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THE ROLE OF IDEOLOGY IN THE STUDY OF WESTERN MUSIC*

ROSE ROSENGARD SUBOTNIK

Some time ago, an established American musicologist complained to me that I approached the study of music with a philosophical orientation and was therefore bound to falsify music and music history. My immediate reactions to this remark were disbelief that a philosophical orientation should be held grounds for adverse criticism of humanistic scholarship, and shock that my critic saw such an orientation as a flaw in the validity of my work rather than as the symbol of an ideological difference between his conception of scholarship and my own. The remark struck me as patently naive and, on reflection, as an attack upon my intellectual freedom. Yet it is clear that my critic’s conviction represents the mainstream of thought in American musicology today, and that very few English-speaking musicologists today would share my evaluation of this criticism as obviously wrong-headed. So the remark has rattled around in my head for several years now, impelling me to reconsider the premises on which the study of Western music is based, and thus to give my colleague’s criticism some extended attention.

At the outset, I want to make two observations that I will not have time to develop in this essay. First, it is conceivable that in referring to my “philosophical orientation” my critic really had in mind not any general philosophical bent but rather the adoption of a specific philosophical viewpoint, in my case, of T.W. Adorno’s dialectical philosophy. But if this is so, then my critic would open himself directly to a charge that he would be most anxious to refute, and that is precisely the charge of suppressing ideological differences and, thus, of limiting academic freedom. In the long run, though, I don’t think it matters much which way the criticism was meant. Both a general philosophical orientation and a specific philosophical viewpoint are aspects of what I intend to call here ideology—by which I mean, generally, a conceptual context that allows the definition of human utterances—and I believe the ultimate force of my critic’s objection is directed towards the notion of ideology in all of its possible forms. Second, I cannot take time here to develop a theory of the relationship between compositions—let us call them musical structures—and the structures that are based on compositions, such as historical studies and critical essays. I shall simply assume here that both sorts of artifact belong to a single con-

*An earlier version of this paper was presented in November, 1980, at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology, in Bloomington, Indiana.
tinuum of semiotic structures, that is, of utterances through which individu-
als or cultures externalize a conception of reality, and, consequently, that
ideology can be considered to play the same sorts of role in both com-
position and the study of composition. In fact, my critic concedes my point
when he charges that my philosophical lenses distort both music and the
history of music, since that history itself is a construct superimposed on
compositions.

Let me then begin by asking: Are all human utterances based on a
philosophical orientation? I think there are today, in academic musical cir-
cles, two prevalent schools of thought about this question, which I shall
call the Continentalist view and the Anglo-American view. Extending this
terminology, which is more often applied to the two dominant schools of
philosophical thought, one might also call these attitudes the metaphysicist
view and the empiricist view. The Continentalist view, to which I myself
subscribe, tends to answer my question in the affirmative. Continentalists
tend to approach their studies with the idea that all men, including them-
selves, operate with a comprehensive, though not necessarily conscious,
immutable, or irrefutable view of how things are. Continentalists are thus	often prone to treat the study of musical utterance as a kind of meta-study
in which various levels of ideological orientation are to be distinguished
and taken into account in any work of interpretation or evaluation. These
orientations include those of the composer, of the historian or critic, and
of any who develop theories about either or both. Moreover, the Continen-
talist’s point of departure is more likely to be an awareness of his own
ideological framework than the musical artifact, the so-called object of
study, itself. But Continentalists are also generally forced into considering
the possibility of distinguishing within any artifact between two levels of
structure to which meaning and value can be assigned: first, the internal or
autonomous structure of the artifact itself; and, second, the structure of
cultural, philosophical, and ideological premises underlying or surrounding
the artifact and, ultimately, the study of the artifact.

