic understanding. It is against this background that the concept of consistency ('Stimmigkeit') is set up and finally gains significance. Rather than to mediate between 'fulfilment' and 'non-fulfilment' of a particular formal type, Adorno conceived along with the concept of consistency a music aesthetic criterion⁵⁵ which is technically grounded in the way in which handed-down material (which includes formal and generic types) is mediated within the formal configuration of the individual work.⁵⁶

In this way, the concept of consistency should not be misunderstood with what the German original 'Stimmigkeit' might perhaps falsely evoke: that the concept of consistency aims to elucidate whether the overall formal architecture of the individual work is 'counterbalanced', and finally succeeds in being stabilised. This idea does not account for what Adorno's concept of consistency is substantiated with. In order to provide a more definite contour to this, Adorno illuminated his conception of 'Stimmigkeit' by negation, rhetorically playing the different conceptions off against the singular of the concept which they share: '[w]hat is only and thoroughly consistent, is not consistent. What is nothing but consistent, regardless of what is to be formed, ceases to be something in itself and degenerates into something completely for-an-other, that is academic polish.'⁵⁷

Hence the concept of consistency may not be confused with an ahistorical conception of formal coherence. By pursuing the question concerning whether the individual work is consistent or not, Adorno rather aimed to discern the relationship

⁵⁴ This can be evidenced by reference to Adorno's talk 'On the Problem of Music Analysis': '[...] 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' (p. 184).

⁵⁵ Ernst Krenek and Theodor W. Adorno, 'Arbeitsprobleme des Komponisten', GS 19, p. 436.

⁵⁶ Please refer to Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*, p. 89.

⁵⁷ 'Was nur und durchaus stimmt, stimmt nicht. Das nichts als Stimmige, bar des zu Formenden, hört auf in sich etwas zu sein und artet zum Für anderes aus: das heißt akademische Glätte.' Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, p. 281. Adorno argued similarly in his exchange with Krenek: 'Consistency is not [...] defined through some classicist ideal of a smooth and harmless structure of the architecture [...].' ('Stimmigkeit ist [...] nicht durch irgendein klassizistisches Ideal glatter schadenloser Gefügtheit des Gebildes definiert [...].') Adorno and Krenek, 'Arbeitsprobleme des Komponisten', GS 19, p. 437.

between the individual formal configuration and the status of the musical material ('Materialstand'). Thus the concept of consistency is genuinely dynamically conceived, and can indeed be regarded as a tool for what Adorno would refer to as 'historical analysis'.⁵⁸ In attempt to further concretise this consideration, I put forward that the concept of consistency concerns in Adorno a roughly two-fold division.

On the one hand there is, as we touched upon in the section on tonality, the 'idea' ('Einfall') posited in a traditional sense as the motivic-thematic 'source material' at which 'work' is done, or which is 'worked through' (Schoenberg would refer to the smallest entity for a composer to work with as the 'Grundgestalt' which needs to be made subject of development in variations throughout time). On the other hand, there is the pre-composed 'logic' (as broadly associated with the dodecaphonic and serial music) which is not actually developed in time but is rather predetermined; the result as this crystallises in the formal configuration is then merely projected in time, wherein it contradicts the first category which heads towards an understanding of form as 'becoming'. Both types can thus be qualified along the lines of two different attributes of consistency: the *aesthetic* and the *technical*.

This distinction can be found in the *Philosophie der neuen Musik*. Here Adorno argued that '[c]onsistency as mathematical accuracy takes the place of [that element called] "the idea" in traditional art'.⁵⁹ While these are works whose consistency can be directly 'read off' through *technical* facts (that is to say, which are pervaded by compositional strategies and means through which logic presides as a kind of compulsion, as 'mathematicism'⁶⁰), the normative background for ascertaining the *aesthetic* consistency of traditional music is more difficult to elucidate, as Adorno's treatment of it is quite undetermined—and in fact this is due to the nature of its conception: it appears somewhat reluctant to be defined. Yet despite these genuine difficulties, I argue that more nuanced contours to Adorno's conception of consistency can be determined when examining his concrete application of it to

⁵⁸ Please refer to Adorno, *Beethoven*, p. 23.

⁵⁹ 'Stimmigkeit als ein mathematisches Aufgehen setzt sich an die Stelle dessen, was der traditionellen Kunst "Idee" hieß [...].' Adorno, *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, GS 12, p. 67.

⁶⁰ Please refer to Adorno's polemicisation in the *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, p. 214 f.

music history, and in the course of this, as we will see, the demarcation lines which he drew to the concept of coherence.

Indeed, Adorno considered the difference between formal ‘coherence’ and ‘consistency’ not to be *effectively* distinctive but as a historical process of gradual detachment. Within Adorno’s examination of the beginning of Viennese Classicism, formal ‘consistency’ and formal ‘coherence’ somewhat historically coincide:⁶¹ the musical idea in terms of the motivic-thematic work which is carried out through the formal coherence of the sonata principle had first of all to be set up and historically redeemed (and this was still the case for Adorno considering ca. 1800⁶²). This status of ‘consistency’ can thus be considered to be adjusted, though this is genuinely set apart from any heteronomous understanding, effectively in congruency to a heteronomous orientation insofar that, as Adorno put it in quite general terms, ‘consistency, the way of the specific logicity, seemed to be exteriorly generated by the tonal system of relations and its rules.’⁶³

However for Adorno the coincidence of formal coherence and consistency during the high period of Viennese Classicism tended to fall apart: ‘[f]orms preponderate over the subject as long as the consistency of the [musical] constructions does not any longer coincidence with them.’⁶⁴ In this context one can set up the fundamental figure of thought that the more the ‘subjective’ prevails over the mere ‘fulfillment’ of the formal schematism (that is to say, the more the formal configuration is deformed, therein increasing the divergence), the more the concept of consistency is effectively reinforced with what it is philosophically set up to do: to ascertain whether the concept of form is historically done justice, and so gaining ‘authenticity’. This is the background against which Adorno conceived the concept of consistency to become a criterion of aesthetic judgment which unveils the truth-content (‘Wahrheitsgehalt’) of the individual work: ‘the highest questions of the truth

⁶¹ On the congruency of the concept of consistency and the concept formal coherence please refer to Nowak, ‘Stimmigkeit als analytisches Kriterium’, p. 187 f.

⁶² Please refer to Adorno (in conversation with Krenek), ‘Arbeitsprobleme des Komponisten’, GS 19, pp. 436-437.

⁶³ ‘Stimmigkeit, jene Art der spezifischen Logizität, [...] [dünkte früher] durch das tonale Bezugssystem und seine Spielmarken von außen her gestiftet’; Adorno, *Der getreue Korrepetitor*, GS 15, p. 245.

⁶⁴ ‘Die Formen präponderieren so lange übers Subjekt, bis die Stimmigkeit der Gebilde mit jenen nicht mehr koinzidiert.’ Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, p. 300.

of a work can be translated into categories of its consistency’;⁶⁵ respectively, ‘[t]he immanent consistency of artworks and their meta-aesthetic truth converge in their truth-content.’⁶⁶ In order to shed more light upon these somewhat abstract and arguably cryptic considerations, I will go on to more closely develop in the following the relation between the concepts of consistency and coherence as discussed in Adorno for the music of around ca. 1800 and 1900.

3.2. *On the Relation Between ‘Consistency’ and ‘Coherence’ Around 1800 and 1900*

The dialectic of musical material increasingly detached the ‘consistency’ and ‘coherence’ of the overall formal design after 1800: according to Adorno, if a work wanted to be ‘true’, it had to gain its consistency through a tendency towards the displacement of the formal schematism, instead of relying upon any crude form-typological backdrop. We could, for example, think of the first movement of Berg’s string quartet, op. 3: here, the sheer abundance of the motivic-thematic development, heading towards motivic-thematic fluctuation, breaches any schematised notions of the ‘sonata form’ (as a ‘type’) within its own medium, and in so doing redeems what Adorno, as we have seen in the previous chapter, so deeply anticipated: that the motivic-thematic development, that is the fundamental principle of the sonata form, ultimately ‘liquidises’ any notions of the formal typology from within. It is precisely due to this axiomatic consideration that Adorno considered Berg to have reached ‘utter consistency’:

Berg executed the utter consistency of composing, and in so doing sacrificed the utter consistency of style. He rather relied on the monadological power of the elaborated

⁶⁵ ‘die obersten Wahrheitsfragen des Werkes lassen in Kategorien seiner Stimmigkeit sich übersetzen’; Ibid, p. 420.

⁶⁶ ‘[d]ie immanente Stimmigkeit der Kunstwerke und ihre meta-ästhetische Wahrheit konvergieren in ihrem Wahrheitsgehalt.’ Ibid, p. 420. Already in the early Adorno we find both concepts situated in the context of truth: the ‘language [ie. of art] is aesthetically only consistent if it is “true”: if its words exist in relation to the objectively historical status.’ (Adorno, ‘Thesen über die Sprache des Philosophen’, GS 1, p. 370) In fact, Adorno’s usage of the concept of consistency is not limited to music but rather is employed in a larger philosophical context.

construction which internalises the irreconcilable and forces its expression, rather than to rely on the purity of the idiom in which the indelible contradiction is hidden.⁶⁷

It becomes evident that the concept of consistency is significantly informed by the period of free atonality which Adorno so adored: Adorno's notion of consistency targets at the historical moment when the composer (in concrete terms, Schoenberg) began to float, with closed eyes, here and there, wherever tone upon tone took him.⁶⁸ Thus to generate a 'consistent' work resides solely with the composer and his 'sense of form' ('Formgefühl'), and so with each individual compositional strategy in terms of the developing variations ('entwickelnde Variation'). In this context, Adorno did not only consider the concept of consistency valid for the circle around Schoenberg, but rather for Adorno this concept captured a general characteristic of the music concerning ca. 1900 which can be affiliated with the idea of an aesthetically formal liberation. This becomes evident in the way in which Adorno modified and applied the metaphor of landscape ('Landschaft')—originally developed in his early essay on Schubert—to Claude Debussy:

The landscape has faded; solely its air and its subtle trembling remain, and this is what the music [of Debussy] signifies. Debussy has liquidised the substance of the graspable within the compositional affect, and the cruel cleavage of his materials, and so he gained works that are consistent and constructed.⁶⁹

These lines gain new light when read against the background of Adorno's remarks taken from his lecture 'Zum Problem der musikalischen Analyse': 'in Debussy's case,

⁶⁷ 'Berg hat die äußerste Stimmigkeit des Komponierens verwirklicht, die des Stils aber drangegeben, mehr vertrauend auf die monadologische Kraft des beredten Gebildes, die das Unvereinbare in sich hineinsaugt und zum Ausdruck zwingt, als auf die Reinheit des Idioms, in der der untülbare Widerspruch bloß sich versteckt.' Adorno, 'Alban Berg', GS 16, p. 95.

⁶⁸ Here I allude to Adorno, *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, GS 12, pp. 117-118: 'Whereas Webern binds expressionistic miniatures [ie. op. 5] together by means of the most highly subtle motivic development, Schoenberg [ie. op. 19]—who had fully developed every possible motivic device—floats, with closed eyes, here and there, wherever tone upon tone took him.' ('Wo Webern die expressionistischen Miniaturen durch die subtilste Motivarbeit bindet [ie. op. 5], läßt Schönberg [ie. op. 19], der alle die Motivkünste entwickelt hatte, sie fahren und treibt geschlossenen Auges, wohin Ton um Ton ihn drängt.')

