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FOUNDATIONS
OF MUSIC
HISTORY

CARL
DAHLHAUS

TRANSLATED
BY
J. B. ROBINSON

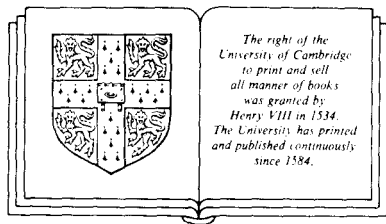
History

CARL DAHLHAUS

Foundations of Music History

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Translator's preface

Professor Dahlhaus has handled a complex topic with a light touch and enormous vitality, yet the English-speaking reader may find parts of his argument rather inaccessible. There is a simple reason for this: the author is building upon the philosophical tradition of German idealism, which not only developed independently of the Anglo-American analytic tradition but in many ways stands diametrically opposed to it. The reader of the German edition is likely to understand something more or less specific by the term *Verdinglichung*, a concept exhaustively analysed by Hegel, Marx and their successors. What, however, will the English-speaking reader make of its exact English equivalent, 'reification'? Probably nothing. Nor will it help if he has been trained in analytic philosophy, where this term serves entirely different purposes in contexts such as 'reification of universals'. The terminology of the German idealist tradition in philosophy has yet to find its way comfortably into our language. Entire families of concepts such as *Entäusserung*, *Verfremdung*, *Entfremdung*, *Vergegenständlichung* and the like, with all their many shades of meaning, have at one time or another been translated into that overworked and by now practically meaningless word 'alienation'. Even so fundamental a distinction as subject versus object has yet to take hold in our educated discourse: we refer to the 'subject' of contemplation, or the 'subject' of a study, where German speakers, relying on a distinction at least as old as Hegel, would use the word *Objekt*, reserving *Subjekt* for the person doing the contemplating or studying.

The English-speaking lay reader may well wonder why these difficult-sounding terms and distinctions have been brought to bear on music, or even on history. Shouldn't they be left in the more rarefied world of philosophy from which they come? The fact is that in Germany they have taken hold in a good many academic fields which stand well apart from philosophy. They have even found their way into the arts as well, Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* being just one example among many. So to help the reader of the English-language edition over some of the difficulties they may raise for him in this book, I offer the following brief explanation of some of the key terms in Professor Dahlhaus's argument.

The subject-object distinction is an appropriate starting point. It is of crucial significance to Hegel's epistemology, or theory of human knowledge. Before we can have knowledge of a thing we must first recognise that thing as being different from ourselves, i.e. as being an object. Otherwise we would not even be aware of its existence and there would be nothing to explain. In turning that entity into an object to be investigated we ourselves become a 'subject' in relation to that object, i.e. we become the agency doing the investigating and seeking comprehension. This is the process known as *Vergegenständlichung* or 'objectification'. The goal of knowledge is to reach an understanding of the object such that the condition of 'alienation' existing between subject and object is resolved, though of course on a higher plane than hitherto. This process is what Hegel called *Aneignung*, 'assimilation' or 'appropriation'. All acquisition of knowledge follows, indeed must follow, this underlying pattern of objectification and assimilation.

Now Hegel was a systematic philosopher of the sort not generally encouraged in our Anglophone tradition. Granted that the subject-object distinction is fundamental to human knowledge, it seemed reasonable to him to conclude that it must also underlie the fields of which human knowledge is possible. In history, the subject-objective distinction had for Hegel a threefold relevance. First, the individual historical agent acts as a subject insofar as he transforms his wishes, desires or intentions – what German idealists called his 'will' – into deeds. This is the process known as *Entäusserung* – 'externalisation' or 'concretisation'. These deeds then become 'objects', and stand in the same relation of alienation to the historical agent as do objects of knowledge to the cognitive faculties of the subject. They too must be assimilated and the condition of alienation resolved if the agent is to understand himself in relation to his world.

History acquires a subject in a second sense when it is written down, namely in the sense implied when we say that history is a 'subjective' discipline. Here the historian becomes the subjective agency, and the events of history (including the individual 'subjects' of the historical agents) become the 'objects' of his investigation. The facts and personages, events and structures of history become objects in the epistemological sense described above, and are objectified and assimilated in the same fundamental way as all other human knowledge.

