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THE SOCIOLOGY OF MUSIC



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THE SOCIOLOGY OF MUSIC

by

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II

The Approach to Music

1. PRELIMINARIES

Hysterical trading in art

AT THE PRESENT TIME, when a great amount of music is being both composed and heard, a great deal is also being written about music. Eager attempts are being made both by those who are qualified for the task and those who are not, by scientists and men of letters alike, to bring closer to mankind an art which is naturally close anyway; and on all sides people are trying to construct systems which shall bring us to the roots of music. Such attempts are by no means new. The nature of music has been discussed wherever and whenever music has been composed, and discussion, attempting to adapt itself to the needs of the time, swung for many centuries between the extremes of pure musical theory and philosophical and ethical reflection. Only when the invention and continuing improvement of the printing-press made it possible for enormous amounts of music to be published did it happily become necessary for scholars to preserve every composition as a precious cultural heritage.

It was at this time that the broad lines of musical evolution were laid down. It became necessary to study musicians individually, and from this necessity a vast biographical literature has arisen, as a result of which the kind of treatment once reserved for the great and in most cases dead masters is today given even the youngest composers. Thus the pendulum of musical literature has swung from pure theory through the

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philosophico-ethical position to the inquisitive, sensation-mongering writings, thanks to which music has almost become a literary vice. These attempts at the popularization of music—which are for the most part the result of purely commercial considerations—should not however be rejected out of hand, for they do have the effect of increasing the ordinary man's knowledge of music; a fact which should surely be welcome to all those who are in any way connected with the subject.

Yet there is no denying that a great many serious musicians are disturbed by this popularization, and will therefore repudiate attempts to publicize themselves in monographs, biographies, encyclopaedias, magazine articles or on the sleeves of gramophone records. They are not, however, in a position to call a halt to the ever-increasing spread of information which our age seems to demand under the guise of the furtherance of musical knowledge. Not only do we wish to know whether J. S. Bach wrote with a straight or a curved pen; we also demand exact information as to when, where and why Mr. X., the contemporary composer, had the notion of composing his Op. 47 in Iceland instead of in Southern Italy. By all means let this demand be satisfied; but let us hope that we are not led into the activity which the painter Kokoschka describes as 'hysterical trading in art', an activity which causes such confusion—the natural result of hysteria—that both internal and external balance is lost. *External* balance is lost when, for instance, five different biographers inform the reader that only in, say, Palestrina, in Vivaldi, Ravel, Schönberg or Hindemith are the primal elements of music to be found; or when readers are told that it is impossible to appreciate Stravinsky's 'Symphony of Psalms' without a prior knowledge of Heinrich Schütz and his 'St. Matthew Passion'. Furthermore, many biographies of composers are so stuffed with details of their passions and their woes that their subjects become enwrapped in a thick romantic mist which not even the driest musical analysis can penetrate. As a result of all this, the music lover stands bewildered before a closed door, reproaching himself with his own 'unmusicality': and will therefore either reject all musical literature out of hand or will seek aid from facile cataloguings and classifications which will at least enable him to distinguish between 'classical' and 'impressionist' composers.

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The *internal* loss of balance results in utter confusion. People begin to have the feeling, albeit unconsciously, that things are no longer what they were. Changes become apparent in every quarter, and the conclusion is more and more forced upon people that man in modern society is the victim of forces beyond his control, and that he swears by idols of his own construction. The fear daily grows that as a result of the continuing increase in economic production, humane values will lose their dominant place in modern society,¹ and that musicians—composers, listeners, performers and musicologists alike—will begin to lose courage and come to regard their activities as futile.

What then does the musician do? He looks back. Taking the music that already exists and holding fast to the past glories of culture, he begins solidly to reinforce these with all the means at his disposal. He constructs a system which shall be the foundation of his work. He then builds the walls out of aesthetic phraseology and finally tops the whole with a roof of such complex and well-nigh incomprehensible musical jargon, that no drop of the refreshing rain of sense will be able to penetrate this enclosed musical fortress. Thus an ersatz culture is created, a synthetic product which is doomed to a slow death of undernourishment. Thousands of these musical fortresses have been built in recent centuries, and each one contains a small amount of music which will be of interest to both the professional musician and the layman. But only when one possesses a special key can one gain access; and the forging of such a key involves such a tumult of ideas, approaches, systems and methods, that one begins to tremble at the thought of one's own ignorance.

Uncertainty over music

Such a situation begets uncertainty, and I believe that it is in precisely this situation with regard to music that we find ourselves today. And because of our uncertainty, we restrict ourselves to guarding our cultural heritage as jealously as possible. We forbid the historian to analyse carefully the social conditions which influenced the music of the past. We forbid the psychologist to probe in any detail into the processes of artistic creation. We will not permit the educator to refine our musical responses. And only on very rare occasions do we allow

¹ Cf. E. Fromm: *The Sane Society*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1956.

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the sociologist to penetrate into the musical fortress: yet it is precisely he who will be most able to illuminate the interaction between individual and individual, the individual and the group, the individual and the institution, between art and communication. And while we allow this uncertain situation to stagnate (we have indeed already allowed it to stagnate) a vast stream of music passes the potential listener by. The stream flows unguided and anyone who uses outmoded methods in an attempt to impose some kind of order upon it, is simply swept aside. Occasionally of course, a few individual voices attempt to put forward a critical view of the situation, but such voices are quickly hushed: not because they have not been heard, but because they have dared to criticize. Only a writer who, by whatever means—musical history, theory, the aesthetics of music, the psychology or the sociology of music—can establish justifications for the status quo is able to find an audience: and special homage will be paid him if he is in a position to defend the indiscriminate worship of music as a source of disinterested pleasure or as a consumer article. But this kind of thing cannot lead either directly or indirectly to the creative impulse in either composer or listener (i.e. reader). And from time immemorial the defence of the status quo and the worship of false gods have been signs of degeneracy.

The sociologist who enters the fray simply as an apologist can only add to the confusion. He should therefore permit himself to speak of music only if he has the courage to be a critic of society at the same time. Thus will he guard against becoming a useless specialist in a single field of human activity. In the course of his activities he will inevitably have to utter some hard words: but these will only disturb those who feel their monopolized positions as scholars or writers on music to be in danger. But for all those who have no desire to fall victim to the ever-increasing epidemic of music, and who have realized that every art-form, that of music not excluded, offers a means of developing personality and of stimulating unity among men, even the most severely critical utterances in this field can only mean what in fact they are: courageous social criticism in the interests of both society and art.

At this point it may justifiably be asked if there is any real need to create such a fuss about an art-form. Is music so funda-

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mental a feature of man's life that old ideas must be rejected and new ones adopted simply in order to sustain it? Are not both music and its necessary accompaniment, musical literature, rather overrated? In my view, one may answer these questions however one likes without doing the slightest harm to music or to its influence. Ever since western culture began—and it is only with western culture that we are dealing—people have attempted to explain the meaning and function of art for the benefit of mankind, and will doubtless continue to do so. K. Kusenber¹ setting out from the monumental works of André Malraux,² tries to indicate to his readers some means of coming to terms with pictures, and in the course of his discussion of individual paintings declares his hostility to the 'inflated style of so many art books' which 'brings both art criticism and art—especially contemporary art—into discredit'; and here he is recognizing that very factor concerning painting which is equally relevant to music, but which few have dared mention until now: namely that just as there are too many pictures, so there is equally too much music for us to be able to do justice to the value and meaning of every individual piece. To this we may add the fact that music has long been widely disseminated and that it has become almost anonymous as a result of the technical innovations of our time. We come here, of course, to technology, at the feet of which every real or imagined decline in culture is laid. This, the cheapest of all arguments, has already been sufficiently refuted by Karl Jaspers, with whose remarks on the subject we agree without proviso: 'Technology is only a means, in itself it is neither good nor evil. Everything depends upon what man makes of it, for what purpose it serves him, under what conditions he places it.'³ We should not therefore unthinkingly condemn such technical inventions as radio, gramophone, television, etc.: rather should we realize without prejudice that in these and in other developments will the qualitative as well as the quantitative future of music lie.