⁶⁹ 'Die Landschaft ist geschwunden; ihre Luft, ihr feines Zittern, allein übrig, macht die Musik aus. Debussy hat seine Substanz an Unmittelbarkeit im kompositorischen Angriff, in der grausamen Spaltung seines Materials aufgelöst und dafür Werke empfangen, die stimmig und gefügt sind [...].' Adorno, 'Ravel', GS 17, p. 64.

there are criteria for inner consistency and musical cohesion which are entirely different from the requirements of what he [ie. Heinrich Schenker] called the Fundamental Line [...].'⁷⁰ Yet Adorno remained silent concerning any concrete criteria. This normative indeterminacy is, arguably, both the very key difficulty with which musicologists are confronted in the attempt to take on Adorno's concept of consistency. Although Adorno's conception of consistency can certainly be critically approached, his notion of it can nonetheless inspiringly be read as heading towards a gradual redemption of what he claimed to be perhaps one of the most crucial music theoretical and music aesthetic tasks: to conceive of form in 'autonomous' terms (we will touch upon this idea more closely in the final essay of this thesis), a task that gained particular significance after the dissolution of tonality. Evidently Adorno's discussion of the dialectical relationship between tonality and 'Einfall' on the one hand, and the question concerning the 'consistency' of the individual work (or one might speak in more general terms of 'Formgefühl') on the other, actually take the same line: tying the concept of form up within the fluctuating discourses of 'German Idealism' and 'technical grounding', Adorno's understanding of the dialectical relationships between tonality, 'Einfall', and consistency, allowed him to pursue the historical traces of musical form as this became more and more liberated from any constraining typological notion. It is certainly no coincidence that Adorno saw the historical moment of 'utter consistency' reached when functional laws of tonality had been suspended for the first time. It is precisely this moment in history when Adorno's anticipation of an actual *aesthetic* concept of form was, arguably more than ever before or after, redeemed.

⁷⁰ Adorno, 'On the Problem of Music Analysis', p. 175. Please refer to Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, pp. 246-247: 'to be able to say with good reason why an artwork is beautiful, true, consistent, or legitimate does not mean reducing it to its universal concepts, even if this operation [...] would be possible.' ('Mit Grund sagen, warum ein Kunstwerk schön, warum es wahr, stimmig, legitimiert sei, hieße aber selbst dann nicht, auf seine allgemeinen Begriffe es abzuziehen, wenn diese Operation [...] möglich wäre.')

CHAPTER 4

THE CONCEPT OF GENRE: GENERAL NOTIONS, WITH AN ANALYSIS OF ADORNO'S INTERPRETATION OF BEETHOVEN'S *MISSA SOLEMNIS*

1. INTRODUCTION

When (re)constructing a 'theory of musical form'—at least when understood in the sense of the German term 'Formenlehre'—one might be expected to provide an understanding of the concept of genre. These expectations do not solely stem from the traditional 'Formenlehre', but are in fact pertinently justifiable as they take into account the simple fact that questions concerning musical form cannot be approached in isolation from the concept of genre: the areas which both concepts are concerned with overlap. Hermann Danuser's illuminating article concerning the concept of genre in *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* is remarkable in this context: instead of providing a narrow definition of it, his article can be read as a clarification of the theoretical potentials of the concept of genre which as yet await development, in particular in its relation to the concept of form.¹

The field of tensions between both concepts of form and genre is generally reflected in Adorno's musical writings. He always made recourse to the concept of genre, in particular in those passages when a location of the individual work within its generic context might promisingly feed into an illumination of the aesthetic problems (in the Adornian sense of 'Problem') that are inherent to the formal configuration of the individual work²—and indeed, considering the concept of genre in these terms

¹ Hermann Danuser, 'Gattung', in *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart, Sachteil 3* (2nd ed.; Kassel, Stuttgart, et. al.: Bärenreiter Verlag and J.B. Metzler, 1995), col. 1042-1069; especially col. 1057-1064.

² Paddison has touched upon this aspect of partial indistinction: 'the line between [...] formal types [in the notion of 'Formenlehre'] and the concept of genre ('Gattungen') is not always a clear one.' (Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*, p. 153) The closely knitted relation between both concepts pervades several of Adorno's early concert critiques. So, for example, he introduced one of them as follows: 'The genre of the orchestral song is crucially affected by both the crisis of symphonic forms and the music drama forms.' ('Von der Krisis der symphonischen Form sowohl wie der musikdramatischen wird die Gattung des Orchesterliedes zentral getroffen.') Adorno, 'Januar 1927', GS 19, p. 88.) This fluent fluctuation between conceptions of form and genre can also be grasped rhetorically, see for example: 'If [...] the renunciation of ritual in the idea of an open genre—which, like the rondo, is itself often conventional enough—is free of the lie of necessity, the idea of the genre becomes all the more exposed to contingency' ('Wird [...] der Verzicht auf Rituale in der Idee der offenen Gattung – sie ist oft selber, wie das Rondo, konventionell genug – der Lüge des Notwendigen ledig, so wird jene Idee desto ungeschützter der Zufälligkeit konfrontiert.') (Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, p. 327) Here the idea of an 'open genre' is compared with and approximated to the idea

would fulfil his claim towards a ‘historical analysis’³ of music, which explicitly takes account of the historical dimension which the individual work is tied up with.

It is against this background that the concept of genre gains significance in regard to Adorno’s theory of musical form. In the first part of this chapter, I shall highlight the general notions of Adorno’s concept of genre, including concrete examples of music history where he addressed aspects of genre.⁴ Yet despite those instances where his interpretation of the individual work impinged upon the concept of genre, I will demonstrate on the basis of his interpretation of Beethoven’s *Missa Solemnis* that nevertheless the concept of genre did not directly inform Adorno’s methodology, and so remains somewhat theoretically unreflected in his account. Although he is aware of the aesthetic dimensions that are evoked by Beethoven composing a mass, even so Adorno approaches Beethoven’s work methodologically from the perspective of instrumental music and so ignores the generic nature of this work, a vocal composition. Developing this imbalance, I will argue that it is considerably due to Adorno’s indifferent attitude to the concept of genre that he felt ultimately incapable of completing his book on Beethoven. My understanding of Adorno’s interpretation of the *Missa Solemnis* is therefore that the inconsistencies that he saw in this work with regard to his theory of the late Beethoven have their origins to a considerable degree within his problematic treatment of genre. Examining this difficulty in detail, I will finally attempt to develop a new perspective on the relation between Adorno’s theory of the late Beethoven and the *Missa Solemnis*. Certainly, in so doing a theorisation of the concept of genre is not afforded (and indeed, such a project would exceed the borders of my topic), but it is my hope to at least provide a sensitive account of the complexity of genre’s own nature. In the course of this I will finally ‘adjust’ Adorno’s methodological approach to the genre of the mass, and so put forward a reading of the *Missa Solemnis* that indeed sees this work in consistency with Adorno’s interpretation of Beethoven’s late style.

of the ‘open form’ as it is identified with the rondo within the parataxis. Adorno considered the rondo to be an open form several times, explicitly in *Ästhetische Theorie*, p. 328.

³ Please refer to Adorno, *Beethoven*, p. 23.

⁴ This becomes very evident in Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, p. 326 f.

2. GENERAL NOTIONS OF ADORNO'S UNDERSTANDING OF GENRE

At a very fundamental level, Adorno's concept of genre was conceived in analogy to the concept of form: for Adorno, the concept of genre was not reduced to a merely invariant or ahistorical system but was considered as if it were interwoven by its own historicity.⁵ On that note, Adorno wrote in *Ästhetische Theorie* that '[p]robably a work of art which is of significance has never fully complied with its genre',⁶ and that 'the substantial element of all genres and forms has its locus in the historical needs of their materials'.⁷ Hence Adorno insisted upon the historically-critical content which the individual work might feature, thus not only in relation to 'form' as 'material' but also in terms of 'genre' as 'material'. He ultimately argued: '[w]hat later appeared in artworks as the specific, unique, and nonsubstitutable quality of each individual work and became important as such was the deviation from the genre, and so reaching a point where it turned into a new quality: this [i.e. the quality] is mediated by the genre.'⁸ Here it becomes evident that Adorno embedded the concept of genre in his conception of the musical material: the handed-down norms of a particular genre as historically given 'objectivity', and the critical reflection upon this as this is carried out within the individual work (as 'subjectivity') constitute a historical dialectic. However, that is not to say that Adorno conceived the concept of genre to be devoid of normativity, but that he saw the historical conventions negotiated through the trajectory of music history. This becomes conspicuous for example in Adorno's argument according to which Schoenberg found, in his

⁵ Please refer to Jim Samson, 'Genre', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. 9, ed. Stanley Sadie (2nd edn.; London: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 2001), 657-659, especially p. 658. In this context, one might also recognise that Adorno's broader conception of genre is not conceived to be in the a priori charged with a historical dimension; a musical 'genre', such as jazz music, which Adorno considered no more than just a product—or, to put it with Wittkin, as a 'lackey' (Wittkin, *Adorno on Music*, p. 179)—of the cultural industry, is considered in Adorno to be devoid of any immanent historicity (see Adorno's review article 'Wilder Hobson, "American Jazz Music"; Winthrop Sargeant, *Jazz Hot and Hybrid*', GS 19, p. 392).

⁶ 'Wohl nie hat ein Kunstwerk, das zählt, seiner Gattung ganz entsprochen.' Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, p. 297.

⁷ 'Das substantielle Moment der Gattungen und Formen hat seinen Ort in den geschichtlichen Bedürfnissen ihrer Materialien.' Ibid, p. 297.

⁸ 'Was an den Kunstwerken später als spezifische Qualität, als Unverwechselbares und Un austauschbares des je einzelnen Gebildes hervortrat und zum Relevanten wurde, war Abweichung von der Gattung, bis es in die neue Qualität umschlug; diese ist durch die Gattung vermittelt.' Ibid, p. 304.

composition of string quartets, substantial orientation from Beethoven.⁹ Adorno discusses precisely the same figure of thought in more detail with regard to Beethoven's string quartet, op. 18, for which he stated that 'Beethoven deduced the criterion of the true string quartet from the immanent compulsions of the genre and not from handed-down schemes.'¹⁰ Thus Adorno implicitly elucidated the 'truth-content' ('Wahrheitsgehalt') or 'authenticity' of this string quartet by reference to its generic context. If Beethoven had ignored the immanent historicity present in the genre of the string quartet as, needless to say, significantly contributed to by Haydn and Mozart—that is to say, if he had not, for example, pushed the boundaries of technical means developed within it—this work arguably would not entail any contribution to the musical material in Adorno's appraisal, and so would be devoid of any 'authenticity'. This example demonstrates how Adorno utilised the concept of genre in terms of 'material', and therein constructed a historical context for this work that responds to the 'immanent compulsions' of the material. In order to emphasise his idea that Beethoven's op. 18 stood out from music history itself, Adorno was even prone to rhetorically over exaggerate, arguing that it is precisely its generic context which made the op. 18 emerge as alienated from the tradition, and so he ultimately felt able to state that 'this opus had virtually no role-models'.¹¹ It is this break of handed-down conventions—therein to negotiate genre's normativity anew¹²—which Adorno ascribed to the nature of the concept of genre: for him, it is crucially defined by the historical dialectic of the musical material.

In this context, it is crucial to see that in Adorno's music aesthetics the historical dialectic of the musical material is not limited to be discussed solely *within* a particular genre, but Adorno's take on it can be shown rather to be *genre-crossing-over*.¹³ This can be for example evidenced in his assertion concerning Richard Wagner, whose work of operas Adorno considered to be the only ones which did not

⁹ Ibid, p. 298.

¹⁰ 'Beethoven leitete das Kriterium des wahren Streichquartetts aus den immanenten Forderungen der Gattung, nicht aus tradierten Modellen ab.' Adorno, *Einleitung in die Musiksoziologie*, GS 14, p. 277.

