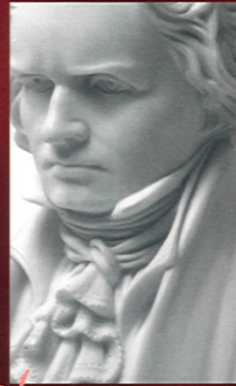


# Beethoven

*The Philosophy of Music*



Theodor W.  
**Adorno**



**BEETHOVEN**





# B E E T H O V E N

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF MUSIC

Theodor W. Adorno

*Fragments and Texts*  
*edited by Rolf Tiedemann*

*Translated by Edmund Jephcott*

Polity Press

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## EDITOR'S PREFACE

'To great writers, finished works weigh lighter than those fragments on which they work throughout their lives.' Benjamin's aphorism from *One-Way Street* sounds as if it had been coined for the book Adorno wanted to write decades later on Beethoven. Adorno pursued – one might even say: courted – few of his literary projects as long or intensively as this. And none came to a stop, for almost a lifetime, at a similarly early stage of its composition. His first texts on Beethoven were produced, as yet without any idea of writing a book on the composer, in 1934, the second year of the Nazi regime, and shortly before the beginning of his exile. According to Adorno, he planned to write a 'philosophical work on Beethoven' from 1937; the earliest surviving notes for it date from spring or summer 1938, immediately after his move to New York. He seems to have formed the plan after completing the '*Versuch über Wagner*', or even in parallel to it. Two years later, in June 1940, a letter to his parents, mainly about the defeat of France, contains the statement: 'The next major piece of work I intend to take on will be the Beethoven.' The work on Beethoven had actually been started long before, though only in the form of notes on individual compositions and, usually, on isolated aspects of Beethoven's music. But the real work, which for Adorno began only with the formulation of the connected text, had not even been started, doubtless because of the daily pressures to which the *émigré* writer was exposed. At the end of 1943 – by now Adorno was living in California – he was still far from having started to write the book, as emerges from a letter to Rudolf Kolisch. Referring to 'my long-planned book on Beethoven', Adorno

writes: 'I think it ought to be the first thing I do after the war.' But even when the war was over and Adorno was back in Frankfurt-on-Main, he continued to write notes of the kind he had been accumulating more or less continuously since 1938. In 1956, however, these broke off rather abruptly; after that, only a few additions were made. In a letter of July 1957 to the pianist and Beethoven scholar Jürgen Uhde, Adorno remarked wistfully: 'If only I could get on with writing my book on Beethoven, on which I have copious notes. But heaven alone knows when and whether I shall be able to complete it.' In October 1957 Adorno finally wrote the essay 'Verfremdetes Hauptwerk' ['The Alienated *Magnum Opus*'] on the *Missa Solemnis*. After dictating the first draft he wrote in his diary, with quite uncharacteristic emotion: 'Thank heaven I have done it at last.' By this time he had clearly given up hope of completing his Beethoven project. When he included the essay on the *Missa Solemnis* in the miscellany *Moments musicaux* in 1964, he referred in the Preface to his 'projected philosophical work on Beethoven' as follows: 'It has yet to be written, primarily because the author's exertions have foundered continually on the *Missa Solemnis*. He has therefore attempted, at least, to explain these difficulties, to state the question more clearly, without presuming to have answered it.' The hope of solving the problems which not only the *Missa* but Beethoven's music as a whole posed to philosophical interpretation seemed to Adorno increasingly forlorn; but there were times when he entertained it all the same. In an impromptu radio talk on Beethoven's late style in 1966, his last work concerned with Beethoven, Adorno no longer mentioned his plan for a book at all. But not long before his death, in January 1969, he included *Beethoven. The Philosophy of Music* as the last in a series of eight books he still intended to complete. It is hard here to distinguish the gentle irony with which the sixty-five-year-old author committed himself to writing eight more books, from his unshakable belief in his own productivity, which for others was, indeed, hardly imaginable. Up to the end, the work on Beethoven was not 'written down', nor was its final drafting even begun. The present edition brings together the very numerous preparatory notes for that work, as well as a few completed texts: fragments on which the author worked throughout his life, or at least throughout its most productive phase.

