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On Theorizing a »Properly Marxist« Musical Aesthetics

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0.0 Here's a metaphor: musicology, ethnomusicology, and music theory together form a three-headed Cerberus who stands guard at the entrance to the Hades of musical understanding. (Knowledge, we learn from Faust, is a form of damnation.) Let's take the metaphor too far, if we haven't already, by saying that Marxist theories fit into it as the spirits of the departed. Remember that in the Greek myth, Cerberus's job was to allow disembodied souls into but not out of the underworld. That has pretty much been the fate, in academic musical circles, of what we could generically call »Left dialectics.« A good deal gets in from the outside, some through music scholars' passing dalliances or long-term liaisons with Adorno, some through attempts to digest Žižek's Delphic contributions to the musicological discussion, and some through encounters with the ostensibly left-leaning field of sound studies.¹ Yet very little novel Marxist theorizing has come

Abstract - Résumé

This essay gives a sympathetic critique of several of the Marxist writings of the American music theorist Henry Klumpenhouwer (»Late Capitalism, Late Marxism, and the Study of Music.« »Post-structuralism and Issues of Music Theory,« and »Commodity Form, Disavowal, and the Practices of Music Theory.«). This critique is then used as a springboard for launching some programmatic suggestions about future Marxist music scholarship.

Keywords: Marx • marxism • music theory • musicology • music history • philosophy • socialism • Communism

¹ In keeping with the Hades metaphor, we could more cynically say that music studies is where Marxism goes to die. The

out of music studies. University music departments have provided a brisk demand for Marxisms of various stripes—the New Musicology, for example, devoured certain products of the Frankfurt school—but have not appreciably added to the supply.

Given that music studies in general has borne little Marxist fruit, one would not expect any at all from music theory, considering that this sub-discipline functions in some respects as a time-capsule in which reactionary and restitutionist ideologies (positivism, formalism, aestheticism, Eurocentrism, backward-looking cultural nostalgia) and chauvinist pedagogical mandates (the preservation and superintendence of the Western canon) have been able to linger well past their expiration dates.² Against the odds, however, music theory has produced some Marxism that is in the legacy of K. Marx rather than A. B. Marx: Henry Klumpenhouwer's triad of essays consisting of »Late Capitalism, Late Marxism, and the Study of Music,«³ »Post-structuralism and Issues of Music Theory,«⁴ and »Commodity Form, Disavowal, and the Practices of Music Theory.«⁵ We shall offer a sympathetic critique of several of the positions that emerge from these documents. This critique will then serve as a springboard for launching some programmatic suggestions about future Marxist music scholarship. The structure of our essay is simple: we give a charitable paraphrase of some of Klumpenhouwer's main lines of argumentation and raise objections to a few of his conclusions; we then submit an open-ended proposal about how to musicologically implement what Lukács calls »orthodox Marxism«:

»Orthodox Marxism...does not imply the uncritical acceptance of the results of Marx's investigations. It is not the 'belief' in this or that thesis, nor the exegesis of a 'sacred' book. On the contrary, orthodoxy refers exclusively to *method*. It is the scientific convic-

existing Marxist musicological discourse, rather than serving as a foundation for the politically-committed music scholar to build upon, has heretofore either been relegated to the history of ideas (as has happened to Maróthy and Knepler) or has seen its anti-capitalist and class-analytical dimension de-emphasized or suppressed (as has happened to Adorno).

² This not a universalization but a generalization, and a soft one at that. The field is of course marked by internal tensions and is tolerant of some amount of dissent and self-criticism.

³ Henry KLUMPENHOUWER, Late Capitalism, Late Marxism and the Study of Music, ed. Deborah Cook, Shierry Weber Nicholson, and Alastair Williams, *Music Analysis* 20, no. 3 (2001): 367–405.

⁴ Henry KLUMPENHOUWER, Commentary: Poststructuralism and Issues of Music Theory, in *Music/Ideology: Resisting the Aesthetic*, ed. Adam Krims (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach, 1998), 289–310.

⁵ Henry KLUMPENHOUWER, Commodity-Form, Disavowal, and Practices of Music Theory, in *Music and Marx: Ideas, Practice, Politics*, ed. Regula Burckhardt Qureshi (Routledge, 2013), 23–41. A few other thinkers working within the discipline of music theory have made extensive use of Marxian concepts. See especially Sumanth GOPINATH, *The Ringtone Dialectic: Economy and Cultural Form* (MIT Press, 2013), Eric DROTT, *Music and the Elusive Revolution: Cultural Politics and Political Culture in France, 1968–1981* (University of California Press, 2011), and Adam KRIMS, *Music and Urban Geography* (Routledge, 2012). We discuss Krims below.

tion that dialectical materialism is the road to truth and that its methods can be developed, expanded and deepened only along the lines laid down by its founders.«⁶

1.0 Klumpenhouwer's Marxist essays were not conceived as a trilogy and therefore do not seek to defend a unitary thesis. Nevertheless they can be read as jointly advancing a blueprint for a radically (in both senses of the word) reoriented *Musikwissenschaft*. The overarching commitment that links these essays is to the view that inquiry into music should be, and has not hitherto been, carried out along »properly Marxist« lines. Marxism, as »the only respectable 'science of capitalism' available to us, and thus the only reasonable perspective from which to undertake the study of culture,«⁷ has devised analytical categories that provide for »the only possibility for sustained and successful critique of our current mode of production...and all of its ideological forms and superstructural institutions,«⁸ including musical forms and institutions. Hard-nosed realism must prevail as we mark out the territorial boundaries of Marxist musical critique:

»A properly Marxist aesthetics, and the broader cultural interpretative methodologies and approaches that emerge from it, ought to begin with the realization that developing strategies for reconciling sundered and mutually alienated social domains, or for 'liberating congealed symbols of beauty and freedom which live on within the masterworks of art' is in the end only futile and distracting. Critical projects committed from the outset to the view that art is foremost a nourishing or therapeutic enterprise, as capitalism's spiritual payoff, consolation prize or moral life raft (depending on the relevant variety of anti-capitalism), have lost their radical critical edge even before they begin.«⁹

This is an admonition to »face with sober senses«¹⁰ some common presuppositions both about the powers of music and about the scope of music criticism. In opposition to musicologists who advocate on behalf of particular repertoires (e.g. art music, improvised music, folk music) based on their allegedly liberatory potential, Klumpenhouwer holds that music cannot to any significant degree act as compensation for or countermeasure to the unfreedom that capitalism seeks to universalize. Ergo it is not incumbent upon music criticism to discover, explain, or foster music's revolutionary propensities, for it has none. The quotation above takes aim at Maynard Solomon, who naively celebrates the »masterworks of

⁶ Georg LUKÁCS, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (MIT Press, 1971), 1.

⁷ H. KLUMPENHOUWER, *Late Capitalism, Late Marxism and the Study of Music*, 368.

⁸ H. KLUMPENHOUWER, *Commentary: Poststructuralism and Issues of Music Theory*, 290.

⁹ H. KLUMPENHOUWER, *Late Capitalism, Late Marxism and the Study of Music*, 401.

