

# Not *Which* Tones? The Crux of Beethoven's Ninth

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There is a moment in the last movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony whose ambiguity, although technically unremarkable, has far-reaching implications for interpretations of the work, prompted by the music's ironic relationship to the text at that point. The moment, as brief as it is critical, comes at the beginning of the baritone recitative "O Freunde, nicht diese Töne!," specifically on the last word of that phrase, "Töne" (ex. 1). The soloist can choose to read the setting of this word in one of two ways: either he can reproduce the pitches literally, as notated; or he can add an unnotated but implied appoggiatura on the first syllable. The

numerous available recordings of the Ninth include examples of both solutions.<sup>1</sup> Embellish-

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<sup>1</sup>A sample of seventeen recordings from the 1920s through the present contained six performances with the vocal appoggiatura and eleven without. Some of the conductors represented by more than one recording are consistent in all their performances, others are not. All three recordings by Bruno Walter, for example, do not include the vocal appoggiatura; two of these feature the bass-baritone Mack Harrell (1949 and 1953), the other William Wildermann (1959). Others belonging to this group of literalists are Wilhelm Furtwängler, represented by four recordings: with Rudolf Watzke (1942), with Paul Schöffler (1953) and with Otto Edelmann (1951 and 1954); Antal Dorati with Sigurd Björling (1967); and Claudio Abbado with Bryn Terfel (1996). Felix Weingartner and Leopold Stokowski have it both ways: Weingartner's recording, in English, with Harold Williams (1927) is without the appoggiatura; the one with Richard Mayr (1935) has it. Stokowski's recording with Donald McIntyre (1967) is without; the one with Eugene Loewenthal (1934), in English, has it. Other members of the appoggiatura group are: Willem Mengelberg with Willem Ravelli (1940), Arturo Toscanini with Norman Scott (1952), Roger Norrington with Petteri Salomaa (1987), and John Eliot Gardiner with Gilles Cachemaille (1994).

Recitativo  
216

Bar. Solo

O Freun - de, nicht die - se Tö - ne!

223

Son - dern laßt uns an - ge - neh - me - re an - stim - men,

*colla voce*

230

und freu - den - vol - le - re!

*ad libitum* *etc.*

Example 1: Beethoven, Symphony No. 9, movt. IV, baritone recitative, mm. 216-36.

a. instrumental recitative, mm. 7-16.

[Presto]

Selon le caractère d'un Récitatif, mais in Tempo

*f* *dim.* *p* *ff* *etc.*

b. instrumental recitative, mm. 81-84.

Tempo I

*f* *f* *f* *f* *etc.*

Example 2: Beethoven, Symphony No. 9, movt. IV.

ing the word "Töne" is justified not only by tradition—whether in the sense of the contemporaneous practice with which Beethoven was familiar or in the sense of more recent performances as documented in recordings—but also by the score itself: in the versions of the recitative presented earlier in the movement by the lower strings, the appoggiatura is written out (both in m. 16 and in m. 84), presumably to make sure the instrumentalists implement as far as possible the vocal performance practice they are so obviously aping (ex. 2).<sup>2</sup>

Based either on knowledge of the instrumental version or on vocal performance practice, if we expect an appoggiatura G to precede the F $\sharp$ , but then hear instead the music exactly as written, might we not think "Not *these* tones?" Conversely, the performed appoggiatura does not present the tones literally as written. In either case, Beethoven is providing a felicitously witty illustration of the text, a kind of *inganno*. The verbal negation "nicht" has its musical equivalent in the literal absence of the implied appoggiatura. Literalists who perform the F are being no less ironic than those who perform the G. However performed, and however intended, whether with or without the appoggiatura, the passage points up a clash of musical cultures, one of several embodied in the movement: in this case, the instrumental versus the vocal, on the one hand, and the notated versus the unnotated (or at least seminotated), on the other.

<sup>2</sup>The meticulously prepared new edition of the Ninth Symphony, edited by Jonathan Del Mar (Kassel, 1996), supplies a footnote with the appoggiatura written out. In his critical commentary, Del Mar states that the first F "should be sung as G in the usual tradition of vocal appoggiaturas." The copyist's score that Beethoven gave to the Philharmonic Society (now housed in the British Library) includes a separate stave, added later, with the recitative written out in English and the G slurred to the F. Del Mar remarks, "It helps confirm that the note actually sung in performance at the time was G, matching bar 16." Additionally, Del Mar also refers to the sketches, where mm. 80–90 appear as a vocal solo, with the first note of m. 84 as an F $\sharp$ . The instrumental version, as in m. 16, is of course G. Although the G in the recitative is deleted in favor of F in the autograph score, Del Mar remarks that "this was surely a notational revision, not a musical one" (p. 53). Beethoven's revision, based on the interpretation being proposed here, is not merely a notational but also a "literary" one.

What about the rest of the passage? The setting of the text that follows suggests word-painting: expansive melismas on the comparative adjective "angenehmere" coupled with a harmonic shift from minor to major via a sustained applied dominant seventh (V/V). If we accept this rather obvious interpretation, then we might also want to include as text-painting the appoggiatura on the first syllable of the preceding word "diese": that is, the half tone sigh B $\flat$ –A before the temporary cadence in D minor. Beethoven is thus ushering in his alternative "more pleasant tones" with a kind of motivic and harmonic cipher of supposedly less pleasant ones. B $\flat$ –A is, after all, suggestive of all kinds of motivic and structural relations in the piece, including the D-minor mode, of which it functions here as a token. In a book otherwise devoted to "the thematic process in music," Rudolph Reti tellingly misquotes Beethoven's words as "No more of these *sad* tones."<sup>3</sup> Musically, the determiner "diese" has both immediate and long-range significance, both affective poignance and structural salience. Moreover, the same half tone appears both as a dissonant verticality and horizontally in the so-called horror fanfare, which begins the movement and serves to introduce both the instrumental and the vocal recitatives. Beethoven is literally intoning the tones he is at once rejecting, albeit in what has to be construed as a radically condensed form.