¹¹ '[...] jenes Opus [hatte] eigentlich gar kein Vorbild.' Adorno, *Einleitung in die Musiksoziologie*, GS 14, p. 277.

¹² See Wellmer, *Versuch über Musik und Sprache*, p. 163.

¹³ At this point it is important to remind ourselves that Adorno's considerations take place against a historical background wherein the concept of genre had already entered its period of disillusionment, and hence there are no longer any norms which stem from this. We will more closely encounter this insight within the context of my analysis of Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*.

take Claudio Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*—for Adorno, representative of ‘the first authentic opera’¹⁴—as their genre-defining role model. Hence Adorno considered Wagner's operas to deviate from the supposed immanent ‘laws’ of the genre ‘opera’, putting the supposed ‘historical agreement’ that ‘all opera is Orpheus’¹⁵ into question. As a consequence of this, Adorno stated paradoxically that ‘to get Wagner in line with the genre of opera is to misappropriate the dynamic which is inherent to it.’¹⁶

This is a good example to demonstrate that, for Adorno, the demand for individuation as it stems from the musical material does not only concern all types of genres but works in the focal point of the individual work itself in a ‘genre-crossing-over’ way. In this way, Adorno saw the historical stage of Wagner's œuvre, as is something of a commonplace, significantly provided by the genre of the symphony – in concrete terms, Beethoven's final movement of the Ninth Symphony (albeit not limited only to this).¹⁷ Indeed, Adorno employed this figure of thought in various contexts, so for example when he argued that in Brahms the only distinction between the genre of the symphony and the genre of chamber music lies in the ‘almost random choice of the instrumental medium’.¹⁸ Hence for Adorno there is no real qualitative distinction between both genres, it is rather just a matter of the ‘instrumental media’ (‘klangliche Darstellungsmittel’). Likewise Adorno argued for this indifference of generic models in the context of Bach, highlighting here that Bach's ‘compositional techniques, the complexity, and the density of his composing’¹⁹ needs to be evaluated independent from the actual genre within which Bach developed these compositional means. Hence from Adorno's perspective on

¹⁴ ‘[d]ie erste authentische Oper’; Adorno, ‘Bürgerliche Oper’, GS 16, p. 31.

¹⁵ ‘alle Oper sei Orpheus’; *ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁶ ‘Wagner einfach in ihre Gattung einreihen, unterschlägt die Dynamik, die der Geschichte dieser Form innewohnt.’ Adorno, ‘Wagners Aktualität’, GS 16, p. 548.

¹⁷ On this common consensus, see Carl Dahlhaus, ‘Wagners Stellung in der Musikgeschichte’, in *Richard-Wagner-Handbuch*, ed. Alfred Kroener, Ulrich Müller, and Peter Wapnewski (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1986), 60-85 (p. 68). Richard Klein has shown that this relation is by far not a sufficient account: he has argued that Wagner praised the symphonic motivic technique of Beethoven in contrast to the critical attitude which he took in regard to Mozart's understanding of musical form, something which was indeed perceived by Adorno; please refer to Richard Klein, *Solidarität mit Metaphysik? Ein Versuch über die musikphilosophische Problematik der Wagner-Kritik Theodor W. Adornos* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1991), pp. 127-131.

¹⁸ ‘fast zufällige Wahl der klanglichen Darstellungsmittel’; Adorno, ‘Strawinsky: Ein dialektisches Bild’, GS 16, p. 401.

¹⁹ ‘Verfahrungsweise, die Komplexion und Dichte des Komponierten’; Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, p. 312.

Bach, the question whether the individual work is a vocal or instrumental composition is, for the contribution to the musical material, scarcely relevant at all.

It can be shown that these tendencies in Adorno towards treating genre models in an indifferent way are in fact mirrored in the methodology that Adorno utilised in order to reveal the ‘content’ of the individual work. This becomes perhaps the most evident with regard to his interpretation of Beethoven’s *Missa Solemnis*, which I shall subsequently examine in more detail. Allowing for the fact that the *Missa Solemnis* is a vocal composition (and so providing in the a priori a heteronomous structure, the liturgical text), I will challenge Adorno’s methodological approach which is substantially informed by instrumental music. I argue that it is indeed considerably due to the nature of the *Missa Solemnis* as a vocal composition (rather than the *Missa Solemnis* itself) that Adorno struggled to incorporate the work within the late style though it is a late work. In fact I propose that the *Missa Solemnis* can actually be considered to feature characteristics of the late style – however Adorno failed to account for these as he was unable to readjust his methodological approach in the terms of non-instrumental music (in this context one might keep in mind that the criteria for Beethoven’s late style were exclusively extrapolated from instrumental music). Sensitised for this imbalance, I provide a new reading of Adorno’s interpretation of the *Missa Solemnis*, ultimately aiming at a new perspective on Adorno’s interpretation of the late Beethoven.

3. ADORNO’S INTERPRETATION OF BEETHOVEN’S *MISSA SOLEMNIS*

Beethoven’s *Missa Solemnis* is of considerable significance to Adorno’s music philosophy, underpinned by the philosophical difficulties which Adorno saw in this—as he called it—‘unfathomable work’,²⁰ difficulties, I shall argue, which are due in no small part to the genuine indifference that he ascribed to generic models. The consequences evoked by the difficulties of the *Missa Solemnis* can hardly be underestimated: it was due to the *Missa Solemnis* that Adorno ultimately was unable to complete his highly ambitiously conceived book on Beethoven. In the preface to

²⁰ ‘abgründige[s] Werk’; Adorno, ‘Zum Beschluß einer Diskussion’, GS 14, p. 444.

his collection of essays *Moments musicaux* (1963), Adorno noted that his philosophical work on Beethoven, projected since 1937, had yet to be written,

mainly because the author's efforts have continually foundered on the *Missa Solemnis*. He has therefore tried at least to set out the reasons for these difficulties, and to state the question more precisely, without presuming to have answered it.²¹

He made his difficulties explicit in the mature essay 'Verfremdetes Hauptwerk: Zur Missa Solemnis'²² (1959), and additionally emphasised this in the organisational principle of the collection *Moments musicaux*: he placed this as the concluding essay, while the opening essay—the first Adorno had written about Beethoven²³—is 'Spätstil Beethovens'²⁴ (1937), which does not actually concern itself with the *Missa Solemnis* at all, but focuses on the late style. Seen in a systematic context, this constellation might be regarded less as a contingent observation than an emphatic gesture which stresses the programmatic difficulty Adorno faced when confronted with the idiosyncrasies of the *Missa Solemnis*. Arguably, the 'dark',²⁵ the 'riddle-like'²⁶ of the *Missa Solemnis* was, for Adorno, not only an *unsolved* but rather a basically *unsolvable* philosophical problem; thus his essay 'Verfremdetes Hauptwerk' signifies a perspectival vanishing point, amounting to an aporetic culmination of his

²¹ ['"Verfremdetes Hauptwerk" schließlich gehört in den Komplex des schon seit 1937 projektierten philosophischen Werkes über Beethoven. Bislang kam es nicht zur Niederschrift,] vor allem, weil die Anstrengungen des Autors immer wieder an der Missa Solemnis scheiterten. Er hat darum wenigstens versucht, den Grund jener Schwierigkeiten zu benennen, die Frage zu präzisieren, ohne sich anzumaßen, er hätte sie etwa schon gelöst.' Adorno, *Moments musicaux*, GS 17, p. 12.

²² Ibid, pp. 145-160; republished in *Beethoven*, pp. 204-222.

²³ Hans-Joachim Hinrichsen has called for sensitivity in the comprehension of the letter written by Adorno to Ernst Krenek in 29th March 1935, in which Adorno stated that the essay 'Spätstil Beethovens' was 'the first [essay] ever I dared to write about Beethoven' (*Theodor W. Adorno und Ernst Krenek: Briefwechsel*, ed. Wolfgang Rogge (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), p. 76; my translation). Hinrichsen has argued that this statement should be relativized: apart from the fact that Adorno had written an earlier short interpretation on Beethoven's Bagatelles ('Ludwig van Beethoven: Sechs Bagatellen für Klavier, op. 126', GS 18, pp. 185-188), he in fact approached the late Beethoven largely on the basis of the antedating essay previously written on Schubert, extrapolating the metaphors developed in reference to Schubert to Beethoven; Hans-Joachim Hinrichsen, 'Produktive Konstellation. Beethoven und Schubert in Adornos früher Musikästhetik', in *Musikalische Analyse und Kritische Theorie: Zu Adornos Philosophie der Musik*, ed. Adolf Nowak and Markus Hahlbusch (Tutzing: Hans Schneider Verlag, 2007), 157-175 (pp. 167 f.).

²⁴ Adorno, GS 17, pp. 13-17; republished in *Beethoven*, pp. 180-184).

²⁵ 'Dunkle'; Adorno, 'Verfremdetes Hauptwerk', GS 17, p. 157.

²⁶ 'Rätselhafte[]'; *ibid*, p. 158.

projected ‘philosophy of music’.²⁷ That is to say, it might be suggested that through his placing of these essays within the overall organisation of the book *Moments musicaux*, Adorno passed comment upon his own productive failure to carry his interpretation of Beethoven to a conclusion for the time being.²⁸

Thus far, the axiomatic reason for Adorno’s failure remains to be elucidated. In this context, Carl Dahlhaus’s critical (and largely accepted) examination of Adorno’s approach to the *Missa Solemnis* has provided valuable insights: he has argued that Adorno’s interpretation is informed by his inadequate methodology; the proton pseudos of this observation can be shown to emerge, according to my reading, from Adorno’s all too readily indifferent conception of genre models. However, I perceive that there is a tendency in Dahlhaus’s analysis to not fully account for all the aspects which Adorno raised. By reflecting upon the *Missa Solemnis*, while being sensitised to the idiosyncrasies of its genre as a mass, I aim in the following to provide a more nuanced re-evaluation Adorno’s interpretation of Beethoven’s *Missa Solemnis*.

3.1 *Reflections upon Adorno’s Methodological Approach*

One of the most influential evaluations of Adorno’s critique of the *Missa Solemnis* has been provided by Dahlhaus in his article ‘Zu Adornos Beethoven-Kritik’.²⁹ What

²⁷ This was the planned subtitle of his book on Beethoven. Tiedemann reported that Adorno eventually rejected the titles ‘Beethoven’s Music’ or ‘The Music of Beethoven’ which had earlier been put into consideration, as became evident in a meeting with the publisher Siegfried Unseld in January 1969: Adorno, *Beethoven*, p. 30, and p. 286, n. 27.

²⁸ According to Hans-Joachim Hinrichsen, the essay ‘Verfremdetes Hauptwerk’ was for Adorno the last essay possible on Beethoven, a manifestation of resignation: Hans-Joachim Hinrichsen, ‘„Es wäre sonst alles, auch die “Klassik”, anders verlaufen.“ Adornos Beethoven-Buch als gescheitertes Hauptwerk’, in ‘... dass alles auch hätte anders kommen können’: Beiträge zur Musik des 20. Jahrhunderts (Festschrift Giselher Schubert), ed. Susanne Schaal-Gotthardt, Luitgard Schader, and Heinz-Jürgen Winkler (Mainz: Schott, 2009), p. 224 f. Please also refer to Hellmut Federhofer’s examination in his article ‘Theodor W. Adornos Beethoven-Deutung’, *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, 35: 2 (2004), 127-137, where he has substantially followed Dahlhaus and Früchtl’s examination as discussed in the beginning of the previous chapter.