Yet there is a third sense in which history has a subject. As the individual participating agents in history commit their deeds and

create their artifacts it soon becomes clear that larger patterns are established over which none of them, taken individually, has any control. The emergence of national characters, the creation of classes, the changing demographic complexion of a nation – these things are not willed by any one subjective historical agent, nor are they present in the minds of any but a few of the more far-sighted contemporary participants. Yet these large historical phenomena also exist as historical fact, and must be comprehended by the historian. Indeed, it is not far wrong to say that comprehending them is his principal task. They are, then, objects. Do they have a corresponding subjective agency which summoned them into existence, just as historical deeds are summoned into existence by their perpetrators? To Hegel there was only one answer: Yes. And this subjective agency became, in his philosophy of history, that much misunderstood figure, the *Weltgeist* – the ‘world mind’ or ‘world spirit’ standing over lesser subjective agencies such as the *Nationalgeist* and *Zeitgeist* and realising its will in the history of nations. To elucidate the workings of this world spirit (a later generation might have called it the ‘collective consciousness’) is the historian’s main task, and it is in this sense that Professor Dahlhaus asks, as he does in chapter 4, ‘Does music history have a subject?’.

Where does this leave music? Music historians are, of course, historians like any others, and must confront the past and its threefold subjectivity like their colleagues in other branches of history. Their field is, however, complicated by the nature of music as an art. In one respect, composers behave as historical agents in the normal sense of the term. After all, they too transform their intentions into deeds and artifacts, namely into works of music; they also take part in the historical events of their own time. However, composers are also subjects in quite another sense, namely in the sense implied when we speak of the ‘meaning’ of a piece of music or say that the composer is ‘speaking to us’. Works of music, or at least great works of music, are not irrevocably consigned to the past like historical events, but have a prolonged afterlife during which they change character, acquire and discard meaning, and influence the further progress of the art. In this subsequent history of a work, its so-called *Wirkungsgeschichte*, the composer remains as a subjective agency behind his work. But how, and in what sense? This is only one question among many that Professor Dahlhaus poses and explores in his attempt to unravel the intricate relation between the music historian and his complicated subject (or, as should now be clear, his ‘object’) – music.

This is, of course, no more than a thumbnail sketch of the philosophical background to Professor Dahlhaus's book; but it may serve to bridge the gap between the English-speaking student of music and his German counterpart, who would immediately cut through the philosophical jargon to recognise Professor Dahlhaus's concerns for the pressing issues that they are. Throughout my translation I have assumed that the reader knows nothing beyond hearsay of the German idealist tradition. All philosophical terms, whether the aforementioned epistemological ones, Dilthey's *Lebensphilosophie*, the *Verstehen* theory of history or Windelband's 'nomothetic' and 'idiographic' disciplines, are glossed at their first occurrence wherever they have not been glossed in the original German. I have taken pains to render the philosophical passages into non-technical language as far as possible. Theses and antitheses are not 'sublated' but 'resolved' into syntheses, and *Empirie* is not 'empiricism' (which means something quite different in Anglophone philosophy) but 'the quantitative method' or, simply, 'statistical tables'. A problem was posed by the use of *Form* and *Inhalt*, which in German mean something different from 'form' and 'content' in English and which I have rendered as 'technique' and 'expression'. I have also retained Professor Dahlhaus's many references to Western art music as 'artificial music', which should be taken in the literal sense, i.e. a music made up of artifices. The relatively new fields of *Rezeptionsgeschichte* and *Wirkungsgeschichte* have not yet found their way into Anglo-American academic parlance, but as it is merely a matter of time before they do I have avoided circumlocution and written simply 'reception history' for both. Where *Wirkungsgeschichte* alone is intended I have written of the 'subsequent history' of a work, meaning subsequent to its composition. I have taken the liberty of translating all quoted material anew.

I wish to extend my special thanks to Professor Dahlhaus for encouraging me to undertake this translation and to the publishers for their patience in seeing it into print. Mr Neil Mackenzie of Glasgow read the entire manuscript at an early stage, offering innumerable helpful and thought-provoking comments, as did the publishers' subeditor Ms Ruth Smith, who combines the two admirable virtues of an inquiring mind and a layman's intolerance of waffle. Needless to say, the final decision in all matters of translation rested with me, and such blemishes as exist in the translation are my own doing. My wife Judith helped with the proofreading and preparation of the index; for this, and for many other things too, my heartfelt thanks.