¹⁰ »[M]an is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real condition of life.« Karl MARX, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Chapter 1, »Bourgeois and Proletarians,« accessed May 28, 2016, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm>.

art«¹¹—a term that itself cries out for historical-materialist cross-examination—for their supposed capacity to cultivate liberty and overcome alienation.¹² Klumpenhouwer's disillusioned response is that an emancipatory politics cannot unproblematically glorify bourgeois works of art, which are simply sensuous embodiments of the worldview of the ruling class, nor commandeer them for its own anti-capitalist ends.¹³

We accept this much of Klumpenhouwer's caveat: it is indeed problematic for Marxists to set themselves up as uncritical cheerleaders for this or that cultural product of this or that prior stage of capitalism. However, the vision of a »properly Marxist aesthetics« from which this warning stems is one that we only partly share. As we understand him, Klumpenhouwer rejects out of hand the hermeneutic venture of discovering or activating an artwork's revolutionary, utopian, or class-critical function. Breaking with a line of theorizing indebted to classical German philosophy, this brand of demystified Marxism avoids what it sees as the Romantic error of valorizing artworks as repositories of a spiritual (*geistig*) content that addresses itself to and helps to educate our faculty of moral judgment and our political consciousness. And, breaking with a line of theorizing that begins with Marx and Engels, it denies that art could effect this kind of personal and communal *Bildung* so as to further the aims of the socialist movement.

¹¹ »Art is a distinct form of the labor process in which—amid the myriad effusions and narcotic productions of class culture—is kept alive the materialized imagery of man's hope and of that very same human essence which Marxism seeks to reveal. Marxism, having supplied the theoretical means of analyzing the historically shaped contradictions which give rise to art, has the greater task of preserving and liberating the congealed symbols of beauty and freedom which live on within the master-works of art.« Maynard SOLOMON, *Marxism and Art: Essays Classic and Contemporary* (Wayne State University Press, 1974), 20. Quoted in H. KLUMPENHOUWER, *Late Capitalism, Late Marxism and the Study of Music*, 400.

¹² The Marx of the *Communist Manifesto* might have accused Solomon of »bourgeois socialism,« the self-contradictory espousal of bourgeois ideology in the name of bettering the lot of working class. Marx says with sharp sarcasm: »Free trade: for the benefit of the working class. Protective duties: for the benefit of the working class. Prison Reform: for the benefit of the working class. This is the last word and the only seriously meant word of bourgeois socialism.« K. MARX, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Chapter 3, »Socialist and Communist Literature.« For a wistful retrospective of mid-century working-class appropriation of bourgeois art music, see John HALLE, *Nothing Is Too Good for the Working Class*, *New Politics*, Winter 2014, <http://newpol.org/content/nothing-too-good-working-class>.

¹³ As Klumpenhouwer points out, Solomon's eulogistic attitude toward a canonical body of artworks has a precedent in Marx's exaltation of Greek statuary as an aesthetically unsurpassable symbol of human freedom. Marx's disposition probably reveals more about his cultural and class position as the recipient of a Hellenophilic *Gymnasium* education than it reveals about the meanings objectified in Greek art itself. »But the difficulty does not consist in realizing that Greek art and epic are bound to certain social forms of development. The difficulty is that they still give us artistic pleasure and that, in a sense, they stand out as norms and as models that cannot be equaled.« See Karl MARX, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), Introduction, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/index.htm>.

We will consider this negative claim in more detail below. Its positive counterpart, to which we now turn, is the claim that the Marxist musicologist is tasked with extending Marx's critical analysis of capitalist social relations to the domain of musical production, distribution, and consumption. Marxist musicology's comprehensive agenda is to include: [1] »examining music as functioning in the category of ideology,« i.e. »viewing music as yet another locus where classes square off against each other,« since music »facilitates, mediates, and shapes both fundamental and special confrontations between social classes«;¹⁴ [2] »examining music...as a fulfillment of (basic) need required by all human beings, at least at the level of the collective,« i.e. examining it as a »libidinal object« for appetitive subjects—or, more concretely, appetitive bodies—that are differently »capitalized« as workers, members of the salaried classes, owners of the means of production, etc.;¹⁵ and [3] investigating »other theories of music (viz., capitalist or, where relevant, precapitalist theories): first, within a more general Marxist project of ideology critique, and second, from the perspective of music theory as 'knowledge production,' or, in other words, as an element of basic, or infrastructural, forces of production.«¹⁶

Put differently, the Marxist musicologist must answer the following three questions: How, and with what warrant, do human beings in class society make knowledge claims about music ([3])? What are the class factors that condition people's practical engagement in musical activities, and how is participation in these activities generative of or constitutive of class-conflictual behavior ([1])? And under what material and psychological circumstances, and with what mediating intervention of the capitalist marketplace, do people enter into a relationship of desire and satisfaction with music ([2])? Students of Kant's three *Critiques* will appreciate Klumpenhouwer's tacit gesture of structuring the division of labor within the »intellectual scope of a Marxist poetics of music« as a three-pronged investigation of musical knowledge, musical action, and musical pleasure.

The critique of musical knowledge in Klumpenhouwer's essays proceeds as a polemic directed at the scholarly factions vying for dominance in Anglophone academic music studies. We have little to add to Klumpenhouwer's wide-ranging and subtle diagnoses of the superficially competing, but on a deeper level mutually sustaining, bourgeois (and in certain cases belatedly pre-capitalist) ideologies that inform the old musicology, the New Musicology, the discipline of music theory, the practice of music analysis, Schenkerian studies, the reception of Adorno, et. al. There is of course much more to be said in accounting for fresh developments in the field and in addressing musical »knowledge production«

¹⁴ H. KLUMPENHOUWER, Commentary: Poststructuralism and Issues of Music Theory, 308.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

that transpires outside the groves of academe. We do not pursue this line of epistemological critique in this essay, although we will have something to say further on about the proper objects of musicological research.

Klumpenhouwer describes, but does not substantially take up, the critique of musical pleasure. His recommendation is that a Freudian approach be adopted in which music's appreciators are conceptualized as loci of libidinal investment in sounds. Listeners, so represented, are desiring bodies, and as parties to class society, they are moved by desires that are conditioned by economic position. »The nature and scope of [capitalized bodies] will vary from the fragmented and alienated bodies of workers...to middle-class 'bodies' organized by strictures of the 'abstinence' question, which presents itself to the bourgeoisie as conflict between sustenance...and the further accumulation of capital.«¹⁷ Consuming music is a practice caught up in the conditions of the reproduction of the capitalist system, the expansion of value, and the development of the means of production, in that such world-historical processes are the remote determinants, if not the proximate causes, of the hearing subject's desiderative relationship to music. A Marxist reception theory of music must therefore be constructed within a theoretical framework that can accommodate the conjuncture of psychodynamics, as theorized by Freud's speculative metapsychology, and Marxian economic-historical analysis.

