

Some Issues Concerning the Study (and Perception) of Non- (or Semi-) Autonomous Music

I

Introductory Remarks (JAH)

The main issue: if one is not to perceive pre-autonomous music as Art "in the strong sense" (quoting Dahlhaus, that is, as capital-A "Art," or art to be contemplated), what, then, is the purpose of this music and how is it to be perceived? By extension, the larger issue is: how ought one to deal (analytically/aesthetically/historically) with pre-, non- or semi-autonomous music?

Further complication: it would appear that the producer's intention is not alone what matters, but rather the **producer-recipient transaction**: in actual practice the recipient can "autonomize" or "de-autonomize" any artifact by the manner of perception used to confront or consider it. Thus music that was originally produced to serve as capital-A "Art" can be de-autonomized by being treated as non- (or semi-) autonomous art; and vice-versa. The issue may boil down to: in which circumstances and for which reasons do we choose to confer the label "Art" on certain products? (Useful here: Arthur C. Danto, The Transfiguration of the Commonplace?)

Could it also be said [?]: **In treating an artwork as if it were non- or semi-autonomous, we make claims on it; conversely, autonomous works make claims on us.** To put it another way: Within the sphere of non-autonomy, if one is having a "reception problem" with a work, one naturally assumes that the problem is not ours but rather the work's, and hence the work qua work disappears, for one chooses not to interact with it. (See Batteux, Les Beaux-arts, etc. [1746] in Le Huray-Day, pp. 48-49 [abr. ed. 39-40] for the locus classicus of this viewpoint.) Thus: **In the sphere of non-autonomy, we expect the work to adjust itself to us: our own ability to perceive is not an issue.** This is particularly clear in "free-marketplace oriented" works (popular culture, mass culture, etc.). It might be added that if it is our polemical aim as critics to "deprive" works of a previously claimed autonomy, a typical reason would be to insist that the work does not conform to what ought to be our sense of what is truly (or laudably) human: that is, we still want it to conform to our senses of ourselves, rather than vice-versa.

id.?
downs,
aesthetic
theory
25
he says
exactly this!

c.s.
power transaction
represent a loss
of humanity
at which we
wish to
avoid, etc.

Within the sphere that makes and sustains claims of autonomy, however (however justly or unjustly), the presumption is different. The stature of a Kunstwerk is taken for granted--in advance. Hence if there is a reception problem it is up to us--and not the work--to adjust. The reception problem will be our fault (as Philistines, uncultivated louts, etc.), and the only remedy is to appeal to the process of Bildung (self-cultivation through education).

Dahlhaus on Pre-Autonomous Music (especially the 18th century): A Selection of Quotations (with Additional Comments)

Appropriate interactions with non-autonomous music (forms of perception) (NCM, 95)

1. **Background listening** [accompaniment to other activities]
2. **Concentration on the text** [music as 'enhancing' vehicle for words]
3. **Self-absorption in one's own thoughts and moods** [psychological perception of or indulgence in self--- seeking out music to ask it to manipulate one's emotions for recreational, therapeutic, or other purposes, etc.]
4. **A feeling of camaraderie among a social circle** [music as a bonding agent or common ground of perception within a closed group]
5. **The association of images and programs** [similar to 2 above? music as enhancer of something else].

NCM, 89-90. The main category of the Enlightenment was sensibility. (Or: "sensibility and the search for feeling.") This goal for music is associated with the rising **bourgeoisie**--"simplicity of sentiment"--as opposed to the "pompous dignity" sought out by the aristocracy. Music of Sensibility should "reach the heart" and should be "intelligible as a reflection of inner emotion." Thus it was fundamentally a "**psychological aesthetic**," and it was capable not only of encouraging mere self-indulgence in solitude but also of "trying to establish bonds of sympathy with . . . fellow listeners." The point is that "music was serving a psychological function rather than existing for its own sake." For the bourgeois audiences it became a "psychological reflection on themselves and their own feelings.")