The book now at the reader's disposal contains, on the one hand, every word Adorno wrote for his *Beethoven* study and, on the other, nothing written by anyone else, at least in the text section. All the same, it is not a book by Adorno. It lacks the closed, integrated



structure of a completed work; it has remained a fragment. Adorno's *Beethoven* is fragmentary in a far more literal sense than his *Aesthetic Theory*, for example. If the latter has been aptly called a 'great fragment' – it breaks off before the final stage of formulation – the fragments in *Beethoven* are of a lesser kind. They are first drafts which were put aside before Adorno had attempted to combine them into a whole, or had even sketched a plan for the entire work. None of the notes on Beethoven was written for a reader; they were all intended for the author himself, as *aides-mémoire* for the time when he would apply himself to the final composition, a task he never began. Many of the notes are merely programmatic in nature, hardly more than what Adorno called a formal indication of what he intended to write. And even when, in some cases, individual ideas and motifs go far beyond this stage, they usually trace the path ahead rather than covering the ground itself. Much of the material, which does not go beyond the mere impression or idea, Adorno would never have approved for printing. While he knew what he intended to say, the reader can only surmise it. The reader of the fragments must always bear in mind that Adorno is not speaking directly to the reader. What is only hinted at, sometimes in a private idiom, the reader must translate into a language in which it can be understood by all. The receptive exertion that any text by Adorno demands of its readers is required in potentiated form by the fragments presented here.

To the Editor, Adorno described his fragments on Beethoven as a diary of his experiences of Beethoven's music. They occur in the same arbitrary sequence in which one is accustomed to hear, play or read music. Their chronological sequence follows the contingency of the abstract passage of time we experience empirically from day to day. The Editor has not retained this sequence in the printed version, but has replaced it by an order of his own. In doing so he has not attempted to organize the material as Adorno himself might have done, had he written the projected book. Instead, the existing notes on Beethoven, however fragmentary or provisional they might appear in relation to a book that does not exist, have been evaluated in terms of their internal structure or logic. The order in which they are presented to the reader is an attempt to make this structure visible. Benjamin spoke of the capacity of neglected historical phenomena to 'attain legibility' as a process in time. In a similar way, fragmentary texts may become legible as a kind of spatial configuration: a signature that can only be deciphered if the surviving fragments and drafts are arranged in a constellation determined by their *inherent meaning*, whereas it would remain unknowable had the notes been left in the sequence in which they were produced. The

present arrangement of Adorno's fragments on Beethoven in no way claims to make good what the author failed to achieve and which has thus been lost for ever. Rather, it attempts to bring the kaleidoscope of material to a standstill, so that the logic behind its chronology can emerge. This procedure is not inappropriate to a philosophy like Adorno's, which from the outset saw its task as that of 'arranging its elements in changing constellations until they form a figure which can be read as an answer while the question simultaneously vanishes'. Just as each of the following fragments on Beethoven contains a question to answer which nothing less than the unwritten book on the composer would be needed, the constellation which the fragments form objectively together cannot, of course, replace that book or answer the question; but it may cause that question, in the way described by Adorno, to 'vanish', by composing itself as a figure which 'can be read as an answer'.

The figure or answer that Adorno's fragments on Beethoven present through their arrangement includes the few texts on the composer that were completed, and these are reproduced with the fragments in what follows. In a conversation in 1964 the author called these texts 'advance payments' on his Beethoven book. At that time the essay 'Spätstil Beethovens' ['Beethoven's Late Style'] had been published; its author wrote of it that it might 'expect to receive some attention in view of Ch. VIII of *Doctor Faustus*'. Such attention is merited hardly less by the other parts of Adorno's *Beethoven*. Moreover, the essay later published with the title 'Verfremdetes Hauptwerk' had already been written. Adorno expressly included the passages from the *Introduction to the Sociology of Music* devoted to Beethoven among those which, he said, constituted a partial anticipation of his projected book. The editor has therefore incorporated extracts from the *Introduction to the Sociology of Music* on the mediation between Beethoven's music and society and on Beethoven's symphonic style in the text of the present volume. A text on the late Bagatelles for piano (op. 126) has also been included; written about the same time as the essay on the late style, it had not been printed at that time and had slipped Adorno's memory, as had an extract from *Der getreue Korreptitor* and two pieces written shortly before his death and inserted into his *Aesthetic Theory*. Whereas all these texts took their places within the structure of the Beethoven project, three other studies which were further removed from the book's plan but could not be omitted have been added in an appendix.

