

After Adorno Rethinking Music Sociology

Tia DeNora

 **CAMBRIDGE**
UNIVERSITY PRESS

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge, CB2 2RU, UK
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain
Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa
<http://www.cambridge.org>

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First published 2003

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

Typeface Plantin 10/12 pt. *System* L^AT_EX 2_ε [TB]

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data

DeNora, Tia

After Adorno : rethinking music sociology / Tia DeNora.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references (p. 159) and index.

Contents: Adorno, 'defended against his devotees' – New methods and classic
concerns – Music as cognition – How does music 'channel' emotion? – Music and
"control" – After Adorno : rethinking music sociology.

ISBN 0-521-83025-7 – ISBN 0-521-53724-X (pb.)

I. Music – Social aspects. 2. Music – Philosophy and aesthetics.

I. Adorno, Theodor W., 1903–1969. II. Title

ML3795.D3428 2003

780'.1 – dc21 2003051525

ISBN 0 521 83025 7 hardback

ISBN 0 521 53724 X paperback

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1 Adorno, ‘defended against his devotees’?

Introduction – music matters

Music has power, or so many people believe. Across culture and time it has been linked with persuasion, healing, corruption, and many other transformational matters. The idea behind these linkages is that music *acts* – on consciousness, the body, the emotions. Associated with this idea is another – the idea that music, because of what it can *do*, should be subject to regulation and control.

The history of music in the West is punctuated with attempts to enlist and censure music’s powers. Most interesting of these centre on music’s tonal properties as distinct from lyrics or libretti. The realm of sacred music offers many examples – Charlemagne’s *c.*800AD ‘reform’ of chant, Pope Gregory XIII’s call for ‘revising, purging, correcting and reforming’ church music (Hoppin 1978:50), the late sixteenth-century Protestant call for plain hymn singing (as opposed to elaborate polyphony), and, slightly later, J. S. Bach’s dictum that the purpose of sacred music was ‘to organise the congregation’ are some of the better known. In the political realm, music has been mobilised or suppressed for its effects. Shostakovich’s commission for a symphony to mark the anniversary of the Russian Revolution (and his later censure for writing ‘decadent’ music), the banishment of atonal music in Nazi Germany, and, in relatively recent times, the furore over national anthem renditions (the Sex Pistols’ *God Save the Queen* or Jimi Hendrix’s version of the *Star Spangled Banner*) all attest to the idea that music can instigate consensus and/or subversion. If the lens is widened to consider music in a global perspective, even more dramatic examples emerge, most recently the prohibition, as reported in the Western media, of nearly all forms of music in Afghanistan. If there is one thing the world shares, musically speaking, it is probably the recognition, at times the *fear*, of what music may allow.

Today, debates about music, morality, and pedagogy continue with vigour in and outside of the academy – discussions concerning the

so-called 'Mozart-effect', worry about heavy metal and its effect upon the young, the disruptive influence of any number of musical styles, and even, more recently a study sponsored by the British Automobile Association on the effects of music on driving safety. While it is true that in some cases music features in these discussions as a scapegoat or convenient marker of otherwise extra-musical concerns (as when music is criticised as a means of criticising its devotees or constituencies and their cultures), it would be hasty to discard the idea that music's *musical* properties may have power. For many people it is a matter of common sense that music has effects: we know this because we have *experienced* these effects, and *because* of music's effects upon us we may both seek out and avoid music. We know, in short, that music matters.

Until relatively recently, there has been a tradition within social theory devoted to the idea of music's power. That tradition can be traced at least to Plato. '[I]t seems that here in music', says the Socrates in Plato's *Republic*, 'the guardians will build their guardhouse . . . Then, from the start, in their earliest play the young will be kept to law and measure through music' (1966:72). What comes through clearly in this famous passage is the idea that social order is fostered by (and ultimately inextricable from) aesthetic, ceremonial, and moral order, and that these in turn are substantiated by ritual and by the arts. This way of conceptualising the bases of social order remained alive throughout the nineteenth century. Its legacy can be found in Durkheim's emphasis on the elementary forms – a work, albeit, in which music's role is neglected (Durkheim 1915).

One might have expected, with the rise of mechanical reproduction, the broadcast media, and the entertainment industry in the twentieth century, that the need for thinking about music's social functions would have intensified. And yet, within social philosophy after Saint-Simon, music's importance waned. As sociologists and social theorists turned to music in the twentieth century, it was typically *not* to take up the topic of music's social power. Instead, music has been posed more remotely, as a medium that 'reflects' or otherwise parallels social structure. This essentially formalist paradigm, characteristic of theorists as diverse as Max Weber, Dilthey, Simmel, and Sorokin, effectively neutralised more overt concerns with music's link to moral conduct. (For discussions of their work see Etzkorn 1973; Zolberg 1990 *passim*; and Martin 1995:75–167.) And with this neutralisation came a very different interrogative thrust: socio-musical studies moved *from a concern with what music 'caused' to what caused music*. In relation to this trend, music sociology began to develop as the sociology *of* music, a linguistic nuance within which some of the most intriguing questions about music and society, or,

more precisely, music in and as society, came to be excised. Even in the otherwise fruitful (and grounded) focus of the 'art worlds' and 'production of culture' approaches of the late 1980s and 1990s (Peterson 1978; Becker 1982; DeNora 1995) the question of music's effects remained unanswered.

As a result, within the sociology of music, the medium of music was implicitly downgraded; its status shifted, from active ingredient or animating *force* to inanimate *product* (an object to be explained). Along with this downgrading, music became, during the twentieth century, a scholarly and specialist topic, and, as with most scholarly matters, the *passion* of the subject drained away such that, today, the fissure between ordinary, everyday responses to music and expert accounts of music came to seem both normal and acceptable. In recent years, there have been signs of change (described below) and interdisciplinary studies of music have gone a long way towards redressing music, as it were, 'in action'. There is, nonetheless, still a way to go.

Enter Adorno

It is from within this context that we can begin to appreciate the unique qualities of Theodor W. Adorno and his socio-musical project. For whatever reason – his minor career as a composer, his geographical and cultural displacement, his affiliation with fellow critical theorists – Adorno did, arguably, more to theorise music's powers than any other scholar during the first half of the twentieth century. Because of this – and despite the many faults that, with the benefit of hindsight, can be found with his work and method – Adorno is hailed, rightly, as the 'father' of the sociology of music (Shepherd 2001:605).

Adorno was intimately acquainted with music; for him, music was not a topic to be considered abstractly in terms of the social forces that shaped it or in terms of its structural properties. Music was, by contrast, a living, dynamic medium. And it was, arguably, from the standpoint of his involvement with music that Adorno launched his philosophical and sociological work. As described in the next chapters, Adorno used music *to think with*. He also devoted his thinking to the ways that music could, for better or worse, transform consciousness. It is critical to recognise from the outset that, for Adorno, socio-musical enquiry provided the key to a perspective that encompassed a breathtakingly broad interrogative span – philosophy and sociology of knowledge, cultural history of consciousness, the history of social cohesion, dominance, and submission. To understand Adorno's work on music, therefore, it is necessary to lodge it within these much broader concerns.

The idea of negative dialectics

Adorno could not have been more serious. His work explored the failure of reason that culminated in the catastrophic events of the twentieth century: the rise of fascism, genocide, terror, and mass destruction. More specifically, he sought to understand what he perceived as a transformation of consciousness, one that fostered authoritarian modes of ruling. To this end, Adorno's project begins philosophically with a critique of reason. It ends, one might argue, sociologically with a psycho-cultural study of consciousness and its conditions. Both of these components of his work need to be understood as part of a wider, interdisciplinary project.

Adorno's critique of reason centres on the idea that material reality is more complex than the ideas and concepts available for describing it. Reality – by which Adorno meant not only nature but also the specificity of lived experience – cannot be fully addressed by words, measurements, concepts, and categories, all of which must be understood at best as approximations of reality, as socially constituted ideas or images of phenomena. In this respect, Adorno was, and remained throughout his life, a materialist and a philosopher of the actual. His work highlighted the disjunction between ideas and material reality, a gap within which the former might be useful, indeed, even 'effective', but never be eternally or comprehensively 'true'.

There were, in Adorno's view, grave dangers associated with equating ideas and reality. First, such an association rendered reason conformist. Second, it deprived reason of its critical, reflexive edge. Third, it built into reason an authoritarian tendency, one in which reality was made to fit reason's pre-designed containers rather than reason bespoke to accommodate reality. These dangers were, according to Adorno, compounded by modern commodity exchange and its cultural correlate – the idea of values as 'goods'. The result, in the twentieth century, was an alteration of reason's character. Reason had become both inflated and linked to an over-estimation of itself and to an under-estimation of reality. The tendency to worship science and to accept without question whatever was purveyed under the banner of science exemplified this inflation *par excellence*. The task of modern philosophy, therefore, was to point up reality's *non-identification* with reason. This task was, in essence, criticism, and it was to be advanced through the idea of negative dialectics.