This view of music involves, above all, a "theory of Beauty," which Dahlhaus calls "the traditional aesthetic." (NCM, 90) [i.e., not a theory of the sublime/metaphysical, which would claim, in essence, to leave behind in the dust an aesthetic that prizes the merely beautiful. Thus the move to autonomy seems to have coincided with the decline of the stature of the Beautiful in favor of other things.]

Cf. Hans Robert Jauss, "Sketch of a Theory and History of Aesthetic Experience, Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics, p. 26:

As the new idea of aesthetic pleasure, self-enjoying subjectivity abandoned the sensus communis as the expression of a

sociable sympathy at the same moment the aesthetics of genius finally replaced the aesthetics of rhetoric [i.e., around 1770ff].

It is here that the history of the decline of all pleasurable experience of art begins. Now shorn of its cognitive and communicative efficacy, aesthetic pleasure appears either as the sentimental or utopian opposite of alienation in the three-phase models of the philosophy of history or, in contemporary aesthetic theory, as the essence of an attitude that is considered philistine when adopted toward classical art and simply excluded vis-à-vis modern art. A starting point of all historico-philosophical definitions of the modern antithesis of pleasure and alienation including the materialist is to be found in the sixth letter of Schiller's On the Aesthetic Education of Man (1793-94).

[One of Jauss's points is to explore and shore up the older notion of enjoyment] [Thus, p. 30:] To the extent that aesthetic pleasure frees one from the practical compulsion of work and the natural needs of the everyday world, it grounds a social function which has characterized aesthetic experience from the very beginning. But aesthetic experience has not always been the opposite of cognition and action. In contrast to the secular validity of the Horacian doctrine of the twofold purpose of poetry (delectare et prodesse which together with the rhetorical trichotomy docere-delectare-movere, justified all aesthetic practice from antiquity to the later modern period and was felt to be permissive rather than restrictive of what could be portrayed, the separation of delectare et prodesse--the l'art pour l'art principle--seems an episode in the history of art.

Also: from The Idea of Absolute Music (IAM)

The symphonies of Carl Stamitz and Haydn were created in the context of a concert life that did not primarily strive for esthetic autonomy and metaphysical uplift, but for a **communal culture of sentiment: a culture of sentiment closely related to the literary and pedagogical efforts of the bourgeoisie to understand itself and its humanitarian and moral resources.** Haydn, as Georg August Griesinger reported, wished to depict 'moral characters' in his symphonies; and the esthetic of representation was simultaneously intended as an esthetic of effect: put crudely, music, including instrumental music, existed to make itself useful as educational material. (IAM 103)

If so: another aim of non-autonomous art: to teach or lobby for a way of life in the real Lebenswelt.

The **esthetics of feeling--the association of the expressive with the simple and natural:** the expectation that a composer or interpreter expresses himself through the music, 'breathes his soul into sounds,' in order to awaken sympathy in the listeners; that, in other words, music was a means to 'create' an unconventional 'generally human,' 'unalienated' sociability and communality--can be understood sociohistorically as a bourgeois esthetic that remained untouched by the progression of the history of ideas through the Enlightenment, Empfindsamkeit, Sturm und Drang, popular romanticism, and Biedermeier. [It had clearly begun, at least in France, by the time of Dubos's Réflexions critiques, i.e., 1719.] (IAM, 71)

The sentiment sought by Empfindsamkeit was a **communal feeling** (music accounted for sympathy, a melding of souls). (IAM, 62)

(The point is that the "endless longing" of autonomous music, contrarily, "arose from loneliness: from solitary contemplation of a music that was praised as 'holy.'"--IAM 62)

[18th-century instrumental music moved in the] sphere of the **communal culture of sentiments**. (IAM, 107)

From Esthetics of Music (EM): the relationship with **genre**.