The extensive notes section also contributes to the aim of illuminating Adorno's theory on Beethoven as fully as possible, no matter how undeveloped its formulation may have been. In it the literary

and historical sources mentioned by Adorno in his fragments are set out. Documentation and references were an integral part of his project, making extensive quotations necessary. The reader should be aware of material to which the author is referring or alluding, and should also be advised of passages which do not succeed in conveying what Adorno intended. The notes on particular fragments or parts of fragments also refer to variants and parallel passages which are to be found in Adorno's completed works. He referred back later to many of the ideas first expressed in his notes for the Beethoven book, often in quite different contexts. The unsatisfactory character which many of the fragments will necessarily have for the reader is not infrequently compensated for, or at least alleviated by, the reworking of the same idea. However extensively the metamorphoses undergone by countless of Adorno's ideas on Beethoven are documented, the listing of parallel passages was never intended to be exhaustive. Priority has always been given to variants in which the argument of the Beethoven fragments is taken further or modified.\*

'We do not understand music – it understands us. This is as true for the musician as for the layman. When we think ourselves closest to it, it speaks to us and waits sad-eyed for us to answer.' Although Beethoven's name is not mentioned in it, this note by Adorno in the earliest of the notebooks containing his fragments on Beethoven is placed directly before the first note explicitly dealing with him. Now and then, with splendid immodesty, Adorno had given his book on Beethoven the subtitle *The Philosophy of Music*. When he later published the *Philosophy of Modern Music*, he wrote, in a prominent place: 'A philosophy of music is only possible today as a philosophy of modern music.' All the same, it is conceivable that he was also hinting in coded form at the reason why he had not yet written his philosophy of Beethoven's music. If, as he wrote elsewhere in the *Philosophy of Modern Music*, 'no music today can speak in the tone of *Dir werde Lohn* [Yours be the reward]', then no philosophy can today 'answer' a music which, like Beethoven's, could still speak truly in that tone. It is the tone of humanity, whose relation to the mythical Adorno's book on Beethoven would have made its theme. Myth, as Adorno does not tire of emphasizing, means, in the terms used by Benjamin, the entanglement of the living in guilt, fate encumbered by nature. Humanity, however, does not stand opposed

\* Additions by the editor are enclosed in square brackets. Details on the preparation of the text and on the chronology of the fragments can be found in the Editorial Afterword and in the Comparative Table following it.

to myth in an abstract contradiction, but converges with myth's reconciliation. Adorno, who used the term humanity reluctantly and rarely on account of its false consecration, was nevertheless once prepared, prompted by Goethe's *Iphigenia*, to offer the definition that to be human was 'to have escaped the spell, to have pacified nature rather than subjecting it to the inflexible domination which only perpetuates fate'; but such an escape took place only 'in great music, in Beethoven's "Leonore" aria and in moments of some *adagio* movements like that of the first "Razumovsky" Quartet, eloquent beyond all words'. To this, Adorno's book on Beethoven sought to respond. The fragments, which bear witness only to the attempt, are hardly more than the first stammered beginnings of an answer. The answer itself could no longer be found in an age when the 'better worlds' of which Florestan sang were no more than a blood-stained mockery of this present world, beside which Pizarro's dungeon appears idyllic. This, ultimately, may be the reason why Adorno's book on Beethoven remained unwritten, and why its fragments could only mournfully reflect the mourning with which Beethoven's music mystically 'speaks' to humanity, in vain awaiting its answer.

