

MUSIC
AND ITS REFERENTIAL SYSTEMS



edited by
MATJAŽ BARBO · THOMAS HOCHRADNER

HOLLITZER
WISSENSCHAFTSVERLAG



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PREFACE

The entrance of music into the system of “beaux arts” meant, amongst other things, a break with the paradigm of comprehending music in the context of certain systems derived from outside music, a paradigm that had been valid for centuries. This resulted in the emancipation of music from all of the extra-musical functions appreciated and emphasized until that time.

The concept of the musical work as the central identification point of creative and research interest changed with the broadening of the frame of artistic practices. Consequently, the exclusive value of aesthetic normativeness and artistic autonomy was also questioned. How can we assess this historical process today? Could the substitution of one reference system for another bring about actual musical autonomy? Could not the “artistic religion” outlined by the system of arts into which music is brought in fact be described as simply one of many equivalently obsessive historical paradigms that define the musical context? This discussion is of particular weight in relation to present music practices, characterized by a great number of analytical procedures and hermeneutical views. How can we define the referential systems by which music is determined and through which music gets its own sense and meaning? What is the relation between these systems?

The questions raised open a series of different thematic fields presented in this book. The authors allocate the place of music in the field of aesthetic autonomy or describe its specific sign system(s). Special attention is focused on the systems of musicological contextualization and the meaning/understanding of music in different historical and/or functional contexts – from traditional liturgical chant to recent compositions. Various contributions are dedicated to the relation between music and film, while others deal with the special sociological conditions that constitute some specific musical praxis, such as folk or rock music.

Most of the texts in this anthology were presented at a conference entitled “Music and Its Referential Systems” organized by the Department of Musicology of the University of Ljubljana in May 2010. On the invitation of the editors, a few additional papers were included afterwards. We are grateful to all of the authors for their contributions, and especially to Dr. Michael Hüttler and Dr. Hans Ernst Weidinger for accepting the book as part of the programme of Hollitzer Wissenschaftsverlag, Vienna. Moreover, we would like to express special thanks to Tjaša Ribizel and Nejc Sukljan for their valuable help in the preparation of this book.

Matjaž Barbo
Thomas Hochradner

MÁRIO VIEIRA DE CARVALHO

MUSICAL AUTONOMY AS A REFERENTIAL SYSTEM

KEYWORDS

Systems of musical communication, aesthetic autonomy, anthropogenesis, musical meaning, technical reproduction

ABSTRACT

Autonomous music as a self-referential and self-regulated system of communication has gradually emerged in the European culture from the “invention” of notated composition and culminated with a change of paradigm in the structure and the function of musical communication in the eighteenth century. This change of paradigm has structural connections with the development of the market and of a bourgeois public sphere.

In this paper I start with a critical reflection on basic structures of musical communication, relating them to recent research about the origins of human communication. I argue that music communication is essentially based on the *gesture of pointing* when it is embedded in a context or system of communication from which it is only a part (e.g., liturgy and other rituals), and that the so-called musical autonomy corresponds to the constitution of musical communication itself as a self-referential system, no longer subaltern or subordinated to another. It has increasingly emerged in European culture from the invention of notated composition and culminated with a change of paradigm in the structure and the function of musical communication in the eighteenth century. This change of paradigm has structural connections with the development of the market and of a bourgeois public sphere. Making music and/or listening to music did not become in this way separated from extra-musical systems of social communication. Instead, music continued to be in itself social action and social communication. What changed was the consequence of the emergence of a new, self-referential system, in which the process of musical meaning – through the circulation of printed music, its discussion in the press, its performance and reception – gradually became more self-regulated. Like any self-referential system, musical autonomy, by developing its own self-regulation,

“translates” into its own code the input that it receives from other autonomous systems of communication in which complex societies are functionally differentiated. Musical meaning is no longer subsumed in the codes of other communication systems such as, for instance, those of liturgy or court *divertissement*. This is particularly relevant since the constitution of music as a self-referential system is its exchanges or connections with the sphere of education or *Bildung*, in which music began to play as important a role as (or even a more important role than) the other arts, philosophy or science. That is to say, all aspects of human and social experience became potentially objects of music and of a listening culture (they might be “translated” into musical terms), just as they could be objects of other (philosophic, artistic, scientific, even religious) systems of communication. Sharing human and social experience by means of music in itself corresponds to a new function, and not to an absence of function. However, the historical development of the market, which decisively contributed to the rise of the so-called musical autonomy, seems to lead more and more in our days to the liquidation of both the musical autonomy and the referential system on which it is based.

What is held in common between a Gregorian chant at Mass, vocal and/or instrumental music in a court of the *ancien régime*, commendations of souls in a rural community, popular pilgrimage songs, a serenade sung to the accompaniment of guitar, and a tarantella danced to exhaustion? Examples would be innumerable – either back in history or looking around us at the wide variety of musical experience – of situations where what we call music (singing or playing instruments, often by marching or dancing) occurs as part of a holistic whole, from which music cannot be separated. Since ancient times, according to archaeological vestiges, there have been no human communities that have not explored communication through sound, using for this purpose not only the voice but also artefacts (manufactured tools).