²⁹ Carl Dahlhaus, ‘Zu Adornos Beethoven-Kritik’, in *Adorno und die Musik*, ed. Otto Kolleritsch (Graz: Universal Edition, 1979), 170-179; republished as idem, *Materialien zur ästhetischen Theorie Th. W. Adornos Konstruktion der Moderne*, ed. Burkhardt Lindner and W. Martin Lüdke (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1980), 494-505; and idem, *19. Jahrhundert III: Ludwig van Beethoven – Aufsätze zur Ideen- und Kompositionsgeschichte – Texte zur Instrumentalmusik*, vol. 6 of *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Hermann Danuser and Hans-Joachim Hinrichsen (Laaber: Laaber Verlag, 2003), 318-326.

Dahlhaus has critically put forward concerning Adorno's critique of Wagner³⁰ is also advanced for his critique of Adorno's interpretation of the *Missa Solemnis*: Dahlhaus has proposed that Adorno did not do the *Missa Solemnis* justice because he approached it with an insufficient premise, stemming from the fact that he so privileged the motivic-thematic work. Dahlhaus's argument is that Adorno gained and ultimately detached this principle from the sonata principle, and applied it to genres—here to the genre of the mass—which genuinely do not provide the motivic-thematic work as their main developmental principle. Following this line of argument, Adorno stands accused of idealising the principle of the motivic-thematic work as a kind of ultima ratio, and so to erroneously claim this as the only methodological vehicle through which the *Missa Solemnis* can adequately be approached. Dahlhaus has explained his critique of Adorno as follows:

The dialectic of the thematic-motivic work is the pivotal point of Adorno's critique of the *Missa Solemnis*, a dialectic whose material content is just as incontestable as the critical function which it fulfils in Adorno's attempt to socially decipher Beethoven's music. It is the thematic work that forms the instance from which Adorno's judgement of the *Missa Solemnis* issues.³¹

Indeed, Adorno's essay 'Verfremdetes Hauptwerk' and his fragments on Beethoven contain numerous passages which clearly indicate that Adorno attempted to reveal the 'law of form'³² on which the *Missa Solemnis* is built by seeking to find the motivic-thematic work, and hence his attempt had to fail: '[t]he form is not attained through the developing variation of core motifs';³³ did not 'generate totality from within itself

³⁰ Carl Dahlhaus, 'Soziologische Dechiffrierung von Musik: Zu Theodor W. Adornos Wagnerkritik', *International Review of Music Aesthetics and Sociology* 1:2 (1970), 137-147, pp. 144.

³¹ '[...] den Angelpunkt, um den sich Adornos Kritik der *Missa Solemnis* dreht, bildet die Dialektik der thematisch-motivischen Arbeit, eine Dialektik, deren Sachverhalt ebenso unbestreitbar ist wie die zentrale Funktion, die sie in Adornos Versuch einer gesellschaftlichen Dechiffrierung der Beethovenschen Musik erfüllt. Thematische Arbeit [...] ist die Instanz, in deren Namen Adornos Urteil über die *Missa Solemnis* ergeht.' Dahlhaus, 'Zu Adornos Beethoven-Kritik', pp. 170-171.

³² 'Formgesetz'; Adorno, *Beethoven*, p. 201. Lecia Rosenthal has convincingly proposed that Adorno's wording of the 'law of form' goes beyond the scope of a mere formalism as understood in the terms of music analysis (Lecia Rosenthal, 'Between Humanism and Late Style', *Cultural Critique*, 67 [2007], 107-140, [pp. 122-124]). It is however justifiable in this context set aside the other implications which she has raised.

³³ '[d]ie Form wird nicht durch entwickelnde Variation aus Motivkernen gewonnen, sondern addiert sich aus meist in sich imitatorischen Abschnitten'; Adorno, 'Verfremdetes Hauptwerk', GS 17, p. 151.

as happens in the symphony – precisely by thematic work’;³⁴ ‘there are no tangible “themes” – and therefore no development’.³⁵ Instead Adorno argued that the *Missa Solemnis* utilised a ‘completely different principle of form’³⁶ by means of ‘a puzzle-like procedure, succession, permutation, and unvaried motifs’.³⁷ The organisational principle of the *Missa Solemnis* is understood by Adorno as accumulating ‘additively from sections usually imitative among themselves’,³⁸ which are ‘conceived in terms of undynamic fields’,³⁹ solely relying on ‘proportions’,⁴⁰ and are ultimately characterised by a ‘renunciation [...] of any developmental principle’.⁴¹ This perception advances in Adorno’s analysis to the insight that the *Missa Solemnis* has a formal organisational scheme which is ‘not that of a process with its own momentum, not dialectical, but seeks to be induced by the balance of the individual sections’.⁴² The ‘non-mediating’ character of the single formal units of the *Missa Solemnis* and the absence of dialectical contrasts⁴³ is regarded by Adorno as an ‘exceptional method of shaking the kaleidoscope’,⁴⁴ and therefore the constitution of a coherent configuration is prohibited: ‘[b]ecause no path has been travelled, no resistance of the particular overcome, and the trace of arbitrariness concerns the whole’.⁴⁵ Hereupon Dahlhaus has plausibly claimed that these passages evoke the strong impression that

³⁴ ‘Keineswegs aber [...] erzeugt [die Missa Solemnis] [...] im symphonischen Geist – eben dem thematischer Arbeit – die Totalität aus sich heraus.’ Ibid, p. 151.

³⁵ ‘[...] es gibt keine faßlichen “Themen” – und daher keine Durchführung.’ Adorno, *Beethoven*, p. 200.

³⁶ ‘völlig andere Formprinzipien’; ibid, p. 202.

³⁷ ‘puzzle-ähnliches Verfahren[,] Reihung, Umgruppierung[,] nicht variierte Motive’; ibid, p. 203.

³⁸ ‘addiert sich aus meist in sich imitatorischen Abschnitten’; Adorno, ‘Verfremdetes Hauptwerk’, GS 17, p. 151.

³⁹ ‘[u]ndynamisch-flächig gedacht’; ibid, p. 156.

⁴⁰ ‘Proportion’; ibid, p. 156.

⁴¹ ‘Verzicht [...] auf jedes Entwicklungsprinzip’; Adorno, *Beethoven*, p. 202.

⁴² ‘Die Formorganisation des Ganzen ist nicht die eines Prozesses aus eigener Schwungkraft, nicht dialektisch, sondern will durch Balance der einzelnen Abschnitte der Sätze [...] herbeigeführt werden.’ Adorno, ‘Verfremdetes Hauptwerk’, GS 17, p. 151.

⁴³ Ibid, p. 156.

⁴⁴ ‘exzeptionelle Methode kaleidoskopischen Schüttelns’; ibid, p. 151. While the metaphor of the ‘kaleidoscope’ in Eduard Hanslick’s *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, has a positive connotation, Adorno’s reference to it is intended to criticise the phenomenon of a merely ‘pretended’ late style. Thus this metaphor is distinctly set apart from Hanslick’s understanding of it; see for example Adorno’s utilization of it in *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, p. 294. The *Missa Solemnis* could be considered as the initial catalyst which Adorno developed into the metaphor of the ‘kaleidoscope’, with these new implications.

⁴⁵ ‘Weil kein Weg durchmessen, kein Widerstand des Einzelnen überwunden ward, überträgt sich die Spur der Zufälligkeit auf das Ganze selber [...]’ Ibid, p. 156.

Adorno based his critique of the *Missa Solemnis* firmly on the motivic thematic work as this stems from the sonata principle.

But reducing Adorno's analysis merely to the supposed insufficiency of his methodology is too hasty a conclusion – in any case, in particular when Adorno's interpretation is considered to have been fully delegitimised, as for example has been concluded by Andreas Friesenhagen, who has extended Dahlhaus's critical considerations. He has argued that Adorno was unable to find musical meaning due to his unwillingness to accept the *Missa Solemnis*'s nature as a vocal composition with its corresponding heteronomous character, the written text.⁴⁶ According to Friesenhagen, the pre-existing liturgical text itself appropriated by the genre of the mass became the catalyst for Adorno's critique, as it curtails the inner developmental logic of the piece – which is to say that the purely immanent generation of form in terms of 'autonomous music' is in the a priori prohibited by the 'heteronomous' reference which the genre of the mass genuinely features.

My discomfort with Dahlhaus and Friesenhagen's positions is that their critique tends to miss some crucial aspects of Adorno's interpretation, or to keep the field of problems somewhat underdeveloped. As a consequence, I shall go on to develop my reading of Adorno's interpretation of the *Missa Solemnis* in critical distance to that of Dahlhaus and Friesenhagen.

Obviously the fundamental distinction between instrumental and vocal music—the most fundamental binary entailed by the concept of genre—was for Adorno something to consider in aesthetic terms. This becomes evident when he raised the certainly valid question (an aspect neglected by Dahlhaus and Friesenhagen) of why Beethoven, as a composer of the Enlightenment, occupied himself with a genre rooted in the pre-Enlightenment era: 'it immediately suggests itself to affiliate the exteriority of the *Missa* to its ecclesiastical genre which basically excludes the dynamic-dialectic nature of Beethoven [...]. However, the question of why the late Beethoven, who has been supposed to have stood faraway from organised religion,

⁴⁶ Andreas Friesenhagen, *Die Messen Ludwig van Beethovens. Studien zur Vertonung des liturgischen Textes zwischen Rhetorik und Dramatisierung* (Köln-Rheinkassel: Verlag Doehr, 1996), p. 400, n. 232.

spent much of his mature years concerned with this ecclesiastical work⁴⁷ by trying ‘violently to empathise with a genre with which he was not familiar’⁴⁸ remained for Adorno a crucial concern. Ultimately, Adorno raised the fundamental question: ‘if one understood why he did this [i.e. why Beethoven composed a mass], one would almost certainly understand the *Missa*’.⁴⁹

Here an intriguing imbalance comes to the fore: on the one hand, Adorno did take account of the generic distinction in aesthetic terms; on the other, this did not seem to inform his methodology, and to that extent, I agree with Dahlhaus and Friesenhagen’s critiques. Rather than to reproach Adorno for this, I argue however that his sentiment is indeed, at a basic stage, valid, not only from the emic perspective of his music aesthetics which indeed idealised the motivic-thematic work (and arguably with good reason), but also from a general historical point of view. The motivic-thematic work is, as profane it might sound, the dominating characteristic of Beethoven’s aesthetics. This is why it is legitimate to expect at first glance this principle also to be found in the *Missa Solemnis*. In fact, despite Beethoven’s increasing tendency to make use of the archaic formal type of the fugue in his mature period, Adorno took kindly to this phenomenon, considering these archaic elements in Beethoven to be broadly devoid of any archaic treatment. One might for example think of Beethoven’s *Große Fuge*, contemporary to the *Missa Solemnis*, which is clearly informed by the sonata thinking of the nineteenth century.⁵⁰ Certainly, there is no need to assume in the a priori that in the *Missa Solemnis* Beethoven was genuinely compelled to reject any motivic-thematic thinking in total.

When arguing along with Dahlhaus and Friesenhagen that Adorno approached the *Missa Solemnis* with an insufficient methodological premise, the structure of this critique tends implicitly towards a petrification of the contentious assumption that stable borders of genre (still) apply to the *Missa Solemnis*. However, as Martin Zenck

⁴⁷ ‘Es liegt nahe diese Exterritorialität der *Missa* [Solemnis] auf den Kirchenstil zurückzuführen, der im Grunde das dynamisch-dialektische Wesen Beethovens ausschließt. [...] Aber es bleibt dann doch die Frage, warum der späte Beethoven, der der organisierten Religion sehr fern muß gestanden haben, viele Jahre seiner reifsten Zeit auf ein Kirchenwerk verwandte [...]’ Adorno, *Beethoven*, p. 200.

⁴⁸ ‘[Das ganze ein ganz uninspiriertes, nettes Werk, in dem] Beethoven mit Gewalt versucht, in eine ihm ganz fremde Gattung sich einzufühlen [...]’ Ibid, p. 202.