Klumpenhouwer's writings contain fewer indications about how to concretely prosecute the remaining critique of musical praxis. However, the work of Klumpenhouwer's sometime co-thinker, Adam Krims, can help fill this lacuna. According to Krims, »the basic project of Marxist analysis in the humanities« is that of »tracing [...] the systematic aspects of capitalism in the production, circulation and reception of expressive culture.«¹⁸ This means penetrating beneath the bewildering surface of appearances presented by a pervasively commodified society. The material wealth of such a society appears as an *omnium-gatherum* of pieces of merchandise whose equivalence under purchasability »conceals almost perfectly any trace of origin, of the labour processes that produced them, or of the social relations implicated in their production.«¹⁹ Thus there falls to the Marxist critic the responsibility of »restoring...hidden social relations« to the musical commodity. In Krims's own investigation of rap music produced under a post-Fordist regime of accumulation, this restoration becomes a matter of »tracing flexible accumulation in the very sound of the musical tracks«²⁰ and, more generally,

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Adam KRIMS, *Marxist Music Analysis without Adorno: Popular Music and Urban Geography*, in *Analyzing Popular Music* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 141.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 142.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

of »tracking shifts in musical representation, and tracking their complex relations to capital and both its physical and symbolic requirements.«²¹

»Tracing« and »tracking« are pivotal methodological prescriptions here. Having internalized a Marxian impulse toward materialist objectivity, Krims comes to view the work of the Marxist music scholar as akin to that of a forensic scientist. She is to place under a music-analytical microscope the class-indexing stylistic residue that capitalism deposits on music's sonic surface. Thus can she ascertain which economic factors are responsible, directly or indirectly, for music's audible qualities. Musicological inquiry is worthwhile, on this picture, because and insofar as it explains how the sound of music is the effect of an economic cause. This comports nicely with Klumpenhouwer's arguments: since the value of Marxist music studies cannot derive from music's capacity to make life freer and better, music and musical practices command the scholarly attention of Marxist thinkers only inasmuch as they are *signifiers* of capitalism, commodities enmeshed in, and microcosmically indicative of, capitalist relations and operations. The purpose of music analysis, accordingly, is to make palpable the relationship between determinant and determined, economic base and musical superstructure.

Our focus hereafter will be on musical praxis. In a nutshell, we feel that the tracing metaphor is helpful but one-sided. As will be seen, the way we elaborate this point is inconsistent with Klumpenhouwer's negative claim about how music is devoid of emancipatory potential. So the next thing we need to do is refute that claim.

1.1 The young Marx was fond of quoting Mephistopheles from Goethe's *Faust*: »I am the spirit that always negates! And rightly so; for all that has come into existence deserves to perish!«²² Klumpenhouwer's is a ruthless critique not only of everything musicologically existing – his disciplinary polemic is unsparring – but also of everything *musically* existing. Owing to »the complete bourgeois dominance of musical production,« he contends, it is an exceptionless rule that »the characteristics and the deployment of cultural commodities in capitalism serve the interests of the ruling class.«²³ From this can be derived »enormous implications for those studies of culture serious about engaging with Marxist aesthetics.«²⁴ The implications are that (1) »searching within the current or past system of musical genres for signs of oppositional or resistant impulses...is a fruitless exercise...because it is pointless to struggle towards an exit in such a closed

²¹ *Ibid.*, 156.

²² J.W. GOETHE, *Faust*, Chapter 6, »Ich bin der Geist, der stets verneint! / Und das mit Recht; denn alles, was entsteht, / Ist wert, daß es zugrunde geht.«

²³ H. KLUMPENHOUWER, *Late Capitalism, Late Marxism and the Study of Music*, 376–77.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 377.

system as capitalism«²⁵; and that (2) seeing in art a »'privileged means of access to that mode of existence which, *ex hypothesi*, mankind will one day attain when the realm of necessity has been transformed into the realm of freedom«²⁶ is a form of bourgeois false consciousness that »can only lead, as [it does] in Adorno, to extreme cultural disappointment as society under capitalism continues to shed older cultural forms and objects for which it no longer has any use.«²⁷ These entailments have an epistemological upshot: Marxist criticism cannot aspire to anything over and above grasping how the »relevant underlying mechanisms and laws of motion basic to the capitalist system are manifested in music«²⁸ and detailing how and why music—as it is made, consumed, and theorized, by people of any class affiliation—serves the interests of capital accumulation.

But is it true that cultural commodities, just insofar as they are commodities, monolithically serve the interests of capital? Marx's *Capital*, we assume, sometimes takes the form of a commodity: copies of it have a value expressed by a price; workers who print it and bind it generate a surplus value that is appropriated by their employers, and so forth. And, on top of how it enriches the class of owners when it assumes the commodity form, *Capital* has also come to capitalism's aid in a superstructural or ideological way: Kautsky and other technocrats of the Second International used some of *Capital's* words and ideas to keep the membership of the *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* docile and unrevolutionary; the Soviet Union made *Capital* the official apologia for its brand of bureaucratic state capitalism; today, universities that serve as mechanisms of debt-imposition and neoliberal indoctrination are able to maintain the fiction that they are sites of critical resistance to corporate tyranny in part because books like *Capital* still get taught within their walls. Does it follow from all this that *Capital's* »characteristics and deployment« serve the interests of the ruling class and only the ruling class? No. The key word here is »only.« Whatever else may be true of it, *Capital* is foremost an abiding »monument of the proletarian culture« that renders to humankind the historically necessary service of »deduc[ing] the 'expropriation of the expropriators' as the inevitable and ultimate result of the production of surplus-value and of the progressive concentration of capital.«²⁹ We agree with Luxemburg that there can be no question as to whether this cultural commodity serves the objective interest of the oppressed class, even if the oppres-

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 398.

²⁶ Michael SPRINKER, *Imaginary Relations: Aesthetics and Ideology in the Theory of Historical Materialism* (Verso, 1987), 13. Quoted in H. KLUMPENHOUWER, *Late Capitalism, Late Marxism and the Study of Music*, 400.

²⁷ H. KLUMPENHOUWER, *Late Capitalism, Late Marxism and the Study of Music*, 400.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 399. This quote makes clear the convergence between Krim's and Klumpenhouwer's views.

²⁹ Rosa LUXEMBURG, *Stagnation and Progress of Marxism* (1903), *New International VI*, no. 77 (August 1940), 143–44.

sors have found an occasional use for it, too. Of *Capital* she averred: »Therewith, as far as theory is concerned, the essential need of the labor movement is satisfied.«³⁰

The point is that the Marxist theoretician is not faced with a stark and undialectical binarism that forces her to choose between categorizing *Capital*, or any cultural object, as exclusively bourgeois or exclusively un- or anti-bourgeois. When Marx says, with a Hegelian accent, that the capitalist world is full of »contradictions,« he means that aspects of the constructed social order can, and standardly do, embody conflicting tendencies or mutually antagonistic forces that jointly presuppose or reciprocally sustain one another. Thus a Marxist can speak—and speak truthfully—out of both sides of her mouth in asserting that an expressive cultural object both is and isn't bourgeois. Marx famously argues that the most significant sense in which the modern world has a contradictory character is that capitalism itself, as a system of self-begetting value, is riven by antithetical energies. Its inexorable push towards expansion and universalization necessitates a concomitant proneness to crisis and self-annihilation, and the special character of capitalist exploitation gives rise to the class consciousness and militancy that galvanizes the proletariat into action as »the identical subject object of history whose praxis will change reality.«³¹ More colloquially, »what the bourgeoisie produces, above all, are its own grave diggers.«³² Anyone who fatalistically claims that »it is pointless to struggle towards an exit in such a closed system as capitalism« does so in violation of the fundamental Marxist tenet that capitalism is *not* closed in the sense of being utterly nonporous and imperturbable. Quite to the contrary, Marx claims, capitalism constantly pokes holes in itself, creating spaces within which revolutionary agitation can find latitude. One of the ways it does this, one that should be of interest to Marxists concerned with culture, is by creating material conditions that permit and promote the fashioning of expressive cultural objects—words, sounds, pictures—that are in one way or another inimical to capitalism's persistence, objectifications of human thought and sentiment that intentionally and unintentionally threaten the production and reproduction of the bourgeois order.