This is not to deny that most Continentalists would sooner or later
reject the possibility of making a clean distinction between artifact and
ideology, as well as the possibility of assigning true meanings or values to
an autonomous artistic structure taken in itself. Continentalists are basically
post-Kantians, who doubt the possibility of stripping away all ideological
distortions and penetrating into any object in itself. And one need only
consider the Communist disdain for formalistic analysis to understand the
lengths to which the Continentalist’s preference for ideological context over
artistic structure might take him. In general, Continentalists are at least as
concerned with re-synthesizing into some sort of enlarged conceptual unity
the levels of meaning that they pull out of an artwork as they are with
distinguishing those levels. Nevertheless, there are few Continentalists who
are not eventually forced, in this very activity of re-synthesis, to give some

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1Despite the parallelism available in these two pairs of terms, I speak mainly of “Continentalists” and “empiri-
cicists” in the following discussion, partly because the term “metaphysicist” is easily misconstrued and partly because
the primary import of the term “Anglo-American” is ideological rather than geographical.
attention to just what an autonomous artistic structure might be. And finally, the Continentalist’s attraction towards ideological underpinnings or context encourages open distinctions between levels of ideology which are conscious, and constitute political viewpoints or schools of criticism, and levels which are unconsciously formed by a speaker’s unreflected assumptions, say, his psychological reflexes, his economic and social attitudes, or his cultural values. What tends, indeed, to madden the empiricist about the Continentalist more than anything else is the latter’s penchant for diagnosing some level of unconscious meaning beneath the overt structure of any utterance, thereby reducing the empiricist himself, in some Continentalist accounts, in some instances, to little more than an anal-compulsive or a bourgeois decadent.

By contrast the Anglo-American scholar, such as my own critic, tries to concentrate on an autonomous object of study, focusing on what is physically present in the object or can at least be scientifically validated as implicit in the object. His wish is to correct ideological distortion by filtering out all ways of thinking that do not lend themselves to scientific proof, including any ideological biases of his own, and thereby getting to something, however narrowly defined, that can be called true. In a sense, then, the empiricist, like the Continentalist, distinguishes between levels of potential meaning. But I would argue that the empiricist’s purpose is not to distinguish in order then to construct a more significant interrelationship of meanings, but rather to distinguish to the point of severing an essentially scientific level of meaning from all others. Thus, he puts himself in a position where he need not face the scientific uncertainty of relating music to ideological levels of meaning, conscious or unconscious, or of constructing unverifiable patterns of interrelation, such as a theory of history. Typically the American musical scholar concerns himself with the physical components of the score, in particular with restoring the musical text to its original form; and the outside information he draws upon—notation systems, watermarks, performance practice, matters of religious custom and provenance—bear directly on this task of restoration. The Anglo-American scholar, in fact, tends to regard all scores as autonomous objects, even those that date from cultures which preceded the modern Western conception of the artwork as autonomous, cultures which more or less openly viewed art as part of a more comprehensive ideological whole. In short, whereas the Continentalist may theorize about contexts to the point of rejecting the autonomy of the composition, denying its meaningfulness or even distorting its significance to serve unrelated ideological ends, the empiricist may remove virtually everything from serious consideration except what he takes to be the musical structure. The legendary pinholes once used at Princeton for musicological observation provide a symbol of this tendency at its extreme.

Each approach has strengths and weaknesses to which I shall return. At this point I should like merely to point out that the Continentalist’s method of approach is likely to require some attention to the problem of musical autonomy, even if only to reject the notion, whereas the empiricist
may work a lifetime without giving a single thought to ideological context, which lies beyond his own scientifically defined domain of study. The Continentalist may consciously suppress what differs from his ideology, whereas the Anglo-American may never even recognize the possibility of valid differences from his way of looking at things because he is unconscious of having an ideology. And the empiricist would vigorously deny the Continentalist assertion that his own anti-ideology is itself simply another ideology, a principle of conceptual selection with no privileged access to the truth. To the empiricist, as to the Newtonian scientist on whose now- outdated world-view so much empiricist work is still based, anti-ideology is nothing less than the direct road to objective truth.

