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MUSICAL WORKS

*An Essay in the Philosophy
of Music*

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The Central Claim

How does musical practice operate and how does the work-concept operate within it? The purpose of this chapter is to identify the philosophical content of the claim that the work-concept began to regulate a practice at a particular point in time. One way to do this is to investigate matters with an eye not just to ontological puzzles, but also to how a practice lives and survives—for indeed it does—without explicit understanding of its ontological structure. This change in emphasis involves stepping in all kinds of new directions, new at least to those who have been predominantly interested in analysis.

The main difference between the new approach and analysis is the explicit use it makes of history. This approach does not obviate the need for ontology, however; ontology is just reconceived to become inextricably tied to history. This does not mean either that ontological claims are justified solely by history or that the claims are incoherent on their own terms. It means a methodological priority is given to making ontological claims compatible with the historical and conceptual complexity of the subject-matter with which they are associated.

The proposed inquiry is designed to resolve or at least to change the terms of certain kinds of conflicts. Recall the conflict between Goodman and Ziff. In assessing the force of Ziff's purported counter-example to Goodman's theory, the question was posed whether ornaments affect either the quality or the identity of Tartini's 'Devil's Trill' Sonata, or both. It was also asked whether avant-garde musical production yields works in all or even some cases. The new strategy is to investigate how far the conception implicit in the production of early music, and then of avant-garde music, matches that implicit in work-production. Of course we have to establish what the production of musical works involves first, but we can and shall do that. But before doing any of this, I need to make explicit the ontological picture to be presupposed in the historical investigation.

The ontological picture comprises claims about concepts and objects that together constitute an account of the normative structure of classical music practice. I shall claim specifically of the concept of a musical work (i) that it is an *open* concept with *original* and *derivative*

employment; (ii) that it is correlated to the *ideals* of a practice; (iii) that it is a *regulative* concept; (iv) that it is *projective*; and (v) that it is an *emergent* concept. I shall treat each in turn; after that I shall discuss the central historical claim.

I

The major methodological transition is a move away from asking what kind of *object* a musical work is, to asking what kind of *concept* the work-concept is. An answer to the latter will eventually yield a new answer to the former. But consider, first, a well-known theory of concepts, usually referred to as the theory of open concepts, despite its also describing closed concepts.

Despite anticipations in Nietzsche, the idea of an open concept—often also referred to as an open-textured concept—was first explicitly used by Friedrich Waismann in his essay on the verifiability of empirical statements. Waismann's account is reminiscent of Wittgenstein's remarks on unbounded concepts and family resemblances, and is well, if not exhaustively, understood in the light of these. Concepts of democracy, justice, and art, as well as of music and musical work, are examples to keep in mind as we proceed with the more general discussion.¹

The theory rests upon three premisses. First, the different roles concepts have within a practice, the different uses to which they are

¹ Cf. Nietzsche: 'As for the other element in punishment, the fluid element, its "meaning" in a very late condition of culture . . . the concept "punishment" possesses in fact not *one* meaning but a whole synthesis of "meanings": the previous history of punishment in general, the history of its employment for the most various purposes, finally crystallizes into a kind of unity that is hard to disentangle, hard to analyze and, as must be emphasized especially, total *undefinable*. (Today it is impossible to say for certain *why* people are really punished: all concepts in which an entire process is semiotically concentrated elude definition; only that which has no history is definable.)' (*Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, tr. and ed. W. Kaufmann (New York, 1968), 'On the Genealogy of Morals', Second Essay, §13, 515–16.) Waismann, 'Verifiability', *Aristotelian Society Proceedings*, supp. vol. 19 (1945), 119–50; Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, tr. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford, 1958), §§ 67 ff. Since the 1940s, the idea of an open concept has been employed widely in aesthetics, ethics, and the philosophies of science and law. See M. Weitz, 'The Role of Theory in Aesthetics', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 15 (1956), 27–35; M. Mandelbaum, 'Family Resemblances and Generalizations concerning the Arts', *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 2 (1965), 219–28; W. B. Gallie, *Philosophy and the Historical Understanding* (London, 1964), ch. 8; T. J. Diffey, 'Essentialism and the Definition of "Art"', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 13 (1973), 103–20; H. L. A. Hart, 'The Ascription of Responsibility and Rights', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 49 (1948–9), 179–94.

[illegible]

I

The major methodological transition is a move away from *agnate* and *concepts*. Third, the meaning of concepts cannot be understood in isolation from the practice in which they function. The kind of *object* a musical work is, to asking what kind of *sed* independently of the practice in which they function, work-concept is. An answer to the latter will eventually acquire their meaning just by functioning in particular answer to the former. But consider, first, a well-known within practices. And since practices are not known or learnt concepts, usually referred to as the theory of open concept, knowledge of conceptual meaning can be no different. The premises are consistent with a particular view of language.

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The theory rests upon three premisses. First, the dict admitting of 'absolutely precise' definitions of the sort traditionally given in the literature is not a necessary condition for the use of concepts within a practice, the different uses to which concepts are put, and the different conditions; secondly, the different uses to which concepts are put, and the different conditions; thirdly, the different conditions; and finally, the different conditions.

[illegible]

'bald', and 'middle-aged' are examples.) Open texture provides for both the logical and empirical 'possibility of vagueness'.⁴

But how, in the light of these descriptions, are we to understand closed concepts? Are they to be understood, *contra* (i) above, in essentialist or realist terms? No. That would commit us to a view of meaning whose rejection gave way to the doctrine of open concepts in the first place. A distinction must be drawn between fixed and closed concepts. Only the former function or find their expression within an essentialist view of language and the world. The doctrine of open *and* closed concepts, by contrast, is designed to sustain a non-essentialist view.⁵

Are closed concepts those expressed within a (Carnapian) formal, or what has been called an ideal or exact, language? No, to the extent that this understanding leads us to deny there are concepts, such as 'quart' and 'freshman', that are closed yet do not belong to what we usually call a formal language. Still, we are moving towards a plausible description. Thus closed concepts function within systems or practices requiring different kinds of formality, exactness, or precision. While mathematical and logical systems are obvious formal languages, measurement and monetary systems, the House of Commons, Cambridge University, and the Royal Family are precise or formal systems of a rather different sort.⁶

Concepts, perhaps going by the same name, can be treated as closed for certain purposes, and as open for others. For funding and insurance purposes, say, as opposed to purposes of criticism and aesthetic experience, certain concepts (often relating to ownership) most effectively function as closed. Whenever a concept is treated as closed, it is given exact and complete definition in the light of a stipulation made at a given time 'for a special purpose'.⁷ This definition stipulates boundary conditions. In closing a concept we decide it is to be used if and only if the relevant objects have certain features. We recognize

⁴ Recall my comments on vagueness in Ch. 1.

⁵ Recall my claim that analysts tend to treat the work-concept as fixed. In this context, Dewey's insight is appropriate, that looking for concepts with hard and rigid boundaries is connected to the philosophical search for certainty, as argued in his *The Quest for Certainty: A Study of the Relation of Knowledge and Action* (New York, 1929), ch. 2.

⁶ The best examples of closed concepts come from the sciences: the concept of anaemia is closed by the condition of a person's having a low blood count. The concept of triangle is closed within the Euclidean system.

⁷ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, § 69.

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the stipulation is dependent upon the use to which we want to put the concept. Thus when we want to change the system and thereby the use of the concept, we change the definition. Though we might continue to use the same name, we use a new concept because we give up the old definition and replace it with a new one.