Munich, April 1982

J. B. Robinson

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Foreword

Foundations of Music History is a presumptuous title. I would therefore ask the reader to bear in mind that it represents a makeshift solution to the problem of finding a more precise and less bombastic one. As compensation for my failure, or at least in an attempt to make it pardonable, all I can offer is a few admonitory assurances. The following historiographical reflections, which were occasioned, or rather provoked, by the obvious and disproportionate lack of theory in my own peripheral discipline as compared to the veritable welter of theoretical writing in general history, sociology and epistemologically orientated philosophy, are not meant to be an introduction to the basic facts of music history. Nor are they intended as a textbook of historical method in the manner of Bernheim's work. Still less do they constitute a philosophy of history or an ideological critique in the respective traditions of Hegel and Marx. Their closest model might be Johann Gustav Droysen's unsurpassed lecture series of 1857, *Historik*.

It is difficult, however, not to become involved with Marxist ideological critique, since in this field of study – or at least in the field it claims to study – choosing a topic is always inextricably bound up with deciding in favour of one of the various contesting positions it encompasses. Suppose, for instance, that we were to make the seemingly innocuous remark that our concern was not the sociology but the logic of history, thereby insisting on a distinction between a sociology of knowledge that pursues extrinsic relationships and a theory of history that examines intrinsic connections. To a Marxist – in whose eyes the only alternative to overt bias is covert bias – this would look suspiciously like a conservative stance entrenched behind formal argument. This suspicion cannot be allayed; it must simply be borne. At best we might rejoice that the history of scholarship has not yet succeeded in unearthing any connections between methodological precepts and political implications which are as clear-cut in practice as they are in theory. To maintain that structural history, for example, is *a priori* more 'progressive' than a history of events would be absurd in view of the work of Jacob Burckhardt or Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl. The alleged 'reactionary' nature of Russian formalism or Czech structuralism has been revealed as a falsification of the facts. And the dubious

method of understanding history by the process called *Verstehen* (lit. understanding, but here direct identification with historical agents) is not simply a matter of antiquarian posturing or escapist immersion in the past; on the contrary, it can be reconciled with a detached approach in which the past appears progressively more enigmatic and alien the better it is understood – or in which, to put it paradoxically, distance increases with proximity.

For decades now historians have been talking about a crisis in historical thought. At first, from Ernst Troeltsch in his *Der Historismus und seine Probleme* (1922) to Alfred Heuss's *Verlust der Geschichte* (1959), this crisis was seen and lamented not as a menace to the science of history from within – with doubt being cast on its underlying premises, its avowed goals and the measures taken to reach them – but as a disintegration of the role that history had once played in the popular imagination. In recent years, however, it has become increasingly apparent that the difficulties of principle in which history found itself embroiled were not so remote from the daily business of scholarship as historians once believed, or tried to believe – trusting in the distinction between a *métier* which one more or less mastered and a *Weltanschauung* which was one's private affair. If I may be permitted a digression into the personal by way of illustration: the following chapters from a philosophy of music history are the reflections of someone directly involved in the field and not those of a philosopher standing 'above it all'. They arose not from ambitious theoretical lucubration but from the practical difficulties that I encountered in trying to devise a history of nineteenth-century music.

Is history on the decline?

For several decades now historians have felt threatened by a loss of interest in history, even believing at times that their existence as an institution is in jeopardy. History – memory made scientific – is apparently no longer the primary authority that we turn to for guidance or support when trying to understand ourselves or the world we live in. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it was taken for granted that we had to know the origins of a thing in order to know its essence. By now, however, this basic tenet has forfeited much of its credibility.

Prevailing opinion or prejudice as to the usefulness or the drawbacks of political history (which forms the main bone of contention) does not directly involve music history, however, as the two fields apparently draw on fundamentally different assumptions – though not even music history can escape the current intellectual fashion of having history take a back seat to sociology. Music histories have always been ambiguous in function. Sometimes they are read less as accounts of some aspect of the past than as historical commentaries to particular works – or, to put it bluntly, as concert or opera guides. Far from dismissing this practice as a mere abuse we should recognise in it a sign of the special nature of music historiography. For if we accept that the subject matter of music history is made up primarily, if not exclusively, of significant works of music – works that have outlived the musical culture of their age – and consequently that the aesthetic presence of individual works will necessarily intervene in any account of the past (whether as a selection criterion or as a factor in helping us decide what we want to know about), it then follows that an account of the origins and later history of musical works will serve a dual function, illuminating the preconditions for a given work on the one hand and on the other shedding light on the implications of the present-day listener's relation to that work. (The later history of a work – its *Wirkungsgeschichte* – is in turn the pre-history of its current reception.) We arrive at a better understanding of a thing, whether it be a piece of music or our own relation to that piece, by knowing the history behind it.