Unlike both Hegel and Marx, Adorno was not interested in contributing positive knowledge 'about' reality. Adorno sought no form of 'synthesis', whether posed in terms of an ideal formulation about reality or as a philosophy of history culminating in a utopian, and thus positive, state. By contrast, Adorno sought to illuminate difference and contradiction – the

residual, the ill-fitting, non-sense, in short, anything that did not 'fit' within existing categories of thought. Through this process, Adorno sought to refine thought. This task was in turn oriented to reconfiguring reason as a form of suspended recognition, that is, as continuous moments of non-recognition between reason and reality. These moments of non-recognition in turn provided a means by which greater complexity could be revealed. Adorno's famous aphorism, 'the whole is the untrue', encapsulates this point: the idea of negative dialectics was thus a mandate for reason to engage in self-critique. In this respect, and despite the humanist estimation of reason that permeates his work, Adorno's idea of negative dialectics is ultimately about the humility of knowledge, its inextricably social – and thus moral – character.

The concern with cognition is central to Adorno's thought world. To gain familiarity with that world it is necessary to understand what Adorno meant when he spoke of reason's tendency to objectify and, along with this, to understand objectification as a social process, that is, as a form of praxis, as described in the two next sections. From there, it is possible to contextualise Adorno's views on the degraded role of both science and art as forms of knowledge in the modern world. These topics, which together highlight Adorno's *philosophical* beginnings, in turn provide the groundwork for embarking upon what, from a *sociological* perspective, may be viewed as the *core* of Adorno's work: his focus on the role played by cultural machineries in relation to objectification, the inclusion, within his philosophy, of a theory of the unconscious, and, related to this second feature, his concern with the links between aesthetic structures and styles of consciousness.

What is objectification?

An objectifying mentality led away from dialectical thinking. It posed instead an identity between human ideas (concepts) and material realities in ways that made these realities appear axiomatic – and therefore non-negotiable. It is important to note that, for Adorno, objectification was *activity* (praxis); it was the subject who, through particular habits of mind, accomplished this work. For Adorno, the subject was thus complicit in her own cognitive alienation. It was the cultural basis of this complicity that Adorno-the-sociologist sought to explore.

Objectification was simultaneously cognitive violence. (In this sense, Adorno's focus overlaps with the post-structuralist concern with discourse and its totalising powers.) For, when an objectifying mentality had come to be established as a habit of mind, the impetus to excise what did not 'fit' pre-given assumptions about the nature of reality also

became routine – part of the tacit practices of perceiving and responding to material reality. This objectifying form of consciousness – directed away from the perception of discrepancy – was, needless to say, overly, i.e., ritualistically, conservative: it was oriented to the recognition (and thus reproduction) of general categories (as opposed to a constant interrogation of those categories by material reality). As such, it entailed a generic orientation to the world, characterised, for example, by tacit assumptions about classes and categories of people and the treatment of individuals as instances of those categories. It also involved assumptions about the nature of things (aspects of the material environment) as general types, assumptions which, if acted upon, abolished proximate – intimate – experience of things.

In Adorno's view, such a consciousness was not only dehumanised (it failed to search for specific differences that would, in turn, enlarge general categories of thought); it was above all a consciousness amenable to externally imposed relations of ruling. In the identification such consciousness made between ideas and material realities, it generated *belief* in a 'reliable', i.e., *stable*, material and social world, a world that, in the oft-quoted passage from the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 'simply exists'. To speak in this way of a *belief* in 'what simply exists' is to speak of what Adorno occasionally calls, the 'ontological ideology' (Adorno 1981:62). As a habit of mind, the ontological ideology was characterised by a taste for certainty, itself a symptom, in Adorno's view, of lax cognitive functioning. And this habit was highly conducive to 'rational' administration in so far as, at the local level, actors reinforce (identify with) general concepts, modelling the particularity of their experience or action upon those concepts so as to 'fit' or make sense of the 'here and now' in terms of the 'there and then', i.e., to ideas of what is *supposed* (by actors) *to be*. To illustrate objectification as praxis (how actors 'fit' the general to the particular and thereby do violence to the latter while simultaneously aligning themselves with ruling authorities), it is worth considering how Adorno's perspective can be compared to other strands of sociology similarly concerned with the ways that 'reality' comes to be produced as an objective fact. Consider, for example, the ethnomethodological perspective on this topic.

Objectification as social practice

One of the most compelling descriptions of this process can be found in Garfinkel's classic study of the inter-sexed person Agnes (Garfinkel 1967). Garfinkel's essay ('Passing and the Managed Achievement of Sexual Status as an Intersexed Person') examines the practices 'Agnes'

employed so as to 'pass' as a generic type of human being – a 'woman'. In this work Garfinkel prefigured subsequent perspectives in performance theory (e.g., Butler 1989) with his focus on the situated practices through which cultural 'work' gets done, performances through which the 'reality' of cultural, often institutional categories (here the identity between the categories of biological sex and natural phenomena and their link to social institutions such as the family), is reproduced. To 'fit' herself into the category 'woman', for example, Agnes mobilised skills and material props (1950s pearls and twin-set sweaters, cookery skills); she subjected herself to radical techniques of body modification (hormones and surgery); and took care to avoid situations that threatened to reveal her less feminine characteristics and attributes (she would not wear a swimming costume; she avoided 'dangerous' intimate situations). In this way, and, critically, by *suppressing* aspects of her material reality, Agnes managed to 'pass' ('for all practical purposes') as a woman.

The lessons to be drawn from Garfinkel's study apply to the performance of *all* meanings, of all cultural categories *as if* they are naturally occurring. What Agnes did, so too 'real' women (and men) do – they orient to (and through their praxis attempt to reproduce) assumed features of socially constituted, generic categories. Agnes's more extreme version of this process thus serves to highlight 'normal' praxis; it illuminates how the specific is rendered in general terms; how, in this case, 'femaleness' (one could here substitute any number of other categories of identity) is achieved through interpretive and material practice – both Agnes's practice and also the practices of those who come to perceive and act towards her as 'a woman'. We also see, in this case study, how difference (that which does not fit within a category) is excised as an often-tacit matter of practical experience. Through these practices, that which is assumed to be an axiomatic feature of material reality comes to take on the appearance of what Garfinkel and the ethnomethodologists call a 'for-all-practical purposes', 'natural, normal world'.

In similar vein, the work of Erving Goffman, on self-presentation, shows us actors as they draw upon pre-given modalities, scripts, images, and other externally provided materials (this topic will be discussed in chapter 5 in relation to the theory of cultural repertoires) so as to enact meaningful social scenarios. We see Goffman's actors produce themselves as 'types' of workers, personalities, or subjects. In this respect, Goffman's actors are fundamentally conservative; they are oriented to (as they perceive them) the culture and requirements of organisations and institutions; to what it takes, in other words, to 'get the work done' and thus to perpetuate organisationally and institutionally specific arrangements.

While at first glance Garfinkel and Goffman may seem unduly remote from Adorno's concerns, their work can also be read as highlighting the discrepancy or gap between social categories and material reality. In their reports, we are able to see some of the *work* that actors do, as practical and interpretive agents, to maintain a cognitive-ritual order. And thus we see what *does not fit* as it is fitted into preconceived forms, as cognitive (and in Agnes's case, physical) violence is done to material reality. From Adorno's critical point of view, the work performed by the actors described by Garfinkel and Goffman would consist of nothing less than mistaken identity – i.e., activity that is obeisant to the authority of the object (i.e., an apparently natural category of being such as sex or a stipulated institutional category). This type of obeisance is one that does not impinge upon the shape of that object or the thought system within which it is lodged. That is, the violence done to material so as to make it conform to an idea precludes any need to refashion – recompose – the idea so as to accommodate it to reality.

Adorno was never an interactionist nor did he concern himself with work in that tradition (indeed there are few references to *any* American sociology in his work). His work diverges markedly from interactionist and ethnomethodological perspectives in that he turned away from a concern with *actual* social practice in favour of a focus on more 'macro'-cultural concerns. By this I mean that he lodged the forms of obeisance described by scholars such as Goffman in *historical* perspective and conceptualised them as modes of consciousness and cognitive praxis, that is, as *structures* of consciousness standing outside individuals and thus serving as conditions for, and of, consciousness (on this point, and for an ethnomethodological account of knowledge production that does provide a historical perspective on knowledge as mode of praxis, see Pollner 1987). In particular, Adorno considered that subjective praxis of objectification was historically specific, a hallmark of modern thought. As part of that project, he criticised the formulation of what passed for knowledge under modernity in his and Horkheimer's jointly written *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (to which, it is worth underlining, Adorno's *Philosophy of Modern Music* was intended as an extended appendix). Examining the critique of science put forward by Adorno, and the transformation of science in the post-enlightenment period and beyond, helps to highlight Adorno's views on the 'true' social role of art – as a condition through which consciousness was structured in the modern world. It is, more specifically, in his treatment of the science–art dichotomy that the groundwork is laid for his ideas about art's (music's) cognitive function, that is, music's link to the shape and tendency of consciousness under modernity, to be conjoined to the habits of mind that characterised the ontological ideology.

In the modern world, Adorno considered, art had been stripped of its status as a means for knowing and, with it, the role of the un-conscious (or quasi conscious) in knowledge formation forgotten.

Art 'versus' science

In Adorno's eyes, the post-enlightenment dualism of art 'versus' science (the impoverished role of the former; the ascendancy of the latter) was symptomatic of the debasement of *both* science and art under modernity (capitalism, cultural commodification, and authoritarian political rule). This debasement was, in turn, part of what Adorno perceived as the 'crisis' of modernity, the disconnection of subject and object, or, in Marxian terms, the alienation that is fostered when, in daily life and on a routine basis, one is required to function in a world one has had little part in making or hope of remaking. For Adorno, the post-enlightenment division of art and science led to the modern human subject's double dispossession.