Open concepts are different. Because they function within a different kind or part of a practice their definition does not require a stipulation of boundary conditions. When we treat a concept as open we treat it as unbounded; its definition need be confined only to known or uncontroversial, canonical, or paradigm examples.⁸ Open concepts are treated so that they can undergo alteration in their definition without losing their identity as new examples come to appear as standard, as the practice within which they function changes. Unlike definitions of closed concepts, those of open concepts are expanded and modified but not replaced. Open definitions, if one may call them that, are not treated then as rigid or fixed, but as 'signposts' facilitating language use. They are mutable and flexible in the light of their particular descriptive and prescriptive functions.⁹

Continuity is crucial to the functioning of open concepts. The continuity weaving through a living and changing practice—say, an artistic or moral practice—often manifests itself in the continuity of function of its open concepts. Such continuity is guaranteed through the expansion or modification of definitions rather than through their replacement. This prompts us to trace the genealogy of the concept or the history of its meaning as it has functioned within the relevant practice as a way to understand both the concept and the associated practice. With closed concepts our consideration has a different

⁸ Ibid., § 68: 'I can give the concept "number" rigid limits, . . . that is, use the word "number" for a rigidly limited concept, but I can also use it so that the extension of the concept is not closed by a frontier. And this is how we do use the word "game". For how is the concept of a game bounded? What still counts as a game and what no longer does? Can you give the boundary? No. You can draw one; for none has so far been drawn. (But that never troubled you before when you used the word "game".)'

⁹ Recall Wittgenstein's idea that a rule cannot be made to cover all possible future applications of a concept, but this does not imply that serviceable rules cannot be given for the present (ibid., § 84). For mention of serviceable definitions, see Margolis: 'Definitions may serve only to fix the properties of what, in accordance with the prevailing current of competing theories, are thought to be normal or central instances. . . . Definitions are practical and alterable instruments servicing developing theories that cover at least certain undeniable specimens.' (Margolis (ed.), *Philosophy Looks at the Arts: Contemporary Readings in Aesthetics*, 3rd edn. (Philadelphia, 1987), 139.) For a comparable, but more general, discussion, see H. Putnam, 'The Meaning of "Meaning"', *Collected Papers*, ii (Cambridge, 1975), 215–71.

emphasis. We assess the practice or system less in historical terms than in terms of its own particular internal, formal, structural, or purposeful coherence—especially when we are confronting issues of justice, medicine, or property.

An open concept sometimes undergoes quite radical shifts in function and meaning, but it does not thereby lose its identity. Its identity is preserved by the continuity that is guaranteed at any point in time if the concept's present use is appropriately connected to its previous uses. These connections, in formal terms, are causal, intentional, and recognitional, but in practical terms, the connections are shown through examples, say, of a past event inspiring the production of a future event, or of a desire to develop, expand, or improve upon something done in the past—the sense of working within a tradition. The presence of continuity or connectedness also allows us to explain how a given object may at one time fall under an open concept, and at another time not do so. Knowledge of connectedness enables one to recognize that a given object once fell under a concept and to know why it no longer does, if indeed it no longer does.¹⁰

We should never be misled by the idea of openness. We might think that calling a concept open implies that 'anything goes', that unless a concept has a fixed or bounded identity, anything in principle could fall under it. This is mistaken. As Ronald Dworkin puts it: 'Discretion, like the hole in a doughnut, does not exist except as an area left open by a surrounding belt of restriction'.¹¹ Conceptual change is restricted in precise and different ways depending upon a concept's particular use.

Suppose you wanted to produce a radical change in the way a given concept was used, and you thought this could be done by producing something incorporating a denial of everything we (others) thought was involved in the employment of this concept. We could only understand the result as a use of *this* concept if we found it to have a significant connection to something which constituted a use of this concept in the past. Otherwise we would simply deny your employment had anything to do with the concept at all. Not anything goes. But this does not mean that nothing goes, or even that only a little goes.

¹⁰ Cf. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §67: 'Why do we call something a "number"? Well, perhaps because it has a—direct—relationship with several things that have hitherto been called number; and this can be said to give it an indirect relationship to other things we call the same name.'

¹¹ 'Is Law a System of Rules?', in Dworkin (ed.), *The Philosophy of Law* (Oxford, 1987), 52.

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If this is a plausible view of concepts, and I think it is, the nature of conceptual continuity and relevant restrictions must be spelled out carefully from case to case. The claim that a concept is open can, therefore, be no more than the beginning of the story, certainly never the end.¹²

II

The theory of open concepts tells us something about both our practical and theoretical employment of paradigm examples. Consider Morris Weitz's claim that, even though there is no single fixed set of defining properties, say, for works of art, there are still paradigm examples of them. These are chosen on the basis of criteria, he argues, such as of recognition and evaluation, determined in turn by prevailing, dominant, and competing aesthetic theories. Weitz is renowned for having claimed that art is an open concept.¹³

Ziff took another step. He claimed that there is neither a single set of defining properties for something to be art, nor are there paradigm or 'clear-cut' examples of art. Looking back into the long history of art, and at the many uses the concept of art has had, at which point would we say that the art being produced was paradigmatic of the tradition? Ziff combined the two claims by arguing that one reason we have for not being able to find an essentialist definition for 'art' is precisely because there are no paradigm examples.¹⁴

Are paradigm examples to be understood, as Ziff intimates, in accordance with an essentialist view of things? Are we to assume that a given example is *essentially* a paradigm example, such that what we take to be paradigmatic of a tradition cannot change as the theories and corresponding criteria of recognition and evaluation change? I do not think so. In contrast, it is possible, though our employment of a concept is multifarious and changing, to find paradigm examples of that concept. They are paradigmatic, not because they are associated

¹² This discussion is compatible with other theories about the 'revisionary' character of practices. I am thinking here especially of Peirce's and Dewey's conceptions of pragmatic and instrumental inquiry and Gadamer's conception of hermeneutical inquiry. Cf., for example, Gadamer's remark: 'Changing the established forms is no less a kind of connection with the tradition than defending the established forms. Tradition exists only in constant alteration.' (Quoted in D. C. Hoy, *The Critical Circle: Literature, History, and Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Berkeley/Los Angeles, 1982), 127.)

¹³ 'The Role of Theory in Aesthetics', 28.

¹⁴ 'The Task of Defining a Work of Art', *Philosophical Review*, 63 (1953), 68–78.

with an unchanging set of essential properties, but because—to turn Weitz's point back into Wittgenstein's—they play, for a given time, a particular role in the practice in which they exist.

Certain examples falling under a given concept are paradigmatic because they are chosen by us according to some purpose we have. Given this purpose, an example is duly accorded paradigmatic status. This is only a general principle, and a vague one at that.¹⁵ By itself it does not tell us why we actually choose the paradigm examples we do. Part of an explanation for that is, however, forthcoming.

Take the concept of a musical work. At a particular point in history, this concept attained a centrality, a certain kind of status in musical practice, and it acquired this status just because of the particular way in which it emerged. This institutionalized centrality is, in my view, the foundation for our acquiring at a given time a standard or model by which we choose certain examples as paradigmatic. That we might continue thereafter to use the same paradigm examples is then explained by the further use we make of one and the same standard. Institutionalized centrality is closely related to what in more familiar terms we identify as a mainstream or a canon. The emergence of a mainstream—housing the paradigmatic—depends upon a practice's being standardized with respect to various aspects of its structure.

The principle of institutionalized centrality contrasts with a principle according to which our choice is determined by what we like best, or by what is produced contemporaneously or nearest to hand. It also contrasts, though it is not incompatible with, psychologically based principles. There are many other such principles. I believe, however, that we have tended, and still tend, to pick as our examples those works produced at the time when the work-concept acquired a centralized position in musical practice. For reasons that shall become clear later on, we tend more often than not to choose works by Beethoven.

All these general suggestions fit concepts and practices of many different sorts. But in any given domain they point to the insufficiency of concluding that our choice of paradigm examples is dictated according to needs and purposes, unless we also show how these needs and purposes are connected to the historical character of the practice.

¹⁵ Cf. Ted Cohen's remarks on the problem of authoritative legitimation in the art institution which forms part of his discussion of the 'institutional theory of art' ('The Possibility of Art: Remarks on a Proposal by Dickie', *Philosophical Review*, 82 (1973), 69–82).