There has been some speculation about the role of acoustic communication in anthropogenesis. Jean-Jacques Rousseau is one of the philosophers who gave priority to sound expression, besides the gesture, in human communication. Gesture and sound were for Rousseau “the Dictionary of simple nature”, a type of communication that could be called “analogical”, preceding the evolutionary process of the invention of the word, that is, of the arbitrary (or “digital”) correlation between vocal sounds and designated objects; therefore, preceding the emergence of articulate speech, with its grammar, its morphology and its syntax.¹

1 On the debates about music and language in the eighteenth century see Mário Vieira de Carvalho, “*Nature et naturel dans la polémique sur l’opéra au XVIIIème siècle*”, in *Le parole della musica*, vol. 2, *Studi sulla lingua della critica del teatro per musica in onore di Gianfranco Folena*, ed. Maria Teresa Muraro (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1995), 95–146.

Rousseau's hypothesis seems to be partly confirmed by Michael Tomasello's research. In his book *Origins of Human Communication* (2008), Tomasello summarizes the conclusions he has reached over years of observation of and experimentation on great apes by challenging those conclusions with ongoing investigation on communication with human infants. However, Rousseau failed to put sound and gesture in the same plane, although it is in the gesture – in the gesture of pointing, or gesture of showing – that resides, according to Tomasello's investigations, the original foundation of human communication.²

Tomasello diverges, therefore, from those who see antecedents of spoken communication in apes' vocalizations³ or who, like Georg Knepler, address anthropogenesis as a process over which a single acoustic communication system is subdivided into two: *music* and *speech*.⁴ Tomasello concludes from his observations that the vocalizations of the great apes are phylogenetic in nature and remain unchanged, even when they are subjected to intensive contact with humans, while gestures are ontogenetic, culturally learned. It is this learning that is, in turn, evolutionarily inscribed in the highly complex psychological infrastructure of shared intentionality, exclusive to the human species, by means of which humans use their gestures to build a cooperative model of communication. This is the point that, according to Tomasello, marks the difference between great apes and humans: apes point, but do not cooperate in the gesture of pointing; humans point and cooperate simultaneously.

Thus, what is foundational in human communication does not reside, according to Tomasello, in codes or conventions, but in other ways in which shared intentionality and cooperative purpose are manifested: in natural gestures of pointing and pantomiming. The human gestures emerged evolutionarily from the gestures of the apes and paved the way for full conventionalization of human languages.

From the psychological-functional point of view, Tomasello suggests two basic types of communication based on the gesture of pointing and/or pantomiming:

- *to direct the attention* of a recipient spatially to something in the immediate perceptual environment, *deictically* (pointing), as in the case of human infants, who already use pointing to direct others to all kinds of referents in order to communicate all kinds of complex social intentions;
- *to direct the imagination* of a recipient to something (that typically is not in the immediate perceptual environment) by behaviourally simulating an action, relation, or object, *iconically* (pantomiming), so that the recipient is

2 In this regard, Tomasello quotes Wittgenstein: "What we call meaning must be connected with the primitive language of gestures." Michael Tomasello, *Origins of Human Communication* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), 1.

3 Tomasello, *Origins of Human Communication*, 15–55.

4 Georg Knepler, *Geschichte als Weg zum Musikverständnis* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1982).

induced to imagine some corresponding perceptually absent referent (simulations of actions that are not currently happening).⁵

While the great apes request things using ritualized signals, understand intentions and perceptions, and reason practically about them, humans add to these skills two new components: new motives of help and sharing, and new abilities to imitate actions (including the ability to engage in role reversal). These new components enable iconic gestures and communicative conventions.⁶

In accordance with Paul Grice, Tomasello maintains that it is the recursiveness of human communication that changes everything:

- turning helping and sharing into mutual expectations or even norms of cooperation;
- turning the understanding of goals and intentions into joint goals and communicative intentions;
- turning practical reasoning into cooperative reasoning; and
- turning imitated signals into bidirectional, shared conventions.

The added value of both pointing and pantomiming comes from that psychological infrastructure hidden in human communication: the infrastructure of shared intentionality, that is, the cooperative model of communication. This is the point on which Tomasello insists. Other primates do not structure their communication in the same way with joint intentions, joint attention, mutually assumed cooperative motives, and communicative conventions. Rather, they merely attempt to predict or directly manipulate the individual goals, perceptions, and actions of others, while human infants begin to structure their gestural communication cooperatively even before language, and they do so in developmental synchrony with the emergence of their more general skills of shared intentionality as manifest in other collaborative activities.⁷

In short, the acquisition of linguistic conventions depends crucially on socio-cognitive skills and motivations originally developed in gestural communication (pointing and iconic gestures).

The purpose of my quest is to reflect on the reference systems of music by taking into account the results of Tomasello's research and relating them to a discussion of models of musical communication. Christian Kaden's typified models in his *Musiksoziologie* (Sociology of music, 1984) help to further my critical approach to the topic.