Adorno's argument runs as follows: on the one hand, science, configured as the positivist pursuit of objective facts, 'progressively' accumulated, was hailed as the purveyor of patent truth. (Such formulations left no space for scientific progress to be examined as a social and cultural construction.) As such, science was rendered aloof from ordinary modes of human inquiry, sequestered as an expert realm and thus as an instrument of ruling. (This was exemplified, perhaps most immediately, by 'science' under the Nazis, but was also illustrated at a sometimes more anodyne level in the everyday understanding of expert-mediated knowledge, and today, perhaps, many of the attempts to inculcate a 'scientifically literate' public particularly when these literacy projects are linked to attempts to *persuade* the public to 'accept' particular scientific policies or practices and/or to quell controversy.)

On the other hand, the role of art, as a form of *knowledge* or, as will be described below, a way of activating consciousness, was undercut. As with science, art came to be something remote something that acted *upon* its beholders, either as allied with the subjective (i.e., 'personal' and thus, 'irrational') realm and with the romantic notion of expression (to 'move' listeners, for example), or as it was debased through being used as an agent of rhetorical persuasion. For Adorno (as will be discussed in detail later), art's link to the mobilisation of emotion and/or action was regressive, symptomatic of the same kind of (authoritarian) communicative relationship he sought to critique. In both science and art, then, the exploration of dialectical tension between form and content, concept and material, was sacrificed in favour of the production of 'effects' – sensations, imageries, findings – in short, applications.

For Adorno, nothing was more insidious than this loss of dialectical tension. Indeed, it is here that we may venture to speak of ‘true’ science (and perhaps also to begin to appreciate why Adorno has recently been rediscovered by feminist and ecological philosophers), namely, an investigative attitude devoted to recursive revision (negation) of itself (as in the almost ethnographic, ‘feeling for the organism’ of Barbara McClintock (Fox-Keller 1983)) or art’s explorations of things outside the frame, the liminal or otherwise neglected aspects of material. For Adorno, these reflexive activities widened attention’s span. They heightened consciousness, that is, the ability to perceive the *differences* between things; to fathom, if never contain, reality. The task of reason was to accommodate, and through formulation as knowledge, *arrange* (without suppressing) complexity, diversity, heterogeneity – to hold as much ‘material’ as is possible within compromised consciousness. Such a task should be the same, whether accomplished through science or art, and it is at this point that Adorno’s philosophy begins to modulate into cultural critique, to a focus on how, in any cultural medium, formulation – *composition* – is accomplished. It is also at the point when Adorno becomes a cultural critic that he becomes, also, a sociologist.

That music sociology may be encapsulated as follows: Adorno was concerned with how music’s *formal properties* evinced modes of praxis that in turn were related to, and could inculcate modes of, consciousness. This ability to inculcate modes of consciousness was in turn linked to a theory of the listening subject’s unconscious (or quasi-conscious) relation to music, i.e., to the way in which music processing involved a sub-rational and sub-liminal dimension, an ability to elide consciousness and yet still have some effect upon consciousness and/or action. Cultural products, in so far as they evinced particular modes of praxis in their formal arrangements, could, for example, heighten or suppress human critical, perceptual, and expressive faculties. And to the extent that they were able to structure these faculties, they also fostered social arrangement. It is from this perspective that Adorno can be seen as seeking to bridge the gap between aesthetic and scientific modes of knowing and, in so doing, to restore aesthetics to its pre-enlightenment role as cognition’s matrix. It is here that Adorno’s concern with music in modern societies comes to the fore.

Adorno on music

Adorno was musically trained, an acolyte of Alban Berg and author of atonal compositions. Music was, as will be described in chapter 3, nothing less than Adorno’s cognitive workspace; his philosophy can be understood

to have sublimated music into philosophy and, simultaneously, sublimated philosophy into music. This point has been discussed by those most intimate with Adorno's linguistic-compositional practices: Susan Buck-Morss and, more recently, Susan H. Gillespie have both outlined this issue with great insight. Gillespie (1995; 2002) has suggested that Adorno's texts have a strongly performative dimension, and that their translation requires that special attention be paid to:

the text's rhythms and stresses, its oblique references to other texts and contexts, its use of rare or poetic words and frequent neologisms, and also certain more pervasive differences in mood, for example between the short, scherzo-like sketches and the longer, more symphonic essays. (Gillespie 2002:xiv)

Thus the written text, modelled upon music, was itself also an exemplar of how cognition and cognitive representation could proceed. Adorno's writings can thus be seen as performing *manners* of composition, ways of holding on to and accommodating material. In this respect, the philosophical text was no different from composition.

For Adorno, music was nothing less than a cultural site within which social-cognitive tendencies could, through the formal properties of composition, be 'diagnosed'. Musical composition was, in other words, a potentially exemplary form of praxis. As such, it involved the handling or *arrangement* of materials or parts – voices and modes of voicing, motives, and themes, and also tempos and rhythmic figures, timbres (e.g., the sound of the saxophone, the use of vibrato), and the architectonics of harmonic 'progression'. As a mode of arrangement, a way of fashioning material into 'parts' and 'wholes', musical composition evidenced, for Adorno, social content; it demonstrated modes of handling, ways of ordering (musical) reality. Musical composition was not merely analogous to social organisation. It was also a form of political action (e.g., musical form inevitably simplifies the sonic tendencies of its materials, inevitably involves compromise, and, thus, does violence to materials that are curtailed in the service of compositional form). These features could in turn be revealed by an 'immanent method' of critique, namely, an engagement with music's formal properties and with the ways that composers handled, within specific works, the tensions between material and formal arrangement.

This point is worth expanding. For Adorno, music performed two cognitive functions, both of which operated at a level beneath conscious awareness. The first of these was to portray the 'true' state of the subject, to provide that subject with a mirror of her relation to the social whole. When the totality of social relations took on the guise of repressive administration, for example, when it did violence to the subject-citizen, music

could document the discrepancy between (socio-political) subject and object, by illuminating the ‘homelessness’ of the subject, its inability to find a form capable of accommodating it. Music’s first cognitive function was thus to remind the subject of what, in other realms, had been lost.

Music’s second cognitive function was to exemplify: in and through the abstract procedures of its composition – the arrangement of material – music offered models of how part–whole relationships could be conceived and configured. In so doing it also showed how the subject (being) or material (nature) could stand in relation to the social and cognitive totality. Musical form thus served a didactic function – it could exemplify how material could be organised so as to do minimal violence. The handling of musical material – composition – could provide models of how one might conceive of, and orient to, realities beyond musical ones, how one might ‘handle’ arrangement elsewhere – in science or in social institutions, for example, so as to preserve, rather than excise, complexity. It was in this sense that musical compositional praxis provided a simulacrum of praxis more generally. Music’s second cognitive function was thus critique by example; music was a structure against which other things could be articulated. It was, in this sense, a cognitive resource.

For example, the question of how music fashions ‘closure’ might be read for what it tells us about how ‘closure’ in other realms could, potentially, proceed. Does the piece end with a clashing of cymbals or with the fading away of a single note? Does it reassert the tonic or ‘home’ key repeatedly through a series of closing dominant seventh to tonic cadences (the music equivalent of saying ‘the-end, the-end, the-end’) or does it end with a harmonically ambiguous passage? Or, as in the music of Phillip Glass or Steve Reich, does it end abruptly, with no foretaste of cessation, no self-referencing sign that an end is soon to be reached?

To take another example, how are voices interwoven? Does one voice, a solo or the melodic line, lead and are others used (subserviently) as harmonic support? Or are all the voices, as in a fugue or polyphonic composition, equally important, equally ‘melodic’, as in, for example, Thomas Tallis’s choral works? As Adorno puts it, ‘[p]olyphonic music says “we” even when it lives as a conception only in the mind of the composer . . .’ (1973:18).

To develop this example, and in a way that highlights compositional praxis, consider the process of learning how to harmonise the melodic line of a Bach chorale. As part of the rudiments of music theory, it is customary to practise this skill by learning how to harmonise a chorale melody. There are various rules that apply – no parallel fourths or fifths, for example. Novice attempts to follow these rules often result in supporting lines (alto,

tenor, and bass) that follow distinctly jagged paths and are thus difficult to sing (i.e., they have no logic of their own but only in relation to the melodic line and the global rules). The *material*, in this case the voice lines, is thus made subservient to the need to produce a greater form; the particular is sacrificed to the general. A 'good' harmonisation, by contrast, would be attentive to the needs of *all* the voices so that the 'whole' could be seen to emerge from a judicious arrangement of the parts. In such a composition, then, one might speak of the music as analogous to a collective ideal.

It is possible, from this example, to imagine how musical relations may come to serve as exemplars of social relations, in particular, as 'ideal[s] of collectivity' (Adorno 1974:18). One sees here the deeply intriguing aspect of Adorno's musical work – his concern with composition, with the handling of musical material, as nothing short of moral praxis. This is one of the greatest strengths of Adorno's position – his concern was not with what music (as a medium or an object) 'represented', it was rather with the actual practice of music – its formal arrangement, both as moral praxis and as exemplar, as a model for praxis in other realms. How, then, to account for the process by which musical forms took shape? What, in other words, was the engine of music history?

Music history – how is it made?