Klumpenhouwer seeks corroboration for his pessimism in a passage from Trotsky's *Literature and Revolution*: »[i]t is fundamentally incorrect to contrast bourgeois culture and bourgeois art with proletarian culture and proletarian art. The latter will never exist.«³³ Klumpenhouwer interprets this remark as expressing the universal claim that »all art and culture under capitalism is 'bourgeois' precisely because, fundamentally, it all serves the interests of the ruling fraction of society, and thus if art and culture carry identifiable class traits at all, they will

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ G. LUKÁCS, *History and Class Consciousness*, 197.

³² K. MARX, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Chapter 1, »Bourgeois and Proletarians.«

³³ Leon TROTSKY, *Literature and Revolution* (Haymarket Books, 1925), 32.

be those of the bourgeoisie.«³⁴ Yet this isn't Trotsky's contention in the slightest, as one sees immediately when a crucial explanatory clause is reinstated: »...because the proletarian regime is temporary and transient.«³⁵ The idea Trotsky wishes to convey is not that under capitalism all art and culture is purely an instrument of class rule. The topic at hand in this section of *Literature and Revolution* is the status of art in the Soviet Workers' State, which Trotsky takes to be a post-bourgeois, post-capitalist national context. »The Revolution overthrew the bourgeoisie, and this decisive fact burst into literature. The literature which was formed around a bourgeois center, is no more.«³⁶ The question of the hegemonic function of cultural objects under capitalism is moot, for Trotsky is already thinking about art after capitalism. His message is that drawing a contrast between erstwhile bourgeois art and contemporary proletarian art is misleading, because contrasting the eclipsed bourgeois *society* and the ascendant proletarian *society* is useless. The relevant contrast to draw, Trotsky argues, is between bourgeois society and the future communist (post-proletarian) society that will be capitalism's permanent replacement. The proletarian society brought into being by the Bolsheviks is merely preparing the path for a climactic, internationally socialistic, universally classless stage of economic development. Just as the transitory Dictatorship of the Proletariat is in flux, Trotsky explains, so too is its art and culture. Since the art and culture of the transitional phase can have no stable, univocal character they therefore can provide no fixed basis for an evaluative comparison with previous bourgeois art and culture. In this sense there is no such thing as proletarian art as against bourgeois art; it will »never exist.« Whether or not this is a good point,³⁷ it is indisputable that it is a purely *methodological* point about the legitimacy of comparisons. Trotsky does not assert, and what he asserts does not imply, that art and culture under capitalism must inevitably and exclusively advance capitalist class interests.

If Klumpenhouwer's negative claim were true, a troubling question would arise as to how music is meant to sustain our critical attention once the methodological critique is complete and once music's commodity status has been fully and accurately depicted. If music's positive contribution to the faculties of ethical judgment and political consciousness is out of bounds for the Marxist critic, what, if anything, is left in it that might compel her analytical interest? Even if her enthusiasm for »restoring hidden social relations« were a sufficient inducement to carry out music analysis along the lines proposed by Krims, it seems that Klumpenhouwer's meta-theory bars her music-analytical discoveries from count-

³⁴ H. KLUMPENHOUWER, *Late Capitalism, Late Marxism and the Study of Music*, 376.

³⁵ L. TROTSKY, *Literature and Revolution*, 32.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 30.

³⁷ We are dubious about the transitionalist view of the workers' state upon which Trotsky's sociological aesthetics is premised.

ing as reasons for subsequent musical action. That is to say: if participating in or experiencing or creating music cannot, even in principle, promote the realization of socialist ideals, it is unclear how the results of historical-materialist music analysis, even if correct relative to some shared standard of accuracy for »tracing flexible accumulation in the very sound,« could constitute grounds for the Marxist to endorse any musical practices. Klumpenhouwer's fatalism divorces contemplation from praxis by guaranteeing that what one learns from the historical-materialist study of music cannot motivate the adoption or promulgation of any concrete modes of listening, composing, or performing. And if there is nothing we are supposed to musically do on the basis of what music analysis reveals to us, it is difficult to understand why the kind of knowledge music analysis delivers is knowledge worth having.

Klumpenhouwer puts his sympathizers in a predicament similar to the one Adorno's sympathizers find themselves in. The latter's political pessimism is infamously systematic. Adorno rails endlessly against the »rationalization« of human institutions, their total and irreversible capitulation to the dictates of means-end reasoning paired with their systemic inability to subject ends themselves to meaningful deliberation, such that capital accumulation is always and everywhere presupposed as an absolute *desideratum*. This pathology is so advanced in contemporary capitalist societies that it preemptively extinguishes any spark that could illuminate sincere moral reflection or ignite radical political action. In the Adornian dystopia, »wrong life [i.e. life under a capitalist division of labor] cannot be lived rightly.«³⁸ The »schema of mass culture« (*Schema der Massenkultur*) and the triumph of positivism in the social and psychological sciences conspire to reduce rationality to a calculus of bare subjective preferences rooted in the atomic individual. Reasoning grounded in the social whole represents an impossibility for subjects whose capacity for authentically communal decision-taking has been eroded irrevocably by a monoculture of consumerism and profit maximization. And if this is so, then revolutionary hope is a counterproductive delusion at best. The agent's sole recourse is to withdraw into what Lukács dubbed the »Grand Hotel Abyss,«³⁹ adopting an attitude of Schopenhauerian contempt for the cultural world she has the misfortune of having been born into, and spending her days devising ever more nuanced accounts of why seemingly innocuous aspects of this world (e.g. jazz, radios) are in fact sinister. Seduc-

³⁸ Theodor W. ADORNO, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from a Damaged Life* (London: New Left, 1974), 39.

³⁹ »A considerable part of the leading German intelligentsia, including Adorno, have taken up residence in the 'Grand Hotel Abyss' which I described in connection with my critique of Schopenhauer as 'a beautiful hotel, equipped with every comfort, on the edge of an abyss, of nothingness, of absurdity. And the daily contemplation of the abyss between excellent meals or artistic entertainments, can only heighten the enjoyment of the subtle comforts offered.'« Georg LUKÁCS, *The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-Philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature* (MIT Press, 1971), 22.

tive though it is, Adorno's position is straightforwardly self-undermining: if his cynicism is justified, and capitalism's inexorability ensures that cultural criticism cannot meaningfully abet societal transformation, then nothing matters, least of all his cynicism.

Notwithstanding the effort Klumpenhouwer expends in »Late Capitalism« discrediting Adorno's idiosyncratic uptake of the Marxist tradition (a misappropriation from which we would also wish to distance ourselves), his model for a Marxist musicology, like Adorno's, makes no provision for acquiring normative musical commitments—allegiances to *ways of musicking*⁴⁰—in response to music-critical and music-historical inquiry. It is our belief that the gap between historical-materialist analysis and normative musical commitment must be closed if the analytical act is to lay claim to relevance and if the musical commitments are to count as rationally grounded.

2.0 We hold that closing the gap is possible and that it involves reconstructing music's »social ontology.«⁴¹ By »social ontology« we mean the essential property musical practices have of being founded and governed by socially-instituted norms. To accomplish this reconstruction, it is not enough to merely trace the silhouette of capitalism on the surface of our musical inheritance. Marxian music criticism must additionally delve beneath the facade of musical appearances down to a level of »real abstractions,«⁴² a level of historically-determinate practical maxims that serve to configure what Talcott Parsons (following Weber) calls »the structure of social action.«⁴³ This entails probing the matrix of norms that both regulate and constitute our ways of musically being-in-the-world (*in-der-Welt-sein*) at a specific moment in history, with a view to uncovering the historical

⁴⁰ See Christopher SMALL, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Wesleyan University Press, 1998). Small's activity-centric conception of music is highly apposite to our conception of a Marxist critique of musical praxis.