When we remark that the present superfluity of music goes

¹ K. Kusenber: *Mit Bildern leben*, Piper, Munich, 1956.

² A. Malraux: 'The Imaginary Museum', in *The Voices of Silence*, Secker & Warburg, London, 1954.

³ K. Jaspers: *Origin and Goal of History*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1953, p. 125.

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hand in hand with music's widespread anonymity, we are recognizing the fact that the control once effected by supply and demand is now lost. It may be asked if this now impossible control can be replaced by another or if it wouldn't be better simply to let things take their course until the situation explodes. If, however, we adopt so fatalistic an attitude (and it is already far too widespread), then we shall become the slaves of technology in good earnest. There is nothing to be gained simply by bewailing our condition and attributing blame where we deem blame to be due; nor are outmoded musicological methods of any help in diagnosing and healing the present sickness of music. Only new modes of thought, e.g. psychology and sociology, to name the two which are closest to us, can be of aid: modes of thought whose methods have only recently been laid down, and whose use in the field of music should neither be exaggerated as being something of great merit in itself nor rejected out of hand.

On the question 'What is music?'

If at this point we glance at some of the countless definitions of the word 'music', we shall encounter such widely differing points of view that we may at first deem the whole subject plagued by confusion. This, however, is not the case. These different viewpoints are simply the outcome of new perceptions which result in a theory becoming more closely defined and thus limited or developed, at various intervals. Whether or not this kind of clarification, the result of contemporary ways of thinking, is satisfactory is not the present point at issue. Our summary of some of these ideas is simply meant to show how justifiably it is demanded that the question 'what is music' be placed at the beginning of a work on this subject; and to show also how unwarranted it is for an author simply to select from the mass of his ideas only those which are congenial to his own method of approach. This so arbitrary, and unfortunately so frequent practice weakens the author's thesis by supporting itself upon ideas which are a product of their time and which must therefore of necessity make way for new ones when they have outlived their usefulness.

Definitions of music will, of course, vary according to the bias of their propounders, be they theoreticians, practising

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musicians, philosophers, theologians, poets, doctors, psychologists, psychoanalysts or historians. Thus for Aristotle, music is a direct imitation of moral feelings, for St. Augustine the art of perfected movement. Music is the art of pleasing modulations, says Censorius; for John Cotton in the seventeenth century, it was the fitting movement of voices. The philosopher Leibniz discovers hidden arithmetical progressions in music, while the composer Rameau sees it quite simply as the science of sounds, a view confirmed in the nineteenth century by the great Combarieu, when he describes music as the art of thinking in sound. For Debussy, music is a totality of dissolved powers. While Richard Strauss sees music as a translation into sound of impressions and emotions, Stravinsky maintains that it is incapable of expressing anything at all. Moving away from the philosophers and musicians, we come to Freud, who tells us that listening to music is an undifferentiated projection of an anal significance: so that some of our most sublime experiences rest on what might be described as the basest manifestation of the human character. The depth psychologist Anton Ehrenzweig contents himself with the statement that 'music has become a symbolic language of the unconscious mind whose symbolism we shall never be able to fathom'.¹ The view of music as symbolism has come strongly to the fore in our day, and the following passage may be cited as being especially typical of many American thinkers: 'Music is a symbolic, immediate and untranslatable presentation to our comprehension and response. Its power resides in its unique ability to dispense with portrayal, depiction and exegesis, to strike directly to the mind and the heart by symbolic articulation.'²

This list could be continued for many pages, and would reveal a rich selection of ideas: music as symbolism, irrationalism, as play, as science or mathematics, as a norm, as institutionalized activity, as expression, as liturgy, as a healer of the soul, as representation, etc. However pleasing we may find the fact that music can mean so many things to so many people, that it can change its aspect like a chameleon, the answer to our question 'what is music' must inevitably be unsatisfying—

¹ A. Ehrenzweig: *The Psycho-Analysis of Artistic Vision and Hearing*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1953, p. 164.

² H. Weinstock: *Music as an Art*, Harcourt Brace, New York, 1953, p. 14.

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and should, perhaps, remain so, that the freedom of music may be preserved. But this is of little use to anyone who has set himself the task of showing a means of approach to the work of art (in the broadest sense). In face of the divergence of views on music as such, however, the definitive question will have to be laid aside in favour of something more manageable: namely the question, 'How does one approach music?'

This question automatically broadens the concept of 'music', makes of it, so to speak, a living entity, and places it, even though it is as yet undefined, at the centre of countless problems of which it is both the source and the goal. To put such a question involves a certain scepticism vis-à-vis present-day musical life (though we shall refrain from using the all-too-popular, fear-instilling word 'crisis'); and in such an age as our own, when the music-explaining market is flourishing, the question may seem old-fashioned, even suspicious. This would be an incorrect impression. We have altered the question to its present form in order to clear the way for the treatment of problems which, when seen in their widest context, cannot properly be solved either by pure musical analysis or by the unsystematic treatment of individual aspects of musical life. J. Handschin remarks that every type of music corresponds to a specific human type, which it reflects, and to which it addresses itself;¹ and K. Blum that, so far as the musician is concerned, the performing of music presupposes a certain technical, intellectual and psychological versatility in the performer.² From these two concise remarks, we realize that we have to do with aspects of feeling whose relation to and dependence on non-emotional factors represent visible, not to say tangible aspects which can perhaps be much better handled by careful scientific analysis than by the futile practice of establishing definitions. Thus when we ask: 'How does one approach music?', we are really putting a very human question—namely, how do different groups and societies satisfy the musical needs of their members?

Demonstrable facts and social changes

This is the question which we shall chiefly be considering. But

¹ J. Handschin: *Musikgeschichte*, Raeber, Lucerne, 1948, p. 386.

² K. Blum: 'Plus und Minus', in *Cahiers d'Études de Radio-Télévision*, P.U.F., Paris, 1955, Nr. 3-4, p. 431.

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our attempt to consider the problem sociologically can only be successful if we limit ourselves exclusively to demonstrable facts: that is, if we cherish the highest respect for demonstrable realities and the strongest scepticism regarding convictions only held because they have been sanctioned by society. Every sociologist, of course, dreams of being the possessor of some sort of abstract framework which will enable him to study the system of social forces in an objective and disinterested manner. But this has not always been possible, and many sociological contributions to our present subject have tended to be superficial, unmethodical and unconsidered. A certain scepticism has therefore been shown by those who have recognized that sociology would be most useful in the field of music if it would only produce rather more concrete results, and if, above all, it would not confine itself to trying to answer the question, 'What is music?' When sociology does not keep to its own limits, when it attempts to define music as such in its own way instead of analysing its effects, then such remarks as H. H. Stuckenschmidt's are perfectly justified: 'In looking at the balance of thirty-five years of sociological consideration of music, we find but one thing on the credit side: the recognition that music has no purpose beyond its own beautiful and useless existence.'¹

Let us rather be encouraged than discouraged by this remark. For it shows, along with many others that could be cited, that there is need to relate the universal deep social changes in the world to the realm of music. No one can fail to realize that such events as the invention of penicillin, the popularization of psychological principles, the spread of anthropological knowledge, the development of the atomic and hydrogen bombs, together with all the related moral and political problems, the undermining of the old liberal-bourgeois ideals, and last but not least the spread of positivist philosophy with its contempt for ethics, have all contributed to the shaking of traditional convictions and moral ideas. Such enormous changes make themselves felt in every field, no matter how tenuous the connection may appear to be, and bring about turning-points, moments of decision, etc., everything, in short, that one usually designates with the word 'crisis'. When we consider the history of sociology, we realize that 'the most notable progress in the consideration

¹ H. H. Stuckenschmidt in *Melos*, Melosverlag, Mainz, September, 1955, p. 245.

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of social phenomena has been made either in times of crisis or of post crisis'.¹ Neither in its specialized fields nor in its general function can sociology afford to limit itself to data referring only to the problems of one particular region or nation, but must attempt to consider its problems from an international viewpoint. And the purpose of a 'crisis science' ² is not only to increase knowledge, but also to use that knowledge for desirable ends.