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In classical music practice, for example, one has to look at the actual uses to which the work-concept has been and can be put, to discover the needs and purposes existing within it. Then one discovers how these needs determine our choice of paradigm examples.

Explicating the work-concept historically does not require us, however, to confine our inquiry to paradigm examples. On the contrary; to understand why we choose certain examples as paradigmatic, we must also understand how examples can be non-paradigmatic. Following the historical inquiry, I shall develop a distinction between what I call *original* and *derivative* examples, a distinction that emerges directly out of a certain historical story. This distinction, differing from the traditional one between paradigm and borderline examples, rests upon a relation of conceptual dependency: briefly, a derivative example is conceptually dependent upon an original example, but not vice versa.¹⁶

III

This model of open concepts has theoretical effect upon our understanding not only of concepts but also of the objects that fall under them. One particular way to see this effect requires us to distinguish between identity conditions and ideals. This distinction serves to mediate the move from describing objects *per se*, to describing regulative concepts and the projected existence of objects. To introduce the distinction consider a passage from the *Philosophical Investigations*, which begins with Wittgenstein recalling the emphasis F. P. Ramsey once placed on the idea that logic was a 'normative science'. Wittgenstein took this idea to be closely related to another, that in philosophy 'we often compare the use of words with games and calculi which have fixed rules, but cannot say that someone who is using language must be playing such a game'. But, he continued,

if you say that our languages only approximate to such calculi you are standing on the very brink of misunderstanding. For then it may look as if what we are talking about were an ideal language. As if our logic were, so to speak, a logic

¹⁶ Note that my theory has much in common with the institutional theory of art (cf. Arthur Danto's *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981), and George Dickie's *The Art Circle: A Theory of Art* (New York, 1984)). But there is a difference. I have tried to avoid the tendency, sometimes visible in other institutional theories, to offer a comprehensive account of all the arts. Emphasizing generality and sameness at the expense of historical particularity and difference limits, in my view, the theory's full potential.

for a vacuum.—Whereas logic does not treat of language . . . in the sense in which a natural science treats of a natural phenomenon, the most that can be said is that we construct ideal languages. But the word 'ideal' is liable to mislead, for it sounds as if these languages were better, more perfect, than our everyday language, and as if it took the logician to show people at last what a proper sentence looked like.¹⁷

Wittgenstein was attacking two related ideas: that language is meaningful only if it consists in fixed (logical) rules, and only if it approximates to an ideal language (where an ideal language is understood as consisting of fixed and exact rules). Ideal languages, he argued, can be constructed as languages, but they do not and need not form part of all languages. An ideal language does not, in other words, necessarily form a part of the natural languages we use. The idea that revealing the perfect logical form of language explains the meaning of the words or propositions in that language is therefore mistaken.

I believe ideals can play a role in our 'informal' cultural practices, though what I mean by 'ideal' is somewhat askew to Wittgenstein's meaning. Ideals are what we strive towards within our practices. Following Wittgenstein, however, these ideals can neither be explained independently of the relevant practice nor be articulated in terms of fixed rules. This can best be explained by extending an argument begun in the previous chapter against the search for identity conditions.

Recall Goodman's conditions of accurate notation and perfect compliance. These (like Levinson's conditions) were or can be articulated in terms of identity conditions. ('Something is *X* iff . . . ' or '*X* is a necessary and/or sufficient condition for something to be the kind of thing it is.') Traditionally, these conditions have been conceived to be the sort of things that demand to be *met* or *satisfied*. For something to have the identity it does it must meet certain conditions. The 'must' here is of a Leibnizian logical sort, as is the notion of identity with which we have been dealing.

In the previous chapter, I suggested that the problem with identity conditions resided at the intersection between theoretical and empirical considerations. Only at this intersection did we see confusion over what could count as an identity condition and over what kind of justification could be offered for the positing of one. The problem resided in the incompatibility between the theoretical demands associated with identity conditions and the phenomena to be accounted for.

¹⁷ § 81.

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Recall Goodman's conditions of accurate notation and perfect compliance. These (like Levinson's conditions) were or can be articulated in terms of identity conditions. ('Something is *X* iff . . . ' or '*X* is a necessary and/or sufficient condition for something to be the kind of thing it is.') Traditionally, these conditions have been conceived to be the sort of things that demand to be *met* or *satisfied*. For something to have the identity it does it must meet certain conditions. The 'must' here is of a Leibnizian logical sort, as is the notion of identity with which we have been dealing.

In the previous chapter, I suggested that the problem with identity conditions resided at the intersection between theoretical and empirical considerations. Only at this intersection did we see confusion over what could count as an identity condition and over what kind of justification could be offered for the positing of one. The problem resided in the incompatibility between the theoretical demands associated with identity conditions and the phenomena to be accounted for.

¹⁷ § 81.

Most if not all identity conditions for works and performances are, in my view, mis-translations of ideals that exist within classical music practice. In all translation something is lost. In this case most of the empirical and ideological content is drawn off, leaving what we have seen to be little more than generic formulations. Consider how many types of action could be identified on the basis of that non-extensional compound condition offered earlier for something to be a performance. Something is a move in a tennis game if and only if the player intends it to be such, it is recognized as such, and it accords sufficiently with the rules of the game.

The argument against translation requires us to stop exclusively seeking identity conditions for objects and to describe on the level of concepts the sense in which works require of their performances perfect compliance with scores. Perfect compliance is an ideal we strive towards in the performance practice of classical music. It is an ideal of paramount evaluative and aesthetic importance that performers strive to produce perfect expressions of works. This ideal is an ideal because of certain aesthetic beliefs about what musical works are and what their performances should be like. Its existence is founded upon a complex aesthetic theory underlying the conceptual and institutionalized structure of classical music practice.¹⁸

What we understand today to be perfect compliance has not always been an ideal and might not be in the future. Actually it is quite peculiar and rather unique. It has characterized classical music practice only for the last 200 years. It is also not universal in the world of music. In fact, it is significantly this ideal that serves to distinguish the practice of producing performances of classical musical works from the performance practices associated with other kinds of music. Whereas in classical music performances we strive towards maximal compliance with a fully specifying score, in traditional jazz improvisations, where very different notions of compliance operate, musicians seek the limits of minimal compliance to tunes or themes. In most jazz, extemporization is the norm, and it is just this feature that forecloses the possibility of our speaking comfortably of one and the

¹⁸ Cf. David Carrier's discussion of performance practice in his 'Interpreting Musical Performances', *Monist*, 66 (1983), 202–12. He speaks of the risk-taking involved in producing performances and of the way in which performers try to reduce the distance between the performance and the work itself.

same work (rather than of a tune, theme, or song) simply being instantiated in different performances.¹⁹

To speak of ideals is not to speak in a disguised form of identity conditions. Operating within the confines of a search for identity conditions, we are faced with a seemingly intractable tension between 'chemically pure' theory and the indeterminacies of practice. Operating on a conception of ideals we move towards a new tension. This one turns upon a dichotomy inherent in all cultural practices, that between the ideals supporting a practice and the limitations of human action. This tension is a positive one. It tells us that we cannot stipulate that every performance *be* perfectly compliant with the score, only that it is an *ideal* that each performance *be* such. Recognizing something to be an ideal means that it is rarely if ever perfectly realized, but this does not undermine its existence and force in any way.

If perfect compliance is an ideal of musical practice, it cannot also be a *prerequisite* for performance individuation. To see it as such would be to ask too much of the practice; it would be to over-determine it. In other words, it would be a mistake to specify perfect compliance as an identity condition for a performance of a musical work.²⁰

Focusing on ideals paves the way to an understanding of performance individuation. A similar emphasis contributes also to our understanding of the purpose of a score. Goodman argued that for a score to serve the function of identifying a work in a chain of score-copies and performances, the notation must meet strict requirements. I prefer a description

¹⁹ Wynton Marsalis expresses the point in rather different terms: 'Concert musicians are artisans—Jazz musicians are artists. . . . With Bach or Haydn, you know what you're playing is worth hearing, and the best thing you can do is not mess it up. In jazz, you have to have something worth saying and then know how to say it.' (Quoted in B. Buschel, 'Angry Young Man with a Horn', *Gentleman's Quarterly*, 57 (1987), 195.)