For Adorno, the composer (subject) is understood in dialectical relationship to the musical material (object) in a way that, at first glance appears to engender contradiction. On the one hand, he emphasises music's *inherent* logic (the unfolding or developing of musical material over time). On the other, he emphasises the composer as a subject in relation to the congealed history (conventional musical practices) placed at her disposal. This contradiction needs to be addressed full-on if Adorno's work is to be developed, eventually, in an empirical context. It is necessary, in other words, to press Adorno on the question of musical stylistic change and, equally importantly, on the question of musical greatness and its origins.

On the one hand, Adorno often speaks of how the composer is faced with 'problems' posed by music, or the 'questions directed to him by the material in the form of its own immanent problems', as in the case of Schoenberg (Adorno 2002:399). Here the implication is that the best composers will find ways of responding to music, ways of solving the problems *music* poses. And in this case, music's link to society is conceived as isomorphic: each 'develops' according to its respective internal logics and both these logics are generated by an underlying structural dynamic (congealed history). Here, Adorno can be read as a structuralist, as implying that music 'mirrors' or in some way is structurally related to

society. The composer's task here is conceived as essentially passive; she is configured as a conduit, one who follows the 'laws' of development implicit in music's material. 'Good' composers are, within this purview, those who are best able to develop the implications of musical material's potential. There is more than a little metaphysics here of *music's* trajectory, a metaphysics that is often present in the tenor of Adorno's thought. Such a view skews music history towards musicological determinism and, as such, sits uneasily with more recent work in music sociology as I describe below.

At the same time, Adorno posits a second understanding of the music–society nexus. In this second understanding, the composer is a subject within her world, a maker of that world through her compositional praxis, and thus, a maker of music history – a history that does not simply evolve but is the result of agency. ('The idea that the tonal system is exclusively of natural origin is an illusion rooted in history' (1973:11)). As Adorno puts it, "'material" is itself a crystallisation of the creative impulse, an element socially predetermined through the consciousness of man' (1973:33). Here, Adorno reinserts agency to the compositional equation and thus can be seen to correct the structuralist tendencies of his work in ways that presage structuration theory, namely, that position creativity within an enabling and constraining matrix of prior creative acts and materials. And it is also here that we can begin to see just how much weight Adorno expected the 'good' composer to carry: she needed not only to grapple with material but also to find a way both of addressing history (i.e., of being thoroughly encultured) while simultaneously working through that history to forge historical materials to the here and now of socio-musical (political, psychological) conditions. It was in this sense that the composer was – to use the old-fashioned term – a 'maker'.

This focus on the dual nature of composition – the human-made quality of musical discourse and the ways in which musical material was preformed by history – points up Adorno's dialectical materialism. But – and not intended by Adorno – it also furthers certain of Adorno's assumptions that were characteristic of the culture in which he was steeped – the belief in musical–aesthetic hierarchy ('good' or 'true' music and, by implication, its opposite), an adherence to a romantic and post-romantic conception of the artist and artistic autonomy, the idea of the artist's marginal position in relation to public life. These were the nineteenth-century emblems of bourgeois humanism that Adorno revered. They led on to the image of the composer as hero. And nowhere is this image more striking in Adorno's work than in the essays on Beethoven, who, in his formal compositional procedures, uniquely exemplified the status of the bourgeois subject in the post-enlightenment world.

Adorno's Beethoven hero

As Adorno makes clear, the utopian moment of human history, the time when music was (briefly) allowed to enjoy its role as affirmation and the time when bourgeois humanist ideology seemed like a reality, was long since by-passed. That moment, and its elision, could be perceived, according to Adorno, in the compositional praxis of Beethoven and his shift from middle-to late-period style during the early nineteenth century.

For Adorno, Beethoven was heroic because his compositions both exemplified the procedures of reason and served as a foil against which reason's historical position could be gauged. Beethoven occupied a particular position in history. Beethoven, unlike his contemporaries, according to Adorno, managed to compose in such a way that his work was drawn into exact alignment with his historical situation. Beethoven was able, in other words, to address music's congealed history and in so doing simultaneously address his historical situation.

In his praxis, then, Beethoven both diagnosed and exemplified the 'crisis' of modernity – a rupture or break between subject and object, individual and society. Beethoven's middle-period works, their affirmation as exemplified by Beethoven's willingness to allow material – the musical subject – to subject itself to the good of the whole (because of a belief in the justice of that whole) represented, for Adorno, Beethoven-the-man's fleeting belief in utopian possibility, the justification of part within whole. Such is the view that preserves the composer as (heroic) agent. Adorno described this point as follows:

Beethoven did not accommodate himself to the identity of the often-cited rising bourgeois of the era of 1789 or 1800; he partook of its spirit . . . where the inner coincidence [i.e., partaking of the spirit of a movement] is lacking and is imposed by force or fiat, the result is merely conformity on the part of the composer . . . regularly at the expense of quality, of the music's stature. (2002: 652–3)

At the same time as he identified Beethoven as an agent, Adorno also identified Beethoven's agency as 'coinciding' with the spirit of an age and, in this respect, Adorno's conception of the work of composers exhibits the structuralism with which Adorno is often associated: Beethoven's works mirrored social forces in this conception but did not mediate these forces or provide resources through which they were elaborated. Whichever of these views one holds (Beethoven as a 'possessor' of agency or as the 'possessed' by music's material tendencies (its congealed history)), when the moment of social equilibrium passed, and when the object claimed priority over the subject in the guise of administration (Napoleon crowning

himself emperor), Beethoven's composition became increasingly fragmented, characterised increasingly by dissonance and disintegration. It exemplified the rupture between subject and object and the apparent impossibility of a future union between the two. Beethoven's later music thus 'diagnosed', as Subotnik puts it (1991), the homelessness of the subject under modernity, and the violence perpetuated against the subject that any attempt to accommodate it would produce. In this regard, Beethoven's praxis provided a direct line to be taken up, in the twentieth century by Schoenberg.

Adorno praised Beethoven for refusing to allow the subject (musical material) to capitulate to the object of musical form. In this resistance, Beethoven fulfilled the 'true' function of art, namely to offer a contrast structure against which 'false clarity' could be perceived (1974:15). Formal 'obscurity' could, Adorno argued, be 'held up in opposition to the prevailing neon-light style of the times'. After the utopian moment was lost in the early nineteenth century, affirmation was no longer a valid possibility, the only valid role for art was critique. Art is able to 'aid enlightenment only by relating the clarity of the world consciously to its own darkness' (ibid.). It is here, then, that Adorno's concern with dialectic, his critique of positivism, his theory of negative dialectics, and his concern with the formal properties of composition coalesce. And music, because of its unrepresentative and temporal character and through its formal properties, could preserve the negative function of reason. It was precisely this negativity, or refusal to capitulate to that 'neon-light style' (an epistemological attitude in which things are taken to be self-evident – i.e., the ontological ideology), that Adorno explored in the *Philosophy of Modern Music*, an analysis of the two main tendencies – negative versus positive, progressive versus reactionary – that music followed in the twentieth century.

Music, progress, and administration

A century and a half after that utopian moment captured in middle-period Beethoven, the dual regime of political authoritarianism and commodity capitalism – both as relations of production and as the producer of cultural 'goods' – had triumphed. And in that triumph, according to Adorno, resided the mechanisms of collective stupefaction – the dynamics of the culture industry and their psycho-cultural consequences. For if 'good' art could 'aid enlightenment' by pointing out darkness, the culture industry and its drive towards standardisation militated against enlightenment through repetition and predictability. According to Adorno, the music industry purveyed an endless parade of popular songs that

were generically nearly identical. (Recall here, Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and Orwell's *1984*. In both these dystopias music is employed as balm, as distraction, and as focusing device to prevent critical reflection – I return to this theme in chapter 5.) Though the superficial details of the songs varied, popular music fostered 'pseudo-individualisation' according to Adorno – the presentation, as a staple diet, of a radically narrowed 'menu' packaged and sold to address the full gamut of difference in, as it were, a cardboard box. And composition was entirely given over to the generation of musical effect; musical material was held tightly in reign by the discipline of form and cliché. As a listener, one attended to, and expected, certain effects. Through this cycle of expectation and gratification, according to Adorno, popular music 'train[ed] the unconscious for conditioned reflexes' (1976:29).

In an early essay, Adorno analysed the psycho-cultural effects of such music, referring to the fetishisation of music and the regression of hearing. As he described that work in the preface to the *Philosophy of Modern Music* (1973:xi), Adorno said that he had sought to show how music's function had been altered in the modern world, and that this change was due to the impact of commercialisation on composition (on the 'inner fluctuations suffered by musical phenomena'). As he described it, these changes were linked to a shift in the structure of musical hearing (that is changes in the social construction of aural perception, of how we hear), a point later developed in the opening pages of the *Introduction to the Sociology of Music* (1976). These changes were, importantly in Adorno's view, linked to the fundamental shift in consciousness that was the hallmark of modernity, the emergence of the ontological ideology.

Musically conceived, this shift was characterised in particular by the listener's susceptibility to music's effects on the body and the emotions, and her orientation to music as a source of pleasure, as a token of lifestyle, and as a diversion and a way of coping. Here, then, music loses its status as dialectical praxis and as a resource for the instigation of critical consciousness (the perception of difference). It is reduced to the status of a commodity, a commodity that subverts critical faculties and substitutes for knowledge a kind of compensatory affirmation. To put this bluntly, music's commodity value was, according to Adorno, derived from its *psychological* function, its ability to gratify, to offer (temporarily and for money) pleasure, sensation, and a (false) sense of security. In this sense, music was re-specified as that supreme function of capitalism – a good.