⁴⁹ ‘[...] verstünde man ganz, warum er [ie. Beethoven] es tat [ie. eine Messe komponierte], man verstünde wohl auch die *Missa*.’ Adorno, ‘Verfremdetes Hauptwerk’, GS 17, p. 150.

⁵⁰ Please refer to Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, ‘Beethovens *Große Fuge*: Multiperspektivität im Spätwerk’, *Music & Ästhetik*, 8 (1998), 12-38.

has demonstrated, we have every reason to treat Beethoven's opus as if it were detached from the genre-typological straitjacket of which the previous mass compositions of the Viennese Classicism were embedded into: '[t]he *Missa solennis* is not a linear continuation of the history of the genre of the mass—as this had been upheld by Mozart and Haydn who both stood in employment of the church (Salzburg and Eisenstadt); rather the *Missa Solemnis* is an unique solution which entirely abolishes the borders of the genre [i.e. of the mass].'⁵¹ Thus Adorno's 'genre-cross-over' approach to disregard the immanent law of the genre of the mass may be considered to be pertinent. Whether this methodological decision was informed by the *Missa Solemnis* itself—in this respect Adorno's critique might be considered to just follow the consequences of the *Missa Solemnis*'s own nature—or whether by his own historical situation for which the significance of the conventions of genre had become negligible,⁵² is otiosley to be resolved, but anyway his methodological decision does not signify per se a misguided consciousness.

Moreover, while Dahlhaus has highlighted the critical implications of the extreme value with which Adorno afforded the motivic-thematic work and the sonata principle, an abandonment of the sonata principle does not eo ipso imply an abandonment of any other critical potential. Indeed, Adorno was principally aware of critical possibilities beyond the framework of the sonata principle, as can be illuminated by reference to his concept of musical time. Although the sonata principle provides the paradigm par excellence for a dialectical 'fulfilment' of musical time,⁵³ the works of the late Beethoven—unlike those of the middle period—reject the homogeneity of continuity of music in time, as Adorno attempted to evidence in Beethoven's abandonment of transitions in the *Six Bagatelles*:

⁵¹ 'Die *Missa solennis* stellt keine geradlinige Fortsetzung der Gattungsgeschichte der Messe dar, wie sie noch von Mozart und Haydn, die beide im Dienst der Kirche standen (Salzburg und Eisenstadt), fortgeschrieben wurde, sondern eine singuläre Lösung, die die Grenzen der Gattung überhaupt aufhebt.' Martin Zenck, *Die Bach-Rezeption des späten Beethoven: Zum Verhältnis von Musikhistoriographie und Rezeptionsgeschichtsschreibung der „Klassik“* (Beihefte zum Archiv der Musikwissenschaft, 24; Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1986), p. 262.

⁵² An idea of the concept of genre as it was perceived by the circle around Schoenberg is developed by Simon Obert, *Musikalische Kürze zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Beihefte zum Archiv für Musikwissenschaft, 63; Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2008), e.g. pp. 113 f. and 141 f.

⁵³ Please refer to Eckehard Kiem, 'Der Blick in den Abgrund: Zeitstruktur beim späten Beethoven', in *Musik in der Zeit: Zeit in der Musik*, ed. Richard Klein, Eckehard Kiem, and Wolfram Ette (Weilerswist: Velbrück Wissenschaft, 2000), 212-231 (esp. p. 217).

juxtaposition is here considered by Adorno to be a critical characteristic of the late style, a ‘disassociation’ of the homogeneity of continuity as it denies the fulfilment of a diachronic dialectically-mediated development in time.⁵⁴

Although Adorno did not explicitly reflect upon the aspect of a ‘disassociated time’ within the context of the *Missa Solemnis*, the general observations concerning its large-scale un-dialectical architecture might suggest that the *Missa Solemnis* can indeed be compared with the canon of works tied up under the topos of the ‘late style’. Thus the common reception of Adorno’s hypothesis that the *Missa Solemnis* is a late work without providing any traits of Beethoven’s late style—as this is commonly accepted within the discourses⁵⁵—turns out to be fundamentally challenged. Moreover, arguably Adorno’s interpretation did not fail due to any aesthetic inconsistencies within Beethoven’s canon of late works, but due to the inconsistencies which pervade Adorno’s own position in regard to the *Missa Solemnis*. However, inferring a reduction of Adorno’s critique to assume that he did not do the *Missa Solemnis* justice due to methodological limitations tends to take on Adorno’s critique as if it were a consistent argument which is set up to locate supposed inconsistencies in Beethoven’s aesthetics (Fiesenhagen has even considered Adorno to have ‘converted his own lack of comprehension into a reproach of Beethoven’⁵⁶).

In this context it is illuminating to return to Adorno’s prominent hypothesis—condensed in the title of one of his crucial fragments on Beethoven, ‘Spätwerk ohne Spätstil’⁵⁷—according to which the *Missa Solemnis*, though a late work, does not conform to the late style. In order to more closely account for the exceptional status of the *Missa Solemnis* which Adorno indeed acknowledged,⁵⁸ it is insightful to note

⁵⁴ In this context Michael Spitzer has discussed the *Missa Solemnis* in regard to the concept of ‘landscape’ (Michael Spitzer, *Music as Philosophy: Adorno and Beethoven’s Late Style* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006], pp. 71-75). He has insightfully argued that ‘[w]e can turn on its head Adorno’s criticism of the mass as being an archaic anomaly, and recognize it as a progressively free realm of archetypes, an idealized landscape in which Beethoven could rehearse schematic oppositions of space and motion.’ (p. 73).

⁵⁵ See for example Urbanek’s study *Auf der Suche nach einer zeitgemäßen Musikästhetik*; therein Urbanek has outlined that Adorno’s understanding of the *Missa Solemnis* is exterior to the canon of works of the late style (pp. 226-228).

⁵⁶ Friesenhagen, *Die Messen Ludwig van Beethovens*, p. 400, n. 232 (my translation).

⁵⁷ Adorno, *Beethoven*, pp. 200-202.

⁵⁸ Daniel Chua has stated that ‘the sovereignty of the *Missa* is founded on a law of exception in which Beethoven himself is excluded from his work’ (‘Beethoven’s Other Humanism’, *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 62:3 [2009], p. 630).

that while Adorno considered the Ninth Symphony to be broadly devoid of the characteristics which he associated with the late style, he nevertheless considered this to differ significantly from the *Missa Solemnis*: '[t]he Ninth Symphony falls outside of the late style altogether, turning retrospectively towards the classical, symphonic Beethoven'.⁵⁹ In contrast, Adorno considered the *Missa Solemnis* to be not simply devoid of the late style in terms of a 'retrojection' to the heroic period, but indeed as such to signify a break in the assumed tripartite scheme of Beethoven's development as inherited from A.B. Marx. Hence while Adorno suggests that the Ninth Symphony fell back into the middle Beethoven and is so 'regressive', the situation for the *Missa Solemnis* appears to be different.

This becomes evident in Adorno's argument for the idea of the 'entirely exclusivity of the *Missa* in Beethoven's oeuvre',⁶⁰ ultimately even denying the essential Beethovenianism of the piece.⁶¹ In these terms the concept of alienation—as Adorno conspicuously introduced by entitling his pivotal essay 'Verfremdetes Hauptwerk'—can be insightfully understood according to the Hegelian notion of 'Entäußerung': Adorno has implied that Beethoven had alienated himself from his own aesthetic standards. Yet I argue that the presupposition according to which the *Missa Solemnis* is a late work without late style is somewhat misguided. Adorno set up the difficulties inherent to the categorisation of the *Missa Solemnis* (though he himself did not provide a solution to this), and thereby the *Missa Solemnis* remained a kind of anomaly in the terms of the proposed tripartite scheme of Beethoven's development.

Accounting for the exceptional status to which the *Missa Solemnis* doubtlessly is ascribed in Adorno's interpretation of Beethoven, another level of alienation—for Adorno of the most crucial significance—should be drawn to attention: the concept of alienation may be considered as further contributing to the discourses of humanity in the period of the Enlightenment. Thus one might argue that the *Missa Solemnis* carries out an idea of humanity through alienation, under the assumption that, following Adorno, the work purposefully mediates unsuccessfully between the topoi

⁵⁹ Adorno, 'Verfremdetes Hauptwerk', p. 149; see furthermore Adorno, *Beethoven*, p. 146.

⁶⁰ 'völlige Exteriorialität der *Missa* in Beethovens oeuvre'; Adorno, *Beethoven*, p. 200.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

of the motivic-thematic work—as it is broadly connected to ‘subjectivity’ in Adorno’s music philosophy—and the static ‘objectivity’ of the archaic genre of the mass.⁶² Thus the unsuccessful mediation might here be considered to convey the idea of a fundamental irreconcilability.

Both applications of the concept of alienation⁶³ suggest that there is a need for a reassessment of Beethoven’s second mass in the terms of Adorno’s conception of Beethoven’s late style. But before we will be able to develop this approach in more detail, it is initially important to pursue the genre-related question concerning by which legitimation Adorno was able to supposedly idealise the motivic-thematic work in the context of the *Missa Solemnis*?

Although Dahlhaus’s critique—that the methodological approach of Adorno was in a conventional sense inadequate—may seem to be at the first glance plausible, I argue that it is nonetheless necessary in equal measure to reflect upon Adorno’s methodological approach against the background of his understanding of genre to as having—and this is hardly a contentious insight—permeable borders. In this regard, it appears to be a logical step that the motivic-thematic work as it stems from instrumental music might also be applied to a vocal composition. In so doing, however, Adorno drifted toward the fundamental difficulty of identifying the constitutional framework in which the dialectic between the ‘normative’ level (such as handed-down formal types, etc.) and the ‘critical’ level undermining these givens

⁶² This aspect has been discussed by Rose Rosengard Subotnik, ‘Adorno’s Diagnosis of Beethoven’s Late Style: Early Symptom of a Fatal Condition’, *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 29:2 (1973), pp. 258-261; Max Paddison, *Adorno’s Aesthetics of Music*, p. 239; and Michael P. Steinberg, ‘The Musical Absolute’, *New German Critique*, 56 (1992), pp. 29-35.

⁶³ This is not an all-encompassing survey of every layer upon which the concept of alienation can be understood in terms of Adorno’s treatment. So for example, alienation could also be taken to stem from Adorno’s concern to mitigate the ‘superficial, fetishistic, and trivial glorification [oberflächliche, fetischistische und triviale Verhimmelung]’ (Adorno, ‘Zum Beschluß einer Diskussion’, GS 14, p. 444) of the *Missa Solemnis*—as similarly developed in ‘Bach gegen seine Liebhaber verteidigt’—and so to make the work an object of critical reflection: ‘[t]o speak seriously of it can be nothing other than, in Brecht’s phrase, to alienate it; to rupture the aura of unfocused veneration protectively surrounding it, and thereby perhaps to contribute something to an authentic experience of it [...] [Von ihr im Ernst zu reden, kann nichts anderes heißen, als sie, nach Brechts Ausdruck, zu verfremden; die Aura beziehungsloser Verehrung zu durchbrechen, die sie schützend umgibt, und damit vielleicht etwas beizutragen zu ihrer authentischen Erfahrung [...].]’ (Adorno, ‘Verfremdetes Hauptwerk’, p. 146). Thus alienation as understood in these terms—and as underlying Brecht’s conception of the Epic Theatre—is a prerequisite step ‘in order to set up a proper access to this unfathomable work [ein sachgerechtes Verhältnis zu dem abgründigen Werk überhaupt erst vorzubereiten.]’ (Adorno, ‘Zum Beschluß einer Diskussion’, GS 14, p. 444).

is carried out.⁶⁴ I argue that the core aesthetic problem which Adorno backed off from is that the genre of the mass genuinely requires a readjustment of this dialectical axis: while in instrumental music Adorno saw the ‘subjective content’ (as connected to the motivic-thematic work) emerge within the heteronomous ‘objectivity’ of the normativity of formal types, I argue that the genre of the mass gains its kind of heteronomous reference through the liturgical text. In failing to take this into consideration in his analytical approach, Adorno missed the chance to make, in aesthetic terms, ‘sense’ out of the *Missa Solemnis*. In my interpretation the liturgical text, in terms of constituting ‘objectivity’, might cautiously be put forward as a kind of ‘surrogate’ for formal types and hence may correspondingly provide the individual work with the potential to carry out both a pure affirmation of the ‘normative’ level and its disassociation represented by the ‘critical’ level.