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# Fragments and Texts



# ONE

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## PRELUDE

**R**econstruct how I heard Beethoven as a child. [1]

From my childhood I can clearly remember the magic emanating from a score which named the instruments, showing exactly what was played by each. Flute, clarinet, oboe – they promised no less than colourful railway tickets or names of places.<sup>1</sup> If I am entirely honest, it was this magic far more than the wish to know music as such that induced me to learn how to transpose and read scores while still a child, and which really made a musician of me. So strong was this magic that I can still feel it today when I read the *Pastoral*, in which, probably, it first manifested itself to me. Not, however, when it is *played* – and that is no doubt an argument against musical performance as such.<sup>2</sup> [2]

Of my childhood experience of Beethoven I know that I first (when certainly no more than 13) came across the ‘Waldstein’ Sonata and mistook its theme for an accompaniment which was to be joined only later by the melody. – My favourite piece for a long time was the *Adagio* from op. 2, no. 1. I heard about the chamber music, especially the quartets, so early, from Rosé,<sup>3</sup> that I never actually experienced its newness. I probably did not really understand the quartets until Vienna,<sup>4</sup> although I had long half-known them by heart. – The violin sonatas, which move me indescribably, go back to my *early* childhood (‘Kreutzer’, the small Sonata in A minor [op. 23] and two slow movements: the D major section from the Sonata in A major [op. 30,1] and the E major minuet movement from the

Sonata in G major [op. 30,3].) – My first real experience of the late Beethoven was through op. 109 and op. 119; I heard both of them, with a short interval between them, played by d'Albert and Ansorge.<sup>5</sup> I discovered and cherished the first movement of [op.] 101 on my own. – I played trios (the first [op. 1,1] and the 'Geister' Trio) while still a schoolboy. [3]

On my childhood image of Beethoven:<sup>6</sup> I thought the 'Hammerklavier' Sonata must be an especially *easy* piece, associating it with toy pianos with little hammers. I imagined it had been written for one of those. My disappointment when I could not play it. – Another part of the same stratum: as a child I thought the 'Waldstein' Sonata portrayed the *name* Waldstein; in the opening bars I imagined a knight entering a dark wood. Was I not, perhaps, closer to the truth in this than I ever was later when I could play the piece by heart? [4]

The difficulty of any musical analysis lies in the fact that the more the piece is dissected into its smallest units, the closer one comes to mere sound, and all music consists of mere sounds. The most specific thus becomes the most general, abstract in the wrong sense. But if this detailed analysis is omitted, the connections elude us. Dialectical analysis is an attempt to sublate [*aufheben*] each danger in the other. [5]

NB: In the study of Beethoven the appearance of giving primacy to the whole must be avoided at all costs, the subject matter being shown as genuinely dialectical. [6]

It will not be possible to avoid completely certain scientific procedures relating to the logic of proportions. The approach used by Rudi [Rudolf Kolisch] in his typology of tempi,<sup>7</sup> only subtler. For example: comparisons between main themes, transitions, second subject groups, closing themes, codas, and so on, of different (naturally comparable) works. What such shapes have in common may be abstract and empty, but it can sometimes throw light on the *essence* of these shapes, as when pedal points, shifts to the subdominant, and so on, occur in closing sections. Follow up. [7]

The fundamental error in Bekker's book [Paul Bekker, *Beethoven*, 2nd edition, Berlin 1912] is that he regards the content [*Gehalt*] of Beethoven's music and its objective musical form as largely independent of each other – and the latter as subordinate to the former,

whereas any statement about content remains mere verbiage unless it is wrung from technical findings. That is the methodological rule in my work. Evidence of the contrary in Bekker [ibid., p. 140], where he refers to the Funeral March in op. 26 as: 'a piece of music of thrilling power, with an imposing grandeur of feeling. And yet – a piece of music. Its special charm, the reason for its popularity, lies in its objective musical values. As a confession it hardly concerns us'. (Note the condescending tone.) Paul Bekker is a barbarian of progress; his concept of historical development constantly obscures his view of the specific quality and encourages him to pontificate. On the Rondo from op. 31,1 (p. 150): 'the work concludes with a charming Rondo, an inconspicuous late bloom of an obsolete genre.' Once again, the attitude of *nil admirari*, on the basis that, if you know where it all leads, you always know better. [8]