The replacement of the B $\flat$ –A motif by B $\sharp$ –A occurs in both of the outer movements. In the recapitulation of the first movement it is temporarily proposed but then thwarted (ex. 3). Eventually, in the last movement, the victory of B $\sharp$  over B $\flat$  is presented quite extrusively with fifteen repetitions of the same dyad in the eight-measure wind-up to the final Prestissimo (ex. 4). It is the kind of overt motivic manipulation that Beethoven would have appreciated in Haydn's music, in particular Symphony No. 104, the "London" Symphony, which is also in D and which, in all its movements, similarly composes out the replacement of B $\flat$  by B $\sharp$  as a

<sup>3</sup>Rudolph Reti, *The Thematic Process in Music* (London, 1961), p. 28.

Example 3: Beethoven, Symphony No. 9, movt. I, recapitulation, mm. 387–95.

Example 4: Beethoven, Symphony No. 9, movt. IV, mm. 843–52.

large-scale process.<sup>4</sup> Seen this way, Beethoven's music is speaking about tones not just in its words but on several levels through the tones themselves.<sup>5</sup> And although the initial moment of negation gains its ultimate hermeneutic force

through anti-organicist disruption of the kind that perturbed Hanslick and eventually caused Schenker to dismiss the opening of the movement as a "logical inconsistency," we nonetheless need organicist spectacles to read the work's message in this way.<sup>6</sup>

Such a reading of the recitative about "diese Töne," taking an initially literal approach, has

<sup>4</sup>Janet Schmalfeldt has explored the "neighbor motion  $\hat{5}-\hat{6}-\hat{5}$ " in the minuet of Haydn's Symphony No. 104 in her article "Towards a Reconciliation of Schenkerian Concepts with Traditional and Recent Theories of Form," *Music Analysis* 10 (1991), 233–87. That same motion, sometimes with minor inflections, imbues the motivic material of the entire symphony. With respect to the Ninth, James Webster has discussed in some detail the downward step  $\hat{6}-\hat{5}$ , which he calls a "prominent . . . pitch constellation," in his article "The Finale of Beethoven's Ninth," *Beethoven Forum* 1 (1992), 25–62.

<sup>5</sup>The opening fifth A–E at the beginning of the passage could also be seen as echoing the beginning of the first movement, and the recitative therefore as embodying, in miniature, the progress of the whole work. Seeing the opening interval in this way turns the *ossia* C $\sharp$  (as an alternative to the E) into something of a riddle. The autograph score does not include either it or the preceding grace note. According to Del Mar (1996), both were added later by Beethoven to scores prepared by copyists. Nor does the *ossia* seem to serve any practical purpose, since the soloist is required to perform the high E in the next measure. It

does, however, parallel the ambiguity of the appoggiatura on "Töne" at the end of the same phrase. The ascent from the third to the fifth degree, echoing as it does the opening of the "joy" melody, also makes sense both motivically and in terms of text-painting ("O Freunde!"), in which case the baritone's initial notes in the score embody simultaneously the opening and the resolution of the symphony, both the tones being rejected and those following in their stead. This is *Augenmusik*, of course, of the most recondite kind. But, given the care Beethoven took over correcting and modifying the various sources, it is hardly to be dismissed out of hand.

<sup>6</sup>Hanslick, in *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, judged the last movement to lack beauty, to be "unschön." Essentially a classicist interested primarily in manifestations of the "musically beautiful," he sided with those who see the symphony as a whole as an "aesthetic monstrosity" (*ästhetische Ungeheuerlichkeit*). See *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen: Ein*

little in common with customary accounts of this passage. The vast literature on the subject tends, as a matter of course, to look further back in the movement for its points of reference, at least as far back as the second "horror fanfare" or *Schreckensfanfare*, if not further. Yet this literal, short-range approach itself soon leads to focusing on such abstruse matters as the disjunction between written and sounded music, on the one hand, and on the irony of negating tones that can be construed as motivically and harmonically constitutive of long-range musical organization, on the other.

Nor is irony restricted to this short phrase. If performances of the baritone's next phrase tend to sound somewhat sardonic in tone, an early critic of the symphony offered an explanation that related the notes themselves to his own expectations. Writing in 1826 in the *Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, an anonymous reviewer mentioned that the "great melismas overstepped all conventional limits of recitative."<sup>7</sup> He no doubt meant specifically the large number of notes sung both on the first syllable of "angehemere" and on that of "freundenvollere," in each case exceeding by far anything to which contemporary audiences

were accustomed in a recitative (such elaborate melismas in an aria might, of course, be a different matter).<sup>8</sup> Is there any special significance to Beethoven's exaggerated painting of these two words, coming as it does after the paradoxical switching of roles between voices and instruments, with the lower strings having played the recitative the first time around, and the whole orchestra, in a set of *instrumental* variations, having presented, before the interruption by the second fanfare, what will eventually become the *vocal* "Ode to Joy?" Is the exuberance of the word-painting melismas also ironic? And if so, might Beethoven be projecting some kind of distance from that which is being promoted as "more pleasant/agreeable"?