Sociology has always held fast to this principle. Whatever the theme discussed, be it 'The sociology of political parties', 'Human relations in industry', 'Mixed marriages' or 'The families of drug addicts', it is always necessary to seize and analyse the critical moment, so that means may be found of preventing the situation from exploding. The critical moment with regard to music (not, be it emphasized, the crisis) lies in the approach to music. Our own approach—the musico-sociological one—may be described only after we have sketched the numerous other modes of approach. And that is what we propose to do now.

2. EVALUATION OF MUSIC

Confusion of methods of approach

We have not sketched the fundamental difference between the questions 'What is music?' and 'How does one approach music?' merely in order to underline a linguistic and logical difference, but rather because of the confusion which reigns when people attempt to answer them—a confusion not only of answers but also, indeed, of the fundamental questions themselves.

If we now consider the question of the approach to music as the one which seems to us at the moment to be the more important, we shall come upon a similar confusion; for in many cases the ostensible answers to this question tend in actual fact to half-answer several questions at the same time. It may be argued that there is nothing wrong in this, and certainly nothing detrimental to the well-being of a cultural expression. Perhaps so. Yet the confusion results in the inability of the ordinary music-lover to make proper use of the mass of studies—or perhaps we

¹ G. Bouthol: *Traité de sociologie*, Paris, 1946, p. 7.

² R. König: *Soziologie Heute*, Regio, Zürich, 1949, p. 21.

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had better say of methods of approach—which are, in the opinion of many, the only means whereby music can be presented as a living thing. Thus one writer will advise the reader to restrict himself to the study of the main lines of musical development, while a second insists on the importance of the lives of individual composers. A third feels that the emotions behind the work are the essential element; and yet others stress the importance of historical facts, of the intellectual situation at the time when the work was written, or of the personal sources of the work.

When all these ingredients have been stirred, how does the mixture look? On the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of Schumann's death, the editor of the *Monthly Musical Record* wrote: 'Schumann's music can only be understood in terms of Schumann the man . . . We need a new interpretation of the facts—preferably by someone who knows how to use the tools of Freudian research.'¹ To this came the reply: 'Where I beg to differ from the editor of the *Record* is in the artistic appraisal of any knowledge thus gained. Good music can be understood only in terms of what happens within it, and the fullest understanding of Schumann the man will not increase our *musical* understanding of a single quaver rest, unless it be a bad one.'² Here is an example of the very confusion of which we have been speaking. As so frequently happens, each author has refused to recognize the validity of the other's approach: for there are two perfectly valid approaches here, which stand, however, on different planes. Thus, attempts to bring the two face to face can only cause mischief.

Only when we are able to distinguish one valid approach from another can we employ a number of them simultaneously. A number of examples may be cited of authors who are quite clear about their intentions and approach: N.-E. Ringbom, for instance, attempts to combine the ideas of the phenomenologists and the hermeneutists in a method of studying music which operates at two levels, i.e. the 'spiritual element' of form and the 'living element' of content are seen as inseparable: Ringbom thus starts out from and remains with the individual work of

¹ London, July, 1956.

² H. Keller: 'Schumann after Freud', in *The Listener*, B.B.C., London, July 26, 1956, p. 141.

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art without also bringing in, say, functional questions.¹ Similarly Suzanne Langer, tackling the question, 'What does art create?' comes to a definition of art which combines manual skill with feeling and expression and according to which art is the creation of forms symbolic of human feeling: here again the author approaches her subject from the point of view of the work of art itself.² When K. H. Wörner, in his extensive work, *Neue Musik in der Entscheidung*, gives an historical survey and shows that music can be, among other things, a means of conjuration, the foundation of cosmology, an incitement to movement and a form of entertainment, then he is approaching his problem simply from the functional viewpoint;³ as is Johan Huizinga when he shows that art was first 'a vital function in the life of the community', then 'an adornment of the life of the privileged', then an 'aesthetic animation of the spirit' and eventually assumed the role of 'public property'.⁴ In such works as the ones cited there is a clear method of approach which can either be accepted or rejected. But it is quite a different matter when Gestalt-theory, historical sociology, depth psychology, symbolism, art, the artist, form and content, the living and the dead are thrown wildly together without any fixed point of departure, simply in order to prove hypotheses whose identities are for the most part prudently concealed. This is especially true of those observers of culture whose chief aim is the evaluation of music.

Evaluation of music as a science

The simplest way of approaching a work of art is that of evaluation. It is the way which lies closest to hand and is at first sight the easiest. Either, we say, a work pleases us or it does not; or we set ourselves up as arbiters, and distinguish accordingly between good, mediocre and bad music. Of this kind of evaluation, that of the 'first impression', listeners must never be deprived; and when we instance it as being among the modes of approach which seem to us of dubious value, then this is not, as we shall see, because it is a bad method in itself.

The task of circumscribing evaluation and worth, and of set-

¹ N.-E. Ringbom: *Über die Deutbarkeit der Tonkunst*, Breitkopf & Härtel, Wiesbaden, 1955.

² *Feeling and Form*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1953.

³ Schott, Mainz, 1954, pp. 303 ff.

⁴ *Homo Ludens*, Rowohlt, Hamburg, 1956, pp. 191-2.

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ting stricter limits for each than 'natural feeling' can do, falls to the experts. From the elementary level of those to whom the 'enjoyment' of a work is enough, we thus reach a second level, that of those who wish to 'understand' a work of art before pronouncing a reasoned judgement upon it. Naturally, one can have no quarrel with those who simply enjoy music. But it is doubtless well worth the trouble to consult the experts, the musicologists, musicians and critics, i.e. those whose studies have led them beyond mere enjoyment to make a contribution to understanding.

When the representatives of this group decide categorically and without much ceremony that such and such a work is good or bad, great or trivial, easy or difficult, they have reached their judgement by the most diverse routes, and, according to the degree of their authority, they will influence whole circles of listeners. These listeners, however, are seldom content merely to be led, but will—especially when they disagree with the expert's verdict—want to know how he recognizes the worth of a piece. To pass judgement, then, is not without its dangers; from which fact originates the phrase: 'Only time will tell whether or not this work has any value'—a phrase which, especially as it concerns contemporary music, has become both famous and infamous. We have to do here, of course, with those persons for whom the value of any particular work stands in direct proportion to the number of people who have valued it over a long period. Almost in the same category belong those commentators who—whether in daily papers, radio talks, popular introductions to music or encyclopaedias—are possessed by the urge to classify. Every musical work must somehow be ranged in some order, brought under some heading, even if this be only the rubric 'good' or 'bad'. The reader, of course, is not obliged to subscribe to such classifications, but if they come from the lips of some eminent author, then they are at least of use to an indiscriminating public, in so far as they enable its members to trouble themselves no further about making an honest emotional response. Thus enjoyment is curbed and becomes only a contributory factor in the search for direct material success.¹

¹ For a more detailed account see my *Introduction à une sociologie de la musique*, P.U.F., Paris, 1955, pp. 1-5.

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A different type of musical evaluation is that which is based upon technical knowledge combined with tactical tendencies. In this case, the critic decides whether or not a particular work has anything to offer, and has at his disposal a much greater number of standards—standards given by society. Without going into too much detail, we may mention that there are a number of standards which underline activist tendencies, e.g. education, concentration, solidarity, brutality, activity, politics, etc. Other standards are of an affective nature, e.g. mourning, melancholy, longing, fear, pleasure, sentimentality, passion, anger, love and hate, enthusiasm, sympathy, tenderness, goodness, exaltation, etc. And finally there are the standards which underline intellectual tendencies, e.g. sociability, precision, clarity, honesty, order, discipline, reason, morality, irony, sublimity and many another. So great a selection of standards is there, in fact, that the critic should no longer be limited to a few poor adjectives like 'good' and 'bad'. From such hereditary or socially given standards as these both the average listener and the professional musician may set out if they are seriously trying to appreciate music. As norms they are thoroughly objective and they make it possible for a work of art to be objectively assessed. But evaluations based upon classification, and those which are pronounced *ex cathedra* and based upon prestige value, are merely a form of self-overestimation on the part of the critic.