'That which was', writes Johann Gustav Droysen in his *Historik*, 'does not attract our interest simply because it was, but rather

because, in a certain sense, it still is, in that it still exercises an influence' (p. 275). Seen in this light, a piece of written history, if it is to do justice to its subject, must take its character from the manner in which the object under discussion 'in a certain sense . . . still is' – whether as a mere inference from present modes of behaviour or institutions, as a work performed in concert halls, or as a museum piece. A music historian who does not want to demean his subject can ill afford to overlook the current aesthetic presence of some of the works he wishes to put into an historical context. It would be unrealistic and absurd in the extreme for him to treat the musical past as though, like the political past, it was at best indirectly preserved in current events and affairs as a sort of proto-history to them. Music of the past belongs to the present as music, not as documentary evidence. This implies nothing less than that when we delve into the turmoil of current events to determine the function of music history we are not entirely beholden to vacillating opinions as to the value of recollecting the past. Music historiography has a different legitimation from political historiography. It differs from its political counterpart in that the essential relics that it investigates from the past – the musical works – are primarily aesthetic objects and as such also represent an element of the present; only secondarily do they cast light on events and circumstances of the past. It would be a patent caricature to compile a history of music strictly along the lines of political history, treating the score of, say, the Ninth Symphony as a document to be weighed alongside other pieces of evidence in reconstructing the events surrounding its première or some later performance. This is not to say that 'events' are irrelevant, merely that the emphasis falls on understanding works – which, unlike the relics treated in political histories, are the goal of historical inquiry and not its point of departure. The concept 'work', and not 'event', is the cornerstone of music history. Or, to put it in Aristotelian terms, the material of music history resides not in *praxis*, or social action, but in *poiesis*, the creation of forms.

The historian who takes the aesthetic presence of musical works as his point of departure does not necessarily overlook or belittle his distance from them in time, as the New Criticism has been faulted for doing. Indeed, ever since Schleiermacher it has been the fundamental axiom of historical hermeneutics (the science of interpretation) that surviving texts, whether musical or linguistic, remain partially obscure after an initial naive reading and do not disclose their full meaning until their historical preconditions and

implications have been thoroughly analysed. The task of historical hermeneutics is to make alien material comprehensible, i.e. material that is remote in time or in social or ethnic origin. In so doing, we do not deny its extrinsic or intrinsic distance from us, but instead make this distance part of the process of perceiving the material in the context of the present as opposed to viewing it from a detached historical standpoint. In other words, an aesthetic presence based on such historical insight embraces rather than bypasses an awareness of this otherness or alienness. Admittedly the outcome of historical exegesis can never be entirely subsumed in aesthetic perception; yet a certain degree of mediation between the two is distinctly possible, and at all events less difficult than it might seem to the proponents of the aesthetics of immediacy, who regard the roundabout paths trodden by the historian as mere divagations. (This school fails to note that the aesthetic immediacy it insists upon can also be a secondary immediacy, as indeed it must be when dealing with complex or temporally remote works.) The knowledge that two and a half centuries lie between us and the completion of the *St Matthew Passion* does not impair our aesthetic appreciation of the work in the least, but rather forms a part of it. (However, one should take care not to confuse or equate historical insight that merges into aesthetic insight with that vague sense of temporal remoteness that so often pervades and tempers our perception of early music. A sense of nostalgia may possibly kindle an interest in history; but it can only hinder this interest by making further refinements by increased knowledge appear not just unnecessary but even harmful.)

Thus there is a fundamental difference between music history and political history, between the historical interpretation of an object which resides primarily in an aesthetic presence and the reconstruction of a past event which survives merely on the basis of its implications. This has not, however, prevented musicologists from developing an aversion to history, a mixture of suspicion and nervous uneasiness toward the time-honoured view that the principal concern of musicology is music history. It is not out of place here to examine the causes for this change in attitude and the arguments used in support of it. Indeed, the author of a treatise on music historiography is bound to devote particular attention to the difficulties he encounters.

I

Recent developments in music and a growing trend toward ideological critique have tended to cast increasing doubt on the premise that the concept 'work' is the central category of music, and hence of music historiography as well. On the one hand, 'open' forms have arisen in which the listener may no longer simply listen to the music as a passive agent, following its course in his mind, but is required to take an active part in creating it. On the other hand, suspicions are being aroused against the phenomena of 'alienation' (*Entfremdung*) and 'reification' or 'objectification' (*Verdinglichung*). These two developments converge in the belief that, in music, the 'fixed letter' capable of being passed down to posterity is less important than the actual musical process, which we might describe as the 'event' that emerges partly from the written composition, partly from its realisation in performance and partly from the modes of musical perception, with these three factors interacting on equal terms so that performer and listener are no longer subjected to the tyranny of the composer. (Referring to the 'authority' of a work is taken as a sign of 'bad faith'.)