Any new exegesis necessarily has to compete with a number of different answers to the riddle posed by Beethoven's dichotomizing verbal construction "nicht diese . . . sondern . . ." Which tones is he referring to, with respect both to those being negated and those being welcomed as an alternative? And even if we could identify these tones unequivocally, what would the apparent rejection mean? That the work demands an interpretation from its listeners is a commonplace of its immense secondary literature.<sup>9</sup> If there is any one place that

*Beitrag zur Revision der Ästhetik in der Tonkunst* (Leipzig, 1854; Darmstadt, 1991), pp. 50–51. Schenker, inspired by similar basic values, insisted on understanding "tones" to mean "clearly forged themes" (*mehr oder minder ausgeprägte Themen*). Hence he was forced to see Beethoven's rejection of these tones, namely the "joy" theme, prior to its being sung by the baritone soloist as a "logical inconsistency" (*logischer Lapsus*), at least from a programmatic point of view. At the same time, however, Schenker claimed that the "inconsistency . . . finds its remedy once again in Beethoven's musically absolute primal urge toward parallelism!" See Heinrich Schenker, *Beethoven: Neunte Sinfonie: Eine Darstellung des musikalischen Inhaltes unter fortlaufender Berücksichtigung auch des Vortrages und der Literatur* (Vienna, 1912); *Beethoven's Ninth Symphony: A Portrayal of Its Musical Content, with Running Commentary on Performance and Literature as Well*, ed. and trans. John Rothgeb (New Haven, 1992), p. 243.

<sup>7</sup>"Dieser [der letzte Satz] führt nicht zu einem Schlusse, sondern zu jenem Rezitative zurück, das nun in ähnlichen, großen, alles gewöhnliche Recitativmaß übersteigenden Melismen—so forderte es die Entwicklung des Menschengesanges aus dem Instrumentale—vom Baßsänger zu den einleitenden Worten gesungen wird." The review is reprinted in *Ludwig van Beethoven: Die Werke im Spiegel seiner Zeit: Gesammelte Konzertberichte und Rezensionen bis 1830*, ed. Stefan Kunze (Laaber, 1987), pp. 500–07 (p. 506).

<sup>8</sup>The contours of the melismas on "angenehm" closely follow those of the word "an" in the line "reichen an die Gottheit an" in the duet "Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen" from an opera much admired by Beethoven, Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*. For mention of other intertextual references, including some to *Zauberflöte*, see n. 39.

<sup>9</sup>Wilhelm Seidel, in one of the most eloquent of recent commentaries, has noted (echoing Hanslick and a number of other predecessors, including Wagner) that "the Ninth Symphony is a profoundly uneven [*uneinheitliches*] work. The discrepancy between its parts cannot be explained in a purely musical way. It demands an interpretation that goes beyond the purely musical. In denying the work an interpretation one also evades it." See Wilhelm Seidel, "9. Symphonie op. 125," in *Beethoven: Interpretationen seiner Werke*, vol. II, ed. Albrecht Riethmüller et al. (Laaber, 1994), pp. 252–71. Leo Treitler, in *Music and the Historical Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass., 1993), asserts that the Ninth "more than any other work of the tradition . . . demands an interpretation" (p. 55). Referring to Treitler, Scott Burnham recently concluded that "one could make a case that this imperative is itself immanent in the work, that this work stages the act of interpretation more explicitly and directly than most others—by forcing the issue—and that the reception history of the Ninth is thus an inescapable part of the work." See Scott Burnham, "Our Sublime Ninth," *Beethoven Forum* 5 (1996), 155–63.

forces us to come up with an interpretation, it is this one, the piece's hermeneutic crux. Referring to it as "a litmus test," Nicholas Cook has stressed the openness of hermeneutic possibilities.<sup>10</sup> Many answers seem to be possible. Like a Rorschach test, the work brings out different things in different people—and in Wagner's celebrated case, it brought out different things in the same person.<sup>11</sup>

When Nietzsche addressed the matter, in the fragment "On Music and Words," which he suppressed from his otherwise pro-Wagnerian *Birth of Tragedy*, he could not but take issue with Wagner, whose understanding of the passage—or rather, one of whose understandings, namely, the one in *Oper und Drama*—is per-

<sup>10</sup>Nicholas Cook, *Beethoven: Symphony No. 9*, Cambridge Music Handbooks (Cambridge, 1993), p. 86.