⁴¹ »A practical discipline...essentially functions as a formalized extension of ordinary processes of reflective thinking and practical deliberation. A practical discipline seeks to cultivate practical reflection and deliberation by systematically studying practical activities and developing normative theoretical models or rational reconstructions of those practices. A rational reconstruction of a practice presents an idealized description of it that provides a reasoned normative model for practical conduct and critical evaluation of the practice.« Robert T. CRAIG, Grounded Political Theory, in *The International Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction* (John Wiley & Sons, June 8, 2015), 705.

⁴² Marx presents the idea that some abstractions are »real« in that they trace out the objective structure of our social practices in Karl MARX, *Economic Manuscripts: Critique of Political Economy.*, Part 1, The Commodity, accessed June 1, 2016, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/ch01.htm>. »This reduction appears to be an abstraction, but it is an abstraction which is made every day in the social process of production. The conversion of all commodities into labor-time is no greater an abstraction, and is no less real, than the resolution of all organic bodies into air. Labor, thus measured by time, does not seem, indeed, to be the labour of different persons, but on the contrary the different working individuals seem to be mere organs of this labor.«

⁴³ See Talcott PARSONS, *The Structure of Social Action* (Free Press, 1968).

causes of the authority of these norms. Put another way, Marxist musicology's disciplinary objects are musical *rules* (in the broadest possible sense), and its first disciplinary mandate is to figure out why and how those rules have been experienced by musicians, in concrete historical and economic contexts—the materially »real conditions of existence«⁴⁴—as *binding*. For such materialist criticism to deserve the qualification »properly Marxist,« we maintain, it must ultimately be capable, generally, of engendering commitment to musical norms and be capable, specifically, of occasioning musical actions (normatively structured behaviors) that are somehow appropriate to the historical mission of the historical class, the proletariat. To borrow Bloch's metaphor, Marxian music criticism must have both a »cold stream« and a »warm stream,« an analytical component and a commitment- or action-precipitating component.⁴⁵

2.1 How so? The answer to that question comes with a historical preamble. Our approach understands Marxism to be part of a lineage of self-directed humanistic inquiry and cultural maturation that dates back at least as far as Kant's transcendental-idealist epistemological revolution. For our account to be perspicuous it must be placed in the context of this geneology.

It was Kant's achievement to have given the most monumental philosophical exposition of the idea that our judgments are commitments to which we are responsible and about which we can be held to account. For him, concepts are rules that govern the thinkable and the doable. Bringing concepts and intuitions together in the act of judging is, in Kant's depiction, an activity that is normatively regulated in accordance with a privileged set of judgmental forms, his well-known »categories.«⁴⁶ As Lucien Goldmann has argued, Kant's project, oriented though it is toward self-constitution, individuality, and personal autonomy, nonetheless carries within it a social kernel, harbored in the concept of *universality* that bespeaks the social necessity that we be able to hold judgements to public account.⁴⁷ The role of the transcendental unity of apperception and the *sensus communis* in Kant's theory, too, demonstrate how notions of individual integrity (the coherence of the subject as a *single*

⁴⁴ Louis ALTHUSSER, *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (Monthly Review Press, 1971).

⁴⁵ »[Bloch] argues that Marxism contains both a cold and a warm stream. The cold stream is that of analysis. This establishes Marxism as a 'science of conditions,' which also gives rise to a process of unmasking and disenchantment. The warm stream is the 'liberating intention' of Marxism, »towards whose goal all these disenchantments are undertaken.« Jamie Owen DANIEL and Tom MOYLAN, *Not Yet: Reconsidering Ernst Bloch* (Verso, 1997), 73, quoting Ernst BLOCH, *The Principle of Hope*, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice, and Paul Knight, 1st American ed., vol. 1, *Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1986), 209.

⁴⁶ See Immanuel KANT, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge University Press, 1998), A70/B95-A93/B109.

⁴⁷ Lucien GOLDMANN, *Immanuel Kant* (New Left Books, 1971), Chapter 2 *et passim*.

subject) and private judgment lead beyond themselves to notions of public reason and of a supra-subjective (social) totality.⁴⁸

Just this thought about the dependence of the individual on the social whole in which she is an active member—and organic »moment«—is what Kant's most important critic, Hegel, would take up and expand into a theory of history. While Kant insists that the world as we know it conforms to the shape of our judgments, Hegel claims that the indwelling form and structure the world is experienced as having is a historical achievement that finds correlative expression in the makeup of surviving social institutions.⁴⁹ Moreover, Hegel observes that these institutions and their organizing principles are not static. Their evolution is driven by their tendency to come into conflict with themselves and one another. Hegel makes explicit the contradictions produced by and productive of a great many human institutions, such as slavery, monarchism, absolutism, and French Jacobinism. His philosophical explication takes the form of a rational reconstruction of institutional commitments and responsibilities. By articulating the conflicting norms bound up in social practice, Hegel offers up a theory of progress driven by immanent contradiction. The overcoming of normative conflict through the reform and replacement of institutions is, in Hegel's philosophy, the engine of humanity's incremental self-realization (»spirit coming to know itself«).

Marx takes up the mantle of Hegel's historical method but balks at the latter's blindness to the present, his tendency to overlook, or to prematurely see as resolved, the immanent contradictions by which modern society is riven. Marx's project from his earliest writings to his final unfinished masterpiece, *Capital*, is to offer a critique of the institutions of his—and to a perhaps surprisingly large extent, our—present. This critique, like Hegel's, takes the form of a rational reconstruction of the rules according to which we live, the rules of social reproduction. Far from being a blueprint for a socialist utopia, *Capital* articulates the logic of social life as it flows from a particular and characteristic division of labor and conception of ownership, which are themselves socially self-imposed »real abstractions« and not natural dispensations.

⁴⁸ On Brandom's (admittedly contentious) reading of Kant, »Kant is committed to the view that the *unity* of apperception is *achieved* through a process in which an agent unifies her judgments by coming to believe what she ought to believe (has reason to believe) given her other judgments and the content of the concepts ingredient in those judgments.« Mark OKRENT, review of *Reason in Philosophy: Animating Ideas*, by Robert B. Brandom, January 16, 2010, <http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/24267-reason-in-philosophy-animating-ideas/>. Given that the content of concepts is determined by the role in a public language of the words designating those concepts, the unity of apperception is relative to social norms. Kantian »common sense« is »a feeling that is shared by all subjects because each subject must be able to feel (and to communicate) the harmony between her faculties that produces [individual] cognition.« Rachel ZUCKERT, *Kant on Beauty and Biology: An Interpretation of the »Critique of Judgment«* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 336 n 26.

⁴⁹ This view of Hegel is advanced by Terry PINKARD, *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason* (Cambridge University Press, 1996).

For Hegel, and to a lesser extent for Marx, political economy and philosophy are not the only ways in which the logic of social life can be made explicit and intelligible. The arts step onto the stage to perform a vital mediating function between the sphere of social reproduction and the domain of abstract reflection. From the tragic drama of ancient Athenian life, through the emergence of the novel, to the vernacular music that pervades the telecommunicative channels of the information age, art practices, a Hegelian Marxist wishes to say, are sensuous enactments of key norms by which societies define themselves.