'Developing variation.' But the aim is not, as is often the case in the analyses of René [Leibowitz],<sup>8</sup> to show what is contained in what, but what *follows* what, and why. Not mathematical but 'historical' analyses are needed – René usually thinks he has 'proved' a piece of music by demonstrating thematic relationships. But the task begins only after that. Cf. Valéry's book on Degas.<sup>9</sup> [9]

How indiscriminating our means of analysing musical meaning still are can be seen from a straightforward question such as: Why does so simple and in some ways masterful a piece as the introduction of Act III of the *Meistersinger*, when compared to a piece expressing 'resignation' by Beethoven – for example, the first movement of op. 101 – have an embarrassed, turgid, Pharisaical quality? And yet this is *objectively* the case, regardless of the mere taste of the listener, or the psychology of Wagner – in which the categories of genuine and ungenuine remain ambivalent, changeable – and even regardless of its theatrical function. I shall attempt to indicate a number of objective moments in the composition.

The<sup>10</sup> formal idea of the piece is the contrast of three elements: subjective-expressive theme, folksong (in the Shoemaker's song) and chorale. The Chorale is meant to have affirmative power, especially through its cadences. But the relationship of these elements is an outward one. Folksong and chorale give the effect (in extreme contrast to Bach, for example) of a *quotation*, because we *know*: this is a folksong and this a chorale; and this knowledge, this reflexion on naivety, dissolves the latter, making it something manipulated. 'Look, I'm a plain, true-hearted master' – 'I have a German soul': simplicity as artifice. (Nietzsche doubtless felt all this but always argued it *ad hominem*, never really in relation to the 'artist'.) The incongruity

manifests itself, however, in purely musical terms. In the true chorale the cadence is taken for granted and never especially emphasized. From the standpoint of *Tristan*, where it no longer really commands belief, and where straightforward diatonic harmony seems banal, the cadence has to be exaggerated in order to be felt at all. It's like a parson intoning: Verily I say unto you, my dear brethren, amen, amen, amen. And this gesture is at the same time in contradiction to the chorale's melody, which it overstates to the point of expressing, not faith, but: Look, I believe. – Similarly with the folksong. As a melody it does not convey the deeply fractured expression (intended as a stroke of genius) of hopeless tenderness, of renunciation's sweetness, that Wagner ascribes to it. He therefore has to introduce this effect from outside, by harmonization, by modulation to E major, by the chord of the ninth, by overstretching – all of which procedures are foreign to the musical phenomenon itself. But it is not thereby assimilated but rather, for the sake of effect, *stands still* as something heterogeneous. The whole has something of the Child Jesus in Flanders, 'where the star stops' – Monsieur Timmermans is teleologically immanent in Wagner (his assimilation of precisely this element is dubious even in Mahler). *The technical reflection on expression in Wagner is a negation of its own content*. But it should be added that this is not the whole truth, and that precisely this fractured quality, the truthful image of untruth, has about it something wholly splendid, and even infinitely touching. That is to say that untruth, depending on the point it occupies on the sundial of history, is at the same time *truth* – a fact that Nietzsche misjudged, registering it merely by categories such as charm and refinement. And finally: *all* musical characters are really quotations. Alexandrinism is the principle of art that has attained self-awareness . . . [10]

A prominent and fundamental motif of the work must be that Beethoven – his language, his substance and tonality in general, that is, the whole system of bourgeois music – is irrecoverably lost to us, and is perceived only as something vanishing from sight. As Eurydice was seen.<sup>11</sup> *Everything* must be understood from that viewpoint. [11]