In this way Dahlhaus and Friesenhagen’s critiques fall short: they have failed to adequately acknowledge that Adorno’s concern is motivated by the desperate attempt to constitute the subject-object-dialectic, which indeed is a legitimate concern when approaching the *Missa Solemnis* from the immanence of Adorno’s music philosophical thought. Here Subotnik’s reflections are particularly illuminating: she has recognised the difficulty of locating the subjective content (‘subjektiver Gehalt’) of the *Missa Solemnis*, ultimately concluding that this had been somewhat retracted: ‘the idea of “subject” in the *Missa Solemnis*—the humanistic aspect of the work, in Adorno’s terms—retains its presence and expressiveness only in the poignancy of the subject’s need to withdraw itself physically and retreat behind the collectivity of an archaistic surface.’⁶⁵

Therein Adorno’s methodological decision to seek the motivic-thematic work and, further his insight, to fail to find any, led him to point out a crucial aesthetic problem concerning the *Missa Solemnis*: along with Subotnik, one might think of the possibility that Beethoven retracted the content of ‘subjectivity’, which could itself be considered an immanent critique of those notions of humanism that are arguably represented by the liturgical context. One might here recall Adorno’s statement that in

⁶⁴ I introduced both concepts in the introduction, with reference to Paddison; please refer to n. 26.

⁶⁵ Subotnik, ‘Adorno’s Diagnosis of Beethoven’s Late Style’, p. 258; see further Chua, ‘Beethoven’s Other Humanism’, p. 587.

Beethoven's Mass in C Major, op. 86, it was 'as if his [i.e. Beethoven's] humanism had bridled against the heteronomy of the traditional liturgical text and had delegated its composition to a routine devoid of genius'.⁶⁶ The context of this assertion suggests that this consideration may be extrapolated to the *Missa Solemnis*, whereupon the *Missa Solemnis* could be promoted not only to be a late work, but—as I will go on to outline below—also to come within the ambit of the late style.

In my perspective, the late style should be considered able to be carried out no matter what genre Beethoven decided to compose in, once the configuration of the subject-object-dialectic is aesthetically 'adjusted' to the idiosyncratic nature of vocal or instrumental music respectively. Certainly, this is a consideration which directly concerns the concept of genre, and which Adorno did not develop, though the *Missa Solemnis* would have been an exceptional object for a theorisation of the concept of genre in this respect. That Adorno missed this opportunity might indeed be regarded to be, as Raymond Geuss has suggested,⁶⁷ symptomatic of Adorno's supposed resentment of the *Missa Solemnis* as an ecclesiastical work. Thus my attempt will be to reflect upon the possibilities by which the *Missa Solemnis* might be integrated within the late style: rather than supposing that the *Missa Solemnis* represents a kind of 'regression' within the context of the late style, I will instead consider that Beethoven's second mass constitutes an alternative route by which to produce the late style, under the premise that the frame of the concept of the late style must be broadened to account for the idiosyncrasies of the genre of the mass, and more principally the ways in which the critical consciousness can be carried out beyond the 'traditional' constraints of genres.

3.2 *Considerations of an Adjustment of the Late Style*

The difficulty that the *Missa Solemnis* can be considered to be a late work conforming with the late style but expressed within its own terms was in fact prepared by Adorno in his note 'Spätwerk ohne Spätstil'.⁶⁸ Here Adorno attempted to provide a perspective according to which the *Missa Solemnis* can be seen as a 'critique of the

⁶⁶ Adorno, 'Verfremdetes Hauptwerk', GS 17, p. 150.

⁶⁷ Raymond Geuss, 'Adorno's Gaps', *Arion*, 12:2 (2004), 161-180 (p. 173).

⁶⁸ Adorno, *Beethoven*, pp. 200-202.

“classical” symphonic ideal. The ‘bound style’ *allows* him [i.e. Beethoven] a turn which was hardly permitted by instrumental music’.⁶⁹ Thus Beethoven’s decision to compose the *Missa Solemnis* might be considered a necessary step to carry out new potentials of his critical consciousness in regard to his heroic period, and therein to establish a different angle of his supposed self-critique of the heroic period not possible within the constraints of instrumental music. This potential of the *Missa Solemnis* was to some extent recognised by Dahlhaus, who hinted that

[t]he compositional deficiency [...], which results from the abandonment of the thematic work and the suspension of the processual character of the music constitutes the reversed side of an insight through which Beethoven elevates for a moment in the *Missa Solemnis* beyond the ‘law of form’ of his symphonic works.⁷⁰

This ‘elevation’, as Dahlhaus has put it, can be discussed in relation to a distinction which I shall develop: I want to distinguish between the form of *critical consciousness* represented by the late style and the technical *means* employed to achieve this form of consciousness. The form of consciousness of the late style might be described as a fundamental discomfort which Adorno assumed Beethoven to have felt when confronted with his heroic period. This idea clearly emerges in Adorno’s fragments on Beethoven:

The key to the very late Beethoven probably lies in the fact that in this music the idea of totality as something already achieved had become unbearable to his critical genius [...]; in a sense, the disassociation found in the last works is a consequence of the moments of transcendence in the “classical” works of the middle period.⁷¹

⁶⁹ ‘[Die Antwort schiebt mir in der Linie von Beethovens] Kritik des “klassisch”-symphonischen Ideals zu liegen. Der gebundene Stil *erlaubt* ihm eine Wendung, wie sie die Instrumentalmusik kaum zuließ [...].’ Ibid, p. 200.

⁷⁰ ‘Der kompositorische Mangel [...], der aus dem Verzicht auf thematische Arbeit, aus der Suspendierung des Prozeßcharakters der Musik resultiert, bildet die Kehrseite einer Erkenntnis, durch die sich Beethoven in der *Missa Solemnis* über das Formgesetz seiner symphonischen Werke einen Augenblick lang erhob.’ Dahlhaus, ‘Zu Adornos Beethoven-Kritik’, p. 171.

⁷¹ ‘Der Schlüssel zum letzten Beethoven liegt wahrscheinlich darin, daß seinem kritischen Genius in dieser Musik die Vorstellung der Totalität als einer schon geleisteten unerträglich wurde. [...] In einem gewissen Sinn ist die Dissoziation der letzten Werke die Konsequenz aus den Augenblicken der Transzendenz in den “klassischen” der mittleren Zeit.’ Adorno, *Beethoven*, pp. 36-37.

To dispel this discomfort, Adorno supposed Beethoven to have had developed certain means, and which he addressed in his essay ‘Spätstil Beethovens’. But all of these means were distilled from the instrumental music of the canon of the late works. Thus I propose that there is a necessity to determine (and therein, to extend) the means by which such a critical consciousness could be implemented, specifically in the terms of the genre of the mass. That is to say, the abandonment of the sonata form as the framework in which an undermining of totality⁷² can be carried out does not necessarily imply an abandonment of any critical potential. Rather we should ask: what gains are obtained in quitting the sonata form? I argue that the genre of the mass as the foundation from which Beethoven might have developed his (self)criticism might offer an alternative critical approach which is consistent with the consciousness of the late style.

I want to put into consideration that to understand the work according to its own ‘laws’ means taking on the aesthetic problems it enkindles. Obviously with regard to the *Missa Solemnis*, where ‘coherence’ is not generated in terms of the formal configuration, the constitutional framework needs to be reassessed in relation to the idea of disassociation, which certainly is the central feature of Adorno’s theory of Beethoven’s late style.⁷³ Indeed, the *Missa Solemnis* can be understood to have traces of disassociation, a perspective which Birgit Lodes and Daniel Chua have opened up (though an extensive analytical examination with regard to Beethoven’s two masses still remains to be done).

As the liturgical text, so for example in the *Gloria*, juxtaposes two fundamental spheres—the divine heavenly sphere and the human earthly one—Lodes has stressed that this juxtaposition is not supposed to result in a kind of ‘synthesis’, but rather the liturgical content claims the acceptance of this fundamental

⁷² It is important in this context to acknowledge the nuances of Adorno’s account of tonality in this context; see Friedrich A. Uehlein’s article “‘Beethovens Musik ist die Hegelsche Philosophie: sie ist aber zugleich wahrer...’”, in *Mit den Ohren denken: Adornos Philosophie der Musik*, ed. Richard Klein and Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998), pp. 206-228, in which the author has emphasised that the concept of totality as affiliated with the middle Beethoven needs to take in the aspect of transcendence (esp. pp. 221 and 224-227).

⁷³ Hinrichsen, ‘„Es wäre sonst alles, auch die ‘Klassik’, anders verlaufen.“’, p. 225. Please also refer to Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, p. 139.

distinction.⁷⁴ This acceptance counteracts straightaway the dialectical constellation of two themes within the sonata principle which are constituted in the expectation of their later convergence.⁷⁵ Hence we see a characteristic which might be considered to conform to the critical consciousness with which Beethoven's late style is associated. On that note, the idea of reconciliation can be shown further to be impossible, as Chua has discussed, in the *Dona nobis pacem* through the fact that Beethoven severs the "dona" from the "pacem" motivically, textually and temporally.⁷⁶ Observations like these foster the assumption that the genre of the mass possibly allowed Beethoven to develop the idea of 'non-synthesis' in new ways.

Indeed, Adorno had actually reflected upon the *Missa Solemnis* along these lines:

The late Beethoven's demand for truth rejects the illusory appearance of the unity of subjective and objective, a concept practically at one with the classicist era. A polarization results. Unity transcends into the fragmentary. In the last quartets this takes place by means of the rough, unmediated juxtaposition of callow aphoristic motifs and polyphonic complexes. The gap between both becomes obvious and makes the impossibility of aesthetic harmony into the aesthetic content of the work: making failure in a highest sense the measure of success. *In its way even the Missa sacrifices the idea of synthesis in the sense that it refuses the entrance of the subject imperiously, which is no longer contained in the objectivity of form, and which cannot generate the latter without a break from within.*⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Birgit Lodes, *Das Gloria in Beethovens Missa Solemnis* (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1997), pp. 90-102.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 100.

⁷⁶ Daniel K. L. Chua, *Absolute Music and the Construction of Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 269.

⁷⁷ 'Der Wahrheitsanspruch des letzten Beethoven verwirft den Schein jener Identität des Subjektiven und Objektiven, der fast eins ist mit der klassizistischen Idee. Es erfolgt eine Polarisierung. Einheit transzendiert zum Fragmentarischen. In den letzten Quartetten geschieht das durch das schroffe, unvermittelte Nebeneinanderrücken kahler, spruchähnlicher Motive und polyphoner Komplexe. Der Riß zwischen beidem, der sich einbekennt, macht die Unmöglichkeit ästhetischer Harmonie zum ästhetischen Gehalt, das Mißlingen in einem obersten Sinn zum Maß des Gelingens. Auch die Missa opfert auf ihre Weise die Idee der Synthesis, aber nun, indem sie dem Subjekt, das nicht mehr von der Objektivität der Form geborgen ist, aber auch nicht diese aus sich heraus bruchlos hervorbringen kann, gebieterisch den Eingang in die Musik verwehrt.' Adorno, 'Verfremdetes Hauptwerk', p. 159 (my italics). This quote is taken in translation from Max Paddison's article 'Authenticity and Failure in Adorno's Aesthetics of Music', in *The Cambridge Companion to Adorno*, ed. Tom Huhn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 198-221 (p. 218).