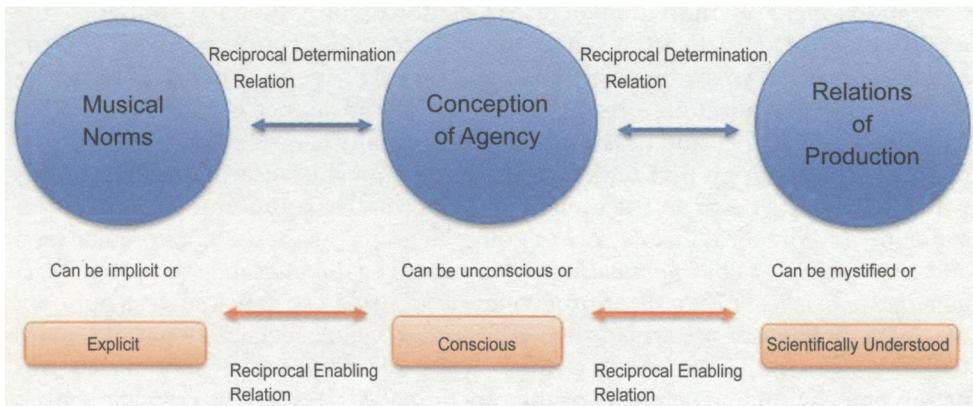
Which norms? In our Hegel-inspired view, art is a mirror in which humankind beholds itself, in that the arts materially manifest the *conceptions of agency* that circulate within the social whole at a given moment in its history. By »conception of agency« we mean the prevailing ways in which members of a culture represent themselves to themselves by schematizing various interrelationships between and among individual agent (such as a worker), subject of collective action (such as the proletariat) and the social whole (the totality of relations of production, distribution, consumption, and ideation)⁵⁰ that define membership within that culture. Conceptions of agency are paradigmatically normative, in that they take the form of attributions of rights, responsibilities, permissions, obligations, etc. to an individual or an association of individuals. We adhere to the methodological heuristics that 1) musical practices should be investigated as sonic and corporeal externalizations of such conceptions of agency, and that 2) the relationship between normative essence and musical appearance is dialectical, in that conceptions of agency and musical practices mutually condition one another. The focus of a musicology that understands the relationship of art to society in this way, then, would be on an assessment of the normative commitments that underwrite music's practical life, its way of going about its business at a particular time and place, *insofar as those normative commitments stand in a relation of mutual determination with a historically specific conception of agency*. In societies such as our own that have arrived at a sophisticated division of labor, social actions take place within the context of the highly rationalized, typically coerced economic coordination of individuated actors. A prime function of Marxist music criticism within advanced capitalist society, then, is that of making explicit the ways in which music itself makes materially manifest the form and consequences of this individuated, atomized, and non-voluntary type of social agency.

This methodological orientation can be seen as refinement of established sociologies of music. For example, Weber's *Rational and Social Foundations of*

⁵⁰ »For the aggregate of these relations, in which the agents of this production stand with respect to Nature and to one another, and in which they produce, is precisely society, considered from the standpoint of its economic structure.« Karl MARX, *Capital*, Vol. III, *The Process of Capitalist Production as a Whole*, ed. Friedrich Engels (Institute of Marxism-Leninism, 1959), chap. 48, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1894-c3/index.htm>.

*Music*⁵¹ is a systematic treatment of the development of musical norms. In that work, Weber is concerned to provide a genealogical narrative of the emergence what he sees as the most essential aspects of the musical practices he recognized as his own, including equal temperament and the tonal system. Beginning with music in the ancient world and tribal societies, Weber narrates the development of music in terms of the normative commitments musicians undertook at various moments in history. His story's fluidity, however, can mask its one-sidedness. Weber believes that the normative make-up of certain (non-musical) social institutions selects for the inauguration and preservation of certain musical norms and that this happens mechanically and unidirectionally. Musical norms are only ever direct effects of socio-economic causes, never causes of socio-economic effects. From this perspective, in which musical norms show up as an epiphenomenal by-product—the exhaust, as it were, of the motor of history – no non-arbitrary justification can be offered for preferring one set of musical norms over any other.

2.2 A diagram helps to illustrate how we see fit to negate, preserve, and transcend aspects of the Weberian outlook:



Reading the diagram from right to left, we ascend from the economic base of society, society's way of making things and its way of apportioning control over the things it makes, through elements of a corresponding »superstructure,« i.e. »the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophical—in short ideological—forms.«⁵² in which a society's dominant mode of production is institutionally

⁵¹ Max WEBER, *The Rational and Social Foundations of Music* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1958).

⁵² K. MARX, *Economic Manuscripts: Critique of Political Economy*, Preface.

enshrined. The rightmost circle stands for the relations of production—most fundamentally, the norms of ownership, i.e. command over the fate of the social product. These relations can be specified by adverting to the definite, functionally articulated roles (such as capitalist and worker, master and slave, feudal lord and vassal) that are »entered into by individuals in the process of reproducing their life.«⁵³ The middle circle stands for a conception of agency, i.e. (some aspect of) a given society's (potentially distorted and mystifying) self-reflexive understanding of the part-part and part-whole relations between individuals and collectivity within the social organism. Conceptions of agency belong to the set of »definite forms of social consciousness« that, according to Marx, correspond to and arise on the basis of »the totality of...relations of production [that] constitutes the economic structure of society.«⁵⁴ The leftmost circle stands for the normative framework of some mode of music making endemic to some cultural milieu.

As was mentioned above, art is a mirror: it reflects, and is in that sense an effect of, a particular conception of agency. But in playing this reflective role, it can also be efficacious in upholding or modifying that conception: what we see in the mirror can lead us to change what we show to the mirror, but it can also play a reinforcing role by confirming our sense that things should remain as they are. This relationship of mutual influence—wherein musical norms are determined by, and contribute to determining, conceptions of agency— is reproduced at a deeper structural level between conceptions of agency and relations of production. Relations of production give rise to a certain understanding of what it is to be a certain kind of person, a member of a social category, thus a *relatum* in a relation of production. And this conception can itself react back causally upon the relations of production, either to reinforce, reshape, or undermine them. Marx's recognition that there is this dialectical relationship between base and superstructure (a fact sometimes denied, in the name of Marx, by purveyors of vulgar economism) is made evident both by his notion of *ideology*, which refers to a system of ideas whose function is to nurture and maintain a given mode of production, and also by his affirmation that »theory also becomes a material force when it has gripped the masses«⁵⁵ such that »[b]y heralding the *dissolution of the hereto existing world order*, the proletariat merely proclaims the *secret of its own existence*, for it is the factual dissolution of that world order.«⁵⁶ In short, ideology, a part of the superstructure, can be a sustaining cause of the economic *status quo*;

⁵³ K. MARX, *Capital*, Vol. III, *The Process of Capitalist Production as a Whole*, chap. 48.

⁵⁴ K. MARX, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Preface.

⁵⁵ Karl MARX, *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right (1843-44)*, ed. Joseph O'Malley, trans. Annette Jolin and Joseph O'Malley (Cambridge University Press, 1970), Preface, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/>.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Introduction.

and revolutionary theory, a different part of the superstructure, can be a precipitating cause of the dissolution of the economic *status quo*.