Thus, for Adorno, it was ultimately the music industry, its forces and relations of production, that generated music's increasingly administrative tendency; its standardised products provided the totems that undercut reason. In short, the culture industry produced music that ordered its

listening subject by narrowing the horizons of consciousness by invoking desire and then channelling it through stereotypical routes. In this way, the music industry and its wares reconfigured music's listeners and its function.

Adorno develops this thesis through an examination of the tendencies inherent in twentieth-century music – through his comparison of Schoenberg with Stravinsky. Written between 1940 and 1948, the *Philosophy of Modern Music* juxtaposes its two subjects as the greatest representatives of compositional extremes. While Adorno bestows the distinction of 'radical' upon Schoenberg, he sees Stravinsky's compositional practice as ultimately linked to the fetishisation and regression that characterised the twentieth-century shift in music's function.

Adorno launches his critique of Stravinsky on a number of grounds. We can begin to explore these grounds by considering his treatment of *Le Sacre du Printemps*, particularly Stravinsky's handling of musical material. We are treated to a veritable catalogue of how not to compose or, rather, how composition may come to evince the fetishist tendencies and thus inculcate the regression in hearing that Adorno described in his earlier work. In short, Stravinsky installed on the 'high' cultural stage the same, regressive, musical compositional procedures that could be found in the popular realm. 'The assembled rhythmic patterns of exotic dances . . .', Adorno writes about Stravinsky's *Sacre*, 'are an arbitrary game, and, to be sure, their arbitrariness is deeply related to the habit of authenticity throughout Stravinsky's music. *Sacre* already contains those elements which later undermine any claim to authenticity and revert music – because it aspires to power – to impotence' (1973:155).

Because, as Adorno believed, Stravinsky's music invoked the body directly, it disengaged the mind. Stravinsky's music did not deal with the part-whole problem of arrangement but was rather oriented – not unlike the popular songs Adorno disdained – towards *effect*. Moreover, in permitting rhythm to dominate, Stravinsky elevated the collective – the object – over the subject; the potential of his musical materials was made subservient to the music's pulse. And finally (and bearing in mind that *Le Sacre* was a ballet), Stravinsky used music to *depict* topics and scenes and this, Adorno claimed, led him to use music as a 'pseudomorphism of painting' – to reduce music to the role of depictive rendition and thus deny its specifically musical properties, understood as the processual unfolding of musical material, its 'becoming' (1973:162).

By contrast, by retaining the (Beethovenian) concern with music's formal problems (which were simultaneously the problem of how to configure the subject-object relationship), Schoenberg's compositional praxis preserved music's cognitive role – at least up until his adoption of the

twelve-tone *system*, after which he was perceived by Adorno as having permitted the object to incorporate the subject (i.e., by abdicating his compositional agency to the dictates of pre-ordained modes of procedure). Schoenberg's 'liberation of dissonance' (recall that he termed his music 'pan-tonal as opposed to a-tonal' (pan-tonal meaning 'inclusive of all tonalities' – note the capaciousness of this strategy in relation to musical material)) was simultaneously viewed as an attempt to accommodate the musical subject within the object of form (rather than forcing musical material into subservience to the composer's intent, and to some external aim, such as when music becomes tone painting or when material is made to conform to pre-ordained form). In so doing, it also purged music of its tendency towards depiction, a tendency evidenced in Stravinsky where music was converted from 'becoming' to 'being', from unfolding process to positive representation. As Adorno puts it, Schoenberg solved 'technical problems' within music that, despite his music's obscurity, were 'socially relevant', that could be applied in non-musical, social realms (2002:399):

Schoenberg . . . never behaved 'expressionistically', superimposing subjective intentions upon heterogenous material in an authoritarian and inconsiderate manner. Instead, every gesture with which he intervenes in the material configuration is at the same time an answer to questions directed to him by the material in the form of its own immanent problems (ibid.)

Moreover, in his refusal to meld material to pre-determined form, Schoenberg deprived the listener of music's 'crutches', as Adorno calls them, of listening – the conventions and clichés that were the stock-in-trade of popular music (the composer Pierre Boulez later (and polemically) termed this task – in reference to his own project – an attempt to 'strip the accumulated dirt' from music). In so doing, Schoenberg elevated the listener to the status of compositional partner, opening up music to the active sense-making (composition) of its hearers. (On this point, see my discussion of Adorno in relation to John Cage (DeNora 1986a), where I suggest that Cage's philosophy of the listener as active participant in the composition process leads to a situation where musical consciousness is re-attuned to observing the situated specificity of musical material. For an ethnomethodological rendering of the 'meaning' problem in music and the listener as compositional partner, see DeNora 1986b.)

In Adorno's view, the listener, like Schoenberg himself, had to *learn* to compose (make sense of) music's parts. And in demanding this cognitive, interpretive work from the listener, in calling her attention to the effectively 'homeless' character of musical material and to the perception

of difference, Schoenberg's music did two things. First, it embodied a value orientation in relation to the individual–social relationship through its demonstration, procedurally, of the alienated subject. Second, in and through its tonal breadth, it inculcated a form of advanced cognition, a mode of sense-making that could accommodate more of material – lengthy stretches of tones and attenuated tonal relationships, for example. Thus, through the demands it made, and through the ways that it exemplified the form–content relationship (in particular by demonstrating the material need for new, distorted, forms – for the incorporation into form of the material subject), Schoenberg's music inculcated critical reason. The subject who could listen to Schoenberg, wherein was contained, 'all the darkness and guilt of the world' (1973:133), was thus a subject who had achieved 'true' consciousness.

Atomisation and absorption

It is perhaps unsurprising that Adorno's work is of so much interest to contemporary critical theorists. His idea that one's hearing, if fed on a diet of the predictable, pre-digested material (musical cliché), would 'regress' in the same way that, as is often argued, one's faculties of taste and smell regress in the face of a diet of soda pop and soft-textured McFood. Music's commodification is thus like the commodification of anything else involving the senses (and Adorno occasionally makes reference to sexual gratification in these ways) – it inculcated a hollowing out of sensory faculties in ways that made individuals vulnerable to capture by (to pursue the culinary metaphor) whatever was 'served up' to them by their *chefs* (masters) – as long as it was laced with the appropriate seasoning. No wonder, then, that Adorno's work resonates so well with relatively recent theories of McDonaldisation and Disneyfication (e.g., Ritzer). Whereas 'true' music taught its listener how to perceive illogic – contradiction – through its challenge to critical faculties, 'false' music taught the listener how to relax and enjoy, and how to identify with particular representations or forms, and how to take pleasure in reliability, in repetition of – through that process – fetishised objects. Ultimately, these forms of pleasure served a didactic function: they taught the skill of how to adapt to (and enjoy) what was given. The ultimate trick, then, in Adorno's view, was to persuade the subject that the highest pursuit to which she could be called was the pursuit of (her own) happiness.

In this conception we hear also the strains of Goffman (discussed above), particularly his discussion of the inmates in *Asylums*, who, 'trimmed' to fit the requirements of the total institution, can do no more than re-enact institutionally stipulated roles, who cannot, in other words,

exert themselves as agents involved in the making of forms that could contain rather than annihilate difference. Goffman's subject is one for whom genuine expression is prohibited but who is expected to engage in the various moral careers built upon institutionally- specified forms of self-presentation. (I return to this concept in chapters 4 and 5). This type of passivity and its inculcation, Adorno believed, provided conditions conducive to authoritarian domination, and it is here that we see clearly music's link to the idea of the 'ontological ideology' and to the concept of social control.

Adorno, 'defended against his devotees'

In the essay 'Bach Defended Against His Devotees', Adorno set out to rescue Bach from the reputation he had gained as an 'antique' composer. Adorno was at pains to establish Bach as the harbinger of musical modernism, 'the first to crystallise the idea of the rationally constructed work, of the aesthetic domination of nature' (1981:139). So too, I suggest, it is possible to defend Adorno against both devotees and detractors, and to re-conceptualise his role in relation to subsequent music sociology in a manner that at least tries to implement Adorno's ideas empirically. It is time to rescue Adorno from the status of 'antique' music sociologist (as his detractors often view him) and also to try to engage with Adorno in a way that moves Adorno scholarship on from the exegesis of his devotees (but without abandoning that focus, for which there is still need).

There is precedent within socio-musicology for this move. As Richard Middleton has aptly put it, 'anyone wanting to argue the importance of studying popular music has to absorb Adorno in order to go beyond him (Middleton 1990:35). Adorno's work, it should be clear at this stage, is far too important to be set aside by music sociologists. At the same time it would benefit greatly from further specification, in particular from a better connection to more recent methodological developments within the human sciences. In the remainder of this chapter I deal with three key themes in Adorno's work and describe how they may be criticised and redeployed at an empirical level of enquiry.

The first of these themes centres on the idea that music is, at least potentially, a means for knowledge formation (a mode of attending to material reality, a mode of posing the relationship between concepts and material detail). In so far as music was a realm of dialectical praxis, it could both exemplify and inculcate such praxis in its listeners, understood as modes of consciousness. It was thus possible to discern in music modes of orientation to 'material' that corresponded to modes and impulses found

in other realms. That is, in *how* composition handled its musical materials, it was possible to discern strategies and impulses that corresponded to (and sustained) forms of social arrangement elsewhere in society – modes of political organisation, for example. In particular, it was possible to show how music enhanced or detracted from the dialectics of non-identity, the critical device through which reason could resist a growing administrative tendency in modern societies.