In considering the *Missa Solemnis* to ‘sacrifice the idea of synthesis’—that is to say, to execute in aesthetic terms the idea of non-identity as posited by Adorno to be the only perspective of humanism possible after the Shoah⁷⁸—the *Missa Solemnis*, composed in the period of Enlightenment, gains its ‘authenticity’ through its failing.⁷⁹ This insight is made possible *based on* Adorno’s methodological approach, though this has been criticised by Dahlhaus and Friesenhagen to be inadequate in its nature.⁸⁰ However, Adorno did not seem willing to accept the corollary of this insight as it would have possibly supported something of an ‘ontologisation’ of the *Missa Solemnis*.

As we have seen, the aesthetic difficulties which he saw when confronted with the *Missa Solemnis* stemmed from his inability to elucidate the subject-object dialectic. However, in extrapolating the concept of disassociation to include the liturgical text, a perspective of a critical consciousness may be developed nonetheless. Thus I suggest that the catalogue of means to convey the idea of disassociation which is so characteristic of the late style, as Adorno distilled these from instrumental music, can be extended, and so the perspective is opened up that the *Missa Solemnis*—which has been broadly considered to be somehow resistant to Adorno’s theory of the late style—can in spite of all be affiliated to the canon of works of the late style. That is not to say that the *Missa Solemnis* loses its exceptional status, or further that Adorno’s aesthetic difficulties with the *Missa Solemnis* are solved, but by taking into account the field of problems which the concept of genre sets up when considering his interpretation of Beethoven’s second mass, a new perspective on Beethoven’s late

⁷⁸ Please refer to Chua, who has proposed that the *Missa Solemnis* for Adorno ‘represents the shrine of human alienation’: ‘Beethoven’s Other Humanism’, p. 585; see further Chua, *Absolute Music and the Construction of Meaning*, pp. 266-275.

⁷⁹ Please refer to Paddison, ‘Authenticity and Failure in Adorno’s Aesthetics of Music’, pp. 217-218.

⁸⁰ In this context it must be emphasised that, in his late monograph on Beethoven, Dahlhaus in fact hinted at a perspective according to which the *Missa Solemnis* can be approached in its own terms, considering in particular the relation between the liturgical text and the possibilities of a kind of ‘submotivicism’. He argued that in the *Missa Solemnis* ‘the demands of the text and musical symbolism required the motivic material to change constantly; consequently, the connectedness was not generated in the motivic material itself, or on its outer surface, but at a semi-latent, submotivic level. And it is this resort to submotivicism that is the basis of the specific modernity which makes the *Missa Solemnis* a late work in the emphatic sense of that term.’ (*Ludwig van Beethoven: Approaches to his Music* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991], p. 196).

style might now begin to emerge from within the emic perspective of Adorno's philosophy of music.

CONCLUSION

ADORNO'S CLAIMS FOR MUSIC ANALYSIS AFTER THE ABANDONMENT OF THE TRADITIONAL 'FORMENLEHRE'

In the previous chapters, I developed several crucial aspects of Adorno's theory of musical form as can be established through his critique of the traditional 'Formenlehre'. The critical impulses that Adorno developed in confrontation with the traditional 'Formenlehre' were the products of his attempt to shepherd music theory towards developing a more adequate understanding of musical form, an understanding of form which did not simply cleave to a normative, ahistorical, static, reductionist, or heteronomous conception of musical form but rather one capable of doing the individual work justice. Having said this, Adorno was no music theorist. Thus we have every reason to critically ask: what is Adorno's concrete contribution to the discourses of musical form after the abandonment of the traditional 'Formenlehre'? I will argue here that no 'counter-project' issues from Adorno's critique, no post-traditional 'Formenlehre', but rather claims for a new *practice of music analysis*, a practice that does not apply the generalities—that is, invariant categories of theory upon the individual work—but aims instead to 'theorize' the musical particularities themselves.

In fact, his critique of the traditional 'Formenlehre' is not only a siren-call to the music theoretical discourses of his time, but indeed also to himself, as is evidenced by his late talk from 1969, 'Zum Problem der musikalischen Analyse', where he admitted that he felt a discomfort in regard to his own analyses.¹ To a certain degree, this critical sentiment was already reflected in, on the one hand, the late Adorno's famous compositional-aesthetic essay 'Vers une musique informelle', in which he anticipated a historical situation where the 'objectivity' which traditionally stemmed from formal types would be shifted into the individual logic of the work itself (we touched upon this fundamental idea already at the end of Chapter Two). On the other hand there is Adorno's proposal towards a 'material theory of

¹ Adorno, 'On the Problem of Music Analysis', p. 184.

form’.² Here Adorno attempted to provide a music-analytical approach which is clearly in contrast to the conception of musical form as conceived by the traditional ‘Formenlehre’ insofar that it aims to substitute the static elements (such as exposition, development [‘Durchführung’], recapitulation) for dynamic categories (such as continuation, development [‘Entwicklung’], contrast).³ Thus both proposals, the ‘Vers une musique informelle’ and the ‘material theory of form’, are enkindled at the same axiomatic consideration:⁴ to turn any understanding of form in heteronomous terms towards an ‘autonomous’, work-inherent understanding of it.⁵ Thus both projects implicitly argue for a ‘bottom-up’⁶ conception of musical form. I see this approach as a vanishing point beyond the traditional ‘Formenlehre’ best captured in the late Adorno’s attempt to conceive musical time.⁷

The concept of time might appear odd to a music theorist at first glance. What is the relationship between musical ‘form’ and ‘time’? What is the value of introducing a new concept here? This might raise some scepticism, which is particularly understandable when considering the fact—as done in the opening paragraph of this thesis—that the *content* of music is its *form*. Moreover, the terminological distinction of ‘musical time’ might insofar be problematic as it

² Although he never committed an essay to a material theory of form, the independence of his theorisation clearly emerges most prominently from his monographs on Mahler and Berg, and in his talk ‘Zum Problem der musikalischen Analyse’. Traces also pervade his writings on Beethoven, as had been acknowledged by Julian Johnson, ‘Vers une analyse informelle’, in *Musikalische Analyse und Kritische Theorie: Zu Adornos Philosophie der Musik*, ed. Adolf Nowak and Markus Fahlbusch (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 2007), 102-113, esp. p. 105. For a more comprehensive survey of Adorno’s anticipation of a material theory of form, please refer to Paddison, *Adorno’s Aesthetics of Music*, pp. 174-182, esp. pp. 174-177; and Hermann Danuser, “‘Materiale Formenlehre’”.

³ Adorno developed these ‘material’ categories in concrete terms in ‘On the Problem of Music Analysis’, p. 185; ‘Vers une musique informelle’, GS 16, pp. 504-505; *Einleitung in die Musiksoziologie*, GS 14, pp. 244-245; *Mahler: Eine musikalische Physiognomie*, GS 13, pp. 194-195.

⁴ Johnson, ‘Vers une analyse informelle’, p. 104.

⁵ In order to avoid confusion, my use of ‘autonomous’ concerning an ‘autonomous concept of musical form’ must not be confused with Adorno’s concept of ‘autonomous art’.

⁶ Please refer to Matthias Hansen, “‘Nacht ist Jetzt Schon Bald (?)’”: Zum Mahler-Bild Theodor W. Adornos’, in *Das Gustav-Mahler-Fest Hamburg 1989: Bericht über den Internationalen Gustav-Mahler-Kongreß*, ed. Matthias Theodor Vogt (Kassel: Bärenreiter Verlag, 1991), 55-62 (p. 56); and Johnson, ‘Vers une analyse informelle’, p. 104.

⁷ Richard Klein locates Adorno’s increasing interest in the concept of musical time at the beginning of his reflections upon Beethoven (1937/8), and from there onwards pervading his musical writings as a constant (always newly negotiated) theme: Klein, ‘Die Frage nach der musikalischen Zeit’, pp. 66-69. Similarly, these early conceptions have informed the approach of Nicholas Bacht’s study, *Music and Time in Theodor W. Adorno*. While I agree with both, I have nonetheless emphasised the late Adorno in this context because I believe that it is not until his self-criticism (see n. 1 from this chapter) that the concept of musical time gained increasing significance for Adorno.

possibly evokes the idea of a static ‘ontologisation’ of musical form, which Adorno clearly backed away from.⁸ In *Ästhetische Theorie* Adorno puts forward a reading of the concepts of form and time according to which, when taken in the strictest sense, both are at their core identical, thus treating both concepts as synonyms: ‘the relationship between music to time that is formally conceived is defined only through the relationship of what is actually taking place in time’.⁹ Hence both concepts are equally considered by Adorno as able to account for the individual formal configuration in terms of ‘becoming’, as music—as a temporal art per se—genuinely impinges on the matrix of time.¹⁰ In that way, the formal configuration of the individual work is understood as the ‘objectivisation’ of temporality:

As much as time is the medium which in its fluidity seems to resist any reification, so it is due to the temporality of music that music congeals to an independent preservation or to an object, that is, quasi to a thing. This is why we might call musical form the temporal organisation of music.¹¹

It is in this notion of ‘form as a (fluid) process’ (that is, a ‘form of becoming’) and ‘form as a (static) schema’ that Adorno introduced the potential of the concept of musical time:

Analysis is [...] 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.¹²

⁸ Please refer to Lydia Goehr, ‘Doppelbewegung: Die musikalische Bewegung der Philosophie und die philosophische Bewegung der Musik’, in *Dialektik der Freiheit: Frankfurter Adorno-Konferenz 2003*, ed. Axel Honneth (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2005), 279-317 (p. 281).

⁹ ‘[...] das Verhältnis von Musik zur formalen musikalischen Zeit bestimmt sich lediglich in der Relation des musikalisch konkret Geschehenden zu jener.’ Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, p. 42.

¹⁰ The complex relationship between music as a temporal art and as a phenomenon in time has been explored by Richard Klein, ‘Thesen zum Verhältnis von Musik und Zeit’, in *Musik in der Zeit: Zeit in der Musik*, ed. Richard Klein, Eckehard Kiem, and Wolfram Ette (Weilerswist: Velbrück Wissenschaft, 2000), 57-107.

¹¹ ‘Ist Zeit das Medium, das als fließendes jeder Verdinglichung zu widerstreben scheint, so ist doch die Zeitlichkeit der Musik eben das an ihr, wodurch sie überhaupt zu einem selbständig sich Durchhaltenden, zum Gegenstand, zum Ding gleichsam gerinnt. Man nennt deshalb musikalische Form ihre zeitliche Ordnung.’ Adorno, ‘Über einige Relationen zwischen Musik und Malerei’, GS 16, p. 628; see also idem, ‘Form in der neuen Musik’, GS 16, p. 607.

¹² Adorno, ‘On the Problem of Music Analysis’, p. 173.