With all this in mind, we can use the diagram to identify an analytical task for the musicologist working within the »cold stream« of Marxism: the task of mapping out the dynamic associations of mutual determination that bind together the relations of production, conceptions of agency, and the norms of musicking in force at a given locale at a given historical moment. As the bottom level of the diagram further indicates, apprehending of the normative structure of one of the three domains enables a deeper understanding of that of the others. Making explicit our norms of musicking helps us to become conscious of our conception of agency, and vice versa; and becoming conscious of our conception of agency helps us to comprehensively grasp the anatomy of the relations of production, and vice versa.

The relational network depicted by the diagram also allows for the possibility of the musicologist making a contribution to the »warm stream« of Marxism. If what the diagram represents is in fact the case, then promulgating musical norms is, at least in principle, a means of deliberately shaping a conception of agency, which could, at least in principle, have ramifications within the economic base. Musical criticism, therefore, insofar as it is undertaken in an advocative manner which seeks to secure commitment to particular musical norms, is, at least in principle, a political instrument.

2.3 To illustrate the above points, which are presented in a necessarily sketchy form, let us plot out a (perforce still somewhat sketchy) path from economic base, through conception of agency, to domain of musical normativity.

Recall that the gist of Marx's distinction between base and superstructure is that the concepts invoked in explanations of the objective world are related to one another hierarchically, and that some concepts cut deeper than others. Concepts like »tonic« and »modulation« cut less deeply than, say, »commodity« and »surplus value.« Now, as Marx states in the first line of *Capital*, the wealth of capitalist world »appears as a great heap of commodities« (*erscheint als eine ungeheure Warensammlung*).⁵⁷ Under capitalism, objects—indeed, anything that can be taken for an object, including our very capacity to work—are, one and all, commodities *in actu* or *in potentia*. They take on that aspect given the rules that generally govern the production and exchange of society's economic product, taken as a whole. *Qua* commodities, objects are necessarily fungible, such that a commodity's value is described and understood in terms of its essential quality of being universally exchangeable, in some determinate ratio, with every other type of commodity.

⁵⁷ Karl MARX, *Capital*, Vol. 1, 4th Edition (1890), trans. Hans Ehrbar, 2010, 1.1a »The Commodity as Natural Object and Use Value,« <http://content.csbs.utah.edu/~ehrbar/akmc.pdf>.

Value therefore appears as exchange value, a form of appearance that systematically abstracts from the true origin of value, which lies in the quantity of human labor expended in the process of making things that satisfy human needs and wants. The abstraction is no mere illusion. It has all the reality of the cold, hard cash we pay for goods and services. Yet already it can be seen that the rules that govern commodities, the logic to which objects in general succumb in acquiring the status of buyable and saleable things, is one that masks the source of their value. This masking results in what Lukács calls »reification« and what Marx calls a »fetish«: the mistake of taking constructed social relations for naturalistic, unmediated relations among things. »What is mysterious about the commodity form is therefore simply that the social characteristics of men's own labor are reflected back to them as objective characteristics inherent in the products of their labor, as quasi-physical properties of these things.«⁵⁸ That gold is worth more than gravel is not a fact about gold and gravel *per se*, although it can certainly seem to be (gold looks to be *naturally* valuable). It is a fact about how society has seen fit to allocate the social product and to deploy the labor that goes into producing it. Further, because capitalist social relations exclude the possibility of a system-internal mechanism that would allow social actors to inherit this social product *as* social (i.e. as communally and democratically managed wealth), the object-world stands before the subject as a congeries of individual, mutually exterior things, discretely packaged and priced. Given that humans' *humanity*—their unique and defining endowment of being able to do purposive, conceptually guided work⁵⁹—is bought and sold on the market along with peaches and mortgage backed securities, it is only fitting that in capitalist society social actors, whose waking lives are squandered in fashioning a realm of finished commodity objects from which they are spiritually alienated and legally estranged, would come to stand toward one another as those objects do, as atomized and abstractly interchangeable singletons.

In fact, it is characteristic of capitalist social relations that the atomic individual represents the horizon of agency as such: as far as action goes, and as far as its coordinate concepts of responsibility, obligation, intention, accountability, etc. are concerned, the solitary agent is the sole unit of account in bourgeois ideology. There are musical consequences of bourgeois society's atomic conception of individuality and individual agency. As the Hungarian Marxist musicologist János Maróthy points out in his magisterial 1974 tome, *Music and the Bourgeois*;

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.4 »The Fetish-Like Character of the Commodity and its Secret«.

⁵⁹ »But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is that the architect builds the cell in his mind before he constructs it in wax. At the end of every labor process, a result emerges which had already been conceived by the worker at the beginning, hence [one that] already existed notionally. Man not only effects a change of form in the materials of nature; while doing this he realizes his own purpose in the natural realm. It is a purpose he is conscious of, it determines the mode of his activity as a law, and he must subordinate his will to this purpose.« *Ibid.*, 7. »Labor Process and Valorization Process.«

Music and the Proletarian,⁶⁰ there are musical forms that are proper to this conception of agency, namely, rounded and closed »song-forms« that articulate a single musician's poetic intervention. »In bourgeois music,« he writes, »song is not merely one of many forms; it is *the basic, typical category*.«⁶¹ It »embodies the attitude of the individualized commodity producer,« specifically through formal principles of symmetry and recapitulation.⁶²

»[The] formal principles [of symmetry and recapitulation] do not merely coincide chronologically with the emergence of the commodity producer's consciousness, as early as the period of Hellenism and Roman Empire and in particular from the Renaissance onward, but they also has a causal connection with it. The same 'egocentric' view of the world which led, for instance, to the 'picture-frame stage' and to monocentric perspective in painting and which, among the common musical categories, has given pre-eminence to song, is also responsible for the world concept in music in which musical expression became monocentric.«⁶³

Maróthy's text can be interpreted as developing and defending the thesis that the norms that comprise the bourgeois conception of agency and the constitutive norms of musical »song forms« are in a significant sense *the same norms*, though applied to different material substrata. These song forms, with their constitutional *identity* to bourgeois subjectivity, stand in contradistinction to, and emerge as a determinate negation of, »collective-variative« musical forms, such as Baroque ritornello form. According to Maróthy, collective-variative genres are distinguished by the fact that they are in principle, if not indeed *de facto*, open to improvisatory group participation and are governed by norms appropriate to a (potentially counterhegemonic, under capitalism) collective vision of agency. In Maróthy's narrative, as capitalist social relations come to dominate all social interactions, and the attendant conception of agency recedes into the tacit background of social life, rounded song-like forms become the neutral, default forms of musicking, their ubiquity and naturalized appearance serving to obscure the essential historicity of their normative structure. The *sonata-allegro* that comes to dominate church and courtly musical practice during the ascendant phase of bourgeois development, Maróthy argues, represents just this kind of reified music-normative precipitate of a newly authoritative conception of agency. The overtly communal, participatory, variative, and resolutely metrical Baroque forms⁶⁴ that persisted anachronistically in this period take on

⁶⁰ János MARÓTHY, *Music and the Bourgeois, Music and the Proletarian* (Akadémiai Kiado, 1974).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 17.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁶⁴ Much of Maróthy's text is given over to defending and qualifying this characterization, which, it goes without saying, is a contestable one.

the obsolescent or archaic character that they do precisely because their formal intelligibility is tied to a conception of agency that was being rapidly superseded.