<sup>11</sup>Wagner's wavering opinions placed side-by-side present a fascinating conspectus just on their own. Wagner had his uses for the Ninth. It was his confessional piece par excellence, "the symbol and cornerstone of my whole building," as he called it during preparations for the consecration of the Bayreuth Festspielhaus in 1872; cited in Christa Jost, "Fortschreitende Abstraktion": Wagners frühe Phase der Auseinandersetzung mit Beethovens Neunter Symphonie," in *Münchener Beethoven-Studien* (Munich, 1992), p. 201. The much-cited coopting of the choral finale in *Oper und Drama* as the most significant item in the prehistory of Wagnerian music drama has, however, to be weighed against the less well-known but no less telling statement from the letter he wrote to Franz Liszt in 1855, echoing and preechoing, as it does, countless other negative judgments of the piece from the time of its premiere until today: "For Ninth Symphony (as a work of art), the final movement with the choruses," Wagner declared, superficially siding for a moment with Hanslick, "is the decidedly weakest part." His not wholly un-Hanslickian reason: "it is merely important for the history of art because it reveals to us in a very naïve way the embarrassment of a real tone-poet who doesn't know (after hell and purgatory) how finally (and finitely) he is going to represent paradise." The letter, dated 7 June 1855, is published in *Briefwechsel zwischen Wagner und Liszt*, vol. II (Leipzig, 1900): "Für die neunte Symphonie (als Kunstwerk) ist der letzte Satz mit den Chören entschieden der schwächste Theil, er ist blos kunstgeschichtlich wichtig, weil er uns auf sehr naive Weise die Verlegenheit eines wirklichen Tondichters aufdeckt, der nicht weiß, wie er endlich (nach Hölle und Fegefeuer) das Paradies darstellen soll" (p. 78). See also Klaus Kropfinger, *Wagner and Beethoven: Richard Wagner's Reception of Beethoven*, trans. Peter Palmer (Cambridge, 1991); Ruth Solie, "Beethoven as Secular Humanist: Ideology and the Ninth Symphony in Nineteenth-Century Criticism," in *Explorations in Music, the Arts, and Ideas: Essays in Honor of Leonard B. Meyer*, ed. Eugene Narmour and Ruth Solie (Stuyvesant, N.Y., 1988), pp. 1–42; and Thomas S. Grey, *Wagner's Musical Prose: Texts and Contexts* (Cambridge, 1995).

haps the most famous of all. The issue hinges on the significance Nietzsche attaches to Beethoven's words in the baritone recitative. Summing up but also undermining Wagner's position, he writes:

What, then, are we to say of the incredible aesthetic superstition that Beethoven in the fourth movement of the "Ninth" gave a solemn testimony concerning the limits of absolute music and thus unlocked the portals to a new art in which music is said to be able to represent even images and concepts and has thus supposedly been made accessible for "conscious spirit"? What does Beethoven say himself when he introduces the choral ode with a recitativo? "Oh friends, not these sounds, but let us strike more agreeable and joyous ones!" For that he needed the persuasive tone of the human voice; for that he needed the innocent air of the popular song. Longing for the most soulful total sound of his orchestra, the sublime master reached not for words but for a "more agreeable" sound, not for concepts but for the sound that was most sincerely joyous. And how could he be misunderstood?<sup>12</sup>

Nietzsche goes on to polemicize openly against Wagner by citing a passage from the master's prose writings, one written after his conversion to Schopenhauerian metaphysics, that undermines his preconversion coopting of the Ninth in *Oper und Drama*. But that's an easy sport: there are many such anomalies in Wagner's writings. Beyond making a Schopenhauerian point, Nietzsche is himself coopting the Ninth to illustrate a distinction central to his own writings, namely, that between the "Dionysian" and the "Apollinian."

What we found in the last movement of the "Ninth," on the highest peaks of the development of modern music—that the content of the words drowns unheard in the general sea of sound—is nothing unique and unusual but the general and eternally valid norm in the vocal music of all ages. . . . The individual who is in a state of Dionysian excitement has no listeners to whom he has anything to communicate any more than does an orgiastic crowd, while the

<sup>12</sup>Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Music and Words," trans. Walter Kaufmann, in *Between Romanticism and Modernism*, ed. Carl Dahlhaus (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1980), pp. 103–19 (p. 113).

epic narrator and, more generally, the Apollinian artist does presuppose such a listener.<sup>13</sup>

According to Nietzsche's distinctions, the recitative presumably represents an Apollinian moment of calm communication before yielding to the unconditional Dionysian excitement of the chorus. In his scheme of things, the agreeable and the Dionysian seem closely related. Nietzsche does not, however, bother to identify the tones Beethoven rejects, still less suggest why he does so, beyond that the work gives way to Dionysian excitement. "The music blinds us totally to images and words and we *simply do not hear anything of Schiller's poem*."<sup>14</sup> This "orgiastic" aspect of the movement's reception, identified by Nietzsche, is something to which I will return.

Nietzsche, as far as I know, is the only commentator to have picked up on the ironic significance of Beethoven's reference to tones, as opposed to words, which Wagner found so critical. In general, Wagner's opinion, which has spawned a variety of solutions to the hermeneutic crux, has carried far more weight than Nietzsche's. Having written in 1992 that "the answer remains elusive," David Levy stated unequivocally in 1995 that "Beethoven's introductory text refers to the *Schreckensfanfare* [the term is Wagner's], and not to the 'sounds' of the first three movements (as has been suggested by some writers)."<sup>15</sup> One of those writers is Nicholas Cook, who also defers to Wagner but with a different result. For Wagner, Cook maintains, "'not these tones' refers to the horror fanfare, to the first three movements, ultimately to instrumental music as a whole." He then states that "virtually all commentators accept this line of interpretation." "In fact," he says, "it is hard to see what Beethoven could have done to make his meaning plainer."<sup>16</sup> But these are really three quite distinct interpretations of what is being rejected: one is the

*Schreckensfanfare* (Levy's interpretation), another is the preceding movements (or at least, the quoted snippets from them, along with whatever they purportedly represent), and the third is instrumental music as a whole. There are many instances in the literature of people supporting one or more of these options but not necessarily all three at once.

