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The Material and “Inner Life” in Music: Beethoven, Psychological Coherence, and Meaning

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Academic Editor: Jacob-Ivan Eidt

Received: 13 July 2015 / Accepted: 31 August 2015 / Published: 11 September 2015

Abstract: Current studies on Adolph Bernhard Marx generally focus on Marx’s seminal texts in music theory and pedagogy, such as *Die Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition, praktisch theoretisch* (1837–1847) and Marx’s theory of sonata form, but they infrequently explore the philosophical and aesthetic dimensions of Marx’s criticism. The present essay will analyze a series of statements Marx wrote that address the aesthetic principles one should employ in descriptions of musical meaning, including “spiritual guidelines” (*die geistigen Lenkfäden*) and *psychological coherence* (*des psychologischen Zusammenhangs*). We will investigate Hegel’s influence on Marx’s thought, in addition to other contemporary philosophical positions, in relation to the themes of musical content, form, and the creative process. The study will aim to reveal the function of “spiritual guidelines” and specifically *psychological coherence* in aesthetics as the basis of a fresh look into musical meaning and ideal content in Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, Op. 125.

Keywords: A.B. Marx; Ludwig van Beethoven; G.W.F. Hegel; psychological coherence; aesthetics; music and meaning; philosophy of music

Adolph Bernhard Marx (1795–1866) occupies a visible place in historical musicology, aesthetics, and criticism as one of the early supporters of Beethoven’s music. On the one hand, Marx can be considered as a precursor to Heinrich Schenker (1868–1935), who developed revolutionary ideas in music theory while maintaining a keen awareness for aesthetic properties and meaning that are grasped in performance. On the other hand, Marx can be seen as a follower of E.T.A. Hoffmann (1776–1822),

whose illustrative writings on music remain unparalleled, as they embody an imaginative method of musical interpretation that is as perceptive as it is otherworldly. In the early part of Marx's career, he became a recognized voice in music criticism. During the 1820s, as the founder and editor of the *Berliner Allgemeine Musikalischer Zeitung*, he contributed numerous positive reviews of Beethoven's music over the course of seven years. These reviews displayed Marx's critical ingenuity and ability to combine traces of Hegelian philosophy with technical analysis of Beethoven's music. Throughout his writings, Marx utilized examples from Beethoven's music in reviews and longer texts (e.g., *Ludwig van Beethoven: Leben und Schaffen* [1859] and *Die Musik des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts und ihre Pflege. Methode der Musik* [1855]) to prove the complexity of meaning that music was capable of expressing on its own. These conclusions were buttressed by theoretical and philosophical principles, and avoided excessive subjective speculation. With innovative descriptions, and references to form and melodic elements, Marx placed Beethoven's music in the front and center of musical aesthetics and criticism. This strategy catapulted Marx into a prominent position in the history of musicology as not only a contemporary supporter of Beethoven's music, but also a nineteenth-century authority, *par excellence*, on musical meaning in Beethoven's compositions.

In *Ludwig van Beethoven: Life and Works* (1859), Marx makes a lengthy discussion of Beethoven's "Eroica" Symphony (Op. 55) and ideal music. Marx unexpectedly shifts the focus of his study and questions his own theory of musical expression. A pessimistic interlocutor comes to the podium and poses arguments held by many disparagers of musical aesthetics. The interlocutor is clearly exasperated, voicing two objections one after the other:

"Setting aside the program and all peripheral verbiage, where finally are the music's means for determinate expression? Leaving the authority of the artist out of the picture, how should we others understand their expression?" ([1], p. 178).

Marx readily dispels these remarks. As though defending the foundation of his texts against incomprehension and future condemnation, the theorist offers an olive branch for critics by telling them *how* they can uncover musical meaning on their own:

We must respond: direct your search to art—to its material, the sounds, chords, tonal relations..., rhythms! Take to this task all the aids of simile (*nehmet dazu die Hilfsmittel des Gleichnisses*), symbol (*Symbolik*), psychological coherence (*des psychologischen Zusammenhangs*), all these spiritual guidelines (*die geistigen Lenkfäden*) that no artist and no person can do without! ([1], pp. 178–79).

We, the critics and readers, along with Marx, are commanded to interpret musical meaning through this enumeration of critical skills. The activity Marx has elaborated constitutes a *sine qua non* for critical assessments of musical expression and meaning. By the same token, Marx nevertheless refrains from showing exactly how one should apply these tools in a critical exercise. When we make a closer examination of Marx's rebuttal, we are faced with two opposing camps: material explication (which involves normative theories and rules) and psychological, "spiritual guidelines." Following the general argument put forward, we grasp meaning in music through a process of examination and reflection from two different perspectives. Despite divergences, the material component will influence and enlighten the conclusions of the psychological component (and *vice versa*) in a hermeneutic fashion

(derived from Schleiermacher's hermeneutics). The ultimate meaning we reach for is captured in Marx's concept of *Idee*—ideal content that appeals both to material and psychological content of music and resolves the conflicts we encounter within a work as contributive to a coherent universal notion.

Our focus in the present study will be on *psychological coherence*, only one of the three tools determined as “spiritual guidelines.” Unlike symbol and simile, which contribute to the formation of description and the vivid portrayal in words of musical gestures, we argue that *psychological coherence* aims to establish deeper connections between performance practice, meaningful content in a musical work, form, and the creative process. Marx's determination of *psychological coherence* addresses, in a general way, Hegel's notion that art “should disclose an inner life, feeling, soul, a content and spirit, which is just what we call the significance of a work of art” ([2], p. 20). What we look at in a work of art (or specifically music in this case) is the material object and thus *psychological coherence*¹ will not rely on the composer's personality² as the only source of meaning. The concept of *psychological coherence* is beyond mere feeling; it relates to the mind and intuition. A study of *psychological coherence* will show us the way a work is able to express thoughts and ideas, the *Idee* of the work, and the concomitant assumption of our ability to comprehend that content. We will conclude with an example from Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 in D minor, Op. 125 to support the argument that the meaning of a musical work, which harbors contradictory moods or thoughts, is strengthened and clarified through an examination of *psychological coherence*.