I am not certain about empiricist ideology, but I do believe that Continentalist ideology need not operate at its most extreme and dangerous poles. Adorno does seem to me to represent the Continentalist orientation in its most flexible and encompassing state. For Adorno insists emphatically upon the need to consider a musical structure in its formal autonomy as well as in its relation to various ideological structures and contexts. Adorno’s basic point is that if one takes the trouble to put oneself into the inner workings of a musical argument, or of any human utterance, and to follow it through to its conclusion, one will achieve some understanding of the rationale at work and will avoid rejecting that argument out of hand, in toto, as simply the symptom of a foreign ideology, without regard to its inner workings or validity. Thus, to take a crude example, if one understands completely the internal structural argument of Pierrot Lunaire—if, that is, one becomes a competent structural listener to the piece—then one will be less apt to reject the work on the grounds that Schoenberg was born a Jew. Up to this point the Anglo-American musicologist would agree, at least on a conscious level, with Adorno. The difference is that Adorno does not, finally, believe that Schoenberg’s Judaism is irrelevant either to the structuring of Schoenberg’s music or to the way in which we receive that music. Hence Adorno, in his study of Schoenberg’s musical structures, is always openly involved in an effort to relate those structures to Schoenberg’s Judaism and to other ideological considerations.

In fact, there is really no denying that precisely because he refuses to rule out ideological considerations, Adorno does openly end by judging works on grounds that are more fundamentally ideological than structural. He can scarcely do otherwise since he is convinced that the internal structure of a composition does not exist in a vacuum but is integrally related to a composer’s ideological assumptions, and that an immoral ideology inevitably produces artistic structures that must be considered flawed. This conviction leads him to make judgments that are often controversial, the most notorious, perhaps, being his scathing attack in The Philosophy of Modern Music on Stravinsky’s work. Stravinsky, it seems clear, openly embraces an anti-ideology very similar to that of the Anglo-American empiricist; that is, he tries to remove all traces of German-Wagnerian metaphysics from his music, and to reduce the composition to a specimen of purely autonomous craft. This position Adorno interprets as a renunciation of the artist’s
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responsibility to fashion a moral vision of reality and, consequently, as a position that is morally reprehensible. But for Adorno, a work based on an immoral ideology is necessarily an artistic failure as well, and, hence, Adorno cannot help but end by condemning Stravinsky’s art.

This is a judgment that most of us in America, including myself, would not readily accept. Yet it is important to point out that Adorno does not arrive at this judgment simply by reading up on Stravinsky’s philosophy in the Poetics of Music and then condemning the music without examining it. On the contrary, Adorno devotes close to half of his book, The Philosophy of Modern Music, to Stravinsky’s music. Indeed, though he never conceals his ideological starting point, Adorno would argue that he arrives at Stravinsky’s ideology principally by way of the musical structures themselves. But, of course, despite Adorno’s dialectical insistence on having it both ways, this latter is an assertion we may well doubt: Adorno’s very definition of Stravinsky’s musical structures is quite clearly informed by a strong, preexisting ideological bias.

But is Adorno’s work on Stravinsky therefore fatally flawed and worthless? I would argue for two points of value in Adorno’s method of criticism here. First, Adorno’s grounds of rejection are based on an ideological predisposition, but at least the ideology involved is not hidden. It is explicit in virtually every sentence that Adorno writes and thus readily available for our own evaluation. However unsettling we may find Adorno’s conflation of method and object, we are not left to shadow-box with ideological convictions that Adorno claims aren’t there. And second, however much Adorno doubts the absolute existence of autonomous musical structure or dislikes Stravinsky’s musical structures in particular, he does not ignore the latter but directs considerable attention to their internal workings. In fact, Adorno devotes to those structures a large-scale and carefully constructed argument that we can judge, to some extent, on its own internal merit, and that, more important, allows us, even if we do finally reject it on ideological grounds, to think about Stravinsky’s music on a number of levels, including humanistic levels of meaning and significance. Charles Rosen, definitely no champion of Adorno, has asserted that Adorno gets at important things in Stravinsky’s music that have otherwise been missed entirely. To be sure, Adorno himself makes little effort to understand Stravinsky’s musical structures in any but a negative way. Nevertheless, by including those structures within the range of his study, Adorno at least provides a possible model for a procedure that the empiricist, I fear, honors less often than he thinks: the procedure of trying to understand an ideologically unappealing construct on its own structural terms before condemning it.

