DOI: 10.1400/201002

Olle Edström

[Elias and/or Adorno]

A personal reflection and perspective from a musicologist

1.

Norbert Elias was the first scholar to receive the Theodor W. Adorno-preis in 1977. Adorno was, in Elias words, a humane Marxist. His reliance on Marx, writes Elias, brought with it disadvantages since it bound Adorno «to a system of thought based on the range of experience and knowledge of an earlier epoch, which was only partially appropriate as guidance to the reality of his own time» (Elias 2009:84). That meant to Elias that even if Adorno posed the right questions and was an "independent thinker", the readers of Adorno's writings never get «the decisive answer, so to speak, around the next corner» (Elias 2009:87). On the one hand, Elias suggests that Adorno's humane Marxism was a major reason for his «ultimate indecision… to form a theoretical synthesis that went beyond the Marxian one», but finds, on the other hand, also an answer in the trajectory of Adorno's life, the experiences that he had, as he as Elias had to leave Germany in the early 1930s. They shared many experiences as emigrant scholars.

In his presentation of Elias to the audience at the prize ceremony, Wolf Lepenies spoke of Adorno's and Elias's shared fates, but also stated that their epistemological outlook was both different and alike as well in broad outline as in detail (Elias 1977:31). At the end of his presentation Lepenies quoted some sentences from Adorno's and Max Horkheimer's joint and original book, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*[1] that he found in essence mirrored much of what Elias also stood for. Elias for his part also referred to their writings, more precisely to their writings on culture and civilization in another book, *Aspects of sociology*[2]. Reading the chapter "Culture and Civilization" in this book, one indeed finds that Adorno *et alii* as Elias had a deep knowledge of European cultural history. Adorno's discussion, however, ends in a, for Adorno *et alii*, rather typical way as they talk about «the chaotic and frightening aspect of the contemporary technological civilization… [however] it is not the rationalization of the world which is to blame for the evil, but the irrationality of this rationalization» (*Aspects of sociology* 1973:89). Elias, however, discussing the differences between his book published fifteen years earlier, rather explicitly states that they had not moved on in their thinking (Elias 2009:89). Their Marxist framework hindered them to fully come to terms with the longitudinal development.

2.

My aim with this article will be to follow two different tracks: I'll on the one hand discuss what Adorno meant to me in the 1970s and onwards, and, on the other, show what my later readings and use of Elias's writings have meant. This means by necessity that I'll also compare their scholarly perspectives, and in conclusion show how I epistemologically have used and intend to use Elias's multifaceted theories and writings, as I once more start on a longitudinal history of music project. My discussion and evaluation as a musicologist then starts from the perspective of the usefulness (to me) of Adorno's and Elias's different aims and working methods.

[1] First published as *Philosophical fragments* in 1944, and later in many editions.

[2] In Aspects *of Sociology*… , 1973:89-100 [in German 1956]. I'll refer to it as Adorno et alii.

At the time this prize ceremony took place, many Swedish musicologists were familiar with Adorno, but few had read Elias. The Swedish translation in 1976 of Adorno's *Einleitung in die Musiksoziologie - zwölf theoretische Vorlesungen* (1962) was probably the first book, musicologists born from the 1940s, met. It got many to look for other works, in particular *Die Philosophie der Neuen Musik*. Since most colleagues at my department at that time was permeated with an interest in Marxist cultural theories, while at the same time several of the post-graduate students were involved in the jazz/rock/pop scene at that time, the studies of Adorno on the one hand, aroused our curiosity due to his style and method, while, on the other hand, we questioned his reasons for rejecting *our* music. To most of us, there was a considerable discrepancy between Adorno's thoughts and our own experiences of contemporary popular music.

We knew that Adorno had been heavily involved in music-sociological projects in the USA, but were still suspicious of his conclusions since we as musicologists in the 1970s were involved in various empirical sociological and ethnomusicological projects. We gained a deeper insight into the pointlessness of instituting theoretical discourses on music without a solid ethnomusicological knowledge of the everyday usage, function and meaning of music. In short, we solved the conflict by holding that Adorno's views were not empirically grounded.

It is today easy to see that the reactions by people in the younger generations in the 1970s were also due to a limited insight of Adorno's worldview. We didn't understand how his world of ideas was created in a Germany that later was lacerated both materially and spiritually by the wars and course of events in Europe. Nor did we have a good understanding of how Adorno, as a gifted intellectual child of his time, came to be a bearer of a traditional German cultural tradition.

A second wave of Adorno's writings reached musicology in the beginning of the 1990s. Paradoxically enough, the impact from this Anglo-American wave was probably more difficult to notice than the first since it was broader and covered a wider scientific area than just musicology[3]. Furthermore, there was also an increasing interest in contemporary cultural theories altogether, which was largely due to the spread of the subject Cultural Studies[4]. Apart from the fact that writers on popular music as a rule questioned Adorno's views on popular music[5], we also noticed critical voices among sociologists, among them, Peter Martin's influential book (1995).

3.

I'll return to Adorno's perspectives in comparison to Elias, but let me first mention the Eliasian books I first encountered. The first was Involvement and Detachment (1987). I just happened to find it a bookshop in London in the late 1980s, ten years after the first Adorno wave.

It is, of course, more than twenty years later, difficult to remember what I found so fascinating with Elias's take on the story of The Fishermen in the Maelstrom. As I now browse through the book, I find I've scribbled many comments in the margin of the book. One of these I found on page 48, to the left of a sentence that I had underlined: «In short, the inability to control tends to go hand in hand with high emotivity of response, which keeps the chance of controlling the dangers of the process at low level, which keeps at a high level the emotivity of response, and so forth I». The comment I had written was "Rock ó Brahms" – by which I probably implied that rock, to its practitioners and audience at a concert, meant a higher level of emotivity and less distance, in contrast to those who play or listen to music by Brahms, which involved less emotivity, but more of a form of structural listening. All things being equal I would still hold that this often is the case and a common use of the two forms of music. Different use of music – different needs.

It was a different book, and it got me to read *The Civilization Process* in 1968 and 1969. Here I met the concept

[3] Cf. for instance Subotnik (1991) and McClary (1991).