One person who understands Beethoven's words as a verbal "explanation" of the transition from minor to major is Konrad Küster. He takes the quotations of the earlier movements to be a common device in Beethoven's music, employed for example in the last movement of the Fifth, whereby the composer seeks to unify a cyclically and dynamically organized whole.<sup>17</sup> Such a reading plays down the idea of rejection in general, not just the rejection of instrumental music, stressing rather the idea of process. Heard in this way, Beethoven's words amount to a commentary, albeit a somewhat self-conscious one, on the sequence of musical moods.

Closer to Cook, but appreciating too that Beethoven's self-quotations are nothing unusual, Claus Canisius hears the baritone solo as "revoking the aesthetic of the preceding music," without specifying that music as being of the instrumental kind. "Not these tones," according to him, refers to the "the whole first part" of the symphony, which he divides into two parts: the first three movements followed by a classicistic three-part ode after the model of Pindar.<sup>18</sup> The crux comes in between.

<sup>17</sup>Konrad Küster, *Beethoven* (Stuttgart, 1994), p. 384: "There is hardly anything special in the way the music is organized up to this point; the elements that Beethoven uses have been his stock-in-trade for some time—albeit not in this structural arrangement." (Der Sache nach ist daran, wie die Musik bis hierhin eingerichtet ist, nur wenig Besonderes zu finden, denn die Elemente, die Beethoven anwendet, gehören seit längerem zu dem Grundrepertoire seines Komponierens—allerdings nicht in dieser strukturellen Anordnung.)

<sup>18</sup>"Beethovens umarmende Aufforderung an sein Publikum, jetzt angenehmere Töne anzustimmen, ist aber nicht nur auf die besagte düstere kurze Fanfarenmusik bezogen, sondern auch auf den gesamten ersten Teil der Sinfonie. . . . Der Aufbau beruht auf Beethovens Umformung von Schillers achtstrophigem Gedicht 'An die Freude' in eine klassizistische dreiteilige Chor-Ode nach dem Vorbild Pindars." See Claus Canisius, *Beethoven: "Sehnsucht und Unruhe in der Musik": Aspekte zu Leben und Werk* (München, 1992), pp. 172–75.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>15</sup>David B. Levy, "The Contrabass Recitative in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony Revisited," *Historical Performance* 5 (1992), 9–18 (p. 16); and idem, *Beethoven: The Ninth Symphony* (New York, 1995), p. 102.

<sup>16</sup>Cook, *Beethoven: Symphony No. 9*, p. 89.

Canisius is one of several commentators who draw on the sketches of the opening recitative known as Landsberg 8, bundle 2, part of which comprised the sketchbook referred to by earlier authors as O.<sup>19</sup> In these sketches, Beethoven adds words to the instrumental part, some of them illegible and therefore, like the finished composition itself, the object of conflicting readings. In fact, none of the commentators agree in every detail on how to decipher Beethoven's handwritten words.<sup>20</sup> Just as it would be churlish to contradict previous transcriptions of these intractable manuscripts, so one should avoid making too much of any of the questionable words, especially those usually accompanied in transcriptions by a question mark. If nothing else, though, the sketches make explicit that the quotations from the earlier movements are also being rejected. The fanfare, according to Thayer/Deiters, "would remind us of our despair" or perhaps our "desperate state." Beethoven's use of the conditional tense is interesting: he is testing the passages for their suitability. Above the opening fifths he asks, according to Nottebohm, for something "more pleasing [*gefälliges*]," which could almost be a synonym for "angenehm." The scherzo won't do either (with the disputed word "Possen" the sketches would be suggesting not just a synonym for scherzo but also a parallel with a theatrical farce): what is required is "something more beautiful and better (*schöner u. besser*)." The following movement, the Adagio,

is rejected as "too tender [*zu zärtl.*]." Both Thayer and Nottebohm read the description of what is sought instead as "aufgewecktes"—something sharp and alert. Eventually, though, the right thing is found, namely "joy."

The relationship between the work and its sketches is complicated. Not only does the texted version of the instrumental recitative offer a layer of meaning (however garbled) not present in the "final" version; the final version itself seems openly to rehearse the process of creation. Before changing course and after retracing the steps taken so far, the fourth movement takes the listener in a possible but ultimately aborted direction.

While the sketched version calls for something "more pleasing" and "alert," the vocal recitative itself calls for tones that are not only more joyful but also "more pleasant," "angenehmere Töne." What did Beethoven mean by this term, what connotations did he attach to it? Resolving the matter involves understanding the concept's opposite. For those, like Levy, who focus on the "horror fanfare," the contrast of the "more pleasant tones" is quite palpable, if the antithesis of "pleasant" is taken to be unpleasant.<sup>21</sup> Yet a problem arises with this approach if we include in our catalogue of less pleasant tones the quotation of the Adagio, which is surely scarcely less "pleasant" than the "Ode to Joy" tune. And if we add anything from the preceding music, including the instrumental variations of the "Ode to Joy" itself, the problem may seem insoluble, as it did to Schenker, who insisted that "tones" be understood as actual themes. Hence his verdict of "illogical."<sup>22</sup>

If Levy is right and the "nicht" applies only to the fanfare, we are forced to discount the words of the composer's sketches. If, however, the rejection refers to all the preceding music, and even if that rejection is only rhetorical, Beethoven's phrase "more pleasant tones" is impossible to apply without anomaly or con-