The ideological essence of music, its affirmative element, does not lie, as with other arts, in its specific content, or even in whether or not its form operates in terms of harmony. It lies merely in the fact that it is *a voice lifted up*, that it is music at all. Its language is magical in itself, and the transition to its isolated sphere has *a priori* a quality of transfiguration. The suspension of empirical reality and the forming



of a second reality *sui generis* seem to say in advance: all is well. Its tone is by origin consoling, and to that origin it is bound. But that does not apply unambiguously to music's status as *truth*. It can be said that it stands, as a *totality*, more directly and completely under the sway of appearance. But this *a priori* condition encompasses it as if from outside, like a kind of general clause, whereas inwardly, in its immanent movement, through its lack of objective substance and unequivocal relationships, music is more *free* than other arts. Its remoteness from reality does, it is true, cast on the latter a reflected, conciliatory glow, but keeps music itself *purser* of subservience to reality, which affects it primarily, not in its essence, but as a context of interrelated effects. Once it has consented to be music at all, it can, to an extent (that is, as far as it is not aimed at consumption), do as it thinks fit. – From this standpoint, Beethoven's work would be seen as an attempt to *revoke* the *a priori* untruth of music's voice, of its being music at all, through the immanent movement of the concept as an *unfolding* truth. Hence, perhaps, the insignificance of the starting point:<sup>12</sup> this is nothing but the untruth, the appearance inherent in music as such. – The late style would signify that music becomes aware of the *limit* of this movement – of the impossibility of cancelling its own premises by virtue of its own logic. The late style is the *μετάβασις εἰς τέλος*. [12]\*

Perhaps the pure, strict concept of art can be derived only from music, while great literature and great painting – and especially great literature and painting – necessarily contain something material, projecting outside the charmed aesthetic circle, not dissolved in the autonomy of form. – It is precisely the logical, profound aesthetic which is fundamentally *inappropriate* to *significant* literature, as it is to novels. Hegel, unlike Kant, had some awareness of this.

[13]

Benjamin's concept of aura,<sup>13</sup> which may touch on the music-like quality of *all* art, could be scarcely better explicated than by some turning points in *An die ferne Geliebte* (and similarly in the last violin sonata [op. 96]), such as the shift between the first and second songs, which opens a limitless horizon, and the passage with semi-quaver-triplets in 'Nimm sie hin denn, diese Lieder' [bars 21–5].<sup>14</sup>

[14]

The dispute whether music can portray anything definite, or is only a play of sound-patterns in motion,<sup>15</sup> no doubt misses the point. A far

\* [Above the text:] (Beethoven, perhaps for Introduction.)

closer parallel is with dream, to the form of which, as Romanticism well knew, music is in many ways so close. In the first movement of Schubert's Symphony in C major, at the beginning of the development, we feel for a few moments as if we were at a rustic wedding; an action seems to begin unfolding, but then is gone at once, swept away in the rushing music which, once imbued with that image, moves onwards to a quite different measure. Images of the objective world appear in music only in scattered, eccentric flashes, vanishing at once; but they are, in their transience, *of music's essence*. The programme is, so to speak, the musical residue left over from the day's dealings. While the music lasts we are *in* it much as we are in dream. We are at the rustic wedding, then are carried away in the musical flood, heaven knows where (it may be similar with death – perhaps the affinity between music and death has its locus here). – I believe the images flitting past to be *objective*, not mere subjective associations. The anecdote told by Decsey about the poem 'Lieblich war die Maiennacht' and the post-horn passage in Mahler's Third Symphony, is relevant here (though doubtless too rationalistic).<sup>16</sup> Within the framework of such a theory, a *rescue* of programme music might be attempted. Perhaps with reference to the *Pastoral*. [15]

Beethoven may represent an attempt to *circumvent* the ban on images. His music is not an image of anything, and yet is an image of the whole: an imageless image. [16]

The task of the book will be to resolve the riddle of humanity as a dialectical image.<sup>17</sup> [17]