[4] Among the relevant literature Aronowitz (1994), Docker (1994), Eagleton (1990), Ingles (1993), Paddison (1993), Wolin (1992) and Zuidervaart (1994) can be mentioned.

[5] Cf. Middleton (1990) concerning Adorno's theories on popular music. For a wide ranging collection, with introductions by Richard Leppert of Adorno's various writings on music, cf. Adorno (2002).

of figurations, and was struck and delighted by Elias' musical dance metaphor. The beginning was quite unexpected: «One should think of a mazurka, a minuet.. or rock'n roll.. mobile figurations of interdependent people on the dance floor.. like every other figuration social figuration, a dance figuration is relatively independent of the specific individual.. but of individuals as such»[6].

These books in a general way suited my conception on how cultures changed. The reason for this was quite simple; the thesis I had written in the 1970s was a historical *and* ethnomusicological study on the culture and special singing tradition (yoik) of the Saami in Scandinavia up till the 1950s. My readings in social anthropology had simply made me susceptible to Elias's theories.

Some years later I found that my interest in Elias was shared by Paul Nixon, who at the time presented his ethnomusicological dissertation (1994) at my department. The single most important book, no doubt, for me in the 1980s was Stephen Mennell's introduction to Elias's scholarly world (1989).

It is unknown to me if many musicologist in the 1980s where inspired by the publication of Elias's books. A search today in the major musicological database, RILM, is not encouraging. Not even a search on 'Elias, N' on the ISI Web of Knowledge- Art & Humanities Citation Index result in more than 14 hits.

One of the earliest studies that is included in the list by RILM is my essay *Fr-a-g-me-n-ts* (1997). At that time musicology was heavily influenced dominated by an American form of musicology called New Musicology, and by French sociologist and philosophers. My long essay was at bottom a defense against my relative uninterestedness of or sceptical attitude to these traditions. The closing part of my essay had the headline *Norbert Elias - all's well that ends well*. Even if musicologists at the time must have noted Elias's book on Mozart (cf. below), I realized that probably few were familiar with Elias's larger oeuvre. Let me thus briefly reiterate what I found valuable for musicologist to consider. I gave a fairly short account on his writings and introduced Elias as a historically-oriented sociologist who attached great importance to combining empirical knowledge from different fields, and felt that his scientific approach was as valid for social scientists as for humanists. Moreover, for Elias the individual was always inseparable from society, just as our language, our knowledge and our consciousness are all intimately connected in the societal process. Like Ludwig Wittgenstein, Elias was almost allergic to freezing the meaning of a concept; it was contrary to his conviction that everything is a process. A concept or word always stood in a processual relationship to other words, in the same way that an isolated individual could never be understood without his/her social context (in Wittgenstein's well-known words, private language games are nonsensical). These processes, just like processes in nature, were blind and unpredictable. I thus found Elias's writings very inspirational.

4.

I read Elias's book on Mozart in German (1991a)[7]. I felt at that time very much at home with Elias's epistemology, but I noticed that the reception of this book among sociologist and musicologist in the coming years was both varied and easy to understand. I'll say something of the latter perspective.

It might, however, first be useful to comment on a form of 'hearing fallacy' that sometimes afflicts musicologists. The actual written music, for instance of a Mozart *Sonata* looks more or less the same today on paper as it did in the 1780s. It can at times easy to think that the composers, the performers and not least the listeners in the 1780s heard the music in the same way that we do, hearing the music. The leading idea of the whole movement of historically informed performance that grew in importance form the 1960s, has actually been to close the sounding gap as much as possible, using period instrument (or copies of them) and playing in the same way. The term HIL, historically informed listening, is a newer and promising development, and has recently been suggested by, among others, Vasili Byros (2009). There is, however, really is neither a playing nor listening in the same way. This is one Elias's basic ideas; a person's position in time and space influences his way of thinking, planning, understanding, interpreting, seeing, listening and so on. What sounds/sounded the same does/did not sound the same.

[6] This quote is from the 1994 edition of The Civilizing Process (p. 214); rock n'roll, obviously, was not a dance in the 1930s.

[7] The emphasis on 'sociology' was kept in the title in Swedish version (1991b), but not in the English translation (1993).

Sociogenesis and psychogenesis are interrelated.

Elias's main aim is thus to understand Mozart's predicaments, place and role from his contemporary social situation. The reactions from the reviewers, were, as mentioned varied. As I remember it, I thought that Andrew Steptoe's review (1994), was representative for historical musicology at the time. He concluded rightly that the study was «a contribution to the sociology of art… that Elias saw Mozart as an exemplar of the transformation from craftsman's art to artists' art». Steptoe, however, also felt Elias «had a dangerously romantic view of the composer», but also though mentioned, correctly, that Elias hadn't followed up musicological research on Mozart by "Robbins Landon and others".

Elias started out with this project in the late 1970s but didn't proceed with it for many years. The project thus was unfinished. Around the time Elias' book was released (from 1991) there was thus a huge output of books on Mozart (1756-1791). The publishers might have thought that the publication would stand out in the market. Bit it did not. Elias's basic aim was to explain Mozart's creative, musical possibilities within his social situation where he found himself; in short, at the social and psychological crossroad of contemporary psychogenesis and sociogenesis. Adorno never wrote a book on Mozart. His interests in contrast to Elias's were different since of one of Adorno's primary interest was to the work of music as a sedimented exemplar of the historical and social situations contradictions and disillusions of the art object itself. Another difference was that Adorno, in contrast to Elias, was much more interested in studying the concepts of experience in history than the actual use of music or its praxis.

5.