1. Psychological Coherence and Thought

In both theoretical writings and reviews, Marx pays special attention to the role of performance as an audible reproduction of meaning. This serves to broaden the horizon of meaning, as we are challenged to *hear* it just as much as we see it in analysis. Marx highlights this in his treatise on the proper performance of Beethoven's pianoforte music [4]. The urgency in Marx's prose can be attributed to his identification of the “peculiar nature” of the content of Beethoven's music in comparison to the music of other composers. For Marx, a proper interpretation of Beethoven's sonatas requires the pianist to draw out an underlying meaning or thought that lies within the music. An accurate performance of meaning in Beethoven's music “is not reached by a general subjective feeling (Gefühl) as would suffice for the pianoforte works of...Haydn, Mozart, Dussek, Hummel, Chopin, Mendelssohn....The peculiar content of Beethoven's style manifests itself in the fact that through his works, instrumental and more particularly pianoforte music, attained to idealism and became the expression of determined ideal thought (idealen Inhalts)” ([4], p. 15).³ In a description of compositional

¹ The interpretation of *psychological coherence* put forward here is derived from a Hegelian interpretation of psychology, *i.e.* rational psychology, as described in Hegel's *Encyclopedia* on Logic. Hegel determines rational psychology in the following way: “it sets itself the task of knowing the spirit through thinking and also of proving what is then thought” ([3], §34, addition, p. 73).

² Marx offers *psychological coherence* as a tool for interpretation when we remove the composer's authority to address the content of a work of music. Therefore, the *psychological coherence* of a work of music will not be equivalent to the psychology of the composer where a particular quirk in a composer's personality will speak to the inner life of a composition.

³ The identification of thought, ideas, and ideal content in Beethoven's music is a recurrent theme in Marx's discussions of music history. For example, he writes that Beethoven brought about “the spiritualization of instrumental music by raising it to the sphere of definite conceptions and ideas.” ([5], p. 84).

styles in opera, Marx draws another distinction between Mozart and Beethoven that calls attention to difference in content. The music of the former demonstrates a superficial freedom while the latter is preoccupied with the deeper “mysteries” of musical expression: “Whilst Mozart shows greater freedom and lightness of fancy, Beethoven dives more deeply into the mysteries of his art, losing himself now and then in the dialogue of his orchestra, which not only entwines itself around the dialogue upon the stage, but often threatens to completely overgrow it” ([5], p. 62). In these reports, Marx describes how “determined ideal thought” and the “mysteries” of instrumental music become vivid in sound. The effect of Beethoven’s orchestra, which climbs rapidly from below like an ivy to suffocate the opera singers on stage, can only truly be appreciated when witnessing a performance of Beethoven’s opera *Fidelio* (Op. 72).

Marx addresses a psychological component of ideal content in the essay “Etwas über die Symphonie” (1824) [6]. In this text, Marx writes that Beethoven, in Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67, successfully illustrates “the succession of soul states portrayed with deep psychological truth” ([7], p. 188). We find that Marx’s descriptions of the “lightness of fancy” in Mozart’s music, which we juxtapose with “ideal thought” and “deep psychological truth” in Beethoven’s compositions, show that these statements not only relate to the establishment of *psychological coherence* in interpretation, but also speak to what that coherence aims to reveal.

Scott Burnham points out a more specific division between Mozart and Beethoven that is found in the vocabulary Marx uses to identify the general aims of musical content. The division is located in the opposition between the terms *Gefühl* (feeling) and *Seelenzustand* (soul state) in Marx’s texts. With Beethoven’s music, Burnham writes, “Marx feels something more momentous than a pleasing array of feelings; he feels the succession of states of the soul. By using the expression ‘soul state’ (*Seelenzustand*), Marx implies something deeper than a *Gefühl* or an *Empfindung*, words he uses when describing the content of Mozart’s music” ([7], p. 191). *Psychological coherence*, or content that holds psychological connections (*des psychologischen Zusammenhangs*), is a critical intermediary between the parts of a work and its *Idee* precisely because it speaks to ideal content and the “soul state” found in the material of music. In interpretation, the identification of *psychological coherence* is a task that aims to describe content beyond “feeling” (*Gefühl*) and “sensation” (*Empfindung*) because of the inherent relation *psychological coherence* has with both content and form. In the present case, the soul and psychological content (or “psychological truth”) is comparable to the inner life of an artwork; the musical work ideally expresses thoughts, ideas, and truth in a way that is perceptible through interpretation. We see this with clarity when Marx claims that many of Beethoven’s works reflect “life,”—this is determined in the interpretation of particular passages and the way in which these portray (psychological) states such as anguish or joy.⁴ These passages then feed into the description of ideal content or the *Idee*, where meaning is constructed from the conglomerate of these particular passages.

⁴ This is present in Marx’s review of the Ninth Symphony (see [8]) and also in the Seventh Symphony (see Scott Burnham’s description ([7], p. 191). Marx alludes to the notion that the illustration of life is fundamental to musical expression when he writes: “Music cannot define in precise terms who and what you are; but it causes all the successive emotions of your heart to pass in review before you; and these enable you to unriddle the enigma of your existence. It is both a monologue and a dialogue, full of dramatic truth and life” ([5], p. 46, translation slightly modified).