The second theme, as discussed above in relation to Beethoven, concerns the composer, who, because she is a subject, possesses (at least latent) potential to intervene in the shaping of music history. The composer's role is thus as important – if not more important – than that of the social critic. Beethoven's intervention, in particular his (late-style) response to the betrayal of the individual subject in favour of ruling power during the nineteenth century, directed music's so-called 'true' path, according to Adorno, away from affirmation and towards the alienation of subject (motif, harmonic progression) from object (harmonic unity, resolute forms of closure, lyric coherence). Music is thus a medium with which to 'do' things psycho-socially.

The third theme concerns the music industry and the ways in which it both reflected and instigated a shift in music's function and the translation of the listener from active subject to passive recipient of music's effects. It is important to observe that for Adorno, both so-called 'high' and popular music were affected by music's commodity form during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For him, in other words, there was little difference, aesthetically and in terms of their psycho-social effects, between the songs of Tin Pan Alley and the music of Tchaikovsky, who, as Adorno so memorably remarked, 'portrays despondency with hit tunes'.

Taken together, these themes give rise to many avenues for further study, some of which are explored below. They have also inspired a good deal of criticism from those engaged in less theoretical, more empirically detailed, research on music and society. In the next section I examine these criticisms, as they have been applied to the three themes outlined above.

In relation to all three themes, sociological criticism of Adorno – that is, the reaction to Adorno by more empirically oriented sociologists of music – can be said to centre on gaps in his investigative technique, all of which relate to Adorno's insufficient attention to musical *practice* as it is conducted within music-producing and music-consuming worlds. This, arguably methodological, deficiency is, I shall suggest in the next chapter, consequential for the character of Adorno's theory and its utility today. I begin with theme number three, Adorno's notorious and oft-misunderstood views on the work of the music industry.

Popular music, but where are the people?

Music sociologists tend to agree that Adorno's conception of the culture industry is over general. In Adorno, the culture industry is too quickly written off as a monolithic force, its products dismissed a priori as undifferentiated, equally worthless (on this point, see Witkin 2002). This is because, as Richard Middleton has observed (1990:37), Adorno began with that which he knew well – Germany during the 1930s – and he projected this model of cultural production inappropriately across time and space. That projection blinded Adorno to the heterogeneity present within the various enclaves of what he referred to, perhaps simplistically, as 'the music industry' – middle-range sectors, networks, individuals, groups, and rivalries through which production occurred. To take but one example, Adorno's conceptual apparatus did not permit him to consider how the record industry was multi-textured, composed of a mixture of small, independent companies and larger conglomerates, and how the interaction between these sectors might have implications for the type of work produced.

This is most assuredly an area upon which subsequent sociologists have improved. The classic study in this respect is by Peterson and Berger (1990 [1975]), well worth considering because it gives a taste of the empirical issues that Adorno ignored but which could have served to develop his theory. Peterson and Berger suggested that 'innovation' (diversity) in pop music arises from competition between large record companies and their smaller rivals, showing that variety of musical forms (and thus epochs of musical innovation and experimentation) is linked to the social structural arrangements of production, in this case, inversely related to market concentration. At the time their article was published, Peterson and Berger were trailblazers for the 'production of culture' perspective, and their study still serves as a model of how to conduct work in this tradition.

Examining number one hit songs over twenty-six years of record production, from 1948 to 1973, and dividing this period into five eras of greater and lesser degrees of market concentration, Peterson and Berger argued that eras of high market concentration were those in which a high proportion of the annual production of hits emanated from one of four leading companies, who, during the era of highest market concentration controlled over 75 per cent of the total record market (in fact just eight companies produced nearly all the hit singles). From here, they considered whether oligopolistic concentration bred homogeneity of product, pursuing this question by examining the sheer number of records and performers who recorded the hits during their five eras (with the idea in

mind that there would be little incentive to introduce ‘new’ products under conditions of market concentration); they also examined the lyrical content of hits and traced these variables through the five eras as competition between record companies grew and then diminished over the 26-year period. Simultaneously, they considered indicators of ‘unsated demand’, such as changes in record sales and the proliferation of music disseminated through live performance and backed up by independent record producers – genres such as jazz, rhythm and blues, country and western, gospel, trade union songs, and the urban folk revival. From there, they considered the conditions under which the independent producers were able to establish more secure market positions, as the top four producers lost control of merchandising their products over the radio. They then traced how the record industry and its degree of market concentration expanded and contracted cyclically over time.

By tracing conditions of record production and marketing, relating these conditions to new developments in the communications industry, and examining trends in record output and product diversity, Peterson and Berger concluded that changes in concentration lead rather than follow changes in diversity, that they are an effect of how powerful producers are able to be. Their finding ‘contradicts’, as they put it, ‘the conventional idea that in a market consumers necessarily get what they want’ (1990 [1975]: 156). In short, Peterson and Berger highlighted the impact of production-organisation on musical trends and styles and showed how popular music production is characterised by cycles, and they detailed some of the mechanisms that affect cyclic development.

Peterson and Berger’s study set the scene from the 1970s onwards for the concern, within popular music studies, with the production system – as examined from the inside out. More recently, Dowd (forthcoming) has built upon this production-organisation approach to examine the relation between musical diversity and industry concentration in relation to specific genres and to the output of the industry as a whole. The tradition forged by Peterson and Berger has also been developed by Negus (1992), for example, who has suggested that working practices within the popular music industry are linked to an artistic ideology associated with college-educated white males who came of age in the ‘rock generation’ of the 1960s and 1970s. This occupational stratification is consequential for the types of pop that are produced: women and unfamiliar styles and artists, for example, are marginalised (Steward and Garratt 1984). (These forms of musical-gender segregation may be seen within musical production in pedagogical settings (Green 1997), particularly with regard to instrument choice – a topic that overlaps with work by social psychologists (O’Neill 1997).)

In these works, the music industry is explored from the inside out. In Adorno's work, by contrast, the music industry remains a black box, the contents of which are deduced without need of opening, or an empty screen upon which Adorno projected his assumptions about the music industry. There is a raft of questions that remains unanswered by Adorno. For example, as Middleton has observed, how does stylistic change in popular music come about, and how does it take particular forms (Middleton 1990:38)? This is, according to Middleton, but one of a range of questions about the music industry, its production, and reception that can only be answered by 'a complete "production history" of popular music from 1890 to the present' (1990:38).

In lieu of this history, Adorno deals in abstractly posited social forces (concentrations of power, commodification) and two types of musical worker: on the one hand, those rare, heroic types who confront social tendencies by grappling with the medium of form so as to preserve true expression; and, on the other hand, those musical workers who trade upon musical cliché and thus capitulate to (and serve to reinforce) administration, the 'collective tendency of the times' (1973). In short, Adorno's socio-musical landscape is sparsely populated: it consists of social forces, musical materials, composers, and listeners. And even here, we are not offered a sufficient view of people *doing* things, that is, of actors caught up in the contingencies and practical exigencies of their local spheres of action. All action in Adorno is *ex post facto*; it is primarily seen once it has congealed in musical form, composition. It may be an exaggeration but with a grain of truth to say that the only process to which Adorno actually attends is the process as exemplified in musical *form*. It is because of this – Adorno's undue emphasis upon musical *works* – that in turn leads to what may be considered a major flaw in his music sociology, namely, his tendency to use his own interpretation of form (his immanent method of critique) as a methodology of knowing about social relations and about history. This is made quite clear in relation to the second theme to be discussed, the relation of the composer and her works to socio-musical history.

The imaginary museum of musical 'works'

In her well-known study of the history of musicological ideology, the philosopher Lydia Goehr (1992) describes how and where the modern notion of the self-contained musical work came to emerge as a 'fact' of music history. This 'fact' was not neutral but part of the project of asserting music's autonomy during the nineteenth century. This project was simultaneously a game about status politics, a game that elevated the

composer to the role of master (*sic*), genius, and, in the case of Beethoven, hero. To be sure, Adorno was complicit in this project. His conception of music history, like his conception of the music industry and its history, is similarly over-theorised.

There were, arguably, at the time, good reasons for this over-theoretical approach, as Richard Leppert explains:

Adorno's sociology worked from both the outside and the inside of musical works. 'Outside' musical texts, he looked at social practices, but here he upset musicological convention by his relative lack of interest in empirical research, though Adorno knew well the 'basic facts' of music history, to be sure. But he insisted on the inadequacy of musical facts as such to the understanding of music – precisely the argument in musicology that emerged in full-blown form only in the mid 1980s, but was nonetheless foreshadowed during the last decade of Adorno's life in his critique of positivism, especially as represented by the British philosopher Karl Popper. 'Inside' the musical text, Adorno committed to what he named 'immanent criticism,' analyzing objective musical details in relation to one another, that is, to musically specific compositional procedures, and also interrogating them as objectively subjective engagements with the reality external to the musical text, a kind of musical hermeneutics that the discipline of musicology only slowly accepted as legitimate, and not without continuing controversy. (Adorno 2002:74)

Leppert's defence of Adorno highlights what is missed, sociologically and phenomenologically, through too strict an adherence to 'the facts' of music history and this argument is critical to the development of any music sociology that wishes to further the direction forged by Adorno. At the same time, such an approach need not be incompatible with historical research, in particular with a greater attention to the detailed practices of composing, distributing, and consuming music, and, in relation to his study of Beethoven, to the social construction of musical worth.