At the end of the 1990s I took part in an International Conference of Aesthetic. I felt — epistemically — rather lonely at the conference since my paper was on aesthetics as a primarily a social process rather than as a transcultural and a-historical phenomenon. My suspicion that philosophers often talked about Plato and Kant in the same sentence, conflating time and different mind sets into one was confirmed[8]. I tried to use *aesthetic* as key to my understanding of how and why the use of music had changed from the Greeks up till today. In my later book (2002/2008) I presented my task as finding information about:

> [w]here/when/how/and with whom, song and music was played and listened to. To do this, one must examine the following factors: a) the social context, b) the references of individuals in groups, c) the music and d) the presentation of music in an intimate ensemble. These four create the framework for the use and reception of music, as well as its roll, function, and meaning. Any narrative about aesthetics should be placed within this thought matrix. (Edström 2008:20)

One chapter in the book deals with the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The latter is a particularly hothouse of social-cultural-historical developments that changed the ways music were used and understood among small strata of people in central Europe. Already in 1735 Alexander Baumgarten thus appropriated the term *aisthesis* from the Greeks and wrote that «*things perceived* are to be known by the inferior faculty, as the object of the science of perception, or *aesthetic*» (1954:78 [1735:§ 116]. It was, thus, in this context I found much of use in Elias's book on the court society (1983). It was to Elias, among others things, important to show that the court society created a personality type that had to maneuver completely in public, but whose behavior was at the same time very carefully regulated. The courtiers had always to maintain their prestige and standing and this prevailing etiquette informed their various art forms. The refined taste that they bore had a demarcating function downwards. Everyone's prestige was the most important socio-economic resource. Elias describes how prestige became fetishized (Elias 1983:86). That meant that the courtiers viewed external objects differently than the bourgeoisie came to do in the nineteenth century. Things in and of themselves, for example, courtly *art and music*, meant less objectively than what they connoted in relationship to the never-ending power drama:

[8] This a-historical take on philosophy has been more the rule than the exception, cf. *Modern Philosophers* (2000:x). Cf. also Kilminster's magistral book (1998).

> While we like to objectify or reify everything personal, court people personify the objective; for it was always with people and their positions relative to each other that they were primarily concerned…To enact their existence, to demonstrate their prestige, to distance themselves from lower ranking people and have this distance recognized by the higher-ranking — all this was purpose enough in itself. (Elias 1983:100).

Elias saw a parallel between the features of the French court and artistic sensibilities that became standardized under the *ancien régime*. Although Elias did not mention music specifically, his outlook and discussion clearly show the value of applying a sociological perspective to art. Music, thus, was almost always part of a larger ceremony. Opera, the most important form a courtly art, was not an activity of *leisure* because leisure time in the modern sense did not exist.

In my book I gave an overview of how the structure of music and its role and function in the court society could be understood. Since art was a part of etiquette, compositions, too, was a part of the social game. Because of the representative function of art at the court, no courtier should needlessly be surprised by completely unexpected musical structures. The social game demanded that one was not adversely affected by very unexpected musical structures. Everything was predefined, even musical compositions. Composers, as a rule, wrote for the glory of the most high on earth and in heaven.

I also emphasized that the bourgeoisie was also exposed to as many constraints as the members of court. The demands and strains that were part of professional life for the bourgeoisie were however different. Leisure, for instance, could be seen as a free zone in which a meaningful part of the musical aesthetic project could be developed, because the noble powers had little influence in this zone. The bourgeoisie, who principally lived in both the professional and the private worlds, found themselves and especially at the many German courts, in the shadow of a noble hegemony. This process carried on for many generations, and the outcome depended upon how one engaged and accepted the noble values of the time, as well on how the different rationality and thought processes that affected the bourgeoisie in their professional lives.

I showed thus how the structural changes in music can be understood as the process of psychogenesis and sociogenesis went on in the eighteenth century. We find many different musical styles that in its way mirrors the dynamic societal processes in the century. Perhaps it was generally as d'Alembert wrote in 1751 in an introductory text to the Encyclopedia, that of all the arts, music had made the greatest advances in recent years. A few decades later, a bearer of the latest style of music and a piano virtuoso, Ludvig van Beethoven, entered Vienna, a fact that take us back to Adorno.

6.

Reading *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, one notices that Adorno and Horkheimer hadn't changed their basic outlook (cf. the new preface written in 1969). Although Elias was in sympathy with their feelings, he differed from his predecessors and contemporaries in that his epistemological base and longitudinal view on the history of humans seems, to a greater extent than his contemporary colleagues, made it possible to form a new synthesis *on the way to another.* He saw syntheses as a more open ended task than Adorno who analyzed dialectical processes linked together in a complicated manner. The prerequisite for the former method arguably suggests a higher degree of detachment than the latter.

I sometimes (even) get the feeling, hard to pinpoint by showing actual a paragraphs in the writings within the Frankfurt school, that the promises formulated by a collective of writers in the Enlightenment should be believed to be *more* than a expectation, a stage that eventually *would* happen. This is not unheard of (Marx, for one). The problem looking back on history is as always the simple fact that we know — in this case — the answers given already in the nineteenth century to these promises. The utopian hope that Adorno incarnated meant, as Richard Leppert writes in his fine introduction to Adorno, «…that modernity and catastrophe were one, the bitter irony of which resided in the fact that modernity at its beginning has posited something fundamentally different, which might have been realized but was not…» (Adorno 2002:514).

It seems almost as *Reason*, in real life propagated by philosophers, educators, men and women of letters, was experiencing regret from the Greek civilization and especially, from the time of the Enlightenment, and in a spirit of dialecticism gave up on itself in disappointment over humanity's handling of the experiment. I can't help thinking, now and then that Adorno's 'utopian delusion' sometimes made him doomed for life within the prison of his own thoughts. Poetry was written after Auschwitz, as also Adorno knew — and as Elias did.