²⁰ Someone might suggest that no identity condition is a translation of an ideal, let alone most or even some of them. The perfect compliance condition might have nothing to do with the ideal of perfect compliance operative in practice; the former is to be understood as a theoretical condition having only to do with issues of identity, etc. If so, my mention of translation is inadequate. Still, I am using the idea of translation only to highlight a difference between two philosophical languages. Perhaps, moreover, identity conditions are no more than theoretical idealizations derived from observation of the relevant phenomena, and any theory articulated in terms of such conditions should be judged on the basis of its explanatory power. This would concur with Aristotle's conception of generalization: generalizations and the theories within which they appear are modified according to the degree to which they explain the phenomena. Were one to take this position, identity conditions might begin to coincide with what I am calling the ideals of a practice. But, again, what I am arguing against here is the theoretical weight accorded to identity conditions as they have been used in the literature, and that weight is stronger than that described in Aristotelian terms above.

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which admits the existence first of an ideal, an ideal that says that the score should be as accurate as possible, and second of a practice, a practice in which the ideal is never quite lived up to, but none the less functions.

If it is an ideal, we cannot conclude that perfect notation is a prerequisite for the functioning of the score, just as we cannot conclude that perfect compliance is a prerequisite for performance production. And just as we can then ask how performance individuation functions without this prerequisite, we can ask how scores manage to serve their function despite the inevitable failure of notational precision. As in the case of performances, an adequate story appeals to a complex, institutional understanding of music.

A final difference between identity conditions and ideals is that the latter, unlike the former, are action-guiding. When we act in accordance with an ideal, we act in a domain of normativity. We are guided by certain beliefs and we develop appropriate skills. All of this comes to be reflected in the institutionally generated expectations that are bound up, for example in the musical world, with our producing and recognizing events as performances of musical works.

In sum, ideals and identity conditions carry different theoretical weight: the latter demand to be met, the former do not. That something functions as an ideal is insufficient evidence to guarantee its functioning as an identity condition. Ideals cannot easily be translated into conditions. To move away from conditions and towards ideals is to move towards a discussion of the conceptual understanding implicit in musical practice, since talking about ideals forces us to look at the historico-conceptual foundations of practice in a way the traditional search for identity conditions for musical objects does not.

Unlike identity conditions, ideals cannot exist in 'a logical vacuum'. On the contrary, having a basis in a logical, coherent, or fully rational theory is not a pre-condition for ideals to exist in a practice. Ideology (in its least derogatory sense) and its expression in practice suffice. Many ideals rest on dubious theoretical foundations, but they still function as ideals. Of course, the better the ideology, the better the ideal—whatever 'better' means.

IV

To see musical activities working alongside the ideals of a practice matches the idea that some concepts are regulative. The notion of a

regulative concept was used with significance by Kant and was brought into the modern discipline of aesthetics notably by Wellek and Warren. These latter theorists suggested that artistic genres function regulatively. They could also have seen regulative concepts to function in particular as well as in general terms. Instead of asking what it means to say that the concept of a work of art is regulative, they could have proposed that each work itself is a regulative concept. When one speaks of works in this way it might however be better to speak of them as norm kinds, or as structures or sets of norms, which in fact Wellek and Warren do.²¹ This view of individual works is not without recent proponents. In Chapter 1, brief references were made to Wolterstorff's, Tormey's, and Walton's normative views. My view is different from all of theirs, however, because it keeps normativity and regulation on a general level. I suspend (without loss) consideration of the former view and speak not of each work, but of the concept of a work, as a regulative concept.

Regulative concepts differ from constitutive ones: the latter constitute the fabric of a practice; they provide the rules of the game. New constitutive rules signal either a new game or a new version of an old game. Regulative concepts guide the practice externally by indicating the point of following the constitutive rules. In moral practices, certain constitutive rules are provided to indicate what one should and should not do. The point of following these rules is founded upon our grasp of concepts such as those of freedom, justice, and responsibility. The latter do not make up the structure of the practice; rather, in their interrelations, they determine what the structure should be like.²²

In their normative function, regulative concepts determine, stabilize, and order the structure of practices. Within classical music practice we compose works, produce performances of works, appreciate,

²¹ See Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, tr. N. Kemp Smith (New York, 1929), Transcendental Dialectic, III, 8, 449; 'The Regulative Employment of the Idea of Pure Reason'; also R. Wellek and A. Warren, *Theory of Literature* (New York/London, 1977), 261, 265, and 150, who write: 'The real poem must be conceived as a structure of norms, realized only partially in the actual experience of its many readers. Every single experience . . . is only an attempt—more or less successful and complete—to grasp this set of norms and standards' (150). They then point to the difference between regulative concepts and individual works: 'Though the genre will appear in the history exemplified in the individual works, it will not be described by all traits of these individual works.' Finally, they point out that 'we must conceive of genre as a "regulative" concept, some underlying pattern, a convention which is real, i.e. effective because it actually moulds the writing of concrete works' (261–2).

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analyse, and evaluate works. To do this successfully we need a particular kind of general understanding. Every time we talk about individual musical works we apply this general understanding to the specific cases. This understanding focuses upon one or more regulative concepts.

The force of regulative concepts is one of guidance through *phronesis* and example, rather than dictation by explicit or formalized rules abstracted from practice. As Polanyi argued,

Maxims are rules, the correct application of which is part of the art which they govern. The true maxims of golfing or of poetry increase our insight into golfing or poetry and may even give valuable guidance to golfers and poets; but these maxims would constantly condemn themselves to absurdity if they tried to replace the golfer's skill or the poet's art. Maxims cannot be understood, still less applied by anyone not already possessing a good practical knowledge of the art.²³

Regulative concepts, like the ideals with which they are connected, function in a practice if participants act in a learned way. All activities are learned activities embedded in domains of normativity.

A regulative concept determines the normative content of subsidiary concepts as it does the content of associated ideals. Dialectically, the subsidiary concepts and ideals determine the normative character of the regulative concept. There is no temporal or logical priority in either determination. Rather, a set of concepts emerge in relation to one another, one or more of which may achieve a position of central regulative force.

The concept of a musical work, for example, emerged in line with the development of numerous other concepts, some of which are subsidiary—performance-of-a-week, score, and composer—some of which are oppositional—improvisation and transcription. It also emerged alongside the rise of ideals of accurate notation and perfect compliance. In this process, the work-concept achieved the most central position.

But what is the content of the work-concept or of any other regulative concept? Though precisely named perhaps, the content of regulative concepts is usually quite elusive. Hence, it is normal to understand the concepts vicariously. They are understood by

²³ *Personal Knowledge* (London, 1962), 31. On the concept of rules and roles and how they are connected to forms of appropriate behaviour, see R. Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York, 1977), ch. 2.

reference to the ideals of a practice, to subsidiary constitutive concepts, and even more concretely to a set of beliefs and values about the status and nature of the objects and activities of a practice.

Correspondingly, when we act in accordance with a regulative concept we act vicariously. We act on our beliefs and values articulated in terms of constitutive rules. When we act we do not always explicitly think of the 'higher' regulative concepts with which these rules are associated. The way practice works is not necessarily identical to how people think it works in their day to day activities. Persons tend to think globally only when encouraged or forced to do so. Furthermore, when we act in accordance with a set of rules, beliefs, and associated ideals, we recognize their interrelations. Like a set of rules for a game, when we know how to act in relation to one belief, rule, or idea, we usually know how to act in relation to the others.