It is often asked whether the evaluation of a work of art, be it on qualitative or on tendential grounds, can have any purpose at all. In sociology, the question of the value and purpose of judgement has always played a large part; and sociology, as distinct from, say, social welfare, is always principally concerned to keep its preferences as regards value strictly apart from its scientific theories. Evaluative judgements can and should be regarded solely as social data, as constituent parts of the social system; thus and only thus should they be used as the object of social study. The sociologist of music may never use these data as the tools of research. So that when in the course of this study we examine the structural elements of the musical world, we shall not be doing so in terms of 'good' and 'bad', but according to the degree of functional effectiveness in a specific social context. Although the sociologist of music recognizes that

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the evaluation of a musical work, the perception of intentions which are to a certain degree individual and more or less intangible, must be brought into his studies, he nevertheless treats evaluations simply as human activities and attitudes, without bestowing on them an aura of absolute value.

3. PHILOSOPHY, IDEOLOGY, AESTHETICISM

The philosophical approach

At this point it should be possible to plunge right into a discussion of the principles of the sociology of music. What restrains us at the moment, however, is the fact that the sociology of music is a comparatively young science, which naturally makes use of the findings of other fields of research; to leave these unmentioned would thus be misleading and, indeed, presumptuous.

Let us consider first, then, the philosophical approach—the approach, be it noted, of philosophy in a general sense and of the philosophy of music, but *not* of the philosophy of history. The sociology of music makes use of philosophical evaluations in so far as they concern meaningful and important questions of human life. Now the philosophical approach to the problems of our existence, as to the problems of music, has lost so much ground in the world of today, that there has arisen, particularly in England and America, a strong tendency to consider the existential basis of philosophy as an independent discipline rather than to philosophize. In the age of a Plato, this procedure was unnecessary, for then it was to the philosopher that the role of observer of time and existence fell—a role which today falls to the scientists. It is they who provide us today with reliable knowledge concerning the constitution of nature, the quality of society, the nature of music and the nature of man. Such a development has meant that the philosopher has been reduced to the role of logician and analyst of other men's thought; and his sole task appears to be to work out a grammar of the rules of scientific research. This, however, cannot and should not be the philosopher's role, any more than it is his duty to illuminate us on the constitution of steel or schizophrenia. We rely upon the specialist to assemble information on things in themselves.

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The task of the philosopher, in the approach to music as well as in other fields, is to present to us the most satisfying evaluations of our knowledge, and to show us which kinds of human experience will bring joy, security, freedom or other qualities. Thus the philosopher becomes the critic and assessor of values, concerning himself with such human values as music, and showing where such values conflict, so that we may know which contain the highest degree of truth and thus which are the most desirable.

It may be asked whether philosophical ideas can legitimately be called into play at all in the consideration of music. Here opinions differ; yet the fact that from time immemorial the great thinkers have approached music from a philosophical standpoint should in itself serve to indicate an affirmative reply. It must be emphasized that we are speaking here of a philosophical *approach* to music, and not of philosophically orientated music, after the fashion of the disciples of Schopenhauer; that we are speaking of such contemporary philosophers as G. Brelet¹ or M. Merleau-Ponty,² who attempt to describe our experience directly, as it comes to us. Such an approach, whatever its causes may be, is thus free of psychology, sociology and history. It concerns the single being as he stands alone in time and space, as he composes and as he hears music. And here philosophy must bring its analytical powers into play.³

As soon as we are concerned, however, with the connection between the individual and the social groups, then we must insist that first and foremost psychology and sociology, singly or in combination, be called into play. We must also make it clear that when a sociologist is considering the relationship between material and spiritual elements, between reason and sensibility, between consciousness and nature, then he is practising not sociology but 'sociologism', 'which represents a philosophical attempt to crown the specialized, objective and comparative studies to which the sociologist devotes himself with an elucidatory theory of the human spirit'.⁴ The question whether philo-

¹ *Le temps musical*, P.U.F., Paris, 1949.

² *Phénoménologie de la perception*, Gallimard, Paris, 1945.

³ Cf. my 'Das "Chaos" der neuen Musik', in *Musica*, Bärenreiter, Kassel, 1956, Vol. 1, pp. 30 ff.

⁴ C. Bouglé in preface to E. Durkheim: *Sociologie et philosophie*, P.U.F., Paris, 1951, p. viii.

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sophy may be used as a means of approach to music is not, then, solely a question for the musician. The sociologist, too, has his doubts, doubts which are often expressed in the ideal of a revivification of philosophy through sociology. For the moment we can only avoid this double dilemma (a dilemma which we have only been able to indicate very briefly in this context) by attempting to keep the various fields of knowledge as separate from one another as possible, and by so limiting the philosophical approach to music that we shall recognize and appraise only new insights, new forms of investigation, new ways of seeing mankind and his music in his own world.

The ideological approach

The ideological approach to music seems to me less desirable. The recognition of the weaknesses of, and the rejection of ideologies is nothing new,¹ but the dispute over the advantages and disadvantages of ideological viewpoints still rages, and in order to speak of the subject at all, we must necessarily make remarks which have become commonplaces. So far as we are concerned, there is one main reason for neglecting the ideological approach to works of art. In order that our results may be objective, we must guard against approaches which simply work with 'ideologically conceived and established realities', as O. Brunner puts it. For 'when one operates with these methods, one arrives at exactly the result one had presupposed, because this ostensible reality has been ideologically prepared'.² The procedure described here is very common in the literature of music—to say nothing of the kind of writing which supports itself on transitory political ideologies in order to falsify positive knowledge and facts.

The disputes over various musical techniques—which have become widespread in recent years—may also be considered ideological and therefore worthless methods of approaching music. The French are the leaders in this field, particularly French composers under the guidance of René Leibowitz on the one hand and Pierre Boulez on the other. These writers

¹ See K. Mannheim: *Ideology and Utopia*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1952; and Th. Geiger: *Ideologie und Wahrheit*, Humboldt, Stuttgart, 1953.

² O. Brunner: 'Das Zeitalter der Ideologien: Anfang und Ende', in *Die Neue Rundschau*, Fischer, Frankfurt, 1954, Vol. 65, Nr. 1, pp. 138-9.

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attempt, with the aid of aggressive ideological arguments, to raise technique as such to the level of art. Here, as with all ideological ways of considering art, the ideology is used as an organized system of thought, from which arise specialized verbal stock reactions and slogans which, in a fashion which has long been familiar to us, inundate the life of music in the form of clichés, stereotypes, and musical legend and myth, finally making music itself into an ideology. 'Bestowal of the epithet ideology upon a way of thinking is to reproach it with untruth and untruthfulness and therefore constitutes the most violent attack,'¹ remarks Jaspers; and this is a remark to which we fully subscribe as it concerns methods of approaching music. As far as the formation of human groups is concerned, groups which are held together by accumulated convictions, we cannot ignore the fact that the individual member of the group does at least reach through ideology a feeling of belonging and of support.² How far these 'feelings' are of sociological value is a question we shall have to consider later.

The aesthetic approach

The aesthetic approach is susceptible of almost as many definitions as the word 'art' itself. According to the most authoritative dictionaries, aesthetics is a branch of philosophy which is concerned with the perception of the beautiful; and a leading aesthetician has described his subject as 'the study of the effects which proceed from various causes'.³ From the large number of writings on aesthetics, it can at least be gathered that this discipline investigates the various forms of art and the perceptions which concern them; and the subject is undoubtedly of great value, in that it satisfies a natural need of the spectator, hearer or reader. Here, of course, we are concerned with 'pure' aesthetics, as it is practised now and will doubtless always be practised.

There is, however, a growing tendency either completely to deny aesthetics the right to an independent existence, or at least to represent it as a reprehensible evil, at the feet of which many shortcomings in present-day thinking about art may be

¹ K. Jaspers, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

² See T. Parsons: *The Social System*, Tavistock, London, 1951, pp. 349-51.