Psychological coherence helps to resolve complexities of meaning in a musical work even when the content varies from a singular and predominant thought throughout the whole (such as the concept of parting and return in the “Farewell” sonata, Op. 81a), to works that present concurrent ideas that contrast or conflict with each other. The task of *psychological coherence*, which renders conflicting ideas intelligible in the same work in a sense of progress toward the establishment of an *Idee*, mimics an operation in thought (essentially psychological) of dialectic. In contrast to the Hegelian definition of dialectic in understanding, where a thesis and antithesis annihilate each other in the process of sublation, in a movement toward the Absolute, our parts or components in a musical work are not negated in what assumes the appearance of an organic process.⁵ We find, nevertheless, a similarity between our view of the co-existence of conflicting ideas, which are considered in the formation of a higher principle, and Hegel’s discussion of the dialectic in the *Encyclopedia* where “even feelings, bodily as well as mental, possess a dialectic of their own. It is well known how the extremes of pain and joy turn into one another...and in some circumstances the most poignant melancholy tends to announce itself with a smile” ([3], §81 Addition 1, p. 131). We encounter a problem of comparison to Hegel’s dialectic when we examine the verb *aufheben*, intrinsic to the process of dialectic, that is normally rendered as “to sublimate” in English. The German word has several different meanings and Hegel does not explicitly name a specific definition; perhaps the most relevant definition of *aufheben* for our purposes is “to preserve or maintain” at the same time as present notions of annihilation or negation. Even when confronted with components in a musical work that are seemingly contradictory to the *Idee*, we maintain these parts as a way to arrive at the final conclusion of the *Idee*. In this sense, although an *Idee* may unify particular parts and ideal content in a musical work, we will vividly maintain particulars that often oppose the *Idee* as a method to strengthen the coherence and integrity of ideal content. From this perspective, we regard *psychological coherence* as the fundamental driving force of meaning of the whole that steers attention away from general subjective feeling (*Gefühl*) and in the direction of determinate ideal content.

⁵ There is little room in the present article to discuss the notion of *musical dialectic*. Adorno has infamously linked Hegel’s dialectics with Beethoven’s work by virtue of opposing expressions, forces, or passages, constructing affines between main theme and thesis, second theme and antithesis, *etc.* Adorno expounds on the idea of whole as the strongest entity that illuminates the meaning of parts, where “the unity of the whole is mediated” and “not only is the individual element insignificant, but the individual moments are estranged from each other....The Beethovenian unity is one which moves by means of antitheses; this is to say its moments, taken individually, seem to contradict each other. But therein lies the meaning of Beethovenian form as process, so that although the incessant ‘mediation’ between individual moments and finally through the consummation of the form as a whole, the seemingly antithetical motifs are grasped in their identity.” (Fragment 29, p. 13) It is difficult to pin down what an antithetical theme in Hegelian logic and dialectics could look like, in the logical *p* / not-*p* relation, a notion Adorno does not directly address. Counterpoint may present a close solution, such as a theme in retrograde. Yet even a theme in retrograde has a specular relation to the main theme; it cannot sustain a *p* / not-*p* relationship because of harmonic implications, such as how to determine the meaning of a cadence in reverse. In Fragment 40, Adorno writes that in Beethoven, “the concept of *negation* as that which drives a process forward can be precisely grasped. It involves a *breaking off* of melodic lines before they have evolved into something complete and rounded in order to impel them into the next figure” ([9], p. 19).

2. Content and Form through the Lens of Psychological Coherence

To explore *psychological coherence* of content and form, we will look more closely at the notion of the work as a whole and how the *Idee* can apply to the whole even when contrasting parts emerge. For instance, we can look at a work of music as a composite of fragments (a philosophical thought championed by Friedrich Schlegel),⁶ of movements, moments, or parts: the whole is not bound together coherently but is essentially unfinished or fragmented. Although many musical works appear finished on the page, or sound complete, in many cases we are only analyzing or listening to one movement, overture, or arrangement selected from a larger whole. What complicates the problem of hearing fragments in performance is that many unfinished works are performed with the same integrity as finished ones (Mozart's "Great" Mass in C minor, K.427/417a, and Mozart's Requiem Mass in D minor, K. 626, are examples of this).⁷ Even if the program notes for a performance state that the work was unfinished, rarely does the listener distinguish this music as having a weaker aesthetic meaning than a finished work.

On a more elemental level, a musical work can seem fragmented because the first and second themes sound at odds with one another as though belonging to two different works (such as the first and second themes in the first movement of Haydn's Sonata in D Major, Hob. XVI/51). However, the

⁶ "Many works that are praised for the beauty of their coherence have less unity than a motley heap of ideas simply animated by the ghost of a spirit and aiming at a single purpose. What really holds the latter together is that free and equal fellowship in which, so the wise men assure us, the citizens of the perfect state will live at some future date; it's that unqualifiedly sociable spirit which, as the beau monde maintains, is now to be found only in what is so strangely and almost childishly called the great world. On the other hand, many a work of art whose coherence is never questioned is, as the artist knows quite well himself, not a complete work but a fragment, or one or more fragments, a mass, a plan. But so powerful is the instinct for unity in mankind that the author himself will often bring something to a kind of completion which simply can't be made a whole or a unit; often quite imaginatively and yet completely unnaturally. The worst thing about it is that whatever is draped about the solid, really existent fragments in the attempt to mug up a semblance of unity consists largely of dyed rags. And if these are touched up cleverly and deceptively, and tastefully displayed, then that's all the worse. For then he deceives even the exceptional reader at first, who has a deep feeling for what little real goodness and beauty is still to be found here and there in life and letters. That reader is then forced to make a critical judgment to get at the right perception of it! And no matter how quickly the dissociation takes place, still the first fresh impression is lost" ([10], §103, p. 155).