Regulative concepts are delimiting. They indirectly suggest to the participants of a practice that only certain beliefs and values are to be held and only certain kinds of actions are to be undertaken. In this sense, regulative concepts are structuring mechanisms that sanction particular thoughts, actions, and rules as being appropriate. Thus, for example, performing a work involves employing the appropriate regulative concept(s). One shows one's knowledge and understanding of these concepts when one, for example, complies with a score, plays these notes and not others, plays in such a way as to indicate respect for the genre musically and historically conceived.²⁴

Regulative concepts function in a stable manner as they come to be entrenched within a given practice. How is this possible? Following a Kantian line of thought, these concepts function stably because they are treated as if they were givens and not 'merely' as concepts that have artificially emerged and crystallized within a practice. That they are treated as givens does not mean they are so. They become anchored in a practice through a kind of fictional or suppositional permanence. In this way they are seen to provide the ultimate grounding, the externalized and thereby transcendent principle of ordering, the externalized point of reference, for the practice.

²⁴ Foucault describes the situation well when he argues that a given ideal, concept or principle is seen to determine or delimit through its regulative capacity a domain of behaviour, objects, rules, tools, and discursive practices. Through this capacity it sets up the criteria according to which these constitutive parts of the domain are judged to be relevant, central, or marginal. See his *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, tr. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York, 1972), 61.

Handwritten notes:
 The historical approach
 is a method of
 understanding
 the past
 by looking at
 the present
 and the future
 in a new way
 and seeing
 the past
 in a new light
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Certain musical and artistic concepts are postulated as given for the same kind of regulative rather than constitutive reasons that other kinds of concepts, such as those of God and of human freedom, are postulated. The latter are postulated as if they were transcendental or given, to justify our faith in moral judgement and responsibility. They are postulated for the same kinds of reasons Mill famously invoked as according an ultimate sanction to the principle of utility. Similarly, musical concepts are accorded this status to stabilize a given kind of musical practice. Even in artistic practices some things do not (and ought not to) happen. We do not, for example, improvise while performing Beethoven's Violin Concerto in D 'seriously' in a concert hall.²⁵

The stability of our practices requires that their central concepts retain their regulative force. This is achieved, I have just suggested, by agents suspending the belief that concepts artificially emerge, that their identity and stability depend on the demands and theoretical underpinnings of the practices. The concepts are artificial, but not in a derogatory sense. We simply think about them as if they were absolute (often with unfortunate consequences) to avoid the challenge of a threatening opposition or the challenge of relativists. Another way to put the point is to say that from within the practice, regulative concepts are seen to be self-legitimizing. Externally, they and the practice they regulate require a different kind of legitimation. What form does this external legitimation take? The answer is complex, and rests upon the idea that concepts emerge within a long and complicated process. The answer requires that we know many things: how, for example, concepts emerge and acquire their regulative status; how concepts are used during their emergence, at the point when they are fully emerged, and then after that point.

²⁵ Mill, *Utilitarianism, On Liberty and Considerations of Representative Government*, ed. H. B. Acton (London, 1972), 27 ff. The analogy between musical and moral concepts, resting on the shared ability to produce order and regularity in the respective practices, is captured well in the words of Ssu-ma Chien: 'The sacrifices and music, the rites and the laws have a single aim; it is through them that the hearts of the people are united, and it is from them that the method of good government arises' (quoted by Attali, *Noise*, 29). Aristotle also wrote to this point: 'As is the steersman in the ship, . . . the laws of the city, the general in the army, so is God in the Universe; . . . he moves and revolves all things, where and how he will, in different forms and natures; just as the law of a city, fixed and immutable in the minds of those who are under it, orders all the life of a state' (*De Mundo*, ch. 6: 399a, 400b (*The Works of Aristotle* ed. W. D. Ross (Oxford, 1931), iii)).

Finally, any description of regulative concepts is complicated by the fact that such concepts are not necessarily associated with one set of beliefs or values. Over time we may act in accordance with a concept in many different ways as the needs of a practice change. To act in accordance with a concept never requires, though it might contingently end up being the case, that we hold those beliefs and values originally associated with it. It is through continuity of function, however, that we assess the situation to be one in which we are using the same concept over a period of time. This view matches the description of open concepts given above.

V

What now are we to say about the existence of the individual works that fall under the regulative work-concept? In other words, do musical works exist? In its regulative capacity the work-concept suggests to us, because of some quite peculiar aesthetic and musical reasons offered at a particular time, that we should talk of each individual musical work as if it were an object, as if it were a construction that existed over and above its performances and score. In a projectivist view, indicated by the 'as if' clause, works do not exist other than in projected form; what exists is the regulative work-concept. However, insofar as this concept functionally involves projections or hypostatizations—for each work composed we project into it 'object' existence—the resultant objects are accorded projective or fictional existence. A fictional object was succinctly described by Bentham as 'an entity which, though by the grammatical form of the discourse employed in speaking about it, existence be ascribed, yet in truth and reality existence is not meant to be ascribed'.²⁶

The most convincing way to describe the motivation for our projecting the existence specifically of musical works is via a description of the quite peculiar empirical and historical rationale that founds the belief and then the hypostatization that there are musical works. Everything about musical practice of a classical sort suggests that composers produce works and not just performances and scores. All our activities of performance, criticism, and evaluation rest on this supposition. But to what does the supposition amount?

²⁶ J. Bentham, 'Of Fictitious Entities', in C. K. Ogden (ed.), *Bentham's Theory of Fictions* (New York, 1932), 12.

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Given the projectivism thesis, the historical inquiry justifiably commences on the level of concepts and not objects. The inquiry moves away from describing the status of the individual works themselves. Is there a problem here? Consider the following premisses: (i) the practice of classical music functions in line with a complex theory about what the practice is and should be like. (ii) Within that theory, musical works are posited as existents. (iii) Successful positing of works confirms the effective functioning of the regulative concept of a work within this practice. Given (i)–(iii), does it follow that the subsequent historical account of the work-concept reflects a theory about musical practice but not the practice itself?

A positive answer is generated when it is presupposed either that theory and practice are structured and determined independently of one another, or that a practice has a 'real', underlying structure existing independently of a theory of it. But I do not presuppose either statement especially if they presuppose something other than the fact that the distinction between theory and practice is formed as a convenient, intellectual abstraction. While admitting of many shades and degrees, the distinction enables one to examine a single (unnamed) thing from a multitude of different perspectives. Practice, however, ultimately remains theorized, as theory ultimately remains practised. Concepts and projections have as much pragmatic import and expression as they do theoretical. To generate too much of a rift between theory and practice is to ignore the import of premisses (i) and (iii).²⁷

VI

I have suggested many times that the work-concept emerged. What does that suggestion entail? Emergence depends upon the development and crystallization of numerous moments ranging from the introduction of more and less specific theories that found new beliefs, values, concepts, and distinctions; to new rules, laws, and normative principles; to new tools and institutional buildings; to new activities and modes of behaviour.

Emergence is not a process having its source in an original (essential) seed. 'It is one thing to see the interconnectedness of things,' Ernst Gombrich writes, 'another to postulate that all aspects of a culture can

²⁷ I have benefited from R. Geuss's discussion in *The Idea of a Critical Theory: Habermas and the Frankfurt School* (Cambridge, 1981), 55 ff.

continuity & inevitability

be traced back to one key cause of which they are all manifestations.²⁸ Emergence is not a pre-determined process showing the inevitability or predictability of the rise of a given concept. It is rather a contingent, retroactively discovered, bonding and roping process.

A concept emerges out of the roping together or fusion of the moments just described. Only when it has emerged can we retroactively discover its original threads. Emergence is not a process of creation *ex nihilo*, but a slow process occurring through the development of a practice, through the fostering of new theories and much more. A concept's emergence is not, furthermore, an event divorceable from its past or from the history of the practice within which it functions. The idea is to see emergence as part of the history of the practice itself.