³ R. Bayer: *Essais sur la méthode en esthétique*, Flammarion, Paris, 1953, p. 153.

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laid. The most frequently attacked aspect is the bombastic and hazy vocabulary of 'vague aestheticizing',¹ of which it is said that its object is not so much to submit a particular work of art to an aesthetic examination as to take the work merely as an excuse for brilliant aestheticizing. Broadly speaking, I believe this to be a temporary thing which will pass as the desire for positive assertion makes itself more strongly felt; but it cannot be denied that at the moment this phenomenon is all too frequently found in writings on music and that even in serious musical journals it often leads to a kind of esoteric jargon, incomprehensible without the aid of a code. A more serious charge against the aesthetic approach than the incomprehensibility of its style, however, is the accusation that the understanding of art has been endangered by 'aesthetic superstition'.² Karl Jaspers demands that history should 'cease to be an affair of aesthetic culture, and become the earnestness of hearing and response',³ and the most deadly blow of all is struck when Anton Ehrenzweig declares: 'Throughout its not all too glorious history, the science of Aesthetics has endeavoured to formulate laws of beauty . . . and has failed.'⁴ Now I do not intend to write a thesis in defence of aesthetics, but the reasons which have led to this kind of judgement must nevertheless be briefly sketched in order that we may come into direct contact with the principles of the sociology of music.

Let us take as our starting point the following themes prescribed for discussion at the 3rd International Congress of Aesthetics in Venice, under the auspices of the 'Centro di Studi Estetici', in 1956: general aesthetics, psychological aesthetics, sociological aesthetics and anthropological aesthetics—themes which indicate that little is left of 'pure' aesthetics as it was once practised. While the object of 'pure' aesthetics was to investigate the 'meaning' (i.e. the gradual moral reaction) and not the 'success' (i.e. the immediate material reaction) of a work of art, aesthetics today attempts to consider a work of art's

¹ See, for example, B. Snell: 'Ernüchterte Altertumswissenschaft', in *Deutscher Geist zwischen Gestern und Morgen*, ed. J. Moras and H. Päsckke, Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, Stuttgart, 1954, p. 295.

² H. Sedlmayr: *Die Revolution der modernen Kunst*, Rowohlt, Hamburg, 1955, p. 99.

³ K. Jaspers, *op. cit.*, p. 266.

⁴ A. Ehrenzweig, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

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connection with life as well as its purely mental connections. In other words, aesthetics has given up the fruitless search for external rules of beauty and now directs its gaze inward to consider especially the relationship of aesthetics with other fields of research. Thus, for instance, when psychology began to emerge, aesthetics immediately took possession of the new science, under the rubric, 'psychological aesthetics'; and although it insisted then, as now, that aesthetics was justified as a field of research in its own right, it failed to realize that it had become merely a branch of psychology in the process. Since that time, every new development in the psychological field has immediately turned up in the guise of an aesthetic observation. Thus Herbert Read,¹ England's leading aesthetician, presents himself to us not, like R. Müller-Freienfels² or C. Seashore,³ as a psychologist of art, but as a declared aesthetician—even though he is the leader of a school of thought which applies to the analysis of art the methods of depth psychology. Yet others go a step further to apply to art the principles of Gestalt-psychology, describing these, indeed, as the 'basis of aesthetics'.⁴ Finally the whole business becomes so complicated and confused that a dynamic theory of aesthetic feeling can be established, according to which 'aesthetic feelings are the conscious signals of intense articulation processes upholding a successful articulation against the disintegrating pull of inarticulate depth perception'.⁵ It is hardly surprising, then, that many have turned away from muddled aesthetics in favour of pure psychology; for they realize that no attempt is being made either to analyse artistic facts directly or to establish a personal method of aesthetic or of psychological observation. But the alternative methods of many of those who have broken away from so-called 'psychological aesthetics' turn out to be hardly less unsatisfactory; for the study of aesthetic facts has in many cases been replaced by the confused study of a bewildering number of subjects: psychology, psycho-analysis, depth- and Gestalt-psychology, psycho-physiology, etc. And what was true of the mixture of aesthetics and psychology turns out to be true also of the mixture of aesthetics with morphology, technology,

¹ E.g. in *Art Now*, Faber, London, 1933.

² *Psychologie der Musik*, Vieweg, Berlin, 1936.

³ *Psychology of Music*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1938.

⁴ E.g. R. Arnheim: *Art and Visual Perception*, Faber, London, 1956.

⁵ A. Ehrenzweig, *op. cit.*, p. ix.

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anthropology and sociology. The findings of these branches of research must not of course be ignored; but this does not mean that a mélange of these subjects with pure aesthetics will automatically produce a satisfactory means of approaching a work of art 'aesthetically'.

Relationship between aesthetics and sociology

While some writers are trying to combine the methods of aesthetics and psychology, others attempt to approach the work of art via a mixture of aesthetics and sociology—even, in some cases, of aesthetics, sociology and psychology. This approach interests us more than all the others. Historically speaking, it began with the elevation of the Beautiful to the level of a social object. After Herder, Taine attempted to see the history of beauty and the Beautiful itself as being conditioned by the three elements of race, milieu and moment. From this theory arose a socio-aesthetic method of studying art 'which sought the primitive functions, the driving forces of art itself, while mixing all the problems of the ancestry of art with anxious research into the social vocation of the artist'.¹ In France today there is still an important school of thought whose ideas tend in this direction. The members of this school are influenced by the ideas of Ch. Lalo, who speaks expressly of a 'sociological aesthetics',² and who believes that the idea of aesthetic worth can be replaced by a science of evaluation. In my view, such an idea can only cause confusion. Criticism of the work of art itself would be replaced by mere statistics of opinion, aesthetic value would become commercial value. For the aesthetic object as such can only be considered as an aesthetic object, and cannot be transformed into a physical, metaphysical or social object.³

In Germany, both 'sociological aesthetics' and 'scientific aesthetics'⁴ have found a great many disciples—even though they may not specifically give themselves this name—in whose works sociological, morphological and aesthetic approaches are seriously, learnedly, and above all attractively, thrown together. Hans Mersmann, a musicologist who, indeed, has never

¹ R. Bayer, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

² *Notions d'esthétique*, P.U.F., Paris, 1948, pp. 70 ff.

³ For a more detailed discussion, see A. Silbermann: *Introduction à une sociologie de la musique*, P.U.F., Paris, 1955, p. 7.

⁴ T. Munro: *Towards Science in Aesthetics*, Liberal Arts Press, New York, 1956.

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explicitly declared himself a sociologist of music, but who, from his earliest writings onward, has recognized the validity of a sociological approach to the subject, has, with praiseworthy courage, set himself at the centre of this perhaps not yet fully noted confusion. In 1953, Mersmann published a study¹ in which he attempted to bring a certain order into the musico-sociological approach, by distinguishing 'direct' and 'indirect' ways in which sociology could be integrated into the history of the arts. The 'direct' way, for Mersmann, is the 'proposition and development of a sociological theme in the realm of art- or musical history'; while the 'indirect' way does not set out from the actual proposition of a theme, 'but applies sociological standards and methods of investigation to the work of art and to the individual periods of musical history'. It is to this latter, the indirect method, that Mersmann then exclusively devotes himself, and which, to judge from its central position in his study, would seem to constitute the essential factor in the relationship between sociology and music. 'Foundations for the sociological investigation of a work of art' must be laid down, says Mersmann; these foundations, however, 'must be constructed not from the methods of sociology, but always and only from the laws of music itself'. Only later in his study does Mersmann get around to treating of elements which lead beyond the purely musical, and the question 'at what places and in what degree artistic utterance is submitted to direct sociological influence' is considered right at the end.

One can hardly declare oneself more clearly than this; nor could Mersmann have given clearer expression to the view that sociology comes into play only in the role of an 'auxiliary science', a view to which the present writer can hardly be expected to yield assent. Sociology for Mersmann is but the handmaid of musical history; for as early as 1930,² Mersmann showed that he belonged to a school of thought which, like Ch. Lalo and his disciples, sets out to examine the work of art as such sociologically. A great many musico-sociological writings stemming from Germany are examples of this tendency, in

¹ 'Soziologie als Hilfswissenschaft der Musikgeschichte', in *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, Trossingen, 1953, Vol. 10, Nr. 1.