If drawn rigorously – as is hardly possible at present – the consequences for music historiography that would ensue from discarding the concept of 'work' would be practically inconceivable in scope. Luckily, it is not difficult to point out a few deficiencies in the historiographical thesis that musical processes have primacy over musical works. To begin with, it is a cardinal philosophical error to equate 'alienation' cursorily with 'objectification', i.e. with the realisation of a composer's intention in a concrete work or text, for the entire matter hinges precisely on discerning the slight but crucial difference in meaning between the philosophical and sociological uses of these terms – between *Vergegenständlichung* and *Verdinglichung*. Secondly, it is scarcely conceivable how an historian could ever succeed in reconstructing a bygone musical event – a complex interaction of text, performance and reception – to a degree of refinement that would not pale drastically beside a musical analysis of the work. A third objection is that 'open' forms are no more capable than 'closed' ones of being generalised into a principle that would encompass and govern the whole of music history. While it cannot be denied that 'music' and 'work' in the strong sense have not always been identical, there is no call to depreciate the artificial music of post-medieval Europe – which is unquestionably rooted in the notions of 'work' and 'text' – or to

level accusations of provinciality against historians who have experienced the aesthetic presence of these works and see in them the bedrock of music history. The musical 'work' as re-created in the mind of the listener has a legitimate claim to existence as music, and is not an inferior sub-species abstracted from the musical 'process'.

2

This waning of interest in history does not, or does not always, imply a suspension of the 'historical awareness' that came to the fore as a mode of thinking in the nineteenth century. On the contrary, the conviction that mental and social phenomena are 'historical through and through' is still very much with us, even among some of those who decry history as an antiquarian science of the past. We might almost speak of historicism without history, the historical aspect being taken to reside solely in the element of mutability. However, this would mean sacrificing the premise which underlies traditional historical writings: that insight into what something is arises from knowledge of how it came about. The emphasis is placed not on the affirmative aspect of 'historicity', whereby the past functions as the foundation and cornerstone of the present, but on its critical aspect, on the implication that states of affairs, to the extent that they have arisen historically as opposed to being given by nature, can be altered or even undermined.

The analysis of the past in order to determine what is by virtue of what has come about would then be replaced by an orientation toward a utopian future – a 'real utopian future', as Ernst Bloch would put it – with historical awareness always being understood as an awareness of mutability. The thesis that has hitherto guided traditional historical writings would be confronted by an antithesis positing that what something 'is' is determined less by the origins it has left behind than by the aggregate of possibilities it contains. The deciding factor would no longer be what that something used to be, but what it is capable of becoming.

Seen in these terms, history might simply be discarded as superfluous or, at best, reduced to a process of scanning the present in the hope of descrying the vague outlines of a more perfect future. The arsenal of history would be rummaged in search of constituent parts to shore up or illustrate a particular vision of the future. Objects hitherto lost in a corner would be seized upon by utopian awareness and suddenly invested with far-reaching significance.

Homely introductions, unlikely transitions and codettas – in effect, musical passages that had hitherto rested in obscurity – figure in the vision of an unfettered music such as Ferruccio Busoni outlined in his *Entwurf einer neuen Aesthetik der Tonkunst* and in the theory of musical prose that Schoenberg advanced in his essay 'Brahms the Progressive'. In both cases these passages are meant to foreshadow a future state in which music, instead of conforming to heteronomous rules, will attain its true essence. (Modern revolutionaries differ from rebels of earlier centuries in that they are 'historicists': they consider history 'producible' and proceed from the premise that religion, culture and the state – Jacob Burckhardt's 'three potencies' – are 'historical through and through' to the conclusion that the mutability spoken of by historians can also be put into practice. The opposite pole to this revolutionary 'historicism' is the traditionalism of the conservatives, with their devotion to 'established truths', which are not only held to be true by virtue of being established but are also given the honour of always having been true simply because they happen to apply now.)

3

But shifting the emphasis of the font of 'historical awareness' from the past to the future is not only a clear indication that history is being subordinated to politics; it also conveys a mistrust of what earlier historians had agreed upon as constituting what 'belongs to history'. A sense of animosity towards the 'great men' who were once said to 'make history' is the natural counterpart of a sympathy for the masses who stood in their shadow, obliged to bear the burden of history.