As Hermann Korte, commented, Elias leaves us with a chance, whereas: «Georg Simmel lamented the "tragedy of culture".. and.. Horkheimer and.. Adorno found their words overtaken by the Holocaust» (Korte 2001:31). In Elias own words, as he thought back on his life in 1980s:

> The theory of civilization and state formation, the symbol theory of knowledge and the sciences and, more broadly, the theory of processes and figurations that I have tried to elaborate are neither Marxian nor liberal, neither socialist nor conservative… That was - and is - undoubtedly one of the reasons for the difficult reception this [Elias's] theory, and the books in which it is contained, have had.(1994a:31)

After Adorno returned to Europe he published many studies on the sociology of music, composers and aesthetics. As I wrote the chapter on the eighteenth century in my book (2002/2008), it was natural to engage in Adorno's writings on Beethoven. Rolf Tiedemann, in the preface of his edition of Adorno's book (1993) on Beethoven, writes that Adorno started to write on Beethoven in the 1930s and that only some parts of this writings were published during Adorno's life, but never a complete biography. In this collection of writings on Beethoven, we first encounter some memories from Adorno' childhood, how he listened to and tried to play Beethoven, and what pieces he liked. Already to the teenager Adorno, it was as natural to listen to the late Beethoven as it was to study Kant.

The fact, however, that music primarily is a syntactic system, with little semantic content, though a contextualized object played, composed and listened to by humans in history, amounts to an almost invincible problem when one confronts the task of understanding what instrumental music means or what — if at all — it communicates. Just experiences of emotions or also propositions?

The long discursive Western tradition has framed the possibilities for what have been believed or taking for granted, so that, as we are born and insocialized into Western society, we will, for instance growing up find it natural to feel that the minor third somehow *sounds* sad. These problems of the interpretation of a sounding structure, however was, as a rule, not what was of special interest to Adorno. To him, the import of Beethoven's compositions mirrored the general societal developments that took place during his life. Adorno, thus, departed from the idea that art's relationship to society was, in some sense, one to one. He was also convinced of that already in later eighteenth century, music, as an artefact, more and more became a commodity.

Adorno wrote on the stylistic changes that have traditionally lead musicologist to talk about Beethoven's middle and late period. His structural music theoretical suggestions, however, are sweeping and rather inexact (standard complaints about Adorno's working method). Adorno offered many comments on *general* structural differences between the two 'styles' and tried to show analogue societal developments[9]. While the music of Beethoven in his middle period showed that the bourgeois place in society, their hope for personal freedom within a society imposing collective constraints on its citizens, had a meaning, this possibility — according to the way Adorno understood this music — was denied them. The balance between personal freedom and social constraints had begun to tip into an unplanned and *false* direction. As it became obvious that the historical moment in the middle period was gone and the foundations of the promises of the Enlightenment were felt to slip away no reconciliation was possible. Beethoven's *music* had to change since it was no longer possible to write authentic music. In order to keep its truth-content, known only to philosophical reflection, music had to become autonomous and an aesthetic art, thus criticizing the society. Music felt this. As Adorno said in the last sentence in his third fragment on Beethoven's late style: «…In the history of art late works are the catastrophes…» (2002:567).

[9] For commentaries see DeNora (2003:25ff); Leppert in Adorno (2002:513-34); Witkins (1998:28-68); Subotnik (1991:1-41).

7.

In contrast to Adorno, Tia DeNora in her book on Beethoven (1995) seeks to understand the circumstances in which he lived and worked in Vienna from the 1790s. «Culture and reality - she writes - [are categories] themselves created and recreated by socially located individuals and groups» (DeNora 1995:14). In order to understand how Beethoven's artistic status was constructed, she first directs her interest to the culture of concerts and points out that whereas easily digested and entertaining pieces had earlier been favoured by the nobility and bourgeoisie, longer instrumental concerts and symphonies were soon being performed more often. Beethoven was a key figure in this transformation[10]. In spite of what is often taken for granted, and this seems to be Adorno's point of departure, DeNora shows that it was the nobility rather than the bourgeoisie that took the late style to their hearts. By openly supporting Beethoven, the prominent nobility could more easily secure their leading position in music. DeNora's major point then is that it is not possible to isolate one factor. It is known that the common audience in the first decades of the nineteenth century found Beethoven's music different. He both played, improvised and composed in a manner that was clearly considered to deviate from common contemporary popular styles. It was not the case that the nobility, from a music stylistic point of view, really *wanted* to go along with the stylistic development of Beethoven's music. It was rather a combination of concurrent factors that in the end functioned as a catalyst to this non-planned process. He could take artistic risks that were either not available, or simply not profitable to other musicians (DeNora 1995:71).

DeNora clearly shows the difficulties one encounters when using an abstract explanation model to extract imagined abstract relations between structures in music and society. Her suggestions undermine the hypotheses of Adorno that Beethoven's music was balancing between the extreme poles of freedom and force, as well as the ultimate reasons Adorno gave for why the music changed.

However, if read positively, as I've tried, one could perhaps imagine a synthesis between the different views implying that the nobility's actions (ongoing feudal force) were out-weighted by the presence of the bourgeois audience (recently found freedom). In any case, Beethoven's music was not appreciated within larger groups of the bourgeoisie until well after his death[11].

8.

Elias and DeNora don't analyze the music as such. Adorno, as we know, often did, but either on such a general level that nothing really new is added, or in such an idiosyncratic way, mirroring his own way of listening that it is difficult to know what to do with the comments[12]. Analyzing Beethoven's music has been an ongoing thing now for over two hundred years. But anyone who has read the comments or type of swift analyses Adorno made, can't, of course, doubt his enormous and detailed knowledge of music's structure and his contemporary competence as a listener[13].

In a comment of the different aims of Adorno's and DeNora's writings of Beethoven, Leppert comments that Adorno's concern was «…the discursive implications of Beethoven's music…» (Adorno 2002:513), whereas DeNora writes about patronage. The overall problem, however, is that Adorno doesn't grapple with the *use* of

[10] Cf. Elias, 1998a:30f.

[11] See Hetschel (2006) for an extraordinary study on the construction of the close connection between German art music and the German nation As Paddison (1993:273) puts it Adorno «…often gives the impression that there is a smooth continuum between technical analysis, sociological critique and philosophical-historical interpretation, in spite of the calculatedly fragmented form in which he presents his ideas…»..

[12] As Paddison (1993:273) puts it Adorno «often gives the impression that there is a smooth continuum between technical analysis, sociological critique and philosophical-historical interpretation, in spite of the calculatedly fragmented form in which he presents his ideas».