² See H. Mersmann: *Die Tonsprache der neuen Musik*, Melosverlag, Mainz, 1930, pp. 69 ff.

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which the point is to treat the musical work aesthetically, not, however, in the old manner of limiting oneself to the work alone, but—so to say, in the manner of a grandiose new discovery—of bringing the collective into consideration as well. Thus in music as in other fields, the ‘individu socialisé’ (to use Lalo’s phrase) has been discovered, an entity which bore the collective spirit within itself long before the shaping of the work of art, and which uses the collective spirit in order to address itself to the groups which will receive it. This sociological aestheticizing further enables its practitioners to discover that artistic evolution and revolutions are but the synthesis of the isolated and independent attempts of numerous forebears and that not everything was genially created out of nothing.

Can it be that these are wholly new ideas? Are these the results brought about by the much heralded entry of sociology into the realm of aesthetics? Or had not such insights already been fixed by Goethe in his conception of morphology? We may well ask. For such methods as these, no real sociological knowledge is required. Sociology is not needed for the investigation of the nature and origin of the work of art, for it is an error to believe that social science—whether as an auxiliary or primary science in reference to art, religion or economic life—is a science which serves to write obituary notices. Any writer who sets out to investigate the work of art must make the work of art itself and nothing else the fixed object of his studies. And the science which takes this fixed object as its centre can only be the pure study of art (*Kunstwissenschaft*), the study which Mersmann places between the history of culture and the history of ideas (*Geistesgeschichte*). Should the writer further attempt to determine, to describe and to evaluate the nature of the Beautiful, then he is moving in the direction of aesthetics, which is only justified as a science when it marks out its own field by employing its own methods—those of a Hegel, a Bergson, a Haman, a Bayer or a Croce. But aesthetics must limit itself to the handling of a number of particular objects if it is not to lose its integrity and finally its whole purpose by trying to absorb foreign elements—in this case sociology.

We are not therefore concerned to defend the honour of sociology, or to insist on the priority and exclusiveness of this or any

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other science. What we *are* concerned to do is to indicate to aestheticians like Mersmann and his followers that it is in their own best interest not to venture upon an 'esthétique sociologique', which can only cause confusion in their important task of determining the nature of the Beautiful in the products of nature and of art.

4. MUSIC AND HISTORY

Subjectivity of the approaches through musical history

As essential as the genuine aesthetic approach to music is the historical approach, which forms the largest part of what we may broadly term musical research. For a knowledge of the past is obviously necessary for a true understanding of the present: the historical view shows the spot at which we are now standing, to use Jaspers' phrase. From our earliest childhood, we are curious to know about the past, to know what once existed and what its meaning was. Thus our knowledge of the present tends to go hand in hand with our knowledge of the past: a fact which accounts for the extremely subjective approach or point of departure characteristic of historical research. Although this subjectivity has been the occasion of a great deal of reproach, it cannot be avoided. There is still no 'objective' historical work, for any selection from the multitudes of historical events must be subject to personal judgement—a factor the suppression of which would lead to such an inundation of historical facts that any kind of selective view would become impossible.

On the other hand, it is precisely this obligatory subjectivity which produces continual changes in historical research and knowledge, changes which make the historical view of a Ranke, a Spengler or a Toynbee subject to continual reevaluation. In art and musical history the case is the same. In approaching a musical work from a historical viewpoint, a writer must ever be aware of the subjectivity of his approach, and also aware that the total picture and his method of approach may well be altered as a result of new views of history. This is a natural process which is particularly fascinating to the observer of culture when he genuinely attempts openly to observe and not simply

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to defend the status quo, as is unfortunately so often the case in the realm of musical history.

Anecdotes, myths, romances

Throughout the years of its development, the historical approach to music has suffered from three main ailments which have been the concern of many physicians. It is necessary to describe these ailments here, for discussion of them will not only reveal elements which have contributed to the rise of the musico-sociological approach, but will also explain the relationship between musical history and the sociology of music. The first of these ailments is the triumvirate of anecdote, myth and romance, three elements which often overlap. To certain recorders of the history of music—those who are particularly popular as writers of introductions to music for ‘the man in the street’—only the extraordinary is important; and, like journalists, they glean the extraordinary from little stories about great men. Trivial, though often very odd events are given so prominent a place in the foreground as altogether to obscure everything else; so that the reader is finally presented with nothing but dubious facts—facts which, from the standpoint of the present, seem to have been mere extravagances or whims. When they are surrounded by stories about their love-life, their toothache, their gentleness or irascibility, glamourized by stories about their grace, their motor accidents, their opponents or their patrons, with anecdotes concerning their intelligence, their memory, their youth or their age, creative artists become abnormal monsters; and as far as their works are concerned, one has the impression that they must have fallen from the heavens like meteors. Ruthlessly, if also ignorantly, such writers stand the social pyramid on its head, and the whole work of diligent agglomeration (such as we find, for instance, in a little book entitled *The Composer in Love*,¹ in which the amorous entanglements of various composers are documented) becomes, as Oswald Spengler has it, ‘not much more than a sanction—no matter how clever a sanction—for the banal and the contingent’.² Although serious musical scholarship has long since rejected this distorting and often distinctly repulsive anecdotage

¹ Ed. C. Clarke, Roy, New York.

² *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, Beck, Munich, 1923, Vol. 1, p. 187.

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as foolish and pernicious, it still persists, appearing, because of the lack of severe opposition, to be as widespread as ever.

The tendency to mythologize the creative artist and his work, although it operates with other, far more delicate means, leads to much the same result. Everyone connected with music knows the means employed, often through the manipulation of mannered metaphor, whenever it falls to a writer or speaker to awaken interest in a forgotten composer or a buried work. The tendency of any work of art to gain from generation to generation more of the quality of myth—one thinks of the thousands of pictures buried in museums and of the thousands of scores that have grown yellow in archives—moves their resuscitator, not to bring them back into active existence, but to strengthen still further the myth in whose power they lie. Thus they remain wrapped in their own myth like the Indian untouchables, and instead of demythologizing them and giving them a new lease of life, many writers employ a vague mythological vocabulary which is as quick to damn artist and work back to the museum as it was to bring them out. Thus many a researcher complains that he must spend half his time in clearing away the myths which bar our way to the past. To this end, in the field of the visual arts, serve such works as those of André Malraux, of which his *Le Monde Chrétien*, which treats of the art of romanesque Europe, is a brilliant example.¹ Works of this kind are still lacking in the field of music; but the tendency towards demythologization is becoming more noticeable in quarters where it is recognized that our generation demands more from musical history than mere mythological stereotypes.

If we now consider the third group, what we have called 'romancing', we shall find much the same tendencies as we discovered in the case of anecdotage: except that in the case of this mania, the artist does not become an abnormal monster and his works gifts from heaven, but art and artist are set on so high a pedestal, that they are at first inaccessible, but become, as our knowledge of them increases, extremely disappointing. Past and present are romantically identified with one another; nor is any difference made between the commonplaces of the artist's work and genial illumination. Blinded by their own importance, writers on music, radio speakers and writers of pro-

¹ *Pléiade*, Paris, 1956.

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gramme notes go romancing around their subject, losing themselves so far in their own enthusiasm that they are no longer able to observe the work they are dealing with conscientiously as a cultural phenomenon, but must needs surround it with dazzling and excessive beautification. So far as one can see, those who are seriously concerned with the genesis, growth and understanding of an art-form have long since turned their backs upon this evil. Unfortunately those who remain—the poor deceived music-lover, the amateur, the average listener and the so-called indifferent masses—continue to be regaled with these writings, in which the stuff of cinematographic illusion is indeed given a scientific flavour, but which in reality deal only in anecdotes, myths and romantic auras, thus sowing evil for music, the musician and for musical life in general.