⁷ Richard Kramer writes at length about the interpretation of fragmented and unfinished works in light of Schlegel's theory of fragments. I argue that in Schlegel's Fragment 103 of the *Critical Fragments*, Schlegel understands even a finished work to be fragmentary, or unfinished. I find he refers also to the creative impulse, where a composer may always see imperfection and room for improvement in a musical work that is "finished." For Richard Kramer's account see ([11], pp. 311–44). One of Kramer's claims is that musical fragments offer a vision of the creative process or a composer's thought. With relation to Mozart's fragment, String Quartet in G minor, K 587a (Anhang 74), he writes on the final, partial phrase found in mm. 24–5: "The inclination to complete this unfinished phrase confronts us with the ultimate riddle of the fragment as a species, for it assumes access to a process of mind that is unfathomable even within itself. It is not the harmonization of the phrase, or even the logical next step in its unfolding, that is at question, but a prior matter having to do with the imponderables of the mind that could give us this phrase with one hand and take it back with the other" ([11], p. 316).

relentless movement forward that is characteristic of music can overthrow this kind of opposition⁸; this flow of sonorous impressions is like a rigid current that spirals backwards only with predictable repeats (or da capo indications, *etc.*) written into the form. Hermeneutics provides a freedom to compare and contrast nonconsecutive parts, as well as fragments, to illuminate a strong, conceptual meaning. To speak of an *Idee* with relation to this perspective appears unfeasible because one is unable to visualize unity among disjointed parts; when we focus too strongly on fragments, the fragments' individuality and their ability to function independently from the whole will condition our ability to grasp the whole.⁹

Psychological coherence, however, rescues the notion of whole and supports evidence of ideal content within particular parts. We draw opposition to Schlegel's uncompromising view of a fragmentary nature of art through the comparison of part to whole in an example from Hegel's *Encyclopedia*. Hegel illustrates the importance of unity of the whole in a discussion of the body and its relation to its organs: despite the body's strong notion of whole, the organs in the body have specific functions and when seen alone they can be self-contained [3]¹⁰; yet they maintain a relationship to the whole, to the body, *viz.* these parts (organs) constitute the whole: "The parts are diverse from one another and are what is self-standing. But they are only parts in their identical relation to one another or insofar as, taken together, they make up the whole. But that 'together' is the opposite and negation of the part" ([3], §134 (α), p. 203). This negative relation of whole to part is immediate, and this aspect is crucial for understanding how a whole is perceived: "the members and organs of a living body are not to be considered merely as its parts, since they are what they are only in their unity, and by no means do they behave indifferently towards this unity. These members and organs first become mere parts in the hands of the anatomist" ([3] §135, Addition, p. 203). In this construction, Hegel presents us with a "living" or proper whole that is characterized by a harmony between its parts. We contrast this with a "dead" whole that can be taken apart and fragmented because its inner life and identity are no longer relevant. To analyze the difference between fragments and the notion of whole is, nevertheless, not as easy as deciphering between the living and the dead.

Marx's concept of *psychological coherence* shows how musical parts inform and reflect components of an *Idee*, or ideal content, even if they seem to contradict the identity of the *Idee*; *psychological coherence* presents the parts as particular ideas or thoughts, which can then be absorbed into the whole. To add complexity to the part, we establish a foundation in Schleiermacher's hermeneutics and we maintain the integrity of the particular much like Hegel's anatomist. The parts are not annihilated and do not become something else—we can always re-evaluate the *Idee* in light of the parts, and start interpretation again at square one. Also, in the temporary suspension of a notion of

⁸ Janet Schmalfeldt describes the process of becoming, synthesis, and dialectic with relation to Beethoven. She achieves this namely through a presentation of views by Theodor Adorno and Carl Dahlhaus along with her interpretation of their ideas. In one example, she cites Adorno's theory of *multidimensional hearing* that allows us to hear forward and backward at the same time. In spite of this, we find that a composition's form will condition Adorno's progressive view of hearing (see [12], pp. 23–57, *viz.* p. 32).

⁹ The individuality of a musical fragment can be observed when opera arias are sung at recitals. In these cases, the performer is able to grant coherence to a particular song through performance interpretation even when the meaning of the aria in the dramatic context of the opera is lost.

¹⁰ As Hegel describes, from the perspective of an "anatomist who has to deal no longer with living bodies but with cadavers" ([7], §135, *Addition*, p. 203).

whole, we can establish meaning for parts that are generally overlooked when integrated into a larger whole. It is in this hermeneutic approach that we are able to reconcile the dialectic of the whole and analysis of the part in light of *psychological coherence*. The strength of these conclusions resides in the fact that we are not attempting to resolve all inconsistencies of meaning into one organized and neat whole. A diverse whole will emerge from this hermeneutic interpretation and will be demonstrative of the particular unity of the musical work in question. From this perspective, we solidify our notion of whole in music through a peculiar “hanging together” of parts that demonstrates psychological and thoughtful coherence and meaning.