[13] What I find troubling though is his wishes to understand music, as it were, from the inside of itself. We don't understand music, he would say, *it* understands us, and that goes for both musicians and laymen (Adorno 1993:15).

music at the time from an *ethnological-empirical perspective*[14]. As DeNora puts it in her book on Adorno, his over-theoretical approach indirectly shows what is not there, «sociologically and phenomenologically, though too strict adherence to 'the facts' of music history», and she adds that what is needed «is a greater attention to the detailed practice of composing, distributing, and consuming music, and… the social construction of musical worth» (DeNora 2003:26).

The change of style of Beethoven's music is but one case, one of many cogs in Adorno's total dialectical system that is full of dichotomies (antinomies). Indeed, even those, who first meet Adorno's philosophy by reading standard lexicon articles will notice that the authors often start with a series of dialectical concepts. Edward Fagan, for instance discusses Adorno's nihilistic outlook and writes that he «considers nihilism to be a consequence of domination and a testament, albeit in a negative sense»[15]. Lambert Zuidervaart concludes that Adorno denies that «the identity between thought and being, between subject and object, and between reason and reality… has been achieved in a positive fashion. For the most part this identity has occurred negatively instead.». Zuidervaart also writes that «whereas Hegel's speculative identity amounts to an identity between identity and nonidentity, Adorno's amounts to a nonidentity between identity and non-identity»[16]. As any reader of Adorno, books as *Aesthetic Theory* or *Minima Moralia* know, it is almost always possible to find at least one sentence on every page that somehow seems to bite itself in its tail[17].

The fact Adorno's styles of writing is supposed to do the same work as his dichotomies, to strive for a new insight, that is, a hope that *seems* to point to a promising insight. But as soon as an insight is felt to glimmer within the thought itself, the semantic content implodes in a dialectical twist. Adorno, thus, seems to have covered all aspects of reality by developing a long chain of concepts that in an infinite dialectical regress are interdependent and interact with another[18]. However one tries to see his points, there seems to be no real possibility whatsoever of using a cultural object in a positive way for mankind. The dialectical process fools us in the end. It is as our lives either are just going downhill in an eternal slalom race, or is going cross-country in a circle, possibly hoping to connect to the new point of arrival, only to find that any point of arrival has been moved to a different track at the pessimistic horizon. But dialectical explanations can hardly be an eternal and all-encompassing descriptive system for the intricate network of relationships that affect society's blind process of development. Adorno's dialectical web woven with his über-virtuosic use of language expands until it covers an impenetrable landscape. And, might it also be said, that Adorno, sometimes forgot his role as sociologist, and followed a long trail of philosophers from Platon onwards that started and ended in their own profession. Does music in the last resource has be explained from a philosophic point of view, i.e. as Adorno put it: «That music can say just what is its own, that means that words and concepts are not in position to immediately express its content but can facilitate it, i.e. as philosophy…»

[14] Cf. also Spitzer (2006) who following in the footsteps of Adorno has written an engaging study on Beethoven's late style. I can't do justice to Spitzer's engaging book here. The book is full of music examples that contribute to his suggestions, and he, to show one quote, sums up Adorno's position very well: «…Music is the most autonomous art… the more it [music] retreated into itself, the more music chimed with the patterns that govern thought, language, economic exchange, and social dynamics. A conventionalized musical structure, since the content it subsumes can be exchanged without loss of meaning, resembles a) the abstraction of a concept, b) the normativity of syntax, c) the fungibility of a commodity, and d) the order of the bureaucratically administered society. Music, then, is also a sovereign art. This, in a nutshell, is the antinomy of enlightened music. Adorno believed that Beethoven embodied this antinomy at its most extreme…» (2006:268). My chief criticism with Spitzer's book, though, is that his perspective is, as the title says, *music as philosophy* (2006:3). DeNora, by the way, is referred to only three times.

[15] Fagan (http://www.iep.utm.edu/adorno/ (accessed 2010.09.28).

[16] Zuidervaart (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/adorno/ (accessed 2010.09.28).

[17] One finds thus in Adorno's works lots of sentences with contradictions, dialectical reversals etc. that arguably sum up what cannot be fully explained as shown by these three random examples from *Aesthetic Theory*: «I artworks are answers to their own questions, they themselves thereby truly become questions» (1997:6) and «Art desires what has not yet been, though everything that art is has already been» (1997:134). This book, a heroic undertaking to understand aesthetics as it were from inside aesthetic's own understanding of aesthetic objects themselves, was found unfinished.

[18] I don't want to seem über-critical of Adorno's writings. There is no doubt that he must be considered as one of the most influential scholars in the 20th century. My perspective on Adorno's oeuvre today has, of course, changed since the 1970s. The basic question one stands before, though, is the same: how come to terms with the dialectical workings of his theories.

(Adorno 1993:31, my translation).

It is no surprise that there exist an ongoing industry of interpretation of Adorno's writings. Moreover, as time goes by, the critical voices seem also to grow in importance (cf. Edström 2008: 111,189). One problem that Paddison discusses at great length is that Adorno, never satisfactorily succeeded in explaining how the process of interaction between music and society actually worked. It remains highly elusive and was never systematically explored (Paddison 1993:108ff)[19]. Again then we find the same baffling problem; how to explain in writing how the mediation between music and society when music, to start with, is very weak representational or semantic system of communication?

In the field of musicology Giles Hooper – following a trail that, among others Peter Martin has treaded – has recently offered a penetrating illumination of Adorno's discourse on mediation (Hooper 2006). Although Adorno argued that pure thought doesn't exist since thinking and believing are socio-historical forms of man's activities, he still - as a sociologist concerned with mediation and value judgments - held very personal and strong beliefs of values. Adorno's enthusiasm of Schönberg's music, and vice versa, his analyses of the hidden meanings in Stravinsky's music are well known.