The transition to autonomy, the emancipation from imposed purposes, was bound up with a reversal of the rankings of individual works and their genres. . . . In older, functional music, a work was primarily an example of a genre, as an individual person fits into a succession of generations that extends far beyond him and survives him. A work formed not so much an isolated, closed whole, an individuality enduring in itself, as, rather, it exemplified a type, feeding on the historical substance of this type, which had developed in the course of decades or even centuries, and requiring listeners to connect the work with the type in order to understand it. . . . But since the late eighteenth century all genres have rapidly lost substance. . . . (EM, 15)

Cf. from Zaslav's Mozart's Symphonies

(Quoting Klüppelholz and Busch, eds.)

The difficulty in documenting the history of the reception of a Mozart work results--as with Bach--from the eighteenth century's point of view, the consideration of compositions **less as individual 'works' than as constituent parts of a complete oeuvre** or as specimens of a genre, which were dedicated not to the constituting of a repertory but to **the carrying on of musical 'daily business.'** If one disregards a few operas, which were already 'repertory pieces' in his lifetime, hardly one contemporary text is devoted to a single, unique, completely determined work by Mozart. (p. 510)

Additional Notes on:
18th-C. "Middle-Class Values," as Defined
Oppositionally to Church & State Cultures
(i.e., Some of this is eligible for nomination as
the "Content" of the Thought/Art of the Period)

By common consensus (Dahlhaus, Berghahn, etc.) Enlightenment pre-autonomous art (1730ff) has something to do with the bourgeois intention to "reassure itself of its own values and projections of life" as well as (possibly) to aid "in the formation of political opinion" (Berghahn, in Hohendahl, HGLC, 21; cf. "bourgeois self-understanding," p. 27). (Cf. Dahlhaus, IAM, 103, "efforts of the bourgeoisie to understand itself and its humanitarian and moral resources.")

The question then arises: What were these values, these life-projections? What were the humanitarian and moral resources of the bourgeoisie in the 18th century? Via Berghahn and Luhmann, one must assume that these were to be the virtues manifestly considered to be "other" than those cultivated by the official structures of State and Church (that is, other than those of stratified society or of the "representative public sphere").

Dahlhaus and Berghahn occasionally give us some idea of the values that they have in mind.

From Dahlhaus (IAM, 71):

- Feeling and sentiment
- The expressive as a correlate of the simple, the natural
- Generally human/unalienated sociability and communality [that is, the desire to dissolve the privileges of class by appeal to universal, presumably rational, substrates]

From Berghahn:

- industry
- thrift
- prosperity
- social virtues (concern for others)
- honesty
- sense of duty
- mass education [all the above, p. 27]
- willingness to discard prior authority and appeal to direct, current experience, scrutinized without preconception through the light of Reason. (= "the claim to authority of public criticism." All were

invited to this debate, regardless of class. See p. 17.)

- Search for new, rational ideas or regulative norms for Art (and hence, for life). (See p. 39)
- Humanizing the "pomp and etiquette" of the aristocracy, which is seen as non-natural and machine-like (as in Lessing, quoted, p. 54).

Cf. Horkheimer and Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment

In the most general sense of progressive thought, the Enlightenment has always aimed at liberating men from fear and establishing their sovereignty. Yet the program of the Enlightenment was the disenchantment of the world [allusion to Weber]; the dissolution of myths and the substitution of knowledge for fancy. (3) The human mind, which overcomes superstition, is to hold sway over a disenchanted nature (4).

Cf. Zaslav, Mozart's Symphonies:

(Quoting Alexander Ringer, who is alluding to Werner Sombart):

Quantitative luxury . . . was typical of post-Renaissance European nobility, whereas **qualitative luxury** reflected the intermittent desire for better, rather than more numerous, products, a desire found throughout history, it is true, but especially so among the rising middle classes of the late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth centuries. That these two 'ideal' types may coexist at any given time, goes without saying. Conversely, history has known situations, particularly in the eighteenth century when the nobility of Europe was in a stage of incipient decadence, in which quantitative luxury assumed almost grotesque proportions. To cite but one of Sombart's many examples, 'On 25 February 1732 the court of Saxony ordered 910 pieces of porcelain figures and vases for a single floor of the royal palace.' (pp. 522-23)