3. *The Creative Process and “Specific Materialization” of Psychological Coherence*

We can examine *psychological coherence* at a fundamental level of the creative process as what essentially gives shape to unmediated, creative content. A work of art, from the Hegelian perspective, is created through, and reflects, the spirit. We understand this to be also mind or intellect, the subjective inner life that is universal. In a comparison of works of art to objects that occur in nature, Hegel states:

Our imaginative mentality has in itself the character of universality, and what it produces acquires already thereby the stamp of universality in contrast to the individual things in nature. In this respect our imagination has the advantage that it is of wider range and therefore is capable of grasping the inner life, stressing it, and making it more visibly explicit. Now the work of art is of course not just a universal idea, but its specific materialization; but since it has been produced by spirit and its imaginative power, it must be permeated by this character of universality, even though this character has a visible liveliness.... Now here it is the task of the work of art to grasp the object in its universality and to let go, in its external appearance, everything that would remain purely external and indifferent for the expression of the content. The artist therefore does not adopt everything in the forms or modes of expression which he finds outside him in the external world and because he finds it there; on the contrary, if he is to create genuine poetry, he grasps only those characteristics which are right and appropriate to the essence of the matter in hand ([2], p. 164).

In the context of Hegel’s conclusion, we find a composition (a particular, artistic, “specific materialization” of a universal idea) by Beethoven can reflect a subjective, interior state (such as unrest, suffering, or strife) particular to Beethoven and Beethoven’s life. While a composition can reflect a subjective thought through an expression of unrest, it also simultaneously speaks to a universal aspect—e.g., unrest as common to humanity. In this passage, Hegel shows that a work of art reflects the inner life or mind of the individual who created it at the same time as portray the universality of that content. Hegel closes this thought with a discussion of the form the artist will choose in order to best portray that ideal content. The artist subsequently engages in an activity that transforms a

universal idea into a material object. It seems natural, then, that the form the artist selects will reflect content in a complex way, through a dialectical relationship (see [3], p. 200).¹¹

We find this spelled out in what Marx writes regarding the Ninth Symphony's form and content, where both exhibit psychological content. An inner necessity, derived from the symphony's portrayal of a universal, elucidates this and consequently shapes both content and form. The *Idee* will grant coherence to the apparent "total freedom of all parts," and constitute the "sure foundation" that predicates the work's content and form. Marx makes the following comment regarding the conclusion of the first movement, *Allegro ma non troppo e un poco maestoso*, of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, in D minor, Op. 125:

The living world of musical instruments harbours awful secrets within its bosom. What must their creator have had to endure in his fateful solitariness, imprisoned in eternal silence within his own breast! To unlock the enigma of his own interior existence there was only the enigmatic language of music—one mystery as solution to another! But he stood unbowed though profoundly shaken. What control and self-possession does this total freedom of all parts, among other things, bear witness to, each line appearing to exist in its own right alone, while yet he holds them all on course and steers them with a tight rein! What sure foundation does this perfectly stable and lucidly formed structure evince in the depth and richness of its musical ideas!...The first movement of each of the symphonies is decisive for the idea (Gedanke) of the work. In the Ninth it is more so than ever. What does it convey to us? This ceaseless complaint of eternal discontent from which he is no longer able to free himself in his kingdom of musical instruments—he who has imbued and inspired this kingdom with his creative spirits....Man is always closest to man; man's voice is the most familiar, the most sympathetic, the most intelligible. That is a general truth...It was here that the outward plan to give the symphony a new shape by incorporating a final chorus must have become an inner necessity. What was a general truth, what was an experience peculiar of Beethoven, became now the Idea of the Ninth Symphony ([8], pp. 227–28).

In Marx's trenchant remarks, he describes a "living world of musical instruments" where these instruments bear some semblance of complete independence. Yet these parts, despite apparent independence, are bound together with a blind stitch. As a living whole that breathes with vitality, its parts struggle for recognition at the same time as they show their unity in the form of a dynamic whole. To fully comprehend the meaning of the symphony's first movement, Marx must reach beyond the

¹¹ Marx describes how sonata form embodies an aspect of content in the following: "If the artist has experienced a deeper transformation within himself and then turns his gaze from his interior submersion back out into the world, then even the world itself will seem foreign and alienating to him. He knew it before and recognizes it again—and it appears as an Other to him, for he has become other. This schism, softened by the feeling of his own elevation and ascendancy over that which has become alien, finds its expression in the humor of the scherzo (the final movement of a sonata)" ([13], p. 87). Marx describes an ideal artist in this passage (although not entirely explicit, Marx appears to be thinking of Beethoven), and sonata form is consequently based on the coherence that emerges from *psychological evolution*. The *psychological evolution* we encounter in the changing movements of a sonata will assist in our ability to establish *psychological coherence* of content, even though these are not identical.

confines of the movement's double bar to reflect on the significance of this part to the symphony's finale. The leap over two intermediary movements (the *scherzo*, *Molto vivace*, and the *Adagio molto e cantabile*) shows us the complexity of the symphony where one must refer to another part in order to make sense of the first. But of even greater importance, Marx demonstrates the universality of the symphony's *Idee* and how it serves as a floodlight to illuminate meaning in the darkest and most obscure parts.

Marx recognizes the *Idee* of the Ninth Symphony as a complex entity. The contradictory aspects within its definition are precisely what forge its relationship to diverse parts throughout the work. He addresses the opposition within the *Idee* of the Ninth in the following: "We can detect a particular elemental quality of sound reverberating within the work—one so mighty, so gigantically forceful, and yet so tender and full of sorrow" ([8], p. 219). If we use this statement as a glimpse into the work's *psychological coherence*, we can then apply its insight to both performance and critical interpretation. The "elemental quality of sound" speaks to the proximity of the finished work to the creative impulse embodied in the *Idee*. Beethoven composed the symphony in such a way that a rudimentary quality of sound (that is "gigantically forceful") is perceptible in the same expression of tenderness and sorrow.