Adorno’s negative evaluation of Wagner’s music is another controversial judgment which helps to clarify the problems involved in making ideological judgments. With respect to Wagner, Adorno argues, in essence, that a fundamentally and even openly immoral ideology produces artistically

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2This assertion was made at the Adorno Symposium held at the University of Southern California on May 18, 1979.
limited compositions. Now, on the whole, Wagner’s position in the Western musical pantheon is even more secure today than Stravinsky’s, and yet I would guess that for most of us in musicology there is somewhere a gnawing suspicion that Adorno is on to something in the case of Wagner, something unscientific and yet real, which the empiricist approach cannot quite dare to consider.

Let me elaborate. Suppose Wagner were a young composer coming up for tenure at a major American university today, and that he had, for example, voiced the same sorts of ideas about American blacks as the actual Wagner did about Jews. Wouldn’t there at least be some of us who were disposed to feel that no amount of craft could be sufficient to overcome the negative force of such an ideology, and even that the music produced by a mind espousing such an ideology must in some sense be a flawed human vision? Wouldn’t some of us be grateful for the development of rigorous critical methods that allowed us at least to investigate, in a spirit of fairness, the relationship between the ideology and the craft, and to expose for serious examination any instincts we may have about the human truth of art?

Most of us who have been brought up on American ideals of free speech would be very uncomfortable, however, about rejecting Richard Junior on ideological grounds; and so, if we could not overcome our gut inability to contemplate his company in our department for the next thirty years, we would probably try to base our rejection exclusively on some incompetence we managed to discern in his musical structures. Like Adorno in the case of Stravinsky, we would focus our criticism on the musical structures themselves; but we would be far less candid than Adorno in calling attention to the role that our own ideologies played in our definition of those musical structures.

But how could such a fundamentally dishonest judgment, in the name of academic freedom, serve the pursuit of truth? Wouldn’t the notion of truth, even of scientifically objective truth, be far better served by an open admission that one’s department could not provide the support for an art based on an explicitly anti-human ideology? Are there not ideologies that rationally demand rejection? And are there not ancient precedents for the view that artistic utterance involves not only craft but also ideology and even moral value?

Mind you, I am not arguing for the justice of rejecting all utterances on purely ideological grounds. Far from it. Any argument that serves even plausibly moral ends should be judged, as far as possible, on its internal merits. But note the proviso “as far as possible.” My assertion is that ideological values contribute inevitably and fundamentally to the structural definition of human utterance, even musical utterance, as well as to the understanding and judgment of utterance, even aesthetic judgment, and thus cannot, finally, be ignored with any honesty. Unfortunately most ideological rejections, Continentalist or empiricist, are directed not at what is morally repugnant to a judge but simply at what the judge finds unfamiliar or different. This latter is not the sort of standard to which most of us would willingly confess, but it seems obvious that it poses a danger to which
ideological rejections left unacknowledged as ideological are particularly prone. To protect ourselves from judging unfairly on undiscriminating ideological instinct, we must first recognize the degree to which ideology does inform our judgments. And once we concede this recognition, we must sooner or later be prepared to define rational limits for our ideological judgments, or, if you will, for our ideological intolerance. I submit that such limits should be defined in moral terms—and in moral terms only.

But what is plausibly moral? The Anglo-American principle of free speech works on the modern assumption that moral standards are a matter of variable, subjective discretion, and that allowing discretion to operate in the arena of free speech opens the way to suppression of that freedom by irrationalist and inhumane ideologies. This, as exemplified by the First Amendment, is a general principle that cannot easily take into account individual exceptions; and in the running of any social group that is bigger than a community, it is probably the most moral possible principle in terms of its effect on most individuals. I would rather live in the United States than in Soviet Russia. But it is not a principle without its rational and moral limits. It is, for example, a principle that is powerless to prevent the moral repugnance of a Nazi march on Skokie because it is a principle that does not admit much discretion by or about individuals.