Background study

Increasing recognition that such unhealthy methods of approach as these are unreliable and unscientific has naturally not contributed to giving any work of musical history or research which operates with these means a particularly good name. The resulting disappointment led listeners and readers to seek a different musico-historical foothold, and writers on music—these helpers in need—to present musical facts in a different manner without destroying the happy belief in the infallibility of science. They thus began to cultivate background study in music, calling it the study of the *Zeitgeist*, of idiom, habit or fashion; or, following Spengler, they turned to the study of the ‘culture-soul’ and, setting out from the fact that music has an emotional and personal character, they devoted themselves to feelings and instincts—in short, to a ‘psychological’ approach, based on the spiritual-aesthetic content of a work of art. Now there can be no doubt that the study of the background contributes to an enlivening of the individual experience; which is what Spengler seems to be hinting when he remarks that the interpretation of any artist’s work must penetrate to the ‘culture-soul’. It should not, however, be overlooked that the recognition of the spiritual-aesthetic content of a work of art is not enough; that—still according to Spengler—any investigation of art should be a new kind of ‘experience of life’ which will ‘experience the

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culture-soul along with its expression in typical men and situations, in religion and state, style and tendency, thought and custom'.¹ This is a difficult task, and it is hardly surprising if the majority fail at it. Yet fundamentally it is not far removed from the view recommended by Taine, when he set out from the following premisses in his approach to art: 'The end of a work of art is to manifest some essential or salient character, and consequently some important idea, more clearly and completely than is attainable from real objects. Art accomplishes this end by employing a group of connected parts, the relationship of which it systematically modifies.'²

Few will disagree when we ascribe to this kind of background study an important place in the approach to a work of art. Countless biographical studies have justifiably attempted to reveal the background to a composer's life—attempts which leave nothing to be desired in scientific aptitude and which impress us with their cautious, yet logical use of such material.

Only when research into the background became fashionable, and then superficial, when feeling became more important than the recognition of facts, when background study became an analytical a priori method did doubts begin to arise. It degenerated into making concessions to indefinite feelings and instincts, into a method of research which supported itself upon generalizations, simplifications, inexactness and lazy thinking. Let us take one example. The well-known musical scholar C. Sachs published in 1955 a voluminous book entitled *The Commonwealth of Art*,³ which, according to the blurb, presents us with 'a festival of art history' which 'reveals the fundamental unity of the arts'. In this work, the author, equipped with a great deal of learning, considers the broad field of movement in the arts. Following the views of Arnold Toynbee, he develops the thesis that art represents a unity and that the diverse forms of art, in their manifestation throughout the course of history, are contemporaneous. Setting out from this point, the author proceeds to give us a number of details concerning background and Zeitgeist, and, while indicating the dualism which conditions not only nature, but also the fate of style, he comes to

¹ O. Spengler, *op. cit.*, p. 209.

² See *Lectures on Art*, Holt, New York, 1883, Vol. 1, p. 76.

³ Dobson, London, 1955.

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the conclusion—a conclusion well known in the literature of background study—that ‘the arts, created by man as the faithful expression of his will and urge, and reflecting the ways of ages and nations, must also mirror the nonartistic features of the common cultural ground in which they have their roots’.¹ It might seem here that Sachs is indicating the enormous power of social, economic, religious and other factors, i.e. all the ‘non-artistic features’ which make up the whole of an investigation of background. This, however, is not the case. Only a few pages further on, our attention is drawn to the fact that the social, economic and religious factors possess at most only ‘contributory power’.² This is in complete contradiction to an earlier remark, which would seem to have been conditioned by a particular view of life and art: ‘The facts of outer life are spontaneous and often erratic; the evolution of art is much more regular. For art is reflection, not action.’³

These quotations may serve as examples of certain weaknesses in a method of approach which in itself is thoroughly practicable; and the following quotations, from an all too little known article by the leading American sociologist of music, J. H. Mueller,⁴ may help us to see whence the weakness springs. Concentrating solely upon the structure of the baroque concept—though with reference to the example of Sachs, we may say that his remarks are also true of all other structures—Mueller tells us that in musical scholarship this structure is undermined ‘because Society is conceived as essentially a totalitarian unity; that all aspects of society are mere manifestations of a primal spirit, to which source they all converge’. Doubtless with an eye to such works as the one we selected as typical, he continues: ‘This unitarian view leads to a desperate reliance on the trivial parallelisms which speckle the whole visage of musicological history at the present time. No social science in whose province this problem actually falls would ever agree to those crucial metaphysical fabrications of the organismic theory which is the foundation of present musicological reasonings.’⁵ Far from thus reproaching present-day musicology with ‘intellectual

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 319.

² *Ibid.*, p. 343.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 326.

⁴ ‘Baroque—is it Datum, Hypothesis or Tautology?’ in *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. XII, Nr. 4, June, 1954.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 437.

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naïveté', Mueller advocates 'rather the elimination of the survivals which clutter up the current revisionary trends. Music', he exclaims, and here naturally wins our applause, 'is, after all, a form of human behaviour and is therefore legitimately subjected to the canons of contemporary social theory.'¹

Historicism

We now turn to the type of musico-historical approach which is generally designated 'historicism'. Here again we find valuable and valueless aspects, together with a great many conflicting opinions as to the validity of the approach: in fact the attitude of any writer towards historicism is usually quite clear from the very tone in which he defines the term. Following the philosophy of Heidegger, the supporters of historicism believe in its teaching of man's fundamental involvement in history and in its rejection of metaphysics; the opponents of historicism, on the other hand, make use of the concept to underline the way in which they deem historical points of view to be overrated. Since the existence of a historical approach is unquestioned on both sides, what we have to consider is not simply a dispute over metaphysics, but primarily an attack against the immoderate fashion in which historical data are transformed by some writers into dogma.

Some writers, for instance, attack all those theories—often to be found in musico-historical writings—which postulate the existence of a law (or laws) of the evolution of society (or societies), and which insist that this law(s) is borne out in special laws of the succession. Starting out from this theory, its opponents proceed to subject the often opposing doctrines of such thinkers as Hegel, Comte, Marx, Spengler or Toynbee to investigation; and then to reject them as manifestations of historicism when it can be proved that the idea of a law of evolution possesses no trace of logical value.² Even scientific method is attacked in this way—especially those aspects of it which seem to be distinguished by more than usual exactness.

How can we arrive at a total view of world history, ask the opponents of historicism, when its construction depends upon

¹ 'Baroque—is it Datum, Hypothesis or Tautology?' in *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. XII, Nr. 4, June, 1954, p. 437.

² Cf. K. Popper: *Poverty of Historicism*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1956.

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a multitude of data whose selection corresponds solely to the requirements, the personality or even the limitations of the compiler? This is a large question which we must leave to more qualified pens. In the same line of country, however, is the smaller question of the place of historicism in musical history and of the extravagance of certain musico-historical approaches to the work of art. This occurs when certain musical researchers, who are gifted with almost superhuman omniscience, establish the absolute infallibility of the kind of historical approach which is apparently based upon a method deriving from historicism, but which proves, on closer inspection, to be only a consistent ordering of data, made as a result of an irresistible urge to classify.

True, the practice of extracting the work of art from its historical context and of regarding as 'external' or 'irrelevant' all its connections with its own time, except for those contained in the music as music (whatever that may mean), did have the effect of mitigating this kind of approach. Nevertheless, a form of historicism remains, under the influence of which the history of music is seen as consisting solely of a list of names of composers, and the existence of interpreters, concerts and musical manifestations of every kind is completely ignored. The influence of this kind of classifying historicism is also, in another way, a danger to the listener who approaches modern music: for he will be reminded of the historical fact that the public's initial reaction to new works has frequently been hostile. This fact has been so often emphasized, that it has come to be regarded in some quarters as a 'historical necessity'; and thus every possible barrier is set in the way of an honest reaction which might prove contrary to the teachings of history. In actual fact, the hostility to new works has not always been on the side of the public. As the Sorbonne professor, J. Chailley, remarks: 'The misunderstanding has always been much greater, much more weighty and lasting on the side of the professionals, the critics or the various aestheticians. For they relied upon a theoretical and practical training which had established as eternal law a state of affairs which the new work in question had just superseded.'¹

The fact that there exist in the field of musical history such

¹ 'La radio et le développement de l'instinct harmonique chez les auditeurs', in *Cahiers d'Études de Radio-Télévision*, Nr. 3-4, p. 403.