4. Psychological Coherence, *Beethoven's Ninth Symphony*, and *Expressive Indications*

4.1. *The Finale*

To show the relevance of *psychological coherence* beyond nineteenth-century criticism, we will set it in motion in a fresh examination of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. In particular, we will use *psychological coherence* as a device to investigate expressive indications or indications of mood. Notation that involves expressive word cues (*dolce*, *espressivo*, *cantabile*, etc.) pose a *sui generis* quandary for performance interpretation. Generally the complexity involved in the interpretation of these indications is overlooked. If doubt arises, one is referred to musical lexicons and contemporary or historical treatises on performance practice. In broad daylight, nonetheless, with great visibility in the score, we encounter expressive indications that are at odds with the musical context we find them in. Conflict suddenly arises between the overall *psychological coherence* of the whole, the passage as a particular, and these descriptive musical instructions.

Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 in D Minor, Op. 125, provides us with a number of examples of this. In accordance with Marx's criticism, the symphony is able to maintain *psychological coherence* that sustains its "elemental quality" of a mighty force, juxtaposed with tenderness and sorrow. This same coherence supports an *Idee* of a fundamental sympathy in humanity that is expressed through the feeling of familiarity and intelligibility when one hears another's voice. The contrasting elements that serve as the foundation for the *Idee* are exemplified in a passage at the *Allegro assai* of the Finale directly following the baritone recitative, "*O Freunde, nicht diese Töne!*" (Figure 1). This particular passage presents us with indications of *piano* and *dolce* for oboes, *dolce* for clarinets and bassoons, and *piano* for first and second horns. The oboes are given the most complex theme with respect to expression (they must play *dolce* and *piano*) while the vocal parts bellow in a dramatic exchange. The strings' *pizzicati* melt away in the interjections from the bass members of chorus; the strings' lack of dynamic indications only emphasizes their subservience.

237 **Allegro assai**

Fl. I
Fl. II
Ob. I
Ob. II
Clar. I
Clar. II
Fag. I
Fag. II
Cbfg.

Cor. I
Cor. II
Cor. III
Cor. IV
Tno. I
Tno. II
Timp.

Sop.
Alt.
Ten.
Bar. (Soloist)

Sop. (Chorus)
Alt. (Chorus)
Ten. (Chorus)
Bass. (Chorus)

Viol. I
Viol. II
Vle.
Vc. e B.

p dolce
dolce
dolce
p
f
(angenehm)
f
f
pizz.
pizz.
pizz.
pizz.
p
p
p
p

Freu - de, Freu - de, Freu - de, schön - er Göt - ter - fun - ken,
Freu - de! Freu - de!

Figure 1. Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 9 in D Minor, Op. 125, Finale. Urtext edited by Jonathan Del Mar, Kassel: ©1999, Bärenreiter-Verlag. Finale, *Allegro assai*, mm. 237–241. Used with permission of Bärenreiter-Verlag, Kassel.

The *dolce* parts do not call attention to themselves in the same way as the baritone and basses’ “Freude”—“Freude!” pairing. (Naturally the basses’ *forte* will sound louder because there are more voices singing these notes than the baritone soloist.) The woodwinds quietly murmur the first two measures of the “An die Freude” melody as many of these same instruments did 160 measures before, in the thematic parade of the symphony that precedes the baritone recitative. Be that as it may, at measure 237, there is a change in the air—we have entered into the choral part of the Finale.

During the recitative (Figure 2), the baritone has essentially told the instruments of the orchestra to go home: “No more of these tones!” This outburst in the Finale has perplexed many critics, music historians, and philosophers. Stephen Hinton presents an argument for how to interpret these words that hinges on the negation embedded in the baritone’s words. From our perspective, the baritone does not reject musical (or instrumental) tone inasmuch as he rejects the mood of the symphony; we thus

arrive at a conclusion that is more literal (the instruments project mood through playing their parts) than rhetorical.¹²

216 Recitativo

O Freun - - - de, nicht die - se Tö-ne! Son-der-n laßt uns an - - - ge -

Recitativo

Recit.

colla voce

colla voce

colla voce

colla voce

colla voce

* Execution / Ausführung: ; cf. / Vgl. Critical Commentary

Figure 2. Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 9 in D Minor, Op. 125, Finale. Urtext edited by Jonathan Del Mar, Kassel: ©1999, Bärenreiter-Verlag. Finale, *Recitativo*, mm. 216–227. Used with permission of Bärenreiter-Verlag, Kassel.

¹² It seems dangerous to bring Friedrich Schlegel’s concept of *irony* to bear on the negation expressed in the baritone’s recitative (see [14], pp. 75–77). Schlegel’s *irony* tends to turn meaning on its head, with arguments rooted in ultimate expressions of Fichtean *ego* and subjectivity. Hegel describes the spiral of negation that comes with this *irony*: “The ironical, as the individuality of genius, lies in the self-destruction of the noble, great, and excellent; and so the objective art-formations too will have to display only the principle of absolute subjectivity, by showing forth what has worth and dignity for mankind as null in its self-destruction. This then implies that not only is there to be no seriousness about laws, morals, and truth, but that there is nothing in what is lofty and best, since, in its appearance in individuals, characters, and actions, it contradicts and destroys itself and so is ironical about itself” ([2], p. 67). One way to counter the *irony* argument is to show that despite the symphony’s expressions of unrest, which are metaphorically parallel to aspects of Beethoven’s life, Marx is able to construct an *Idee* within the Ninth Symphony (and thus assert the presence of universal content). The universality of meaning locked within this symphony, and the diverse interpretations it affords, suggests that subjectivity and *ego* are far from the baritone’s words.