*Copied from a notebook:*<sup>18</sup> The element of *praxis* in Beethoven. Humanity in his work means: you should behave as this music behaves. It shows how to lead a life which is active, outwardly productive without being narrow – a life of solidarity. And the injunction to 'strike sparks from a man's soul'<sup>19</sup> – no 'emotional effusions'. Against Tolstoy's 'Kreutzer Sonata'. However: this does not *exhaust* the meaning of Beethoven. – The metaphysics of 'gallantry' and amusement: a way to defeat boredom. This was a feudal need. The bourgeoisie took it over and adapted it. By work, time is killed *in earnest*. Similarly, Beethoven forces aimlessly passing time to stand still. By work it is conquered twice over. Precisely what is a lie in reality is truth in ideology. Extremely important: to be taken further. – Beethoven's *rhythm* and tonality. Syncopation is relative to the down-beat as dissonance is to consonance. The problem of tonality cannot be grasped deeply enough. It is *both* the surface as opposed

to the subcutaneous, *and* the general principle which itself constitutes the subcutaneous.<sup>20</sup> – Emancipated rhythm today is in the same position as harmony: it is nullified by the absence of a distinguishing principle. NB: Schoenberg *latently* sustained musical metre. – Jemnitz's remark on rhythmical monotony, arising from the occurrence of complementary events on each beat.<sup>21</sup> [18]

To come closer to understanding the *Missa*, it is doubtless necessary to study the Mass in C major. – There is Schenker's analysis of the Fifth.<sup>22</sup> – Bekker quotes a movement composed by Beethoven for a projected mythological opera: in it all the dissonances were to remain unresolved.<sup>23</sup> [19]

On considering the original manuscript of Beethoven's 'Geister' Trio: the extraordinarily extensive abbreviations cannot be explained by haste. Beethoven composed relatively little. Nor – unlike Schubert – does he make countless changes in the MS. What is striking, however, is the *haziness* of the script. It looks like a mere *support* for the real substance – that is, the sound it represents. The written form clearly betrays an aversion to a process which does not itself form part of the musical imagination (so that in Beethoven the visual appearance of the notation has little influence on the composition, unlike the case with many, especially modern, composers). In this context, one should think first of the primacy of the whole over the individual part in Beethoven. In the written image the 'idea' or 'inspiration', the clearly defined individual melody, recedes into the flow of the whole. But something deeper is also involved: the image of the *objectivity* of music, which Beethoven conceived as something existing in itself, not originally made by him, as φύσει, not θεσει. He is the stenographer of the objectified composition, which is something detached from the arbitrariness of individuation. In Benjamin's phrase: 'the clerk recording his own inner life.'<sup>24</sup> What the handwriting reveals is, really, the *shame* of the accidental subject before a truth which has been granted him as the whole. The secret of his impatience, and of his harsh, aggressive trait. Beethoven's script seems to mock the beholder for not having known *beforehand* the music which is here noted down for the first time. In this connection, Beethoven's irritation with the man who misspelled Haydn's name: 'Haydn – Haydn – everyone knows that.'<sup>25</sup> – Likewise: 'Everyone knows the "Geister" Trio.' [20]<sup>26</sup>

Title of the book: either *Beethoven's Music*, or *The Music of Beethoven*.<sup>27</sup> [21]

## TWO

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# MUSIC AND CONCEPT

A possible epigraph for a chapter of the book on Beethoven:  
Clemens Brentano. The echo of Beethoven's music (I, 105f<sup>28</sup>),  
especially:

Selig, wer ohne Sinne  
Schwebt, wie ein Geist auf dem Wasser  
[Happy is he who floats like a spirit over the water]

and

Selbst sich nur wissend und dichtend,  
Schafft er die Welt, die er selbst ist.  
[Knowing and singing himself alone,  
he creates the world that he himself is.]

Might well be an epigraph for Chapter 1.

[22]

Music can express only what is proper to itself: this means that words and concepts cannot express music's content *directly*, but only in mediated form, that is, as philosophy. [23]<sup>29</sup>

In a similar sense to that in which there is only Hegelian philosophy, in the history of western music there is only Beethoven. [24]<sup>30</sup>

The will, the energy that sets form in motion in Beethoven, is always the *whole*, the Hegelian *World Spirit*. [25]