The problem of explicit value judgments seems to be an always present problem for most writers on the sociology arts. I try, but do not always succeed, to stick to Max Weber's *idea* of value neutrality, and contain or bracket out my own value judgments. It is, of course, hardly possible to write that the fact that I happens to like X more than Y, is a neutral fact to me, but it would have been less neutral, to start with the idea that somehow only Y's music contains a truth-value understood (heard?) from a philosophical point of view. As Giles Hooper compares Martin's and Adorno's contrasting views, he also finds that for the former, value judgments represent raw data with which to start his sociological investigation, while for the latter, «such material is an already mediated subject-matter requiring historical and philosophical interpretation in order to reveal its negative moment of truth» (Hooper 2006:108).

The interpretation of Adorno's oeuvre goes on with undiminished strength. *The Dialectical Counter-Enlightenment* (Thorne 2009), one of the most recent contributions, already in its title, signals its basic position: if we follow the history of anti-foundationalism in philosophical manner we find in the end that it can't be defended. The nihilism of Adorno's project can't be saved; we must find, another way to use reason and knowledge - however defined in a postmodern world, a commodity in itself among any other (?) - as means, in the spirit of a dialectical Counter-Enlightenment, to unwrap the knot (cf. 2009: 15ff, 310ff). As I see it, the method of cutting a problem with a sword, was always a too easy way, and spoiled the possibility of unwrapping it. It might be a political trick, but not an academic.

10.

It is well known Adorno's negative views on some composer's music in the 20th century was nothing in comparison to his dislike for many forms of contemporary popular music. To him the products manufactured by the so called culture industry were openly commodities, structured to optimize their marketability and of no value in itself. The entertainment industry of modern society was as mechanical, formulaic, and dominating as the workplace. The music/songs were themselves as empty of content and monotonous as the work most people had to do. It meant that every object had the same commodified form. In a comment to these views, the sociologist Nigel Dodd [19] wrote that the most basic function of the culture industry, is stupification: «It disables us psychologically and emotionally. It acts as psychoanalysis in reverse» (Dodd 1991:91). Adorno thus saw the consumer as a passive container, His judgment upon all those who listened to commercial music was tough since he understood the backside of the fetishism of music as the regression of listening. Not only did the listening subjects lose, along with freedom of choice and their ability to think; the music industry also deafened people's consciousness due to the endless repetitive noise that Adorno found popular music to contain. This was also because of what popular

[19] Subotnik (1991:19) even writes that the relationship between structure in Beethoven's music and culture surfaces through a complex form of mediation processes «which Adorno does not pretend to understand or elucidate adequately».

music was not, art music or art in general. Adorno often recurred to the idea that true art's position in society (in contrast to popular art) could be the last hope for the possibility of redemption:

> For art allies itself with repressed and dominated nature in the progressively rationalized and integrated society. Yet even industry makes even this resistance an institution and changes it into coin. It cultivates art as a natural reserve for irrationalism, from which thought is to be excluded. (Adorno 1997:336).

My critique of Adorno, as I have said, always develops from the position that music is an object that at all time, now as before, is *used* - heard, listened to, sung, played - and that whatever music meant (means), how it functioned, what role it played must be understood from this perspective. This process can't be understood from a philosophical belvederes, however talented the observers are.

As Elias's wrote in his article on Adorno he didn't come to «terms intellectually with the contradiction between the original teaching of Marx and the unplanned development which was taking place» (2009:87). One such factor that changed the function of music was of course the oncoming and development of mass media – a development that went (and goes) on with unforeseen consequences. One is reminded of the sociologist Karl Mannheim's dictum:

> Each idea acquires a new meaning when it is applied to a new life situation. When new strata take over systems of ideas from other strata, it can always be shown that the same words mean something different to the new sponsors, because these latter think in terms of different aspirations and existential configurations. This social change of function, then, is… also a change of meaning. (1952:188)

Adorno and his circle of course thought much about what music from loudspeakers meant to radio and gramophone listeners. To Adorno art music in radio lost its "aura". He believed that people almost always heard radio music in a depersonalized, collective, objectified form, which robbed music of the possibility of its negative function. His pessimism deafened his hearing.

11.

I'm presently drilling deeper into especially the eighteenth century in order to understand how the structure of music changed, how reactions to different kinds of music performed changed, and how these changes could be understood as music was used in different and changing ways in relation to the ongoing psychic changes of men and women within the developing trends and changes in society. I want, in short, to study the changes of music's role, function and meaning in relation to the interrelated changes of sociogenesis and psychogenesis in the eighteenth century. The reader, thus, will not be surprised that I've once more returned to Norbert Elias's writings on the time of the Enlightenment[20].

The period of time that is of special interest to me goes from ca 1720-1770, in music stylistic terms from high-baroque to Vienna Classicism. This period of time has traditionally been of relatively little interest to musicologist. The combined shadows of Bach and Händel on the one hand, and on the other, Haydn and Mozart have meant that the composers in between have been regarded as less important.

It will, thus, be necessary to think more deeply in what the refined taste of the nobleman, the *galant homme*. It was a taste that from the top downwards had a demarcating function. One is, thus, reminded of a analogous comment by the music theoretician and composer Johann Mattheson, who in 1739, concerning the leading melody,

[20] A personal sight. There is today always the fear that there is too much empirical material to be found, making a better synthesis of the process an utterly complicated task. There are moments when I think the sheer mountain of facts and ideas will disappear in a black hole before it will be possible to form a better synthesis. I have, thus, no doubt about that it will not be possible to find all the pieces of the puzzle I want to present. Neither do I doubt that that coming generations will understand the process differently; to do sociological-historical research means at bottom that you'll have to use yourself as carrier of a contemporary group-habitus which makes it impossible to understand your life world from a future perspective. As a child of your time certain spaces of opportunities are open – others not yet foreseeable, the earlier ones can only, in a detached way, be fusioned into your own.

wrote that «…the others (harmony and rhythm) conduct themselves in relation to melody, as in a monarchy…» (Mattheson 1999:145 [1739]).