For a material demonstration of a literal interpretation (if we understand the baritone to be demanding the instrumentalists to desist), we encounter the oboes, clarinets, and bassoons at m. 237 (Figure 1) softly persuading the baritone of their necessary presence. It is as though the woodwinds plead “please do not call in an army of singers, the ‘*Freunde*,’ to overpower us with their ‘joy!’” The first and second horns, normally a source of strength and valor, are even less conspicuous than the woodwinds: they sound an octave pedal point, at a *piano* dynamic, that seems to disappear into the darkness as the baritone and basses yell across to each other in the open space. The vocal effect is then pulled downward by the basses of the chorus singing “*Freude!*” and the string section’s double basses command the tone even lower through their sounding register to a tone two octaves below the notes in the vocal part. The mysterious contour of the sonorous gesture is so great that it hardly seems we are hearing the string section at all. We witness, instead, a superhuman group of voices create a spontaneous black hole into which all the *forte* sound descends. Beethoven allows the vocalists one measure to recover in between the two instances of this curiosity (Figure 1, m. 239).

By m. 241, the baritone finally concedes to lower his voice a bit, at least to an *angenehm* or “pleasant” level. This indication directly reflects on the baritone’s words from earlier, in the recitative (Figures 2 and 3) “*Sondern lasst uns angenehmere anstimmen, und freudenvollere!*” (But let us strike up more pleasant/pleasing and joyful [tones!]). The *angenehm* indication in m. 241 (Figure 1), as a parenthetical remark, offsets the mood of the previous passages, and demonstrates an adjustment in expression away from the invasive “*Freude*,” to the longer phrases that begin the “Ode to Joy.” It is an about-face in expression when the baritone soloist chooses to shift gears to a style that mocks the woodwinds *dolce* at mm. 237–240. The *angenehm* baritone at m. 241 marks a significant crux in the symphony, and a point of no return with respect to the timbre of the orchestra.

To fully grasp the instability that the appearance of the vocal parts creates, we refer to the start of the recitative at m. 216 (Figure 2). The baritone solo lacks any dynamic indication, but emerges out of what seem to be the longest three beats of silence.¹³ The orchestra is suddenly reduced to only the string section. Measure 215 finds all sounding instruments at *fortissimo*, thereby suggesting the same for the baritone soloist (who enters the symphonic space with the vigor of a police officer who has burst onto the scene to break up a noisy party). The strings cautiously rejoin the sounding space to support the recitative at a *piano* level (Figure 2, m. 221). The baritone resounds triumphantly above their submissive *colla voce*. The *colla voce* concludes with almost all instruments of the orchestra exclaiming a short *forte* motif at mm. 229–230 (Figure 3) that modulates the recitative into D major. As this motif accumulates with the figure at m. 234, dramatic changes from *piano* to *forte* (*sforzando* in the strings) and the *forte* interjection once the baritone has concluded the recitative (m. 236), it is as though the members of the orchestra were assuring each other they were still in the room. The recitative has a laborious quality about it, exacerbated in its sustained tones and the relative independence of the vocalist; it seems the baritone alone were trying to stop a speeding train.

¹³ The last beat of measure 215, not shown, is a rest in all instruments. The lack of dynamics is rather unremarkable, as the vocal parts in recitatives generally do not have dynamics written into the part; measure 238 does provide dynamic indications that call attention to the opposition between the voices and the other instrumental parts.

The image shows a page of a musical score for Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 in D Minor, Op. 125, Finale, Recitativo, measures 228-236. The score is arranged in two systems. The first system includes staves for strings (Violins I, Violins II, Violas, Cellos, Double Basses) and woodwinds (Flutes, Oboes, Clarinets, Bassoons). The second system includes staves for vocal soloists (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "neh-me-re an-stim-men, und freu den-vol-le-re!". The score is marked with dynamics such as *f* (forte) and *p* (piano), and includes the instruction "ad libitum" above the vocal line.

Figure 3. Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 9 in D Minor, Op. 125, Finale. Urtext edited by Jonathan Del Mar, Kassel: ©1999, Bärenreiter-Verlag. Finale, *Recitativo*, mm. 228–236. Used with permission of Bärenreiter-Verlag, Kassel.

Once we reach m. 237 (Figure 1), a new instrumental section has entered the symphony: a full chorus and a quartet of vocal soloists. The instrumentalists of the orchestra, with the woodwind section at *dolce*, seem desperate to strike a balance. At m. 241 the baritone sings of joy, apparently renewed, and drastically changes the dynamic and expression of the execution. Measure 241 marks the point of a new stability, as the chorus and soloists will dominate the sonority of the symphony from now on. This *angenehm* passage sets the tone that the singers will have control of the Finale because the baritone soloist no longer needs to sing aggressively at *forte* as though interrupting a conversation. (The sentiments the word *angenehm* recalls and the dynamic of *forte* seem to cancel each other out, even if the vocalist sings this section at *forte*; it would appear unnecessary for the baritone to sing at *forte* considering the few supporting orchestral voices are sounding at *piano* or *pianissimo*.) The

instrumental sections on the whole, for the rest of the Finale, merely shore up and exalt the expression of the singers' words and passages. In the Finale, once the baritone has relaxed enough to sing at an *angenehm* level, the tables have turned and all of the parts of the orchestra serve the message of "*Freude*" and its vocal representatives.