Prior to the point at which we would say a concept has emerged, it might be that many if not all the threads of what becomes the content of the concept already exist. As yet however they have not meshed together in the appropriate way to admit the concept's regulative function, if the concept has such a function. This phenomenon helps explain why, when movements transform themselves one into another, the new appears as much continuous as it does discontinuous with the old.

Thus, prior to 1800 there were functioning concepts of composition, performance, and notation in musical practice, just as there were after that time. This is the continuity. The discontinuity lies in the fact that their significance, and the conceptual relations in which these concepts stood to one another, differed across the two time periods. Later we shall have reason to conclude that the work-concept had a regulative

²⁸ In *Search of Cultural History*, 30. My conception of emergence contrasts with the 'Whig Conception of History'. It is more in line with Arendt's conception, since, in her investigation of political concepts, she differentiates her approach from straightforward causal history, as Foucault, with similar intent, distinguishes his approach from a casual history of ideas. We all share the belief that to describe the emergence of concepts is not to describe causal factors, if that would entail describing the underlying necessity of the emergence. 'The elements of totalitarianism form its origins,' Arendt thus writes, 'if by origins we do not understand "causes"'. Causality, i.e., the factor of determination of a process of events in which always one event causes another and can be explained by another is probably an altogether alien and falsifying category in the realm of historical and political sciences. Elements by themselves probably never cause anything. They become origins of events if and when they crystallize into fixed and definite forms. Then, and only then, can we trace their history backwards. The event illuminates its own past, but it can never be deduced from it.' ('The Nature of Totalitarianism' (1954), unpub.; Library of Congress, quoted in E. Young-Bruhl's *Hannah Arendt: For the Love of the World* (New Haven, Conn., 1982), 203.)

continuity & breakdown at 1800

be traced back to one key cause of which they are all manifestations.²⁸ Emergence is not a pre-determined process showing the inevitability or predictability of the rise of a given concept. It is rather a contingent, retroactively discovered, bonding and roping process.

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1800 -> the work-concept for regulative functions

function in the later, but not in the earlier, period, despite the presence of continuity in both theory and practice.

The emergence of a regulative concept covers the period when the concept is in gestation. During this time, if the concept functions at all, it is by intimation and without stable meaning. During this time the content of the concept crystallizes. After this period, the concept explicitly functions in its regulative capacity. Now it functions in an entrenched, stable, and accepted manner. From a practical point of view, it is usually during this time that the concept sinks into opacity; its existence is taken so much for granted that we find it difficult to think of the practice without it. To adapt Hegel's teaching: what increasingly becomes familiar to us increasingly becomes unknown to us just because of our feeling of familiarity.²⁹

From a theoretical point of view, it is only when the concept becomes familiar to us that we can begin critically to comprehend its meaning and function. Not only can we begin to trace the whole range of its possibly changing regulative meanings and functions, but we can also retrospectively trace its unstable meanings during the period of its emergence. Taken together, these tasks match the intention to trace the history of the musical work as an open concept in the different stages of its life.

But how do we identify the initial, unstable, and then the regulative uses of a concept? Dictionaries help. They indicate known first uses, and they tell us by the absence of terms if terms were not used at least in recorded speech at a given time. Still, they are inadequate to tell us whether concepts were present at a given time or how they were functioning, if they were functioning at all. For this we need to look at the theories, beliefs, laws, and activities existing during that time.

The latter sort of inquiry might reveal that participants of a practice could not have been using a given concept regulatively because the relevant conceptual use was overpowered and excluded by the presence of alternative regulative concepts. That is just the sort of information we need, for with it, we can then trace the changes occurring in these

²⁹ Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, tr. A. Miller and J. N. Findlay (Oxford, 1977), 18. 'The familiar, just because it is familiar, is not cognitively understood. . . . Subject and Object, God, Nature. . . . are uncritically taken for granted as familiar, established as valid, and made into fixed points for starting and stopping.' Cf. R. E. Palmer's analogous description of tradition: 'Tradition . . . is something in which we stand and through which we exist. For the most part it is so transparent a medium that it is invisible to us . . . as invisible as water to a fish' (*Hermeneutics* (Evanston, Ill., 1969), 177).

theories and activities to locate an approximate date when the concept began to function regulatively. Finding a 'rough' date is satisfactory because conceptual change, like the change in practices, has no sharply defined beginning or end.

Just as precise dates are not forthcoming in our inquiry, so neither are definitions of a typical philosophical sort. In the literature, it has been argued that our philosophical interest in concepts does not have to focus on matters of philosophical definition, as it so often has done in the tradition. The alternative argument asks us to consider what it means to act knowledgeably, correctly, and appropriately within a given practice. What must be done to bring about something (an event or an object) that is appropriate in given circumstances? What must be done to bring about, say, a performance of a given musical work? Given a Rylean quest for knowledge of this kind, one could claim that to understand the employment of a concept no philosophical definition is required. The knowledge of when and how we use a concept requires something different from the possession of a definition of this sort.

William Kennick once presented this kind of argument when, with his famous warehouse test, he suggested that persons could pick out reasonably successfully those objects they thought were works of art without employing a definition. He claimed, in fact, that were one to have a definition in mind, say 'art is significant form', one would actually find it harder to distinguish artworks from non-artworks. One might immediately want to retort here that if subjects were ever asked to give reasons for choosing these rather than those objects as examples of artworks, they would appeal to a definition. With regard both to classificatory needs and performance practices, some definitional understanding is always presupposed. This counter-claim is telling. However, Kennick's argument had a provision. He was arguing against philosophical definition and not against definitions of other sorts.³⁰

Kennick was not referring to definitions with which we (perhaps unconsciously) operate in everyday activities. He did not deny that in everyday activities our actions are guided by something like a definition, articulated perhaps in terms of paradigm examples, prototypes, or personally selected features. Any of these can be used as a standard to classify examples. 'Working' definitions are indispensable in fact; they help determine appropriate forms of performance and evaluative

³⁰ W. E. Kennick, 'Does Traditional Aesthetics Rest on a Mistake?', *Mind*, 67 (1958), 327.

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behaviour. Much of our appreciation of something turns upon our recognition that it is a good example of its kind. In most cases, one must know what kind of thing one is looking at in order to respond to it appropriately.

Speaking about working definitions accords with the theory of open concepts. (Kennick would have been sympathetic to this.) As with that theory, the description of a 'non-philosophical sort' of definition has more relevance to the kinds of issues of classification and action to which a description of practice gives rise. So what are we to do now with definitions of the 'philosophical' sort? Should we dispense with them? Not altogether. Theories and definitions of a philosophical sort play a major role in the development of practices. How a definition (say 'art is significant form') is transformed into a set of practical and often personal beliefs and values about art is as subtle and complex an issue as how philosophical theory and practice coincide with one another.

The historical inquiry will point to many aspects both of this transformation and of this coincidence. None the less, unlike other philosophical treatises in aesthetics, it will not yield a definition that is claimed to be a 'philosophical' definition of 'musical work'.

VII

We are finally in a position to examine the philosophical content of the central claim, that the work-concept began to regulate musical practice at the end of the eighteenth century. One way to do this is via *prima facie* objections that might be put to the claim. Continuing in philosophical mode, one might, for example, challenge the notion of *workhood* employed to sustain the whole argument.

Recall that I began this essay with a description of musical works which I said was given in pre-critical terms. Works were described as existing as public and permanent artefacts, created by composers, and constituted by structures usually of sounds, dynamics, rhythms, and timbres. And so on. Ignoring this description, someone might suggest (and this has been suggested to me many times) that musical *workhood* covers a spectrum of cases ranging from the most neutral and general to the most contentful and specific, from the ideologically free to the ideologically specific. The description of works I have given falls at the latter end—the specific and the ideological.