<sup>19</sup>The principal commentaries with partial transcriptions are Alexander Wheelock Thayer, *Ludwig van Beethovens Leben*, comp. Hermann Deiters and ed. Hugo Riemann, vol. V (Leipzig, 1908), pp. 26–32; Gustav Nottebohm, *Zweite Beethoveniana: Nachgelassene Aufsätze* (Leipzig, 1887), pp. 189–92; Alfred Chr. Kalischer, "Die Beethoven-Autographe der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin," *Monatsheft für Musikgeschichte* 27 (1895), 143–69; 28 (1896), 1–80; see also Antonín Sychra, "Ludwig van Beethovens Skizzen zur IX. Sinfonie," *Beethoven-Jahrbuch* 4 (1959/60), 85–101; Sieghard Brandenburg, "Die Skizzen zur neunten Symphonie," *Zu Beethoven 2: Aufsätze und Dokumente*, ed. Harry Goldschmidt (Berlin, 1984), pp. 88–129; Douglas Johnson, Alan Tyson, and Robert Winter, *The Beethoven Sketchbooks: History, Reconstruction, Inventory* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1985), pp. 292–98.

<sup>20</sup>In his monograph *Aufbau und Sinn des Chorfinals in Beethovens Neunter Symphonie* (Berlin, 1930), pp. 82–83, Otto Baensch relies on earlier authors' attempts at deciphering the sketches, while usefully pointing out some of the anomalies between the various readings.

<sup>21</sup>James Parsons has dealt extensively with the word "Freude" as in "freundenvollere" in *Ode to the Ninth: The Poetic and Musical Tradition Behind the Finale of Beethoven's "Choral Symphony"* (Ph.D. diss., University of North Texas, 1992) [UMI: 9225007].

<sup>22</sup>Schenker, *Beethoven's Ninth Symphony*, p. 243.



tradition. Neither solution seems satisfactory, and we might end up agreeing with Levy's initial conclusion that the answer is indeed "elusive."

Beethoven's words can, I believe, point to a satisfactory answer, but they have to be seen in their proper context. My basic premise, following Küster and others, is that Beethoven's negation of the earlier music is rhetorical, not literal. Accepting Wagner's position, as Cook seems to do, is to imply that Beethoven was subscribing to the same Hegelian objective spirit that Wagner was promoting, that he shared the same "aesthetic superstitions" as Wagner (to use Nietzsche's trenchant phrase).<sup>23</sup> Of course, the finale should be joyful, or at least tradition has made it so, even if it doesn't have to be vocal. And why shouldn't the preceding music be less joyful? The day of joy shines all the brighter for emerging from the night of suffering or despair.<sup>24</sup> Beethoven's self-quotations and the words of the recitative amount to a self-conscious commentary not just on the change of musical moods but also on the demands made by the symphonic genre—a self-consciousness underscored by the various kinds of irony pointed out earlier. The contamination of the instrumental music by operatic gestures and by words and the nature of those gestures—the recitative of the bass instruments and the baritone's exaggerated melismas—all reinforce this sense of self-consciousness.

In his 1930 study of the finale, unsurpassed in its thoroughness and thoughtfulness, Otto Baensch tried to get at the meaning of the finale by inventing a staged version with scenery and dance.<sup>25</sup> The role allotted to the baritone in

Baensch's imaginary scenario is that of an elder enlightened philosopher addressing the people.<sup>26</sup> Yet if the singer's words are philosophical, whose philosophy informs them? Baensch's scenario is the town meeting place of an ideal state, modeled after Plato's *Republic*. But just as the words are only a means to expressing a philosophy, so their possible source is less critical than what they serve to express. At stake, then, is less an issue of terminology as such than of Beethoven's own use of it. Ernest Sanders has proposed a reference to Herder, citing several occurrences of the word "angenehm" in his writings, although without any evidence that Beethoven had read or knew them. Another likely source is Immanuel Kant, whose works Beethoven most definitely did know, if not always firsthand. Moreover, "angenehm" is a word Kant applied specifically—and also notoriously—to music. But again: how is Beethoven deploying this word, which happens to be so central, albeit for quite different reasons, both to Herdian and Kantian aesthetics? The relevance of the Kantian connection resides not in the promulgation of Kantian philosophy as such but rather in the ironic negation of a philosophy of music that Kant shared with many contemporaries. The specific allusion, if it is one, is relevant for two reasons: it is relevant to the extent to which it illustrates a more general cultural point, and in that it points up the significance of Kant's position vis-à-vis Beethoven's own.

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unconvincingly, to the last movement of the Ninth. James Webster has chided this as "'bar'-form mania"; see his article "The Finale of Beethoven's Ninth," p. 37. The other potential target of criticism is Baensch's invocation of both Plato and Schelling in the interpretative parts of his study. Neither of these shortcomings—or rather, excesses—should detract from the fact that Baensch knew both the sources and secondary literature probably better than anyone at the time. His bibliographic control is masterly. Even though his conclusions are sometimes far-fetched, Baensch manages to say something interesting and provocative in nearly every paragraph of this ninety-six-page monograph.

<sup>26</sup>The tradition of conceiving of symphony audiences as the *Volk*, in particular audiences at concerts featuring symphonies by Beethoven, is the subject of Margaret Notley's article "Volkconcerte in Vienna and the Late Nineteenth-Century Ideology of the Symphony," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 50 (1997), 421–53. Baensch, *Aufbau und Sinn*, p. 54: "Der Älteste der Philosophen tritt hervor und singt das erste Baritonsolo."

<sup>23</sup>See n. 12.