Kaden identifies three relevant levels of representation and decoding in music communication:

5 Tomasello, *Origins of Human Communication*, 66.

6 *Ibid.*, 106.

7 *Ibid.*, 107.

MUSICAL AUTONOMY AS A REFERENTIAL SYSTEM

- Level 1: “representation by transformation” of the acoustic medium;
- Level 2: “representation of the totality by the part” through the changes undertaken in the medium (*pars pro toto*); and
- Level 3: “representation by substitution”, that is, the conventionalization of these transformations of the medium, giving them the function of acoustic signs.⁸

These three levels coexist in spoken communication:

- without changes of the acoustic medium that are produced and perceived by the interlocutors, words are neither spoken nor heard (Level 1);
- the words themselves are conventional acoustic signs, which represent by substitution things that they designate (Level 3);
- finally, the linguistic code is based on a non-linguistic infrastructure of intentional understanding and common conceptual ground that is, in fact, logically primary,⁹ and this also leads us to the second level, that of *pars pro toto*, to the extent that the speech of the speakers is inseparable from their own expressive behaviours and from the presupposed context (common ground) of communication.

However, as already highlighted by Kaden, the hierarchy of the importance of these three levels is quite different in spoken communication and in musical communication. In the current conditions of speech in everyday life, changes of the acoustic medium are rarely (in themselves) objects of representation or decoding. Apart from exceptions such as, for instance, a test for a radio speaker, in which the voice skills of the candidates are much more important than the words pronounced, the levels prevailing in spoken communication are the third – the representation by substitution or conventional sign – and second levels – the representation *pars pro toto*.

By contrast, a true reversal of the hierarchy has happened in music since ancient times. The representation by transformation and the decoding of symptoms of transformation (of the acoustic medium) gain thereby enormous sociological relevance: they determine whether the instrument that you want to sell or buy has, or has not, the proper sound; whether the voice is suited to admission in a choir; whether the musician sang the exact pitch of the sounds that fall to him in a magical practice or whether he deserves immediate death for having failed and thus aroused the anger of the gods.¹⁰ In *A tragédia da Rua das Flores* (The tragedy of

8 Christian Kaden, *Musiksoziologie* (Berlin: Verlag Neue Musik, 1984), 85–135.

9 Wittgenstein, quoted by Tomasello, *Origins of Human Communication*, 58.

10 Example taken from Max Weber, *Die rationalen und soziologischen Grundlagen der Musik* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1972), 26.

Rua das Flores), a novel by the Portuguese writer José Maria de Eça de Queirós (1845–1901), Madame de Molineux sings opera airs at a *soirée* at home, and one of those present comments, “There’s a fortune in your throat!” It is a typical situation of decoding symptoms of transformation. The flattery meant that the bourgeois amateur had a voice to make a career as a prima donna. The history of music is full of similar real cases, from Farinelli to Luciano Pavarotti. The point of departure for them was the voice as raw material, that is, the representation and decoding of transformation-symptoms; something that, by contrast, has no obvious relevance for any greater or lesser success in other professions.

Originally music emerges in connection with the life-world (*Lebenswelt*), and is neither separated from the latter nor organized in an autonomous system, independent from the more immediate functions of everyday life. Playing instruments and singing, often in association with dance, are common practices in magic or ritual ceremonials, widely documented by archeological and historical evidence, and obviously, by direct observation today. In such situations or other equivalents – funeral rituals, festivities, etc. – the model of musical communication is fundamentally the representation *pars pro toto* (from the producer’s side) and decoding of context-symptoms (from the receiver’s side).

In this case, Kaden stresses, there is an organic connection of the communication partners to the totality represented in the musical process. The elements of the community are all both senders and receivers, as all are actively involved in the ritual. There are cases in which only some of them play, sing and dance, and other cases in which all those present make music. But all procedures are organically structured, whether specifically musical or non-musical, and refer to each other in a network of feedbacks that are mutually regulated (a colloquial communication structure). If we focus on sound events that we call music, then any element involved in communication, by making music, is implicitly *pointing* to the context to which those sounds (music) are organically linked (e.g., funeral ritual). And any other element of the community, by making, or not making music, is also cooperatively sharing the same intention, or, in Kaden’s words, decoding the sound events as context-symptoms of the same ritual. As to the second order observer, the ethnographer who studies from outside the culture, he makes inference operations that allow him also to identify the sound elements that point to the funeral ritual and to distinguish them from those observed in other ritual situations.

So we arrive at precisely the point that I have in view: that music, when considered at this level of communication, is a form of interaction in which the psychological-functional infrastructure described by Tomasello is immediately and clearly externalized. It is not only implicit or underlying, as in the spoken language. Rather it consists itself in the gesture of pointing or showing and in the recursivity, in the cooperative model that presupposes a common cultural ground or context. Making

music in these situations is to communicate through the gestures of pointing or showing, gestures that are not only visual, but also sonorous. And, as in Tomasello's model, musical performance in these cases may not point only to the referents present in the context, but also drives the imagination of the receivers to absent referents, for example, spirits or gods who are invoked by the ritual. Besides, it not only activates sources of information referring to the ritual from which the music is part, but also points to the emotional or expressive moods of the musicians themselves. The mourners musically represent both the mourning of the community *and* their own grief as members of this community. By expressing their innermost grief, they raise in the receiver an equivalent emotional experience. All come together about the emotions to be outwardly expressed. The representation *pars pro toto* also thus involves the representation of emotional experiences. So the gesture of pointing and the cooperative model include both the contextual horizon (the ritual and the supernatural world to which it may refer), and the emotional-expressive horizon of the participants. They raise (on the receiver's side) the decoding both of context-symptoms and expressive symptoms.