One might choose to use the notion of workhood to pick out any musical unit—any string of notes or sounds, even if that meant concluding that the sound of the wind in the trees or a popular song are works as much as Beethoven's concertos are works. Not wishing to go that far, one might seek identity conditions of the sort mentioned in previous chapters. Perhaps a work is any combination of sounds strung together in a deliberate operation of initiation. Where one would now exclude sounds of the wind from the class of works, one would still include popular songs and many other formations. To exclude further undesirable items, one would just increase the number of conditions. One might emphasize the aesthetic function of performing certain combinations of sounds.

Not willing to accept any such conditions, on the grounds that their use detracts from the neutrality of the concept, one could claim that any musical unit, however that is understood, can count as falling under the work-concept. Why not just acknowledge that the work-concept is a category under which bits of music fall, however 'music' is described? This, or so it might be said, is really what is meant by claiming in neutral terms that a musical work is any (musical) combination of (musical) elements.

Though this claim fails to reflect the use of the concept in the history of musical thought and practice, where would it have got us? Only as far as the circular and vacuous knowledge that a musical work is any musical combination of musical sounds (put together by a musician?).³¹ Were one now to return hurriedly back to the set of identity conditions to generate a non-circular definition, one would find oneself hard-pressed to tally its use with a description of a neutral and general concept. For the conditions do not actually have any content until clothed within a real context of use, and that use points to specificity rather than generality. To speak of a compositional condition or that of deliberate operation is to presuppose, unless specified otherwise, a whole understanding of what it means to compose music; *a fortiori*, of what it means to notate and perform music and of what it means to listen to music aesthetically. In fact, when that understanding is made fully explicit, it does not motivate one to conclude that the work-concept is near to being neutral or ideologically free; quite the reverse.

³¹ Cf. Conte's discussion of Tzara's circular definition in 'One Hundred Metronomes', 446.

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The 'pre-critical' description of musical works appears pre-critical only because it is so familiar. It matches how those 'in the classical mainstream' think about works. But critically, the description has its roots in a peculiarly romantic conception of composition, performance, notation, and reception, a conception that was formed alongside the emergence of music as an autonomous fine art.

Now one might worry that I've gone too far, that this description of workhood weds it far too closely to one historical moment. Surely, to say there is no neutral work-concept does not mean the concept must be glued to so particular an historical understanding. Surely the more plausible view is that the work-concept has functioned with varying meanings over time. To see how justified these worries are, let us investigate precisely to what the central claim is committed.

The claim is that given certain changes in the late eighteenth century, persons who thought, spoke about, or produced music were able for the first time to comprehend and treat the activity of producing music as one primarily involving the composition and performance of works. The work-concept at this point found its regulative role. This claim is not committed to the supposition that the work-concept has, since this time, retained its original foundation in the sense that it has come to take on no further meaning. Nor does it imply that composers producing music in centuries prior to the nineteenth were not producing works. Thus, despite the story of its emergence into a regulative concept in the late eighteenth century, the use of the work-concept is not confined to products only of this and later periods.

Consider that, even if circumstances do not allow for conscious or explicit use of a concept, what is produced under these circumstances may still fall under the concept. Maybe Bach produced works, even though he explicitly thought about music in different conceptual terms. That may be so, but it is not so in any straightforward sense. Can a concept have, in fact, a form of existence, namely implicit existence, over and above explicit existence? One can view implicit existence logically. A concept implicitly exists before its explicit emergence if and only if it was logically possible at a given time for it to have emerged explicitly at some other time. Or, focusing on the contrast between conscious and unconscious conceptual use, one may claim that to say a concept functions consciously at one time is to assume that it functions unconsciously at another (either earlier or later). Neither clarification has to entail the realist assumption that the relevant concept always existed (either implicitly or explicitly) even

though we might not always have known it. Such claims can incorporate temporal constraints.

Ignoring the impending logical complexities, I am interested above all in resisting the inclination to say that the work-concept must always have functioned in some manner. The work-concept is not a necessary category within musical production. To make that conclusion harder to draw, I will give the claim about implicit existence a further nuance.

What is in question is whether musicians before 1800 (or at any time), though conditions forbade overt expression, none the less were thinking about musical production in terms of works. There are historical reasons for rejecting this conclusion. There is also a philosophical way to avoid it. Thus, there is an epistemological sense in which implicit function depends upon a concept's having functioned explicitly *first*. Only with its explicit function realized can we in hindsight see the concept as functioning implicitly. Prior to its explicit emergence, there is no evidence to suggest that persons were *really* (whatever that means) thinking about something in conceptual terms distinct from those indicated by their expressed thought and behaviour. Certainly there are persons who led the way forward, but even their prophetic role was recognized as such only after the event.

This epistemological claim presupposes that certain if not all kinds of meaning and truth are dependent upon the existence of particular conceptual schemes. That presupposition allows one to affirm that, given that we have an explicit concept of a work, Bach composed works. If the concept had never acquired its explicit, regulative function within musical practice (or indeed within any other relevant or related practice), we would probably still speak of Bach's music in terms not only more familiar to Bach himself, but also still evident in other existing musical practices not regulated by the work-concept.

The claim can be made more precise. We need to distinguish two potentially distinct claims: first, prior to 1800, the work-concept existed implicitly within musical practice; second, prior to 1800, the work-concept did not regulate practice. They might be different claims but they can usefully function together. First, prior to 1800, musical activity was not structured by the work-concept. What was produced before this time was seen to fall under concepts other than that of a work. If musicians used the term 'work' (or a synonym) at all, their uses did not reflect a regulative interest in the production of works. It is in this sense that I earlier suggested that Bach did not

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think about his activity predominantly or intentionally in terms of works; his activity was otherwise regulated.

Yet, second, Bach did compose works. Given the epistemological dependency between implicit and explicit existence, we can speak of Bach as having produced works in the following way. This way depends upon our importing a conceptual understanding given to us when the work-concept began to regulate practice. Just as a piece of pottery or a pile of bricks can come to be thought of as, or transfigured into, a work of art through the importation of the relevant concepts, so, since about 1800, it has been the rule to speak of early music anachronistically; to retroactively impose upon this music concepts developed at a later point in the history of music. Implicit existence has become here essentially a matter of retroactive attribution.

Now we can make sense of the basic argument lying behind my central claim that prior to 1800 (or thereabouts), musicians did not function under the regulation of the work-concept. To be sure, they functioned with concepts of opera, cantata, sonata, and symphony, but that does not mean they were producing works. It was only later when the production of music began to be conceived along work-based principles that early operas, cantatas, symphonies, and sonatas acquired their status as different kinds of musical work. And this is why we can meaningfully say, nowadays, that Bach composed musical works.

VIII

Much of the information I have provided in this chapter can be used as well to sort out a remaining general issue. But to sort the issue out satisfactorily, I need to introduce a new historical dimension into the argument. That 1800, or thereabouts, should be the point at which the work-concept became regulative might be judged controversial in the light of evidence often brought forward to show the beginnings of this concept's existence in the early sixteenth century. It is often claimed, in other words, that the concept was in use in centuries prior to the nineteenth.

Nearly all theorists (mostly German musicologists) who have looked at the emergence of the work-concept have located two historical moments as worthy of note: c.1527 (sometimes 1537) and 1800. Regarding the earlier date, it has often been claimed that the origin of the work-concept is to be found in Nicolai Listenius's book on music

implicit existence → retroactive attribution

1527
1800

education in Reformation Germany. It is worth quoting Listenius in full.

Music is the science of producing melodious sounds correctly and well. To produce such sounds well is to produce a song subject to some fixed rule and measure properly, through its tones and notes. And it is threefold. *Theoretike* [sic, for *Theoretike*], *Praktike*, *Poietike*.

Theoretical [Music] is that which is concerned solely with the contemplation of natural capacity and the understanding of the subject [*rei cognitione*]. Its goal is to know. Hence the Theoretical Musician who has learned this art, truly content in this alone, presents no example of it by performance.