The reasons that new styles (i.e. the Galant style) made inroads meant that they had relevance on a (group-) individual level[21]. Since I'm interested in the interrelated changes between man, music and society, a grounded knowledge of the societal changes is of outmost importance. As Elias has commented, in France the change, «from the "baroque" to the "rococo".. is a change within the frame of the same social stratum»(Elias 1998b:27). But even if the change that Elias here mentions was an intra-cultural change it affected the bourgeoisie, and meant, especially in Germany that many, influenced by enlightened ideas, were affected by the new ways of thinking to discover both their rational and emotional selves - but also to discover the irrationality of the world contributing on the one hand to the founding of movements as Pietism, and on the other for the intelligentsia how 'gout'-'taste' was grounded. The initial and cautious scientific and rational way of understanding the world paradoxically, also fostered its accepted opposite, a different kind of sensuality. To my mind, then, the importance of this process from a musicological point of view, has not been fully explained in an Eliasian manner.

As also Carl Dahlhaus (1980) repeatedly stressed, but seldom followed up in any detail, it is important to look for 'sozialgesichtliche Erklärungen', social-historical explanations, rather than just music stylistic in order to understand this change. One obvious important reason - both a musical and a social reason - for instance was the introduction of different kinds of noble and bourgeoisie music entertainments, i.e. public concerts that took place at coffee houses and other 'higher' public venues from the beginning of the century.

The process clearly took place at different speeds in different places. As Elias has showed, it was much easier for the French bourgeoisie, which in general were more prosperous than their German counterparts, to rise within the centralized French kingdom. The German situation was quite different, party the result of an abundance of smaller duchies, heavily influenced by French culture and Italian music, and with fewer prospects for the bourgeoisie to rise to influential positions. The division between nobility and the bourgeoisie was especially sharp in Germany. It fostered an inward movement whereby the bourgeoisie, as we put it today, had to find themselves. For the Germans, literature, poetry and music were arguably even more rewarding and valuable compensations for the lack of political influence than for the bourgeoisie in France or Britain. And as Elias wrote: «With isolated examples, one finds in Germany before 1789 no idea of concrete political action» (Elias 1994:15). They instead invested more and more energy in their *Kultur*, their education and sensibility. This inward-seeking movement found to a high extent its expressions in poetry and music. The new emotional style of writing letters and styles of *Empfindsamkeit* clearly points to this, and can easily be showed in poetical and musical detail[22].

Studying longitudinal changes it is necessary to hold as many balls in air - no least those of power and economic force – as possible and study how the interact and bounce into each other in an unforeseen way. This is one Elias's fundamental lesson and a basic rule of the unplanned social games. In Stephen Mennell words:

> The models [the game models] demonstrate the not-altogether-commonplace insight that the more relatively equal become the power ration among large numbers of people and groups… the more likely is it that the outcome will be something that no single person or group has planned or anticipated. Elias considerably broadens the idea of the 'unanticipated consequences of purposive social action', which Robert Merton traced back to (inter alia) Adam Smith's 'hidden hand' and Hegel's 'cunning of reason'. (Mennell 1998b:23).

This slow change of this power balance meant that a new market oriented the capitalistic-industrial bourgeoisie taste came to overlap the earlier court taste the further we get into the nineteenth century. Elias, already in *The Court Society*, spoke of this process:

[21] Still, opera and vocal music in its many forms were during the whole century counted as the highest or first kind of music. It meant that one could concentrate on the story and the lyrics, it afforded, compared with instrumental music, a different type of listening.

[22] Earlier on, already in the 1720s one can trace how the new musical style, galant style, meant a concentration on the leading melody and the oncoming of more reserved attitude towards intricate polyphonic structures in music. As is well-known J. A. Scheibe in the 1730s indirectly criticized Bach's music of being too complicated either to perform or to hear. Indeed, as the Bach-scholar Christoph Wolff (1991:374) has written: «An orientation toward the taste and needs of a wider public seems to have been entirely foreign to Bach».

> As soon as exclusive, elitist tendencies appear in bourgeois strata, they also express themselves in prestige symbols directed at maintaining the group's distance from others, while transfiguring its existence. In these symbols the group's existence is presented as an end in itself surrounded by its aura of prestige, even though in the case of bourgeois strata utilitarian values and economic interests mingle with the prestige-values. (1983:103)

By that time we find ourselves in the third period of Beethoven's music, thus, have left the musical process that I intend to write more deeply about.

I hope then in detail to show how the European *bourgeois* person's altered living conditions, available education, a new work/leisure structure, the division of time into work and leisure, economic power, and so forth, added to the changing processes in communal life. Enclosed in the same process we find, thus, that the new music styles were developed and categorized. There is thus every reason to, in an Eliasian way, try to understand how societies and cultures transformed the way people used and understood the changing structures of song and music. Sociogenesis and psychogenesis work together.

To conclude: Dichotomous thinking sooner or later lands into a straight-jacket and limits epistemological thinking. To let Elias have the last words, he might thus have thought on Adorno as Elias, in a later preface to *The Civilizing Process* wrote:

> Social phenomena in reality can only be observed as evolving and having evolved; their dissection by mean of pairs of concepts which restricts the analysis to two antithetical states represent an unnecessary impoverishment of sociological perception on both empirical and theoretical levels. (Elias 1994:186).

References

Adorno T. W. (1949), *Philosophie der Neuen Musik*, Tübingen.

Adorno T. W. (1967), *Inledning till musiksociologin - tolv teoretiska föreläsningar*, Kristiansstad: Cavefors [in German 1962].

Adorno T. W. (1993), *Beethoven – Philosophie der Musik. Fragmente und Texte*, hrsg. von Rolf Tiedemann, Nachgelassene Schriften, Abteilung I: Band 1, Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp.

Adorno T. W. (1997), *Aesthetic Theory*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota press.

Adorno T. W. (2002), *Essays on Music – Selected. With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Richard Leppert*,), Berkeley: University of California Press.

Adorno T. W., Horkheimer M. (1997), *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* London: Verso.

Aronowitz S. (1994), *Dead Artists, Live Theories and Other Cultural Problems*, New York: Routledge.

Aspects of Sociology by the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research – with a preface by Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, (1973), London: Heinemann [in German 1956].

Baumgarten A. (1954 [1735]), *Reflections on Poetry – Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus*, eds. K. Aschenbrenner & W. Hother, Berkeley, Cal.: Univ. of California Press

Byros V. (2009), *Towards an 'Archeology' of Hearing: Schemata and Eighteenth-Century Consciousness*, in «Musica Humana», Vol1 No 2, pp. 235-306.