However, the social relevance of the moment of representation or decoding of transformation-symptoms does not cease to be present. If any division of competences or division of labour begins to be improved and there are community members who predominantly take on the task of singing or playing instruments, then this means that the other members of the community acknowledge the gifts or talents that the former have shown, trained, and which have given them a reputation as outstanding performers. The representation and decoding of transformation-symptoms and the abilities or skills required for that purpose begin to become inseparable. Those earning a reputation for skills tend to turn professional and become preferentially required for many different celebrations. The technical virtuosity becomes separated – *autonomous* – from the function.

The separation between system and life-world (*Lebenswelt*), dealt with by Jürgen Habermas,¹¹ helps us to understand that moment at which a music system with clearly defined functional boundaries begins to emerge and to become autonomous from the social whole, a system endowed with self-reference and self-regulation (as it could be said, according to the categories of Niklas Luhmann). This emerging musical system or field, where players fight among themselves for a certain amount of symbolic capital (Pierre Bourdieu), becomes separate from the life-world and generates a market segment where the transmission of knowledge and craft skills, or, later, an increasingly complex network of music education, training in vocal and instrumental practices, registration, notation and copying of music, construc-

11 Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1981), 229–93.

tion of instruments, etc., interacts with increasing requests coming from different social actors: courts, churches and convents, civil or military institutions.

Although this process (considering, for simplicity, only European history) had been accelerating since the Renaissance, the process of the development of art as an autonomous communication system was certainly not finalized before middle of the eighteenth century. There was already a music market in expansion, manifested in the densification of the network of interactions, but the whole musical activity remained subsumed in the functions of everyday life for which it was required, for example, the liturgical function in the church, the theatrical function in the opera, the function of prestige and *divertissement* in the court, which may indeed absorb the former two. For example, in the court of John V of Portugal in the 1730s, Italian *castrati* hired for the Royal Chapel were required in the Convent of Mafra and in the Patriarchy Church in Lisbon for the liturgical function, which was simultaneously understood as a function of public representation of the splendour of royal power. They also assumed in the court the function of *divertissement*, by interpreting *commedia per musica* for a very exclusive circle around the queen. Outside the court, a mixed company (men and women) of the Paghetti family offered public performances of Italian *opera seria*, most of them on Pietro Metastasio's libretti, but its presupposed function ("vorgestellte Wirkung"¹²) was also that of mere amusement, and this was because the impresario had to pay a tribute to the Hospital of Todos-os-Santos in Lisbon: since 1588, both in Spain and Portugal, any public spectacle was under suspicion and was only tolerated if one part of the income it generated reverted to charity. Due to the religious devotion of the king, the royal family was never officially present at these public performances (sometimes the king was present, but he was incognito). A similar regime was valid for another theatre, in Bairro Alto, in which Portuguese language operas were played by puppets on the stage, while the singers (men and women) were not seen by the spectators. The opera house as the privileged place of the ceremonial of the representation of royal power, together with its corresponding repertoire (Metastasio's *opera seria*), also arrived in Portugal, but only with Joseph I from 1752, and especially from 1755, following the construction of the sumptuous Royal Opera House of Tagus (destroyed some months after its inauguration by the earthquake of November 1, 1755).¹³

No less relevant in the European courts, at least since the Renaissance, was music practice as an essential element of courtly manners or etiquette. In a book on the education of the Portuguese king, author D. Jerónimo Osório (1506–1580), after

12 See Niklas Luhmann, *Zweckbegriff und Systemrationalität: Über die Funktion von Zwecken in sozialen Systemen* (Frankfurt a. M., Suhrkamp, 1991), 16.

13 See for more details Mário Vieira de Carvalho, *Denken ist Sterben: Sozialgeschichte des Opernhauses Lissabon* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1999), 29–54.

lengthy evaluation of the pros and cons of music education, ultimately recommends music, not only for the king but also for the nobility:

dentro da justa medida, [a música] reprime o descomedimento do ânimo e instrui maravilhosamente na moderação, ... mas quando se cultiva para além do que é justo, aos poucos amolenta o ânimo e desvia a nobreza do cumprimento da sua obrigação.¹⁴

(within the proper measure, [music] represses immoderation and instructs the mood beautifully in moderation, but when it is cultivated beyond what is just, slowly it undermines the soul and diverts the nobility from fulfilling its obligation.)