American musicology, like America generally, for all its ethos of rugged individualism, operates most comfortably through reference to general systems of laws, of which free speech, government by law rather than men, and majority rule are one sort of example, and Newtonian science is another. (It can scarcely be an accident, by the way, that the free-enterprise system found its premier cultural expression in science; nor should it be doubted that affirmative action on the one hand and the threat of nuclear extinction on the other represent moral limits of the traditional American ideology.) But is American musicology really comparable to a political entity or even to a scientific discipline? Must it resort to such rigidly general, non-discriminating standards of rationality to protect itself from an inhumane irrationality? Can it not trust itself to have some capacity for moral discretion? Is this discipline not, or ought it not to be, more like a community, a community with the intellectual and moral capacity to act in good faith, a community in which the risks of rampant irrationalism can be counterbalanced through the development of specifically humanistic standards of rationality that are no less intellectually rigorous than scientific

standards but yet permit the humane exercise of discretion?\(^4\) And indeed, is the study of Western music, as it is currently constituted at most American universities, really as conducive as it could be to either the exercise of free speech or the pursuit of truth?

I would argue that in fact Anglo-American musicology today is not a field open to all morally justifiable opinions or even to a wide spectrum of such opinions. It is, rather, a highly exclusionary system which defines its field of study and chooses its practitioners on grounds that are at bottom no less ideological than the grounds of Continentalist scholars; and, again, the empiricist ideology is in one sense more dangerous because it is not acknowledged as an ideology. Thus, American musicology today is a highly normative system, which excludes from consideration virtually all music that does not fit into the canons of Western art music. I once asked a fellow-musicologist if he could think of a single other humanistic discipline at our university that failed utterly to consider non-Western culture. After some thought he replied, "Yes, English." The system of norms that is involved, I might add, is on the whole rigid and open to little exercise of individual discretion. Adorno may be criticized as a biased judge, but questions of value, being non-scientific and ideological, rarely come up at all in the current empiricist study of Western music. Minor composers are taught alongside major ones as part of a common art tradition, but there are today few rigorous attempts to account for differences in value and still fewer to revise received judgments. A senior colleague once strongly suggested that I delete from an article the suggestion that Beethoven may have failed in the Finale of the Ninth Symphony, a view not without its partisans, even among earlier, less scientific English-speaking critics, such as Vaughan Williams.\(^5\)

Furthermore, American musicology has remarkably little tolerance for divergent schools of thought, least of all for Continentalist schools, even ones that cannot readily be dismissed as morally repugnant. It seldom troubles to master the terminology, much less the premises, of unfamiliar schools of thought. (I know a doctoral student who was advised to delete references to a certain Continentalist methodology from his dissertation because the

\(^4\)Finding alternatives to the scientific method of study that do not sacrifice intellectual rigor is perhaps the principal task facing any intellectual community that recognizes the limits of scientific method. It is, of course, a formidable task, but it should not on that account be given up as hopeless. At least as far back as Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, foundations have been offered for construing non-scientific modes of mental activity as potentially rigorous. The difficulty, as Kant's work itself (more or less unintentionally) makes evident, is to define bases for an individual rationale or exercise of discretion that can be accepted as generally valid. In a paper delivered, as one of the Thalheimer Lectures, at the Johns Hopkins University on May 4, 1979, I argue that Romantic music itself constitutes one major Western attempt to solve this very difficulty. (This paper, "Romantic Music as Post-Kantian Critique: Classicism, Romanticism, and the Concept of the Semiotic Universe," was published in 1981 with the other lectures of that Thalheimer series, by Johns Hopkins Press, in a collection entitled On Criticizing Music: Five Philosophical Perspectives, edited by Kingsley Price.) Some of the problems attendant on an exercise of discretion in humanistic disciplines are usefully discussed in a review by Denis Donoghue, in the November 9, 1980 issue of *The New York Times Book Review* (pp. 11 and 32–33), of Geoffrey Hartman's book *Criticism in the Wilderness: The Study of Literature Today*.