DeNora T. (1995), *Beethoven and the Construction of Genius – Musical Politics in Vienna*, 1792-1803, Berkeley: University of California Press.

DeNora T. (2003), *After Adorno - Rethinking Music Sociology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Docker J. (1994), *Postmodernism and Popular Culture - a Cultural History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Dodd N. (1999), *Social Theory and Modernity*, Cambridge: Polity Press

Eagleton T. (1990), *Ideology of the Aesthetic*, London: Blackwell

Eagleton T. (1997), *Fr-a-g-me-n-ts: A discussion on the position of critical ethnomusicology in contemporary musicology*, in «Svensk tidskrift för musikforskning/Swedish journal of musicology», Vol. 79, no. 1, pp. 9-68, 1997.

Edström O. (1997), *Fr-a-g-me-n-ts: A discussion on the position of critical ethnomusicology in contemporary musicology*, http://musikforskning.se/stm/stmbrowser.php -, or in «Svensk tidskrift för musikforskning/Swedish journal of musicology», Vol. 79, no. 1, pp. 9-68.

Edström O. (2002), *En ANNAN berättelse om den västerländska musikhistorien – och det estiska projektet,* Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet.

Edström O. (2008), *A Different Story: Aesthetics and the History of Western Music,* Aesthetics in Music, No.8, Hillsdale, N.Y.: Pendragon Press), 2008.

Elias N. (1978), *The Civilizing Process*, Vol. 1: *History of Manners*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Elias N. (1979), *The Civilizing Process*, Vol. 2: *State formation and Civilization History*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Elias N. (1987), *Involvement and Detachment* Oxford: Basil Blackwell [in German 1983].

Elias N. (1983), *The Court Society*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Elias N. (1991a), *Mozart: zur Soziologie eines Genies*, hrsg. Michael Schröter, Frankfurt/M : Suhrkamp.

Elias N. (1991b), *Mozart – sociologiska betraktelser över ett geni* (Stockholm: Aldebaran).

Elias N. (1993), *Portrait of a Genius*, Oxford: Polity Press.

Elias N. (1994a), *Reflections on a Life*, London: Polity Press.

Elias N. (1994b), *The Civilization Process,* Oxford: Blackwell.

Elias N. (1998a), *The kitsch style and the age of kitsch*, in *The Norbert Elias Reader*, eds. Johan Goudsblom & Stephen Mennell, Oxford: Blackwell.

Elias N. (1998b), *On Civilization, Power and Knowledge*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Elias N. (2006), Mozart and other Essays on Courtly Art, The Collected works of Norbert Elias, Vol.12, eds. E Baker & S Mennell, University College Dublin Press.

Elias N. (2009), Elias' Address to Adorno, Essays III – On Sociology and the Humanities. The Collected Works of Norbert Elias, Volume 16, eds. Richard Kilminster & Steven Mennell, Dublin: University College Dublin Press.

Elias N. (2010), Norbert Elias, Mozart and Other Essays on Courtly Art, The Collected Works of Norbert Elias, Volume 12, eds. Eric R. Baker & Steven Mennell, Dublin: University College Dublin Press.

Elias N., Lepenies W. (1977), Zwei Reden anlässlich der Verleihung des Theodor W. Adorno-Preises 1977, Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp Verlag.

Fagan E., Theodor Adorno, Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, http://www.iep.utm.edu/adorno/

Goehr L. (1992), The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: an essay in the philosophy of music, Oxford: Clarendon.

Hentschel F. (2006), Bürgerliche Ideologie und Musik – Politik der Musikgeschichtschreibung in Deutschland 1776-1871, Frankfurt: Campus.

Hooper G. (2006), The Discourse of Musicology, Aldershot: Ashgate.

Ingles F. (1993), Cultural Studies Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kilminster R. (1998), The Sociological revolution: from the Enlightenment to the global age, London: Routledge.

Korte H. (2001), Perspectives on a Long Life. Norbert Elias and the Process of Civilization, in T. Salumets (2001, ed.), Norbert Elias and Human Interdependencies, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Le Huray P., Day J. (1981, eds), Music and Aesthetics in the Eighteenth and Early-Nineteenth Centuries, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mannheim K. (1952), Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge, ed. P Kecskemeti, London

Martin P.(1995), Sounds and Society - Themes in the Sociology of Music, Manchester, Manchester University Press

Mattheson, J. (1999), Der vollkommene Capellmeister, Hrsg. Friederike Ramm, Kassel: Bärenreiter

McClary S. (1991), Feminine Endings - Music, Gender, and Sexuality, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Mennell S. (1989), Norbert Elias: Civilization and the human self-image, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Middleton R. (1990), Studying Popular Music, Milton Keynes; Open University Press.

Modern Philosophers – From Descartes to Nietzsche (2000), editor and foreword by Steven Emmanuel, Oxford: Blackwell.

Nixon P. (1994), *Sociality, music, dance: human figurations in a Transylvanian valley*, Diss., Göteborg: Skrifter från Musikvetenskapliga avdelningen, Göteborgs universitet, 34.

Paddison M. (1993), *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Steptoe A. (1988), *The Mozart-Da Ponte operas: the cultural and musical background to Le nozze di Figaro, Don Giovanni, and Così an tutte*, Oxford:Clarendon.

Subotnik R. R. (1991), *Developing variations*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Thorne C. (2009), *The Dialectic of Counter-Enlightenment* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Witkins R. W. (1998), *Adorno on Music*, London: Routledge.

Wolff C.(1991), *Bach: Essays on his life and work*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Wolin R. (1992), *The Terms of Cultural Criticism - The Frankfurt School. Existentialism, Poststructuralism*, New York: Columbia Univ. Press.

Zuidervaart L. (1994), *Adorno's Aesthetic Theory - The Redemption of Illusion*, Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press.

Zuidervaart L. (2007), *Social Philosophy after Adorno,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Zuidervaart L., *Theodor W. Adorno* Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/adorno/.