The Beethoven study must also yield a philosophy of music, that is, it must decisively establish the relation of music to conceptual logic. Only then will the comparison with Hegel's *Logic*, and therefore the interpretation of Beethoven, be not just an analogy but the thing itself. Perhaps one comes closest to this by following up the ancient comparison between music and dream. Except that the analogy is concerned less with the play of representations – which appear only intermittently in music, like flower garlands in pure ornamentation – than with logical elements. The 'play' of music is a play with logical forms as such: those of statement, identity, similarity, contradiction, the whole and the part; and the concreteness of music is essentially the force with which<sup>31</sup> these forms imprint themselves on the material, the musical sounds. They, the logical elements, are largely unambiguous – that is, as unambiguous as they are in logic, but not so unambiguous that they have a dialectic of their own. The theory of musical forms is the theory of such unambiguity, and of its sublation. The boundary between music and logic is not, therefore, located within the logical elements, but in their specifically logical synthesis, in *judgement*. Music does not include judgement, but a synthesis of a different kind, constituted<sup>32</sup> solely by the constellation of its elements, not their predication, subordination, subsumption. This synthesis, too, is related to truth, but to one which is quite unlike apophantic truth, and this non-apophantic truth will probably be definable as the aspect through which music coincides with dialectics. This discussion should terminate in a definition such as: *Music is the logic of the judgement-less synthesis*. Beethoven should be tested against this, in the twofold sense that, on the one hand, such logic is demonstrated through his work; and, on the other, that the work is determined 'critically' as music's mimesis of judgement, and therefore of language. The meaning of the work with regard to the philosophy of history is understood in terms both of the ineluctability of this mimesis and of music's attempt to escape it – to revoke the logic which pronounces judgement.<sup>33</sup> [26]<sup>34</sup>

If the relationships between Beethoven and major philosophy are to be revealed, some of the most fundamental categories will have to be clarified.

1 Beethoven's music is an image of that process which great philosophy understands the world to be. An image, therefore, not of the world but of an interpretation of the world.

2 The sensuous component of music, which is devoid of qualification yet is mediated within itself and sets the whole in motion, is the motivic-thematic dimension.

Question: Interpret the difference between motif and theme.

3 The 'spirit', the mediation, is the whole as form. The category which, in this context, is identical between philosophy and music, is *work*. What is called conceptual exertion or work in Hegel<sup>35</sup> is thematic work in music.

The recapitulation: the return to oneself, the reconciliation. Just as this remains problematic in Hegel (in that the conceptual is posited as the real), in Beethoven, where the dynamic element is set free, the recapitulation is also problematic.

One needs to counter the objection that all this is mere analogy, since music lacks the conceptual medium which forms the very essence of philosophy. Here I shall just note a few points to be used against this objection. (NB: It is *no* part of Beethoven's intention or idea to refute humanity, and so on, which is itself constituted only by music's complexion.)

1 Beethoven's music is immanent in the same way as is philosophy, bringing forth itself. Hegel, who has no concepts outside philosophy, is, in that sense, likewise concept-less in face of the 'heterogeneous continuum'.<sup>36</sup> That is to say, his ideas, like those of music, are explained only by each other. This idea must be followed up exactly, since it leads to the innermost depths.<sup>37</sup>

2 The form of music as *language* in Beethoven's work must be analysed.

3 The pre-philosophical concept in philosophy corresponds to the conventional musical *formula*, on which the work is done.

A concise answer must be given to the question: what *are* immanently musical concepts? (NB: Make quite clear that these are not concepts *about* music.) The answer can only be attained *against* traditional aesthetics, the doctrine of the visual-symbolic-monistic nature of art, which provides the dialectical force setting the Beethoven theory in motion.

The whole study might possibly be introduced by a discussion of music and concept.

NB: The difference between music and philosophy must be defined in the same way as their identity.\* [27]

In one place [cf. fr. 225], I described each piece by Beethoven as a *tour de force*, a paradox, a *creatio ex nihilo*.<sup>38</sup> That may be the deepest connection with Hegel and absolute Idealism. What I described as the 'floating' element in my study of Hegel is at bottom precisely this.<sup>39</sup> And that might be decisive for the construction of the book on Beethoven. Might the late style, finally, be a critique of

\* [Added later:] Against the 'philosophy of art' and an interpretation of art through something foreign to it.