The relationship of musical time to formal types may thus be defined: a particular formal type serves as a kind of ‘auxiliary construction’, set up (and yet moribund in the a priori) to grasp the development of music in time. Here the critique is not only that formal types fail to adequately ‘represent’ the actual ‘phenomenology’ of the individual work in time. It is more than that: formal types do not help to elucidate through which means music develops, that is the mechanisms operating ‘underneath the formal scheme’ that generate musical contexts (in the notion of ‘*musikalischer Zusammenhang*’). Thus, rather than just conceiving of musical form as mediating between the ‘normative’ level and the ‘critical’ level—that is, understanding formal schemes as *typologies* of the concrete temporal phenomenology of the individual work which then, only appears through *negation*—the late Adorno aimed to genuinely go beyond this dialectical conception, in aim of understanding the concrete phenomenology solely through the functional elements of form themselves, and so to ultimately conceive the idiosyncratic phenomenology of the individual work in *positive* terms. It becomes evident in one of his fragments on Beethoven that the pivotal point that turns the pure phenomenology of music as existing in (or, so to speak, ‘occupying’) empirical time into the active principle of constituting temporality *itself* is Adorno’s narrow understanding of development (in the German original, ‘*Entwicklung*’):

It is necessary to clarify the concept of musical *development* within the text [sc. the book on Beethoven]. It is not identical to that of the variation, but *narrower*. A central moment is the irreversibility of *time*. Development is a variation in which a later element presupposes an earlier one as something earlier, and not vice versa. Altogether, musical logic is not simply identity in non-identity but a meaningful sequence of moments; that is, what comes earlier and what later must itself constitute the meaning or result from it. Of course, the possibilities of these are legion, for example: intensity arising from something weaker, complexity from simplicity; but this direction (from simple to complex) by no means defines the concept. It can also *result* in the simple element; the theme; it can simplify the complex, *dissolve* the closed, and so on. Such types could be enumerated; but the concrete composition decides over

the logic of what comes before and after. Or are there general laws, after all? [This is] one of the most central questions of musical aesthetics.¹³

Thus while Adorno's broader notion of 'Entwicklung' refers to the general principle of 'developing variation' (as Adorno encountered it in the music theoretical discourses in the circle around Schoenberg in general), and according to which all musical events are deducible to the 'core material' posited in a composition and so are aesthetically 'legitimised',¹⁴ in contrast, in the more concrete terms of his 'narrow' concept of development ('enger Entwicklungsbegriff'), Adorno considered that the *direction* for development is a priori entailed due to the traits of the concrete phenomenology of the posited material itself. Thus Adorno put forward a reading according to which the *positing* of the individual musical 'event' (in terms of 'Ereignis') always already entails not only the potential for development but, in more concrete terms, a direction of 'movement' ('Bewegung').¹⁵ I argue that this potential can be characterised as 'dialectical' insofar as the impetus for the 'movement' a priori

¹³ 'Er [i.e. der Begriff der musikalischen *Entwicklung*] ist nicht identisch mit dem der Variation sondern *enger*. Zentral ist das Moment der Irreversibilität der *Zeit*. Entwicklung ist Variation, in der Späteres Früheres als Früheres voraussetzt und nicht umgekehrt. Überhaupt ist musikalische Logik nicht einfach Identität in der Nichtidentität sondern sinnvolle Folge der Momente d.h. was früher, was später ist muß selber den Sinn konstituieren oder aus ihm resultieren. Dafür gibt es freilich die verschiedensten Möglichkeiten, wie: Intensiveres aus Schwächerem, Komplizierteres aus Einfachem, aber diese Richtung definiert keineswegs den Begriff. Sie kann auch im Einfachen - "Thema" - *resultieren*; sie kann auch das Kompliziertere vereinfachen, das Geschlossene *auflösen* usw. Man wird solche Typen geben können, über die Logik des Erst und dann wird aber die konkrete Komposition entscheiden. Oder gibt es da doch allgemeine Gesetze. Eine der zentralsten Fragen der Musikästhetik.' Adorno, *Beethoven*, pp. 106-107.

¹⁴ Please refer to Klaus E. Kaehler, 'Aspekte des Zeitproblems in der Musikphilosophie Theodor W. Adornos', in *Mit den Ohren denken: Adornos Philosophie der Musik*, ed. Richard Klein and Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1998), 37-51 (esp. 38-39). The connection between the concepts of 'musical time' and the 'broader concept of development' can be revealed in negative relation to what Adorno considered to be music that does provide any 'work-character' ('Arbeitscharakter') and so is not 'blasted out' of 'empirical' time (Adorno, 'Form in der neuen Musik', GS 16, p. 617): popular music signifies for Adorno the filling-out of empty time with emptiness (idem, *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS 7, p. 365; see also idem, *Der getreue Korrepetitor*, GS 15, pp. 386-387); jazz music is 'undialectical' and its rhythmically distinctive technique is related to musical time in a neutral way' ('rhythmisch gepriesene Technik verhält sich im Grunde neutral zur musikalischen Zeit'; idem, 'Wilder Hobson, American Jazz Music; Winthrop Sargeant, Jazz Hot and Hybrid [review]', GS 19, p. 392). Based on Cage's aleatoric piano concerto Adorno argued that this represents 'the utter catastrophic music, ordered and meaningful only in the taboo of any ideas which concern the musical context of meaning ('konsequent und sinnvoll einzig im Tabu über jegliche Idee von musikalischem Sinnzusammenhang, bereitet das Äußerste an Katastrophenmusik'; Adorno, 'Musik und neue Musik', GS 16, p. 483; see also 'Vers une musique informelle', GS 16, p. 494). In a fragment on Beethoven, Adorno even considered the fantasia to be 'devoid of time' (idem, *Beethoven*, p. 107).

¹⁵ I refer to this term as developed in Goehr, 'Doppelbewegungen'.

aims to reach its ‘phenomenological’ opposite (Adorno put forward the examples: complex/simple, elaborated/weak, closed/dissolution in terms of opening the closed again, etc.). It is precisely in this sense that the ‘movement’ of music is goal-driven or ‘teleological’—that is, ‘irreversible’.

Certainly, Adorno’s narrow notion of ‘Entwicklung’ remains quite vague. Presumably Adorno died too early to develop the implications to a more elaborated and concrete degree. However, we may note that these considerations on the nature of music resonate in Adorno’s idea of the practice of music analysis. His anticipating statement in his late talk ‘Zum Problem der musikalischen Analyse’ of an analysis which ‘is more than merely “the facts” [*was bloss der Fall ist*], but is, by virtue of going beyond the simple facts [*die einfachen Tatbestände*], absorbed into them’¹⁶ reflects the general approach that he anticipated: by ‘absorbing’ itself ‘into the facts’ of the individual formal configuration, music analysis is conceived to take in the dialectical nature of its object as its own principle. In other words (and this is indeed something of an aporetic structure), the *dynamic* nature of the musical object itself needs to be, according to Adorno, extrapolated to the *concepts* utilized to speak about it. Adorno developed this figure of thought under the topos of ‘immanent-musical concepts’.¹⁷ This is what I consider the critical peak of Adorno’s ‘material theory of form’: rather than setting up a catalogue of concepts and categories which then can be heteronomously applied to and so simply *label* the dialectical processes (e.g. paradigmatically on the large-scale architecture, the dualism between first theme and second theme, etc.), the late Adorno claimed that the developments of musical time themselves have to find crystallisation within the conceptualisation of the music-analytical concepts with which these ‘movements’ are finally captured. Kofi Agawu and Alastair Williams have felicitously evaluated Adorno’s claims as the principle through which music analysis has to develop imaginative power through a semanticisation of the formal configuration of the individual work.¹⁸

¹⁶ Adorno, ‘On the Problem of Music Analysis’, p. 177.

¹⁷ Adorno, Beethoven, p. 33. Adorno introduces this term in negation to ‘concepts *about* music’ (‘Begriffe *über* Musik’; *ibid.*, p. 33) and so ‘*opposed* to the traditional aesthetics, the theory of the visual-symbolic-monistic nature of art’ (‘*gegen* die traditionelle Ästhetik, die Lehre vom anschaulich-symbolischen-monistischen Wesen der Kunst’; *ibid.*, p. 34).

¹⁸ Agawu, ‘What Adorno Makes Possible for Music Analysis’, p. 55; Alastair Williams, who has for example referred to Adorno’s material theory of form in the context of Brian Ferneyhough, ‘Adorno

Obviously, this has consequences for music theory and analysis in general. Developing Adorno's critique of the ahistorical orientation of music theory from which music analysis builds, Lydia Goehr argues in her essay 'The Limits of Analysis and the Need for History' that music-theoretical categories and concepts have to be thought of as historical products themselves. Music analysis, however, has tended to forget the necessity to critically reflect on the historical attitude which they have taken in and practice.¹⁹ In the late Adorno we encounter traits that lay the foundations of Goehr's argument. As Arno Forchert has critically highlighted, the scope of Adorno's 'material theory of form' is limited to music from ca. 1900.²⁰ Yet in line with Goehr's argument, I argue that this supposedly weak point concerning Adorno's 'material theory of form' is in fact the consequence of a well-conceived axiomatic consideration: Adorno never aimed at a postulation of the categories of his 'material theory of form' in a historically all-encompassing way, and so to claim general validity for these categories, because he took account for the fact that these categories have to be saved from turning into a normative catalogue that themselves tended again to ahistoricism. The 'material' aspect of Adorno's 'material categories' literally meant that these are pervaded by their own historicity.²¹ For Adorno these categories had to be gained—and that is to say, critically reproduced over and over again—in direct confrontation with the individual work. Thus I argue that although Adorno had indeed developed the 'material theory of form' in the first instance in regard to Mahler and Berg (and which Forchert thus deemed too specialised and without universal impact), Adorno's 'material theory of form' is meant for application in music analysis concerned with the 'Great Tradition' in general. In this respect, the criticised indeterminacy of the 'material' categories is less of a symptom of an unfinished theorisation of the 'material' understanding of form than the

and the Semantics of Modernism', *Perspectives of New Music*, 37:2 (1999), 29-50 (p. 34); see also Seth Monahan, *Mahler's Sonata Narratives* (Yale University Ph.D. dissertation, 2008), pp. 26-50.

¹⁹ Lydia Goehr, 'The Limits of Analysis and the Need for History', in *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay on the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 69-86.

²⁰ Arno Forchert, 'Zur Auflösung traditioneller Formkategorien in der Musik um 1900, Probleme formaler Organisation bei Mahler und Strauss', *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, 32:2 (1975), 85-98, esp. pp. 86-87.

²¹ Please refer to Danuser, "'Material Formenlehre'", pp. 21-28; Johnson, 'Vers une analyse informelle', p. 112.

consequence of the historicity which issues from the ‘material’ understanding of form itself:

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. [...] It [i.e., ‘material theory of musical form’] 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.²²

Just some months before he passed away, Adorno could not have made the way in which he conceived the move beyond the traditional ‘Formenlehre’ more explicit: a ‘theory of musical form’ *after* the traditional ‘Formenlehre’ has to be of a different nature. His wish to understand how musical time is generated in the individual work and the ‘translation’ of these mechanisms into ‘material categories’ anticipated a new *practice of music analysis*. His historical notions of musical form and genre and the (problematic) relationship between both concepts, the aesthetic problems (such as the ‘work character’, repetition, and closure) that immanently issue from the concept of musical form, the idea that musical form is tied up with philosophical-aesthetic ideas as well as being a technical phenomenon, all these notions are encapsulated in Adorno’s anticipation of a new practice for music analysis, and makes this ultimately emerge as the vanishing point of his theory of musical form. For Adorno it was obvious that only by acknowledging the concept of musical form to be genuinely interwoven with this complex discourse can we—and this is the quote that preceded this thesis—‘think the concept [of form] through’. Developing some of the crucial aspects and ramifications of Adorno’s theory of musical form in this thesis, I hope to have opened up perspectives on this discourse, and so to give Adorno a place within the general history of ‘Formenlehre’.

²² Adorno, ‘On the Problem of Music Analysis’, p. 185.

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Due to the difficulties of translating Adorno, I have aimed at providing my own translations throughout, all the better to mediate my reading of Adorno's writings to the reader. In the course of this, I consulted several English language translations of Adorno's work, in order to corroborate the accuracy of my interpretation; divergencies are not made explicit. The works consulted are:

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