4.2. *The Timpani, the Finale, and the Whole*

In this short interpretation of the entrance of the vocal parts, we have explored the contrasting expressions in mm. 216–242 (Figures 1–3) through a perspective that utilizes Marx's *psychological coherence* as a unifying thread. The unity between parts, forged through this method, reflects on the particular nature of the symphony as a whole. Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, nevertheless, continues to challenge critical interpretation that aims to establish coherence. David Benjamin Levy specifically addresses the meaning of the Finale with relation to the whole. Levy writes that the structure of the Finale "is a *microcosm of the entire Ninth Symphony itself*" ([15], p. 93). The hermeneutic significance Levy draws from the analysis of the symphony's "microcosm" within the whole, a mini-whole within the whole, shows how the general meaning of the symphony's earlier movements are systematically reflected in sections of the Finale. This is but one component of coherence of the whole that we can locate in the Finale. With relation to ideal content—and this is where Marx's *psychological coherence* facilitates the construction of meaning—we find the expressive polarization of orchestral sections in other crucial moments of the symphony. For example, the opposition we found in the baritone's exclamation at the beginning of the recitative (Figure 2, mm. 216–221) recalls the timpani's paroxysm of assertiveness in the opening of the symphony's second movement (Figure 4).

The sensation of a loud, intrusive voice in contradistinction to a harmonious orchestral timbre is experienced first at this moment in the symphony (Figure 4, m. 5). A spotlight is fixed on the timpani: firstly, it sounds an unanticipated tone¹⁴; secondly, it has become the most curious object of our attention—through its bold and prominent position in the orchestration, it clearly has something to say. The assuming figure of the timpani throughout the second movement foreshadows the imminent entrance of the baritone in the recitative. We connect the outbursts from this unsettling creature, which has asserted the authority of the percussion section (albeit the timpani's tone integrates into the tonal arrangement of the other parts), to the ruckus of the chorus's "*Freude!*" (see Figure 1, m. 238). Richard Taruskin jocosely calls the Ninth Symphony "something of a timpani concerto among symphonies" ([16], p. 241) and focuses on the timpani's rambunctious contribution to the first movement's recapitulation. Instead of drawing up an interpretation that reads the *scherzo* as a joke—Levy suggests humor as a fundamental guide for the interpretation of this movement due to the Italian definition of "*scherzo*"¹⁵—we find the seriousness of the timpani adds to the general instability throughout the entire symphony. The timpani attempts to speak the *Idee* of the symphony through a mouth piece that reproduces only one tone (and this tone reflected in an octave relation) cloaked in an ardent sense of rhythm. It is not until we reach the vocal section of the Finale that we can recognize deeper meaning in the timpani's

¹⁴ "The kettledrums in m. 5—tuned in a most unorthodox way to octave Fs—leave no doubt that the present movement is in D minor. This tuning—the same Beethoven used in the finale of his Eighth Symphony—is as unexpected as it is audacious" ([15], p. 70).

¹⁵ See ([15], pp. 69–70).

truncated phrases. At first sight, the timpani solos and the baritone recitative seem ironic, comical, and naïve. Upon closer inspection, however, the refractory aspect of their expression instills a strong sense of dialectic between the orchestral sections and the meaning of the whole.

Molto vivace ♩. = 116

Flauto I

Flauto II

Oboe I

Oboe II

Clarinetto I in Do / C

Clarinetto II in Do / C

Fagotto I

Fagotto II

Corno I, II in Re / D

Corno III, IV in Si^b / B basso

Clarino I, II in Re / D

Trombone I Alto

Trombone II Tenore

Trombone III Basso

Timpani in

Molto vivace ♩. = 116

Violini I

Violini II

Viole

Violoncelli e Bassi

Figure 4. Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 9 in D Minor, Op. 125, Second movement. Urtext edited by Jonathan Del Mar, Kassel: ©1999, Bärenreiter-Verlag. *Molto vivace, scherzo*, mm. 1–12. Used with permission of Bärenreiter-Verlag, Kassel.

5. Concluding Remarks

In this study, we have tried to illustrate the relevance of Marx's principles for uncovering musical meaning, specifically *psychological coherence*, in the context of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. The concept of *psychological coherence* takes interpretation in a direction beyond purely formal coherence (derived from form and normative rules of composition), and toward meaning as ideal content. The musical parts we base our conclusions upon, which when analyzed appear disjointed from the whole, are threaded together in a hermeneutic analysis that highlights the continuity between part and whole.

Our activity aims to identify hints of ideal content within the diverse material components of music; the impression of ideal content is like a unique blind stamp that has been worn away on the score and its sounding quality—the vague shadows inspire us to look more closely at these material parts and temporarily separate them from the whole.

In a final move of comprehension of ideal content, or a work’s “inner life,” we step back and observe the connections between the finely moving parts of a particular and the whole of the work. As we have shown in examples from the Ninth Symphony, the opposition between orchestral sections and expressive notation in the Finale offers insight regarding similar expressions of unrest in earlier movements of the symphony. Beethoven presents polarity between instruments within the same passages, which mirrors Hegel’s dialectic in thought, and unveils glimpses of an *Idee*. The form of the symphony, its orchestration, the notation Beethoven has chosen, and the sound of these together as a whole, provide the material foundation for *psychological coherence*. This seems to suggest that ideal content (or a musical *Idee*) is not a psychological immaterial entity independent from musical expression but rather the image of the whole as produced by it. The universal meaning, or ideal content, of the whole appears all the more elegant through the evaluation of conflict and resolution in musical expression.

Acknowledgments

Comments by Miguel Tamen on the previous drafts of this article were greatly appreciated. The author would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their helpful suggestions. The author is also very grateful for the kind permissions offered by Bärenreiter-Verlag, Kassel.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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