Gilles Binchois, at the court of Philip III, Duke of Burgundy, or Domenico Scarlatti at the court of John V of Portugal, are examples of famous composers hired to organize the music in court, including for the education of princes, in a framework of socio-communicative interaction where the refinement of manners and the function of prestige are interconnected. A painting by Jan van Eyck that bears witness to the events that occurred in a single day of the court of the Duke of Burgundy shows the important role of music there: in addition to hunting and supper, there were moments of dance accompanied by various instruments and polyphonic vocal music sung by the courtiers themselves, under the direction of Binchois.¹⁵

To summarize, through highly skilled professionals – often internationally very famous composers, vocal and instrumental performers – music re-entered the functions of everyday life and was entirely reabsorbed by them. The organic connection to such functions was restored, even though the musicians were professionals from outside the community who were expressly hired to do so. Neither they nor their music were autonomous, but both were subsumed in those functions.

The Orchestra of Mannheim was considered by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart to be a model of unattainable technical perfection, and in general much of Mozart's instrumental music integrated the court ceremonial as decorative elements for the *conversations amusantes* of the courtiers, while they were playing cards, eating or walking in the halls and gardens. It is just this heteronomy that becomes increasingly unbearable precisely for artists like Mozart. Theodor W. Adorno recalls Richard Wagner's comment that "das Klappern des Geschirrs" (the noise of dishes) could still be heard in some of Mozart's music.¹⁶ In turn, William Beckford, during

14 D. Jeronimo Osório, *Da ensinância e educação do rei* (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional – Casa da Moeda, 2005), 205.

15 See image in Edmund Bowles, *Musikgeschichte in Bildern*, vol. III/8, *Musik des Mittelalters und der Renaissance* (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1977), 90–91.

16 Theodor W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 14 (Darmstadt: WBG, 1998), 97.

his stay in Lisbon in 1787, gives us an excellent example of a similar situation, in which music disappears into the function of religious *devotio* (devotion):

I went to the church of the Martyrs to hear the matins of Perez and the dead mass of Jomelli performed by all the principal musicians of the royal chapel for the repose of the souls of their deceased predecessors. Such august, such affecting music I never heard, and perhaps may never hear again; for the flame of devout enthusiasm burns dim in almost every part of Europe, and threatens total extinction in a very few years. As yet it glows at Lisbon, and produced this day the most striking musical effect. Every individual present seemed penetrated with the spirit of those awful words which Perez and Jomelli have set with tremendous sublimity. Not only the music, but the serious demeanour of the performers, of the officiating priests, and indeed of the whole congregation, was calculated to impress a solemn, pious terror of the world beyond the grave. The splendid decoration of the church was changed into mourning, the tribunes hung with black, and a veil of gold and purple thrown over the high altar. In the midst of the choir stood a catafalque surrounded with tapers in lofty candelabra, a row of priests motionless on each side. There was an awful silence for several minutes, and then began the solemn service of dead. The singers turned pale as they sang “Timor mortis me conturbat.”

After the requiem, the high mass of Jomelli, in commemoration of the deceased, was performed; that famous composition which begins with a movement imitative of the tolling of bells, “swinging slow with sullen roar.”

These deep, majestic sounds, mingled with others like the cries for mercy of unhappy beings, around whom the shadows of death and the pains of hell were gathering, shook every nerve in my frame, and called up in my recollection so many affecting images, that I could not refrain from tears.¹⁷

Here, too, the music itself is not self-referential but is subsumed into the self-reference and self-regulation of the communication system of religion. It is true that the liturgical text is behind it, but what really counts is the power of music – the musical gesture – to direct attention to the referents present in the ritual (mourning) and to direct imagination to the absent referents: the terror of death, “the world beyond the grave”. It is this organic connection of music to the context that allows the representation and decoding of transformation-symptoms (including performance abilities and skills), as well as contextual and expressive symptoms, referring all of them to an intense religious experience. The music here is the principal agent of cooperative communication, and it works as such doubtless by

17 William Beckford, *Italy with Sketches of Spain and Portugal* (London: Richard Bentley, 1834), 253–55.

the gesture of pointing or showing. It is so deeply immersed in the life-world – in an act of religious worship – that it is truly inseparable from it. Judging by Beckford’s description, all participants in the divine office, including professional musicians, shared real feelings of contrition and religious fear. We were not at the level of the *as if*, but at the level of *being*: there was no separation between art and life.¹⁸

The gesture of pointing by screaming or crying, by expressing joy or sadness, despair or anger, or by many other different situations and emotional contexts, is the point from which it will be plausible to evolutionarily derive the range of possibilities offered by mimetic vocal and instrumental sounds, rhythms, timbres, agogics, etc., that have been organized and classified in musical systems since ancient times. The notion of *ethos* (character), which appears with Damon of Athens, establishes correspondences of certain pitch patterns or modes and certain rhythmic or metric patterns with models of social behaviour. In Plato’s *Politeia* (Republic) and *Leges* (Laws), important consequences are derived from those correspondences for the education of the citizens. Plato distinguishes between the musical practices associated with behaviours considered harmful and those that bind individuals into collective communion on the highest standards of moral and political behaviour (political, in the original sense of the term, referring to the *polis* [body of citizens]). In his exposition, mimesis becomes explicitly a constitutive moment of communication.