<sup>24</sup>The sentiment is a common one, most famously expressed in Beethoven's letter of 19 September 1815 to Countess Erdödy: "We finite ones with our infinite spirit are born only to suffering and joy, and one could almost say that the elected ones achieve joy through suffering" (Wir endliche mit dem unendlichen Geist sind nur zu leiden und Freuden geboren, und beynah könnte man sagen die ausgezeichneten erhalten durch Leiden Freude; quoted from Ludwig van Beethoven, *Briefwechsel Gesamtausgabe*, vol. III, ed. Sieghard Brandenburg [Munich, 1996], p. 161).

<sup>25</sup>Baensch's study *Aufbau und Sinn* left itself open to criticism on two principal counts. One is the application of Lorenzian bar form as an analytical model that Baensch borrows from Alfred Lorenz's Wagner analysis and applies,

In the language of Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, the phrase "angenehme Töne" would not imply a contrast or antithesis to the affect represented by the jarring dissonances of the *Schreckensfanfare*. Nor would it capture the long-term affect of the major mode superseding the minor. Still less would it be invoked to distinguish vocal from instrumental music, or if it were, it would apply more readily to instrumental than to vocal music. Music, according to Kant in paragraph 51 of his *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, tends to produce "merely agreeable sensations" (*bloß angenehme Empfindungen*) as opposed to the beautiful. By that he meant that it has a purely subjective appeal, since it plays with sensations not available to the universals of disinterested aesthetic judgment. Unlike the beautiful, the "merely pleasant" meets only sensuous, bodily needs. In paragraph 53, he writes: "The art of the tone . . . speaks by means of mere sensations without concepts, and so does not leave behind it any food for reflection. . . . It is certainly more a matter of enjoyment than culture." Hence he concludes: "If . . . we estimate the worth of the fine arts by the culture they supply to the mind, and adopt for our standard the expansion of the faculties whose confluence, in judgement, is necessary for cognition, music, then, since it plays merely with sensations, has the lowest place among the fine arts—just as it has perhaps the highest among those valued at the same time for their agreeableness."<sup>27</sup>

In Kantian terms, then, the expression "agreeable tones" is almost tautological. If tones are anything, that's what they are in abundance. The adjective denotes a restriction, a qualification of music's limited capacity to participate in enlightened culture.<sup>28</sup> Degrees of more or less agreeable, insofar as differentiation is viable, would range not between most pleasant and most unpleasant but rather between the poles of mere enjoyment, on the one hand, and

fully enlightened culture, on the other. Seen in this way, Beethoven's phrase "angenehmere Töne" is nothing if not ironic, insofar as the composer's philosophy of music contradicts the invoked Kantian premise, which surely it must. For all his Kantianism, which Maynard Solomon has called "superficial," but which a number of other authors invoke as more fundamental, most often in interpretations of the Ninth, in music aesthetics Beethoven was anything but a Kantian.<sup>29</sup> The melismas on the word "angenehm" and the succeeding ones that are literally full of "Freude" together draw attention in all their exaggeration to the irony of the phrase "angenehmere Töne."

Deriving from philosophical aesthetics, Kant's term refers primarily to the dimension of reception, to music's effect on the senses. Beethoven's setting invokes a style of music, an operatic one in this case, adequate to the kind of reception suggested by Kant's term. And since his antipathy toward Rossini, a virtuoso dispenser of "angenehme Töne," is well documented, this passage could even be construed as a cryptic allusion to that antipathy in the wake of the Viennese Rossini craze.<sup>30</sup> By extension, the same goes for the "Ode to Joy" itself, the embodiment of "angenehme Töne," and also for the Turkish music with all its hermeneutic associations, including the negative ones that Cook hears in the bassoon grunts.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup>Quoted from Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. J. C. Meredith (Oxford, 1973), pp. 182–96.

<sup>28</sup>For an excellent discussion of Kant's music aesthetics and the immediate post-Kantian period, see Wilhelm Seidel, "Zwischen Immanuel Kant und der musikalischen Klassik: Die Ästhetik des musikalischen Kunstwerks um 1800," *Festschrift Carl Dahlhaus*, ed. Hermann Danuser et al. (Laaber, 1988), pp. 67–84.

<sup>29</sup>The following studies rely heavily on Kantian precepts: William Kinderman, "Beethoven's Symbol for the Deity in the *Missa solennis* and the Ninth Symphony," this journal 9 (1985), 102–18; and Johannes Bauer, *Rhetorik der Überschreitung: Annotationen zu Beethovens Neunter Symphonie* (Pfaffenweiler, 1992). Maynard Solomon's description of Beethoven's Kantianism as "superficial" can be found in his *Beethoven* (New York, 1977), p. 38.

<sup>30</sup>For references to Beethoven's opinion on Rossini, whom he regarded as "formless," see Baensch, *Aufbau und Sinn*, p. 63, n. 2.

<sup>31</sup>Nicholas Cook (*Beethoven: Symphony No. 9*) writes: "If we hear the diversity of nature in the 'Turkish' music, or see an army marching past, or if for that matter we view it as the second tonal area within a sonata-like structure, then we may succeed in not actually hearing the 'grunts' of the bassoons and bass drum at all—or at least in not hearing them as 'absurd'. . . . This resistance [to wholly assimilating the Ninth within any single, definitive interpretation] can only be effective if we remain conscious of the incongruities, the incoherence, the negative qualities of the music" (pp. 92–104).