faculties didn’t have time to master the terminology.) But what good is freedom of thought if it amounts to nothing more than a freedom to refuse to understand? Theoretically, Continentalist approaches are as welcome in the American musicological program as studies of non-Western music are. Doesn’t the actual scarcity of both belie an ideological judgment that precludes attempts at understanding the inner workings of an unfamiliar structure? American musicology is excellent at pursuing those kinds of truth that lend themselves to the scientific model of verification, which asks whether something is right or wrong. It is far less good at grappling with those humanistic sorts of truth which do not lend themselves to a single standard but which inevitably evoke large numbers of divergent interpretations, no one of which can consider itself privileged or complete. And within itself the Anglo-American study of music, as it is currently constituted, risks relatively little in intellectual terms and gains relatively little. One is more apt to hear the word courage applied to a scholar who challenges the accepted dating of a masterpiece than to one who speculates on new sorts of possible human meanings or evaluations of that work. In short, I would argue that despite its assertions to the contrary, mainstream American musicology today, no less than its Continentalist counterparts, makes its judgments and selections very largely on ideological grounds, but that in contrast to the work of a first-rate Continentalist such as Adorno, empiricist musicology does not make its own ideological biases explicit, that it seldom gives serious attention to constructs which it ultimately rejects, and that it tends to narrow rather than broaden its field of study wherever possible, thereby excluding considerations of meaning and denying itself a specifically humanistic value.

Again, it seems clear that each approach to the study of music has its ideological biases which make for relative strengths and weaknesses. One would think that a healthy academic structure would allow for the cultivation of both approaches, but is this really possible? Doesn’t such a possibility in fact depend on which ideology is at bottom the controlling one, and on whether the fundamentally controlling ideology can, without negating itself, accommodate a viewpoint that is diametrically opposed to it? And can either of these particular approaches to study actually accommodate the other?

Obviously both approaches are in some sense exclusionary. The Continentalist tends to reject contrary ideologies, the empiricist not to recognize them. But a case could be made, I think, that the Continentalists incline towards inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness, and that the exclusionary effect of the Continentalist is, or at least can be, mitigated to the extent that Continentalism resembles a traditionally Catholic as opposed to Protestant world view. By this I mean that the Continentalist, in Catholic fashion, is more likely to allow for some awareness of the ideologies it rejects and to encompass a place, however lowly, despised, or even hellish, for those ideologies in its world view; whereas the Anglo-American mode of thought, in traditional Protestant fashion, allows for freedom and equality
of thought but only within a very narrow range of the Elect, and simply disregards the human remainder. Of course, the Continentalist can also be linked more openly with oppressive political ideologies. And yet there also is a point beyond which excluding all non-scientific ideologies as a protection against irrationalism can itself become irrational. Adorno is not altogether wrong, at least in the academic realm, when he characterizes the opposition of rigid empiricism to Continentalism as terrorism.

And again, I would argue that most judgments of human utterance are made more on contextual grounds that clearly require the exercise of discretion, grounds such as congeniality of style, ambiance, or association, or even confidence of delivery, than they are on grounds of the internal structural logic of an utterance. I believe this is the case whether the utterance in question is a musical work, a musicological study, a movie, an advertisement, a political speech, perhaps even a courtroom statement. Indeed, a well-regarded scientist, who is himself certainly an empiricist, told me recently that because the data in a scientific lecture cannot be verified on the spot, reactions to such lectures, which sometimes determine academic appointments, depend fundamentally on the prior reputation of the speaker. No doubt he is right: how many journal articles, college term-papers, or even musical compositions do we humanists really understand, much less assess, on grounds of purely internal logic, in an ideological vacuum, unmindful of the reputation of the writer, the journal, or the performing group that is involved? How many psychoanalysts are in business because even between parents and a very young child a good deal more is communicated than the internal structure of the spoken sentence? Why has hermeneutics become such a hot specialty in so many humanistic disciplines (including European musicology)? Why has the phrase “the medium is the message” become accepted as a truism in our culture?

Most utterances, I am saying, are judged, by Continentalist, empiricist, and average citizen alike, more fundamentally on grounds of ideology than

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6This distinction between Catholicism and Protestantism is derived from work by the American sociologist Robert Bellah. I use it solely as a metaphorical distinction, based on historical generalities, not as a critique of any Christian religion today. The metaphor seems revealing in many contexts. Consider, for example, one similarity between that brilliant bearer of the Protestant spirit, the American Constitution as originally written, and Nazi doctrine. Both gave high place to laws of a general or scientific character; each excluded various groups of people from its own definition of human society.