The concept of *ethos*, inseparable from mimesis,¹⁹ is based on a set of correspondences that is subordinated to the values that dictate the organization of the polis, as part of a natural or cosmic order under the ward of the gods. Although some of these correspondences (e.g., between modes or rhythms and certain functional contexts) are conventionalized, the historical process of the outbreak of the *significational* in music communication (conventionalization of music signs) truly begins only with the Renaissance, when music moves away from the mathematical disciplines of the quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy) and becomes articulated with those of the trivium (grammar, rhetoric, dialectic): i.e., when music begins to be theorized as language, giving rise to the category of the *musicus poeticus* (poetic musician). Like the art of oratory, a whole musical rhetoric is developed from

18 See about this differentiation Christian Kaden, *Das Unerhörte und das Unhörbare: Was Musik ist, was Musik sein kann* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2004), 40–66; Christian Kaden, “Das ANDERE als kosmologische Regulationsinstanz in der Musik”, in *Soziale Horizonte von Musik: Ein kommentiertes Lesebuch zur Musiksoziologie*, ed. Christian Kaden and Karsten Mackensen (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2006), 120–36.

19 See discussion in Mário Vieira de Carvalho, “Para a história da teoria musical: Da antiguidade oriental às fontes árabes medievais”, in [Collective work in honor of Prof. Dr. António Dias Farinha] (Lisbon, in preparation).

then on, with its catalogues of affects and of tonal-rhythmic and agogic devices that allow the composers and performers to suggest them and to let the audience experience the corresponding effect. In works such as those by Davide Perez and Niccolò Jommelli, referred to in Beckford's description, this musical rhetoric is as present as it could be in the superb sermons by the famous Portuguese preacher from the seventeenth century, Father António Vieira. The emotions experienced by the performers, and by an especially sensitive listener as it seems Beckford was, would not have such an intensity were the composers in question not as skilled in handling them as were the great orators.

The semiotic conventionalization that has gained increasing relevance in European music since the mid sixteenth century reiterates the underlying functional contexts of musical practices in the different spheres of social life and is in turn enhanced by that reiterated contextual use. But the moment that Kaden calls "Repräsentation durch Setzung"²⁰ (representation by substitution) – the *musical sign* itself – is only really reached when the contextual and expressive symptoms become separated, autonomous, from the holistic life-world experience to which they originally belonged, i.e., when the common ground of which Tomasello speaks, and which enables the communication partners' reciprocal agreement by the gesture of pointing, disappears from the horizon of material interaction. The paradigm shift occurs in the eighteenth century with the development of the bourgeois public sphere, the emergence of the concert hall and the theatre reform of the Enlightenment. Instrumental music and opera are removed from the amusing and decorative sphere, the "religious" music itself becomes separated from religious liturgy.²¹ In both the concert hall and the opera the presentational communication structure becomes more radical: the separation between stage and audience, between art and life is achieved.

The autonomy of the art system corresponds in music specifically to the loss of the organic link between musical performance and contextual or expressive situations belonging to everyday life. What comes to dominate in the communication strategies is, on the one hand, representation and decoding of the skills and abilities of both composers and performers, which refer to the notion of "work" and to its realization as a "sound object", and on the other hand, the deciphering of messages conveyed by musical signs. While it is the "sensible appearance of the idea"²², as Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel would say, music implies on the side of

20 See Kaden, *Musiksoziologie*, 91.

21 For instance, the *Requiem to the Memory of Camões* by the Portuguese composer João Domingos Bomtempo was first performed in Paris in 1819, in a hall, not in a temple, before a circle of exiled Portuguese people.

22 "Das sinnliche Scheinen der Idee", cited after Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetik (1958/59)*, ed. Eberhard Ortland (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2009), 12. On the allocation of this definition to Hegel see the editor's note, *ibid.*, 396.

the composer and/or performer the ability to evoke (through conventional musical signs), feelings, ideas, images, contexts, *to which nothing within the concert hall points*. Conversely, on the listener's side, music presupposes the ability to follow the inverse path – the path from the “sensible appearance” to the ideas, feelings or imagined referents – without having any other support for the listeners' inferences but the culture or information that they already carries before entering the concert hall. Kaden speaks of an iconic ability that is empirically trained – the ability to compare musical processes with natural processes or expressive behaviours that are familiar to us – and of what we might call a cultural competence in a wider sense: the competence to capture the historical genesis of the sign that broke out from the context and appears, transfigured, in the composition (signs of dance, military or funeral march, lullaby, serenade, religious ritual, etc.).

The concert hall as “Realisierungsort autonomer Musik”²³ (place of realization of autonomous music) – mostly instrumental music – still favours a new attitude in the composition, performance and listening, which corresponds to the overcoming of the rhetoric and the Cartesian classification of the “passions of the soul”. An emerging bourgeois conscience of the self is manifested in the growing psychologizing of musical forms, in its dramatization as a dialectical process in which the surprises, contrasts, indefinable and contradictory feelings are resolved in a telos – a conclusive synthesis. The metaphor of a drama without words, associated with these forms subsumed in the generic category of sonata-form, captures another dimension of music specifically intended to be listened to and detached from any other function: the pursuit of what is beyond words, of the unspeakable, the “absolute”. It is at the very moment that the music becomes autonomous from functional contexts and conventionalized as a semiotic language that it dialectically negates the meaning. Confronted with the sonata forms of composers like Joseph Haydn, Mozart, and Ludwig van Beethoven, among others, the German Romantic poets see in music the “art par excellence” precisely because it transcends the concept, and has the power to express the inexpressible, to speak the unspeakable.