In music history this change of perspective means that it is no longer merely the 'great works' towering above the rest of music's copious output that belong to history in the strict sense of the word. This status also accrues to the vast amounts of 'trivial music' that in fact go to make up the bulk of day-to-day musical reality, and should not therefore be summarily dismissed as the rubble that remains after the edifice of history has been erected. A piece of trivial music, so the argument goes, should not be regarded and evaluated as a 'work'; and any aesthetic or compositional analysis of such a piece amounts to a basic misunderstanding of the nature of this genre. Rather, music of this sort should be treated as a fragment of social reality, as a participating element within a social process or state. To put it another way, *histories of musical works*

or compositional techniques based on the post-medieval concept of art must be replaced (the more conciliatory spokesmen of this view would say 'augmented') by social histories that explain musical creations in terms of their functions.

Yet to claim that 'greatness' in music is as insidious and ambivalent as its political counterpart, being a greatness for which other historical agents have had to pay the price, is to miss the point. No-one had a burden to bear because Beethoven wielded authority in music. This line of argument directed at 'great men' collapses when transferred from political to music history. Moreover, it is a methodological solecism to mingle or confuse normative judgments (postulates as to what ought to be) with descriptive ones (knowledge of what used to be). Agreed, in the future it may be morally advisable, perhaps even unavoidable, to devote less time to the search for outstanding composers than to the development of a musical mass 'culture' deserving of the name; but it is also an incontrovertible fact that European music history since the Renaissance has advanced under the banner of what Alfred Einstein once used as a book title - 'Greatness in Music'.

Whether an historian elects to write a history of musical works and compositional technique as opposed to a social or functional history of music does not entirely depend on his own perception of the subject matter, which is a purely personal affair, even though it, too, can be influenced by external motives. Rather, this decision is, at least in part, predetermined by the nature of the subject under study, by the 'givens' of music. Whether and to what degree a stylistic or a social history of music or some reconciliation of the two (which, however, will have to favour one approach at the expense of the other) is appropriate to a particular fragment of musical reality will vary according to the period, field or genre studied. In principle there is nothing that will not submit to one or other of these approaches: granted the necessary degree of aesthetic insensitivity it is possible to analyse a piece of juke-box music in terms of its intrinsic value as a work or, alternatively, to reduce a Bach cantata to its role in the liturgy, i.e. to insist that the one represents a musical text and the other served a function. Yet scholarly experience has shown that it is possible in virtually every instance to determine to the satisfaction of everyone concerned whether a particular result is interesting and relevant or weak and misguided.

The problem of determining in what way the few successful trivial pieces differ from the numberless others that disappear

almost in the instant of their creation will hardly be solved by technical arguments abstracted from artificial or pedagogical music. Nor will an exclusively functional interpretation of a Bach cantata account for the historical fact – which no historian, however much inclined to favour antiquarian reconstructions, can afford to ignore – that Bach's works were not only amenable to reinterpretation in the nineteenth century to become the quintessence and paradigm of absolute music, but also, by virtue of this reinterpretation, attained an historical importance unimagined by Bach's eighteenth-century contemporaries. It was not until they had undergone this profound alteration in their significance that they were, so to speak, 'discovered' – though any historian who shies away from the dogmatics of historical theory will be hard put to decide whether what was discovered was in fact their 'real' nature or a distortion of it.

One way of alleviating this methodological controversy would appear to lie in measuring the two conflicting approaches in mixtures of varying strengths against the historical subject under discussion instead of issuing claims of universality and carrying on a feud in the abstract, fraught with ideological accusations of 'pretentious elitism' or 'overbearing philistinism'. This is not to say that the battle of principles should be abandoned: any attempt at appeasement that glosses over the basic differences between the two approaches would be not merely wrongheaded but doomed to failure. But the controversy will remain pointless until it can draw upon those practical examples and experiences without which proposed scholarly theories are as devoid of meaning as are mere numbers in statistical tables. At the moment the advocates of a sociological approach to the historiography of music are still largely basking in their unfair advantage of being able to criticise the deficiencies of traditional music history instead of having to justify their own results, which are far too few. But, of course, the triumphs of programmatic historians over their more practically minded colleagues have seldom been lasting.

4

The concept of continuity – the principal basis for writing history in narrative form – has fallen into disrepute at the hands of sceptical historiologists. True, those historians who have thought seriously about their own discipline have always recognised the problems that lurk when history is cast in narrative terms. Droysen was the