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divergences of opinion as those we have indicated is alone sufficient to show the necessity for a new view of history in general, of musical history and of the musico-historical approach to music. The construction of such a view is, in fact, concerning very many thinkers at the present time.

New views of musical history and the causal theory

The discovery of the inadequacy of the causal theory and the resulting disintegration of the law of causality (according to which, to put it simply, the effect must of necessity follow the cause) caused in almost all branches of science tremendous upheavals whose effect is still strongly felt. Musico-historical research, however, has been so little affected by them, that one could almost believe that the great revolution in thought had not taken place at all. The artist is, now as ever, required to fit into his allotted pigeon-hole—neatly labelled ‘realism’, ‘expressionism’, or whatever—so that he may be placed according to the conception of cause-and-effect. After the arranging has been successfully carried out, the historian may then proceed to prove that there exist ‘conclusive’ laws in art which may, in their consistency, be compared to the ‘conclusive’ laws in nature. Yet these ‘conclusive’ laws have been destroyed; the concept of cause and effect has been replaced—and not only in the physical sciences—by the concept of manifold variables, which are dependent on one another. But instead of allowing the old concept to rest in peace, many writers have either dramatized or ignored the new one, the latter procedure being preferred by the majority of musical historians. Both attitudes are unjustified, and will prove to be completely ineffectual in the face of new knowledge.

When scientists were able to assert that in investigating the movements of planets around the sun, they needed no ‘conclusive’ law of nature which would oblige the stars to follow their ordained course, but that the stellar movements could equally well be calculated by means of mathematical formulae which enable them to calculate the controlling action in past and future, then the whole conception of conclusive laws was recognized as being superfluous. The elements of the causal concept, i.e. coercion and temporal succession, were not destroyed; they simply ceased to play any part in our ways of thinking, and thus

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the whole concept quite naturally dissolved. The questions of the origin of the causal concept, the reasons why people have held to it for so long and of the ways in which it must now be modified are questions which we cannot discuss here, and must be left to specialist literature.¹ For our present purposes, we need only indicate that when we are concerned in the following pages with the interactional relationship of two related factors, and see in each of those factors cause and effect at once, we shall ever be sceptical vis-à-vis those explanations which derive from the causal theory. The practice of certain historians who, 'believing in the recognizable necessity of historical events, apply the scientific causal concept to the whole of history' is described by Karl Jaspers as 'vulgar'.² We would not wish to go to this extreme: for it is our task, not to destroy, but to utilize the accumulated knowledge of musico-historical research without bringing in the causal concept; and thus, while examining both history and music sociologically, to bring musical history back to active life, to make it approachable if not newly comprehensible.

The relationship between musical history and the sociology of music

What, then, is the state of the relationship between musical history and the sociology of music? Without claiming to exhaust the subject, we must attempt to review some of the many answers that have been given to this question.

Sociologists, to put it as briefly as possible, tolerate history and historical research; but they are ever at pains to emphasize that the historian, as a result of his dependence upon the intellectual tendencies of his own time, is rarely in a position to grasp the true meaning of events. To this the historian replies that the sociologist is just as prone to react to events subjectively, and that in reality he represents simply a new form of the philosophy of history; or, again, that he is merely a historian who confines himself to considering the general application of historical facts. It may be remarked that neither the one accusation nor the other prevents the historian from making use of sociological

¹ See, for example, B. W. Hellpach: *Der Sozialorganismus*, Westdeutscher Verlag, Cologne, 1953; H. Kelsen: *Society and Nature*, Kegan Paul, London, 1946; R. M. MacIver: *Social Causation*, Ginn, New York, 1942; P. Sorokin: *Socio-Cultural Causality*, Durham, N.C., 1943, etc.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 180.

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analyses, or the sociologist from making extensive use of historical sources. Fundamentally—leaving aside polemics and the defence of once adopted attitudes—the opposition arises from the differing points of departure of the two methods of approach.

As we have seen, the historian concentrated until quite recently upon the individual event or person in all its historical importance. He was not greatly concerned about the dependence of the event upon its social surroundings, although he was aware of the forms which influenced its origins and development, even if only contingently. The sociologist, on the other hand, was not interested in the individual event or person, or in their various influences and relationships, but set himself the task of discovering, formulating and analysing generalities and correlations. For him, the once-and-for-all character of an event was perhaps symptomatic, but never essential. As R. Mehl puts it: 'History is the study of the individual, sociology the study of the collective.'¹

The historian, however, cannot confine himself solely to individual personalities and events; yet at one time, any historian who transferred his attention to any kind of collective phenomenon was immediately branded a sociologist by diehards, with the result that a certain hostility arose between history and sociology—a hostility which neither discipline really deserved. Collaboration and mutual completion of the other's findings is the course most to be recommended to both 'parties', and thus today, each draws freely upon the findings of the other. The historian makes use of sociology in order that he shall not lose his bearings in a mass of historical detail; instead of trying to formulate 'eternal laws of nature', he turns instead to the generalities and total social formations which have been investigated by sociology; while the sociologist, grateful for exact information concerning historical events, makes use of the historian's conclusions in order not to fall victim to superficial generalizing. Only the philosopher of history and the social philosopher are still at odds, but this is a dispute which, so far as we are concerned, is best left to the contestants.

Our observation of the relationship between history and sociology yields three points of interest to the sociologist of

¹ R. Mehl: 'Le dialogue de l'histoire et de la sociologie', in *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie*, Seuil, Paris, 1947, Vol. III, p. 147.

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music. Firstly: if in the course of his researches he is in need of the findings of musical history, then he should use them without further ado, while bearing in mind, however, the necessity for distinguishing between history and the philosophy of history. Secondly, he must never practise the social history of music, while falsely calling it the sociology of music—a practice which, as we shall see, is by no means rare. And thirdly: when the sociologist, while keeping to the limits described above, has made use of the findings of musical history, he must still remember that in his, as in every other, science the point of departure for the development of theories must always be from proved facts. Should he exaggerate or do violence to these facts—especially where they concern social changes and the development and progress of music—then they will lose their sociological meaning and become philosophical doctrines, no matter how strongly spiced they may be with historical evidence. If he employs the sociology of music together with musical history, e.g. for the purposes of socio-musical planning, the sociologist of music is on the right road. But if he uses them as a means of prophesying the complete dissolution, the slow death or the rapid re-growth of a culture, then he is abandoning the role of sociologist for that of prophet—and, one might add, as often as not degenerating into a mere windbag in the process.

In 1953 a number of distinguished musical scholars met in Bamberg for an international musicological congress; and an observer rightly remarked that the choice of topics for discussion, e.g. 'The relationship between musicology and musical education' or 'What are the limits of musicology?', were in themselves an indication that to regard musicology as consisting primarily of musical history is no longer enough.¹ In 1956, a teacher of music remarked that 'the methods of musicology, musical theory and analysis have more to do than simply to heal that rank overgrowth of feeling which makes Kitsch so attractive'.² Both observers are calling for the same thing: for an infusion of new life into the study of music, for a less limited outlook. Nor is it simply a question of mutual aid between sociology and music, the sociology of music and musical history and

¹ W. Friedländer in *Das Musikleben*, Schott, Mainz, September, 1953, pp. 316 ff.

² S. Borris: 'Kunst und Kitsch in der Musik', in *Musik im Unterricht*, Schott, Mainz, March, 1956, p. 74.

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vice versa; it is a question of the continuance of the elements which possess value and meaning in the study of music. In the general framework of musical study, each branch must develop its own conceptions in relation to the data with which it has to deal; and thus it may at first sight seem that the conceptions of the sociology of music and of traditional musical research must of necessity part company. But in the last analysis they must work together, and their intimate connection will lead to the injection of new life into every field of musical interest and into all methods of approach to music. To the continuing life of music such a collaboration can only bring good.