In this sense, composing, playing and listening come close to an epistemological inquiry, an enterprise of self-knowledge and knowledge of the real. Art returns in this way to its “beginning” as philosophy, or philosophy to its “end” in art – as could be said following Adorno's aesthetic theory.²⁴ Art as philosophy is precisely the new paradigm of autonomous music to which Beethoven himself gave voice when he once commented to the excellent musicians who complained against the alleged impracticability of his last quartets: “Glaubt Er, daß ich an Seine elende

23 Hanns-Werner Heister, *Das Konzert: Theorie einer Kulturform*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Wilhelmshaven: Heinrichshofen, 1983), 41–98.

24 See Ståle R. S. Finke, “Adorno and the Experience of Metaphysics”, *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 25/6 (1999): 105–26.

Geige denke, wenn der Geist zu mir spricht?"²⁵ (Do you suppose that I think of your miserable strings, when the spirit speaks to me?)

Adorno, in fact, in his critique of the "regression of listening" raised by the media or even by certain tendencies of music pedagogy in the mid twentieth century, presupposes precisely this paradigm shift, which coincides with a change of status of the artist – from "artist craftsman" to "free artist"²⁶ – and the separation of music from other functional systems, except that one in which it has from then on constituted itself: a functionally autonomous, self-referential and self-regulated system, interacting on an equal footing with other communication systems, and not in a subaltern or a subordinate position.²⁷

When Adorno defines the musical material as "sedimentierter Geist"²⁸ (sedimented spirit) it is this "spiritualization" of autonomous music that he has in mind. According to Adorno,

in der Kunst realisiert sich, was mehr ist als Kunst, nur durch diese, die Erfüllung ihres immanenten Anspruchs hindurch, nicht indem sie die Segel streicht und sich unter ihr äußerliche Zwecke oder Kategorien subsumiert. Ihr Überästhetisches ist ästhetisch vermittelt.²⁹

(in art, everything which is more than art, is carried out only through this, through the achievement of its immanent demands, and not to the extent that it eases the sail and subsumes itself into goals that are external to it. Its supra-aesthetic is mediated aesthetically.)

He adds:

jegliche Musik, die seit der Ära der Französischen Revolution nach Gehalt und Gestaltung an der Idee von Freiheit teilhatte, [setzte] die Emanzipation von heteronomen Zwecken voraus.³⁰

(all the music, that since the era of the French Revolution took part, both in content and form, in the idea of freedom, presupposed the emancipation of heteronomous purposes.)

The supra-aesthetic that autonomous art mediates refers to a type of experience whose key – Adorno himself insinuates it – is in Plato's *Phaedrus*. It follows from

25 Quoted according to Gerd Indorf, *Beethovens Streichquartette: Kulturgeschichtliche Aspekte und Werkinterpretation* (Rombach: Freiburg i. Br., 2004), 33.

26 "Handwerkünstler" and "freier Künstler", categories of Norbert Elias, in *Mozart: Zur Soziologie eines Genies* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1991), 40–68.

27 Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 14, 14–66.

28 Theodor W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 12, *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, 39.

29 Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 14, 72.

30 Ibid.

the “Motiv des Schmerzens und der Sehnsucht, die den Menschen im Angesicht des Schönen ergreift” (motive of pain and longing that moves the human being before Beauty):

Die Ergriffenheit im Angesicht der Schönheit wird als eine der Formen jenes Wahnsinns von ihm [Plato] dargestellt, der weiser sei als die übliche Weisheit der Vernunft.³¹

(The commotion before Beauty is presented [by Plato] as one of the forms of madness that is even wiser than the common wisdom of reason.)

If science is suspicious of ideology – that is, if it yields to instrumental reason, and in this way it denies itself – then the art appears in this light as a form of knowledge in which, strictly speaking, truth is hallucinated³² (escapes both the rational and the signification).

Adorno therefore again puts the mimetic impulse in the centre of artistic communication. It is this impulse that leads the composer to the transformation of sound material, and that the interpreter has to reconstruct, to own, and the listener to capture during the performance. Art only happens when all the communication partners transcend the level of structural analysis (rational or signification), although they need it dialectically as a step towards assimilation of the “global gesture” of the work. “Mimetic impulse” and the “global gesture of the work” are expressions of Adorno’s³³ that take us back, after all, to Tomasello’s basic “cooperative infrastructure of human communication”³⁴: the gesture of pointing. Unlike Claude Lévi-Strauss and other structuralists, who seek to bring the musical communication close to linguistic communication and to apprehend in music levels of articulation similar to the spoken language, Adorno sees in autonomous music and art in general just a chance to escape from the signification, to resist the ideology or false consciousness which falls insidiously throughout the discursive communication. To experience music as a chance for truth stands for being freed from the “lie of meanings”, the “prison of language”.³⁵

31 Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetik (1958/59)* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2009), 141, 144.