Scott Burnham has commented on how Beethoven and the idea of the Beethoven-hero in 'the paradigm of Western compositional logic . . . proved so strong that it no longer acts as an overt part of our musical consciousness' (1995:xiii). His work has revealed how, in other words, Beethoven's musical practices, and the Beethoven-ideology has become 'a condition of how we tend to engage the musical experience (ibid.)'. So, too, work by William Weber (1992) and James Johnson (1995) has shown us how the cultures of listening within European cities came to be transformed, in great part in relation to Beethoven. It is on this point that Adorno's views on Beethoven begin to appear more clearly linked to Adorno's occupation of a particular place and time in musical culture. As Middleton has suggested:

with Beethoven the *potential* of music is so raised that older assumptions are shattered. But this could be seen as simply a more than usually coherent version of a familiar Austro-German interpretation of nineteenth-century music history, which sets an over-privileged Viennese tradition at its normative centre. Adorno's preference for 'immanent method'-analysing and evaluating works in terms of the implications, the immanent tendencies, of their mode of existence rather than approaching them comparatively – means that, having set his criteria for 'autonomous bourgeois music' from his interpretation of Beethoven, he exports those criteria to all music of the period and finds the rest of it wanting. At the same time, Beethoven himself is a less comprehensive representation of the totality of the social struggles of his age than Adorno pretends; in a way he is just as 'partial' as his far more popular contemporary, Rossini. Indeed, at times Adorno's Beethoven comes close to being a fetish: the image objectifies those musical tendencies Adorno wants to privilege. (Middleton (1990:41))

The problem, stated crudely, is this: how do we know that in his analysis of Beethoven he is not merely engaging in musical-ideological work, elaborating a trope of Beethoven reception that is prominent within the field of discourse that he operates? How do we know that Adorno's valuation of Beethoven is not the artefact of historical tropes, of the myths of compositional history? Some might counter 'listen for yourself', the idea being that, if one has ears that have not been corrupted (and perhaps also honed through care and study), the 'truth' of music will be self-evident.

But to suggest that 'just listening' or 'training' is enough is to dismiss the power of music education – the material and linguistic cultures that come to frame musical texts, that help to draw out particular meanings. This is a problem that routinely arises in discussions between musicologists and music sociologists. It has been explored in various studies of value and the attribution of value, such as in my own work on Beethoven (DeNora 1995a) and more recently in Fauquet and Hennion's study of Bach (2000). These studies illustrate some of the objections music sociologists have lodged against the idea that analysis and/or criticism is sufficient as a method of socio-musical analysis.

By no means posed in contradiction to the idea of musical value (which was conceptualised as the outcome of social practice, institutionalised over time), sociological studies treat value as produced through the social and material cultural organisation of perception. During Beethoven's first decade of operation in Vienna, musical life, in particular ideas about music and categories of musical value, changed. They were increasingly transformed in ways that were conducive to the perception of Beethoven's 'greatness' and to the idea of 'great composers'. A niche was being carved, in other words, for the very idea of greatness and, as I have described elsewhere (DeNora 1995a), Beethoven was astute enough to seek to lodge himself within this niche, and, more dynamically, to try to adapt the shape

of that niche to fit the specific contours of his talent. In this way he was able to embark upon projects that enabled him to garner increasing cultural weight within the changing cultural terrain. Beethoven was not, in other words, considered the ‘best match’ to an *already existing* set of musical evaluative criteria. It is not reasonable to suggest that his work took the ‘only’ or the ‘best’ musico-logical direction available at the time. On the contrary, his career and work helped to shape the apparently ‘logical’ direction of music and, simultaneously, the criteria applied to his work. It is precisely this internal shaping of the musical world that Adorno’s theory of music history omits. This omission is particularly problematic when we turn to the final theme to be abstracted from Adorno’s work – music’s role as a constituent ingredient of consciousness and knowledge formation. For, because Adorno’s theory of music reception is not fully specified, he cannot describe how, in practice and in context of specific hearings, music comes to ‘work’ upon consciousness. Indeed, had the world of music reception been populated with specified and socially located hearers and music consumers, a good deal of Adorno’s aesthetic hierarchy would have been undermined.

Responding is composing

To speak of framing a musical work and its impact upon that work’s perception is to speak of how listening is mediated through one or another cultural schema; how it inevitably takes place from within the confines of particular and selective universes of works, and is often linked to status group affiliation. When scholars have examined musical consumption practices these lessons are repeatedly borne out. To put this differently, music’s own discourses come to have meaning inter-textually, in relation to other works, yes, but also to other types of discourse and practice. Music’s relation to these other things, moreover, is interactive. In short, music can neither speak ‘for itself’ nor can other things (including other human speakers or texts) speak entirely for it.

To make this observation, however, is not also to suggest that musical compositions, taken in conjunction with the demands they make of performers and listeners, possess no social significance or force as derived from their musical material. Rather, it is to suggest that these significances should be examined in terms of how they come to be *situated* within particular social contexts, where music will indeed come to possess various types of semiotic force, but that a given music’s properties may lend themselves to various significances as its situation changes. In following chapters, I suggest that Adorno’s analyses of how music handles its relation to previous music, to musical convention, is necessary to socio-musical

analysis. But I shall also argue that socio-history, in the Weberian sense (Weber 1978) of actors operating on and in their social worlds is also necessary. The focus on action is necessary if we are to understand how, within specific social contexts, discourses (including musical discourses) come to be created, stabilised, revised, and received by actors, that is if we are to understand not what music *might* do, but rather what music does and is made to do in actual contexts. And again, in relation to the imaginary museum of musical works and the critique of Adorno's value orientation, sociology of music *after* Adorno has had much to say on this subject, particularly as it has focused on the stratification of composers, styles, and genres.

Historical studies have helped to unveil the strategies by which the musical canon and its hierarchy of 'Master [*sic*] Works' were constructed and institutionalised during the nineteenth century in Europe (Weber 1978; 1992; Citron 1993) and America (DiMaggio 1982). An aesthetic movement, and also an ideology for the furtherance of music as a profession, the fascination with 'high' music culture during the nineteenth century was simultaneously a vehicle for the construction of class and status group distinction. It was also a device of music marketing and occupational advancement and, as such, illustrates Adorno's point that aspects of 'high'-culture music shared the mass-culture approach (an argument developed by Judith Blau (1989)). More recently, focus on the distinction between 'high' and 'low' musical forms has widened to include investigation of how 'authenticity' is itself constructed and contested (Peterson 1997). These investigations dismiss the concept of the 'work itself' in favour of the idea that 'works' are configured through the ways they are performed and heard (Hennion 1997; see also Clarke and Cook 2003).

Adorno's work dealt only obliquely with these historical issues because he was concerned only obliquely with the social shaping of cultural products, with how particular representations and evaluations (including the ones to which he espoused) gained prominence. His real quarry lay, as described above, in the analysis of the *formal properties* of cultural products, and in particular how these properties were linked to epistemological *styles*. Such a project differs greatly from the 'sociology of knowledge' as practised today, whether as the 'Edinburgh School' focus on interests and the shaping of scientific knowledge (Barnes 1977), feminist focuses on alternative representations (e.g., Martin 1989), or the Latourian 'actor network and beyond' focus on how the production and institutionalisation of scientific 'fact' is akin to political campaigning (Latour 1987; 1989; Law and Hassard 1999). In the sociology of science that developed from the 1970s onwards, focus was directed at the question of how those things that pass as matters of fact are 'composed' and thus bear

traces of their compositional milieu. One of the great contributions of these works is their critique, implicit and sometimes explicit, of so-called 'Whig histories' of science, that is, histories that tell the progress of scientific development as a story of how one theory gave rise to the next, histories from which all traces of human agency and exigency are erased. The comparison here to histories of the 'development' of musical material should at this point be obvious.

In the case of both music and science, the failure to focus on the specific details of historical production, that is, on the 'inside' of production and its worlds (and the commensurate concern with the construction of compositional 'choices') courts, at best, hagiography and, at worst, disjunction with music as it actually functions at the ground level of social activity. For example, as we have seen in his treatment of Beethoven, Adorno perceives Beethoven's style periods from a twentieth-century vantage point; his perspective does not permit a deconstructive focus on periodisation, nor can it consider discrepancies between how Beethoven's contemporaries perceived the significance of his work and how it has come to be framed by music historical and music critical discourses (DeNora 1995b; Webster 1994). Along with this, Adorno does not attempt to distinguish – to search for a non-identity – between his own comprehension of the social meaning of Beethoven's compositional praxis and how Beethoven's praxis may have been embedded in, and perceived by, his *others* (Beethoven himself and his contemporaries, for example, but also Beethoven listeners today or in Adorno's time). Without such an analysis, Adorno has no warrant (apart from his own belief and his ability to persuade others to join him in that belief) to know what Beethoven was 'really' doing when he engaged in the act of composition.