Practical [Music is that] which does not only lie hidden in the inner sanctum of natural capacity, but issues forth in an *opus* [action, performance, work, labour], though no *opus* remains after the performance. The goal of Practical Music is performance. Hence the Practical Musician [is one] who teaches others something more than an understanding of the art and trains himself in it around the performance of any *opus*.

Poetic [Music is that] which is not content with either an understanding of the subject or with practice [*exercitio*] alone, but rather leaves some *opus* behind after the labour, as when music or a musical song is written by someone, whose goal is a complete and accomplished *opus*. For it consists in making or constructing, that is, in such labour that even after itself, when the artificer is dead, leaves a perfect and absolute *opus* [*opus perfectum et absolutum*].³²

The phrase *opus absolutum et perfectum* has been interpreted to indicate the presence of the work-concept. Theorists have then argued that other developments in the sixteenth century, say, in compositional techniques, in the production of operas, and in the publication of music, further demonstrate the concept's presence. To my mind, the argument does not stand up to critical scrutiny. The appeal to Listenius is difficult to sustain.

Listenius was neither Robinson Crusoe nor an exceptional genius. Like others, he was influenced by intellectual ancestors. He was influenced by the writings of Antiquity, especially Aristotle's *Poetics*, and particularly Aristotle's use of the tripartite distinction applied to

³² Nicolai Listenius, *Musica: Ab auctore denuo recognita multisque novis regulis et exemplis adaucta* (1549); facsimile, ed. G. Schünemann (Berlin, 1927). The crucial sentences on *musica poetica* are given in Latin as follows: 'Poetica, quae neque rei cognitione, neque solo exercitio contenta, sed aliquid post laborem relinquat operis, ueluti cum a quopiam Musica aut Musicum carmen conscribitur, cuius finis est opus consummatum & effectum. Consistit enim in faciendo siue fabricando, hoc est, in labore tali, qui post se etiam, artifice mortuo opus perfectum & absolutum relinquat.'

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many spheres of human activity between knowledge (*episteme*), doing or activity (*energeia*), and making or producing (*ergon*). Listenius was not even the first to apply such a tripartite distinction to music; Boethius and Tintoris plausibly preceded him.³³

Connections do exist between Listenius's *opus absolutum et perfectum* and the work-concept. Yet they also exist between both the former and the ancient notions of art, work, and tragedy. Does this imply the origin of the work-concept is to be found in Aristotle or in ancient thought more generally? In a certain sense it does. But to identify the origin here would not be to tell the whole story about the musical work-concept. Three points follow. First, the work-concept is much related to Listenius's *opus absolutum et perfectum*, as it is to many ancient concepts. Second, even if it were true that Listenius gave crystal-clear expression to *musica poetica* (which he did not), this would not mean the work-concept originated with him. Third, looking for origins always threatens an infinite regression backwards through history. I shall treat the first two points together, the third separately.

Listenius's terms are not as clear as they have been thought to be. His description of *musica poetica* does not justify a proclamation made centuries later that 'Here's the evidence we've been looking for.' To begin, there is an Aristotelian reading of the controversial phrase that is just as plausible as the reading which equates *opus absolutum et perfectum* with the work-concept. The Aristotelian reading suggests that the phrase denotes a finished product which is the outcome of work or activity (*opus/labore*). One perfects one's work in the sense that one performs as best one can, with the goal of producing a perfect synthesis of skill and idea. An *opus* is the product of performance, not just the pre-existing idea that brings a performance about. A finished performance is as perfect and absolute as any activity of making that yields a separate, concrete, product. Both remain after the event as having been perfectly performed. An imperfect performance is 'dead'; unlike a perfect performance, it provides no normative rule for the performance of music thereafter.

Even if this reading were mistaken, that would not automatically entail the correctness of the other reading. Listenius does not explicitly indicate, for example, that an *opus perfectum et absolutum* would have existed as a completed creation prior to performance, or that, as a

³³ Cf. Seidel, *Werk und Werkbegriff*, 1-8, and Wiora, *Das musikalische Kunstwerk*, 17 for comparable and valuable discussions. I have found Seidel's discussion of Listenius extremely useful.

'musical work', its musical or sounding structure (rather than its words or text) would have been fully preserved in a score after a performance. He does not indicate, furthermore, that it would have been conceived as a uniquely and self-consciously created composition *repeatable* in its entirety in more than one performance. Lasting and being repeated do not necessarily mean the same thing. Listenius does not indicate, finally, that a work as a product existing over and above its performance would have been the primary point (*telos*) for musical activity. As far as I can tell, Listenius makes no further use either of the phrase *opus perfectum et absolutum* or the concept of *musica poetica* in his general text. *Musica poetica* seems to have been introduced to give emphasis to the idea that an understanding of making music—compositional principles—was as important as performing or theorizing about it. This turned out to be a particularly important theme in musical theory and practice from the sixteenth century on. Notwithstanding, one can make or compose music without thereby producing a work.

Of course, Listenius might have introduced or reflected an understanding of a work-concept prevalent in his time that preceded and gradually developed into our modern one. Whether that is true, and I think it might be for complicated reasons that shall be specified in Chapter 7, it has little bearing on my central claim. It would only have bearing on my claim if his use of the work-concept showed that it regulated musical practice. Evidence suggests that it did not.

Back now to the search for origins. One way to avoid infinite regression is to distinguish the search for origins from a description of a concept's emergence into a regulative concept. To see the point of this distinction, consider the second date accorded significance by theorists. As I said earlier, they have focused not only on the early sixteenth century but also on the years surrounding 1800.

Actually the latter date has received as much if not more attention than the former. While recognizing the 'origins' much earlier, many have ended up describing concepts associated with the work-concept that were explicitly articulated (as they also see it) at the end of the eighteenth century. They have looked at notions of autonomy, form, and product as these found expression especially in German romanticism. With this evidence in hand, they have then claimed that the work-concept, as Dahlhaus puts it, fused into consciousness in 1800 despite having originated at least two centuries earlier. Is it possible that their claim has ended up being the same as mine? Not quite, but nearly so.

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We all agree that something happened around 1800. How we describe the event and what conclusions we draw from it differ in specific ways.

I have chosen to look for the emergence of a stable and well-founded use of the concept—what I have been calling its regulative use. Consequently, I place less weight than other theorists on the identification of original uses in early centuries of many *associated* concepts. There is a reason for this. In looking for the moment when musicians first used concepts of composition, performance, autonomy, repeatability, permanence, perfect compliance—concepts associated with the work-concept—one should not assume that any single one of these uses indicates the presence of a regulative work-concept. To assume this might lead one to ignore the important fact that, for a concept to function regulatively, many associated concepts have to function together and stand in the appropriate relations to one another in a particular way. Like other theorists, furthermore, I acknowledge that there were uses of terms prior to 1800 that came to be synonymous or nearly so with the term 'work'. 'Piece', 'composition', 'opus', are examples. But, again, unless the evidence can support it, one cannot assume that all these terms and uses of concepts indicate that musicians were thinking predominantly about music in terms of works.

I have chosen also to describe the emergence of the work-concept with its full aesthetic, sociological, and ontological clothing. I am not tempted at all to identify works with tunes or songs in the hope that I would eventually come across a completely neutral and wide-ranging concept. But the most significant difference between any other approach and my own is that I devote considerable time to sorting out the implications of describing the work-concept in terms characteristic of late eighteenth-century thought. If the central claim is correct, what conclusions are to be drawn about musical practice prior to this time? What kinds of understanding did musicians have? How did they think of their musical production? One way to reach some answers is to identify conditions of musical production that were not just alternative to those later associated with work-production, but which helped to exclude or forestall the functioning of the work-concept, not deliberately of course, but from a perspective given by hindsight. Thus the first task is to find out whether there were regulative concepts that once overruled the regulative function of the work-concept, assuming (which we should not) that the work-concept would otherwise have been functioning during this time.

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