Supersession and obsolescence, however, do not represent the ultimate fate of collective-variative musicking in Maróthy's story. Within the bourgeois social system whose quintessential musicking is, non-accidentally, predominantly song-like, contradictions emerge. The victims of the regnant mode of production—workers, the enslaved, and the colonized—become emboldened and empowered to develop and uphold an alternative conception of agency. In Maróthy's view, a worker's conception of her agency is paradigmatically cooperative and collective. Norms of solidarity come to negate bourgeois norms of self-sufficiency, for, as Marx noticed, »when the laborer-co-operates systematically with others, he strips off the fetters of his individuality and, develops the capabilities of his species.«⁶⁵ Maróthy understands the emergence of vernacular, urban musics in the interwar period (early jazz, labor hymns, folk revivals) to manifest and formally embody a renewed authority of the collective. In a dialectical twist, the materials for the construction of a new art were made available by bourgeois-empirical music research:

»The renewed Dionysian attempts were favored by the fact that the first great discoveries of ethnomusicology coincided with them. [...] These discoveries in the creative arts acted with explosive force. A world of phenomena 'on this side of song' lay open to those composers who wished at all costs to get away from the world of major-minor – if only because they instinctively felt the inadequacy of that form of expression. Now, [...] instead of song form they could avail themselves of mono-motivic variative structures; instead of standard major-minor, an infinite variety of tonal systems; instead of *bel canto*, a diversity of timbres; instead of common time, a whole range of rhythmic and metric formulae; instead of iambic *parlando* bourgeois song-likeness, a character best described as 'super-guisto'; instead of glee-club or *Liedertafel* harmony schemes, a wealth of variative polyphony, with ostinato technique, figurative counter-voices, accented dissonances, a multiplicity of harmonic possibilities arising from the unconventional tonal and polyphonic systems [...]; instead of differentiated special genres of art, a syncretic co-existence of the various branches of art; and finally, instead of the specialised 'expert' enjoyment of concert life, the emergence of music as a matter of life and death.«⁶⁶

Maróthy helps us to discern some of the stakes of musicking that create a need for a »warm-stream« of Marxist musicology. If conceptions of agency and musical norms stand in the sort of dialectical relationship we described above, and if, as classical Marxists such as Gramsci have argued, the struggle for social-

⁶⁵ K. MARX, *Capital*, Vol. 1, 4th Edition (1890), 13. Co-Operation. Quoted in Raya DUNAYEVSKAYA, *Marxism and Freedom: From 1776 until Today* (Humanity Books, 2000), 110.

⁶⁶ J. MARÓTHY, *Music and the Bourgeois, Music and the Proletarian*, 554.

ism must centrally involve the building of a counterhegemony, an alternative normative view of society that contests the prevailing bourgeois categories for interpreting and managing a lifeworld, then Maróthy is right: for the oppressed classes, musical norms emerge as a matter of life and death.

3.0 The foregoing does not attempt to establish the truth of Maróthy's substantive claims about the history of musical style—*Music and the Bourgeois; Music and the Proletariat* spends some 600 pages doing this, with mixed success. Our concern at present is instead with his implementation of a methodology in which certain *kinds* of claims—in short, claims concerning relationships between musical practices and conceptions of agency—are assigned theoretical priority. We find it instructive to read Maróthy as a champion of this methodology, an interpretive move we explain at length elsewhere.⁶⁷

As some readers will doubtless have noticed, our methodological outline appears to cavalierly ignore the sustained critiques of historical materialism that emerged in the period of the New Left and in the period of heightened responsiveness to identitarian concerns that characterized the so-called »New Musicology« of the immediate post-Cold War period. Many of these critiques were leveled against a somewhat nebulous theoretical transgression called »reductionism.« In its hard-line form, post-Marxist anti-reductionism condemns any cognitive ascent from the particular to the general, any assimilation of difference to sameness. Since this effectively prohibits conceptualization (the parcelling of particulars into similarity classes) and thus explanation (the conceptual identification of causal or nomological connections rooted in generic attributes), we find this view to be self-subverting. Can it *explain* why reductionism is bad? However there is also a saner form of anti-reductionism that decries not reduction in and of itself, but instead what it alleges is Marxism's congenital tendency to reduce the complex valuative life of society to the brute determinations of grand, impersonal economic motions. To adopt a Marxist standpoint is to permit a modernist master narrative to suppress the supple entanglements into which music enters with an individual's »human relations to the world—seeing, hearing, smell, taste, feeling, thought, perception, experience, wishing, activity, loving—in short, all the organs of individuality.«⁶⁸ Marx's economism, one may think, is innately indifferent or even hostile to what Marx calls the »wealth of subjective human sensitivity – a musical ear, an eye for the beauty of form, in short, senses capable of human gratification.«⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Bryan PARKHURST – Stephan HAMMEL, »The Broken Authority of Song: János Maróthy's Historical-Materialist Music Theory,« unpublished paper.

⁶⁸ Karl MARX, *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, trans. Martin Milligan (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1959), Third Manuscript, »Private Property and Labor,« <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/epm/index.htm>.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

At this point, however, it should be abundantly clear that we have no such reductionism in mind. Indeed, we are persuaded that faithfulness to historical materialism demands that we understand the fact relevant to a Marxist musical aesthetics to be at once normative—bound up inextricably with valuative discriminations, indeed with ethics, in the all-encompassing sense of settling how and why to live—and socially constituted. It is in the context of this conviction that we conceive of a form of Marxist music criticism that has both a scientific character and a political character, a cold stream and a warm stream.

Sažetak

Teoretizirajući o »pravoj marksističkoj« estetici glazbe

Uzimajući u obzir da je proučavanje glazbe proizvelo malo marksističke znanosti ne bi se očekivalo ništa u tom duhu na području teorije glazbe, smatrajući da ova poddisciplina funkcionira do neke mjere kao vremenska kapsula u kojoj su se – iz perspektive marksizma – reakcionarne i restitucijske ideologije (pozitivizam, formalizam, esteticizam, eurocentrizam, kulturna nostalgija) te šovinistička pedagoška mandatna područja (očuvanje i nadzor zapadnog kanona) mogli dugo zadržavati nakon isteka njihova roka. Međutim, unatoč tom nepovoljnom položaju teorija glazbe je proizvela nešto marksizma koji se poziva više na nasljeđe Karla Marxa nego ono Adolfa Bernharda Marxa, a to je trojstvo marksističkih eseja Henryja Klimpenhouwera »Late Capitalism, Late Marxism, and the Study of Music« (Kasni kapitalizam, kasni marksizam i proučavanje glazbe), »Post-structuralism and Issues of Music Theory« (Poststrukturalizam i pitanja teorije glazbe) i »Commodity Form, Disavowal, and the Practices of Music Theory« (Oblik robe, poricanje i prakse teorije glazbe). Ovaj članak pruža slično nastrojenu kritiku nekih pozicija koje proizlaze iz Klimpenhouwerovih članaka. Ta kritika potom služi kao odskočna daska za pokretanje nekih programatskih sugestija o budućoj marksističkoj znanosti o glazbi. Struktura ovoga članka je jednostavna: autori dobronamjerno parafraziraju neke od Klimpenhouwerovih glavnih argumenata i iznose zamjerke na neke od njegovih zaključaka. Potom se podnosi prijedlog o tome kako muzikološki provesti ono što je Lukács nazvao 'ortodoksnim marksizmom'.