32 As to the concept of “hallucination” in this sense see Mário Vieira de Carvalho, “O engano dos significados ou a prisão da linguagem: Da poética musical de Eichendorff à poética musical de Adorno”, in *A 4 mãos: Schumann, Eichendorff e outras notas* (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional – Casa da Moeda, 2005), 75–76.

33 See Theodor Adorno, *Zu einer Theorie der musikalischen Reproduktion* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2001), 266, 276. See also Mário Vieira de Carvalho, “Meaning, Mimesis, Idiom: On Adorno’s Theory of Musical Performance”, in *Expression, Truth, Authenticity: On Adorno’s Theory of Music and Musical Performance*, ed. M. Vieira de Carvalho (Lisbon: Edições Colibri, 2009), 83–94.

34 Tomasello, *Origins of Human Communication*, 7.

35 See M. Vieira de Carvalho, “O engano dos significados ou a prisão da linguagem”, 53–111. According to Adorno, to make the artwork “speak”, to capture its “eloquence”, is the task of philosophy. This is different from a semiotic approach to the artwork.

As mentioned above, with autonomous music a new referential system emerges, which by developing its own self-regulation “translates” into its own code the input that it receives from other autonomous systems of communication in which complex societies are functionally differentiated.

Autonomous music emerges in the eighteenth century just in those countries of central and northern Europe (notably in the German states, France and Britain) in which the market for cultural goods and the role that music has acquired in it had already expanded enormously in the mid eighteenth century. I refer to the network of music publishers, schools and other training institutions, professional and amateur groups, public concert halls, theoretical treatises, periodicals where printed musical works were subject to critical reviews, etc. In contraposition to the representative public sphere of the court, a bourgeois public sphere developed³⁶ and became hegemonic, and would also powerfully enhance the debates and socio-communicative interaction around issues of art and music. The new paradigm of musical communication – “based on a learned high culture”³⁷ – would not have been possible without these structural changes in the public sphere. Something similar begins to develop, in Portugal, for example, only recently at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century and is consolidated after the Republic was established in 1910.

As a typically European cultural expression, autonomous music, which moreover draws all the consequences of another European specificity (the invention of musical composition around the tenth century), gradually expanded to other continents and cultures. Similarly, in our times, with globalization, we are witnessing a fragmentation of the public sphere, where so many different musical events take place as the multiculturalism of our societies admits. The diversity of musical expressions abounds around us, especially through the Internet and mass media. The market for cultural goods that already since the eighteenth century favoured the emergence of autonomous music has become a threat to their survival since the first few decades of the twentieth century. The “uses of music” allowed by its technical reproduction – on radio and TV, LPs, CDs, and now by digital media – expose it to the most varied and unexpected forms of appropriation, which for Adorno could give rise to the “regression of listening”, and for Walter Benjamin might open a new field of emancipatory possibilities.

One of the phenomena that became increasingly widespread with mechanical and now digital reproduction of music and its diffusion through the most different

36 See Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchung zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1990).

37 William Weber, *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste – Concert Programming from Haydn to Brahms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 87. Following this process at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Weber speaks of “musical idealism” and “a new musical intelligentsia” (*ibid.*, 85–121).

gadgets is, on the one hand, the making equal of all kinds of music as “autonomous music” – by disconnecting them from their original cultural contexts, functions or uses (including also, obviously, the European context of the concert hall, of “music to be listened to”). All music is today virtually autonomous, reaches the listener no longer within a given and stable cultural system or context that provides all involved partners with common ground in which the gesture of pointing gives rise to a cooperative model of communication. By listening to music through these gadgets people have no other reference system but their own culture and the information that they already carry. Each individual listener radicalizes as never before, according to his/her own communication strategies, his/her power of free manipulating music as reified sound object.

On the other side, all kinds of music, which through mechanical or digital reproduction become virtually autonomous, become also dialectically re-functionalized, re-contextualized, according to the unlimited capricious uses of the listeners: music of a funeral ritual may be listened to as sound background of a cheerful dinner, any score by Mozart’s or Beethoven’s music may decorate the sound environment of a shopping mall, etc. In so far as music artefacts become, through their technical reproduction, sound objects closed in themselves, they promote a kind of reified “communication centered in the object”³⁸, and they may be appropriated for the most different and contradictory functions. This would lead us to another complex of problems that I must leave aside in this paper.

A final note: without public policies of support and sponsorship, autonomous music that once owed its rise to the market would not have survived the pressure of the market. The question should be asked: As very particular European “cultural goods”, will autonomous music, this trace of a bourgeois culture from the eighteenth century, survive in the future? We must not exclude the possibility that the time may arrive when it is necessary to declare it a World Heritage protected by UNESCO...

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38 On music communication “centered in the object” see also Kaden, *Musiksoziologie*, 139–40.

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