7Theodore W. Adorno, Introduction to the Sociology of Music, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York, 1976), p. 195. Professor David Josephson, of Brown University, finds Adorno’s imagery here inaposite in the sense that terrorism nowadays connotes the activities of guerrillas, fighting outside of a dominant power structure, rather than those of the power structure itself. The objection is intriguing. But let us not forget the historical realities behind Adorno’s choice of words. Terrorism, defined by Webster as “the systematic use of terror especially as a means of coercion,” has all too often been institutionalized as law by groups in power.

8See, for example, Beiträge zur musikalischen Hermeneutik, ed. Carl Dahlhaus (Regensburg, 1975).
on grounds of what is actually said or argued.\textsuperscript{9} This may be unfortunate, though again, I myself feel certain that any assessment of the internal validity of an argument that failed to consider, in the best possible faith, the moral import of that utterance, would be a humanly false judgment. (Hitler’s Nuremberg speeches may have had a perfect inner logic, but the listener who failed to use his discretion and to assess the morality or sanity of the source and purpose of those speeches would arrive at a very incomplete understanding of them.) Nevertheless, if we do think that an argument should be judged as much as possible on its own internal merits, in John Stuart Mill’s impersonal free marketplace of ideas, without regard to any external context, and if, in spite of this conviction, we base our own judgments on grounds that are even partially ideological, then at least we must put ourselves in a position to recognize the tension between our ideals of artistic autonomy and our ideological actions, to distinguish between immoral and merely unfamiliar ideologies, thereby clearing the way for genuinely structural judgments, to identify all ideological judgments honestly, and, finally, to find ways of handling our own ideological baggage rationally. These things empiricism does not help us to do.

In my judgment, unrestricted empiricism poses a danger to free thought in its refusal to recognize its own anti-ideology—what Adorno calls its “boast of being value-free”\textsuperscript{10}—as itself ideological. I would even argue that empiricism would eventually have to negate itself and become Continentalist if it were to allow complete freedom of thought because it would have to acknowledge its own ideological underpinnings and thereby, in effect, become Continentalist. On the other hand, empiricism is, at least nominally, committed in a way that Continentalism is not, to an ideal of equality of opinion. The problem is for empiricism to extend this ideal far enough to include genuinely divergent ideologies. Empiricism must be willing at least to tolerate attempts by other schools of thought to find rigorous and rational modes of exercising moral discretion, modes that need not threaten the empiricist’s own healthy opposition to the authoritarian extremes of Continentalism.

Ultimately, we must probably acknowledge that the relationship between the empiricist and Continentalist approaches cannot be conclusively resolved in favor of either. What exists between the two amounts to an irresolvable tension, comparable to the dialectic that relates the autonomy of an artistic structure on the one hand to the inescapability of ideological

\textsuperscript{9}In “Romantic Music as Post-Kantian Critique,” I develop at length the distinction between internal structure and external context, associating the former with structure and perception, the latter with style and interpretation. It is my contention in this paper, which aims at defining two different modes of understanding a musical composition, that the Classical style proposes the possibility of understanding a musical structure or message wholly on its own internal terms, because its premises and modes of argument are universal, and that musical Romanticism in effect presents a critique of that proposal by acknowledging explicitly the role played in musical communication by various sorts of specific contexts, contexts that cannot be reduced to general principles, contexts that are extrinsic to inner structural connections, and contexts that make necessary an element of discretion in any act of understanding. These contexts include personal style, cultural identity, and even the physical character of the musical medium. In short, as I suggest above in footnote 4, the Romantic composition takes on the task of establishing the validity of a rationale, in this case a musical rationale, that is unmistakably shaped by particular contexts or ideologies rather than assumed to be universally true. As such I argue that this music constitutes an archetype for all human utterances.

\textsuperscript{10}Introduction to the Sociology of Music, p. 194.
values on the other. The best that can be done in any academic community or discipline is to work at maintaining the two approaches in a state of equilibrium, however uneasy. This is a task that requires constant discretion and self-criticism, but these should not be beyond the reach of a humanistic discipline. And in this task the discipline of ethnomusicology could have a particularly good effect on the study of Western art music. For even if his bias is completely empiricist, the ethnomusicologist is almost forced by the scope of his study to confront the limitations of his own approach to truth and to acknowledge its status as unprivileged ideology. This is an awareness that needs to be communicated.

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