Adorno's avoidance of both a 'comparative' perspective and a contextualising methodology, moreover, allow him a particular form of theoretical luxury – that of letting his examples 'illustrate' (rather than drive) the direction of his theory. For example, Beethoven's incorporation of 'shock' or surprise, his deconstruction of form, may, if perceived from the point of view of the contemporary responses to his works (and the level of surprise expressed), have been at its strongest during his early period, when, in terms of the reception history of his work, reactions to Beethoven were most extreme. Beethoven was not, moreover, the only composer to experiment with – and thus attenuate – form; indeed, many of the devices he employed were to some extent shared by others in his world. Such matters are held in abeyance by Adorno in favour of particular interpretations of musical works and, via this, their history (the specificity of historical detail) is sacrificed to the immanent method. He begins, in other words, with the figure and from it deduces the ground.

To what extent would this criticism have troubled Adorno? Very little, I suggest, for the following reason.

Earlier in this chapter I quoted Susan Gillespie on how Adorno's texts may be usefully read as types of performances, like music, meant to stand themselves, as forms of exemplary practice. Is it perhaps possible that Adorno was less interested in being empirically correct than making a rhetorical point for which musical analysis was a highly useful resource? To be sure, many have noted Adorno's penchant for textual drama. As one commentator has observed, 'Adorno habitually alternated microscopies of musical detail with sweeping, caricatural indictments of the social whole, with virtually nothing in between . . . his correlation of results with historical trends often has an arbitrary, almost eerie quality about it (Merquior 1986:134, quoted in Martin 1995:115). More recently, Richard Leppert has suggested that the work Adorno co-authored with Max Horkheimer, the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, is characterised by the 'fundamental rhetorical device [of] . . . exaggeration, embodied in the vast historical sweep from Homer to the movies, in an implicitly unbroken historical thread, as exemplary of domination as it was grist for subsequent criticism' (2002:27).

Adorno does indeed paint history on a large canvas and with a large brush, turning now and again to illuminate the workings of these sweeping forces through minute attention to one or another detail. While this may not be the best recipe for the so-called macro-micro link in sociology, it had perhaps other uses. To be clear here, I am suggesting that the empirical world was perhaps less something that Adorno wished to describe with accuracy (that would have been part of the positivism he so disdained) than to employ as the backdrop for an aesthetic creation, namely, the 'composition', of critical theory. Speculative as this point is, it is in keeping with Adorno's views on the cognitive role of art – his deployment of the immanent method was, in other words, the practising of an art form. Indeed, we perhaps understand Adorno best if we think of him as a sociologically and philosophically inclined composer-in-letters. He was certainly never an ethnographically or empirically oriented researcher. As Brecht once described him, Adorno, 'never took a trip in order to see' (Blomster 1977:200). Peter Martin captures this point well:

Adorno's 'ground position', then, casts him inescapably as a social philosopher or social critic rather than as a sociological analyst. Not that this would have worried him unduly: the sociological work which he encountered during his stay in America, and which he took to be typical, was in his view irredeemably positivistic, not only generating spurious 'facts', but doing so on behalf of the dominant agencies of social control. (Martin 1995:19)

So does Adorno's abstention from empirical enquiry actually matter? Does it tarnish Adorno's contribution to socio-musical study? On one level one could argue that it does not; Adorno's analyses are not meant to *explain* (i.e., to 'tell' the reader) but rather are intended as poetic interventions (to take the reader through a mode of experience, a mode of being conscious of the world). As such, their 'truth value', like the music they describe, becomes exemplary; their role is to call our attention to the social world in a particular manner, to quicken or recall consciousness in a particular way. This may help to explain in part the fascination Adorno's work holds for so many readers. It is, like the work of Alban Berg, 'beautiful' and, in the arrangement of its lines it sought to do in words what 'true' music could do in tones – a form of exemplary praxis.

As Witkin has observed, 'Adorno's formal analyses of musical works are preoccupied with meaning in the context of a hearing of the works' (1998:5). It certainly seems right that Adorno was concerned with music's structure as it came to affect listeners and his focus on how musical material is handled attests to this – the shock value, for example, of a particular chord within the context of an entire movement. Yet, despite Adorno's obvious concern with music's 'effects' upon listeners – effects such as the regression in hearing prompted by false music or the capacity for complex awareness promoted by Schoenberg – the 'audience' is never encountered with any specificity in Adorno's work but is rather deduced from musical structures. Adorno remained fundamentally uninterested in, as Middleton has observed (1990:60), *real* moments of consumption practice. By contrast, Adorno treats music's listener as he treated both music history and the social significance of musical works – he hypostatizes listeners and listening. 'The people clamour', he tells us, 'for what they are going to get anyhow' (1976:29, quoted in Middleton 1990:57). He describes listeners as 'identifying . . . with the . . . product' and tells us that such listeners have 'needs' (ibid.). After Beethoven, there is only one correct mode of attention to music – silent contemplation. His typology of listening (1976), with its top-down itemisation of listening modes, from the valued, rational, listener who 'grasps' music's structure to the 'emotional' listener who orients to music in search of sensation, underlines Adorno's adherence to music in only one form – cognition. This adherence itself can be traced to Adorno's value-orientation within the discourse of serious music, itself a product of the nineteenth century.

Given these statements, it is hardly surprising that Adorno fails to consider the way in which listening, as interpretive processing, is itself a part of composition and that, therefore, if we are to understand music's effects we cannot afford the luxury of reading these off from musical works. 'For Adorno', Middleton succinctly puts it, 'the meaning of musical works is

immanent; our role is to decipher it' (1970:59). The result of Adorno's avoidance of specific acts of listening is an additional theoretical luxury: it enables Adorno to invoke an *image* of the audience whenever that is expedient as a means for advancing his theory.

An unresolved ending

Richard Middleton summarises the flaws in Adorno's theory as consisting of, first, his use of the immanent method (and thus his depopulation of the musical field) and, second, his own historical location and its link to his 'ontologisation of history'. By this he means that Adorno's focus on individual works allowed him, as I described earlier, certain theoretical luxuries – as a strategy the confinement to what he had to say about composition permitted him to find that to which he was already predisposed. And this bias, coupled with Adorno's personal position – a Jew in 1930s Germany, a member of the educated elite, an acolyte of Alban Berg – led to his establishment of a particular version of music history and history more generally as the 'true' version. This version was, moreover, a 'truth' that Adorno's theory sets itself (and its author) in a privileged position as being able to grasp. There is more than a touch of hauteur in Adorno. And while hauteur may be a matter of style, in this case it is adjunct to what in some circles has been called a 'sociology of error', by which is meant a mode of analysis predicated upon the assumption that its statements will either define 'the world' correctly or that they will, as it were, be in error. We must not, however, dismiss Adorno simply because we think that on points he erred. What is of value in Adorno transcends all of this. It concerns Adorno's vision, his way of perceiving the social world and music's interrelationship with that world. Above all, Adorno bequeathed a perspective. Thus it seems right to subject this perspective to the test of criticism, to interact with it across time and culture.

As Middleton puts it, the problems that we perceive in Adorno today need to be addressed, 'if we are to understand [Adorno] – and to make use of him, rather than simply dismissing him as an embittered elitist pessimist' (1990:61) A dismissal is simply too facile a response (it is also not dialectic); there is much, at least at an intuitive level, that 'rings true' in Adorno's work and, indeed, it is for this reason that there has been so much written about him. But, just as Adorno deserves more than derision, he also deserves more than respectful exegesis. The greatest tribute to Adorno consists of, as Middleton suggests, 'making use' of his work. And if we are to 'make use' of Adorno, I suggest it is necessary to specify ways of grounding his ideas, not necessarily in positivist mode as testable and measurable hypotheses, but to specify their meaning by

trying to consider, at least hypothetically, how we might be able to develop his work at or more closely to the level of action and experience. As it stands, Adorno's music sociology almost completely by-passes the need for empirical work, in particular for the micro- and middle-range modes of investigation pursued by music sociology over the past two or three decades – in the roughly forty years since the English publication of Adorno's *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*. As Martin puts it, without this level of analysis, Adorno's ideas remain unfulfilled:

Yet, for all his theoretical virtuosity, it is far from clear that Adorno did in fact provide a coherent account of the relationship he claimed between musical and social structures; indeed, in his unremitting efforts to relate the whole to the parts he leaves unresolved the familiar problems encountered in any attempt to explain individual action in terms of macro-sociological structures. (1995:112)

Martin continues by quoting Rose Subotnik, who suggests that the links between artistic structure and social reality are, in Adorno, 'indirect, complex, unconscious, undocumented, and rather mysterious' (Subotnik 1976:271, quoted in Martin 1995:115). She is, I would concur, right on all five counts.

In recent years, empirical sociology of music has begun to illuminate those links. The enterprise of music sociology since the 1970s has been anything but abstract (for a recent review, see DeNora in Clarke and Cook 2003; Peterson 2001; Shepherd's entry on music sociology in the revised Grove (Shepherd 2001)). And yet, there are gaps and omissions. There are, more to the point, issues that music sociologists have for the most part dismissed, and many of these are precisely the topics that scholars within what is often termed, 'the new musicology' have sought to preserve. What, for example, has become of Adorno's concern with music and consciousness; or music and its link to social 'control'? How, similarly, are we to explore music in terms of its psycho-cultural consequences in relation to action? There is no doubt that the sub-field would benefit from re-engagement with these questions. The challenge lies in attempting to recover these issues while maintaining music sociology's concern with empirical documentation, with a type of constructivism grounded in things that lie outside the analyst's interpretation of musical texts. And, as I describe in the next chapter, this project depends upon finding an appropriate level for socio-musical investigation.