Robert Winter has appropriately described Beethoven's "Freude" theme as "perhaps his only incontestible triumph over the popular style," a triumph that cost him much effort, as the extensive sketches document.<sup>32</sup> And here we have him proclaiming that triumph, on his having produced "more pleasant tones." Indeed, in three manuscript copies of the score (his autograph, the copy presented to the Philharmonic Society, and the copy dedicated to King Friedrich Wilhelm III), Beethoven actually writes the word "angenehm" in parentheses above the word "Freude" at the beginning of the Ode (plate 1). Not exactly a performance instruction (because of the parentheses), nor to be found in printed editions of the symphony (except the recent one edited by Jonathan Del Mar), the marking is nonetheless significant in identifying which are to be considered the "angenehmere Töne." Beethoven associates the phrase, however, not so much with the "Ode to Joy" melody itself as with the kind of effect that should be conveyed through its performance.

For telling parallels between the late quartets and the Ninth Symphony, in particular for instances both of instrumental recitative and willed simplicity, it is instructive to consult Joseph Kerman. Opus 132, for example, features an instrumental recitative for the violin prior to its last movement. In this case, however, the recitative does not usher in "more pleasant tones." Quite the reverse: coming after a jaunty march, it serves, in Kerman's vivid description, as "a violent short-circuit to the world of pain . . . a real inversion of the Ninth Symphony." The Presto of the C#-Minor Quartet, op. 131, is, in Kerman's words, "the neatest example" of Beethoven's "popular lyricism . . . at once native and naive." Adding a further parallel to the Ninth Symphony, Beethoven marked the G-major melody of the Presto with the Italian equivalent of "angenehm," namely "piacevole." The music's innocence is of course feigned: both the Presto melody and the "Ode

to Joy" are prime examples of Beethoven's "studied naïveté."<sup>33</sup>

Far from irrelevant from a biographical point of view is the extent to which "das Angenehme" would be accessible to someone who had become deaf, except as the recollection of a former sensation. Beethoven's distance from "angenehmere Töne," however ironic, was biologically enforced. The finale is thus doubly retrospective: aesthetically, with its reference to an eighteenth-century view; and biographically, by invoking sensations no longer experienced by the composer. As Heine put it so wonderfully, the late music is haunted by the "ghosts of sounds that have already died away."<sup>34</sup> Not representative of the "merely pleasant," by contrast, would be what August Halm would later call the two cultures of the sonata and fugue—both of which are amply present in this symphony.<sup>35</sup>

All of the above point to a reading of "not these tones" at variance with many of those cited. Claiming the most attention as the candidate for the "rejected" tones is the passage immediately preceding the fanfare and vocal recitative, with the instrumental variations cut off at the point not only where the music is becoming more complex on account of the variation technique but where its modulations suggest some kind of symphonic transition. According to this reading, "not these tones" does not refer to the theme itself, as Schenker was trying in vain to argue, but to its treatment, just as the instruction inscribed over the vocal melody in the composer's manuscript identifies a particular incarnation and perception of

<sup>32</sup>Robert Winter, "The Sketches for the 'Ode to Joy,'" in *Beethoven, Performers, and Critics: The International Beethoven Congress: Detroit, 1977*, ed. Robert Winter and Bruce Carr (Detroit, 1980), pp. 176–214 (p. 192).

<sup>33</sup>Joseph Kerman, *The Beethoven Quartets* (New York, 1966), pp. 262, 200. In the case of the Presto of op. 131, what is being evoked, Kerman says, "is not the opera house, but the village green or else the nursery." Also focusing on reception, he remarks that "we are to respond to these childlike strains as unguardedly as children to nursery rhymes, we are to be swept away by the *Volkston* of the half-dainty, half-clownish country dance." See also p. 202.

<sup>34</sup>Heine, in his musical dispatches from Paris, refers to Beethoven's late music as "Erinnerungen eines Tones, Gespenster verschollener Klänge." See Heinrich Heine, "Lutetia: Berichte über Politik, Kunst und Volksleben," in *Sämtliche Schriften*, vol. 9, ed. Klaus Briegleb (Munich, 1976), p. 358. The entry in question is dated 31 March 1841.

<sup>35</sup>August Halm, *Von zwei Kulturen der Musik* (Stuttgart, 1947).



Plate 1: Beethoven, Symphony No. 9, facsimile of the autograph score (Leipzig, 1975), beginning of "Ode to Joy," marked "(angenehm)" in the composer's hand.

the theme as "angenehm," not the theme as such. The "pleasant" version of the theme, sung by the baritone, supersedes a more complicated, "cultured," and purely instrumental presentation whose progress is halted by the fanfare. The fanfare has a dual purpose: it serves rudely

to cut off the instrumental variations and, at the same time, to introduce the vocal recitative. On both counts it could be seen to disqualify itself as being the tones referred to by the baritone. As an introduction to the singer's words, it belongs to the music doing the interrupting,

not to the interrupted music. Moreover, as a jarringly dissonant signal, it is not so much a part of the main musical argument as it is a punctuational sound effect. As such, it could be likened to "non-diegetic" music in film, with the variations and the succeeding "Ode to Joy" as the diegetic music of the symphony proper. With his false start, Beethoven entertains two possible versions of the same work (as he was later to do with the more "angenehm" version of the finale to the String Quartet, op. 130). The hermeneutic crux in between the two versions of the symphony's finale is both a verbal and a sonic intervention that functions on a different level from the rest of the "tones."

Among the many commentators consulted in this study, only two point in the direction indicated: one is Rudolf Steglich; the other is William Drabkin. Steglich focuses on both the use of the melody and its perception: "Beethoven demonstrated an inability by calling with words for the help of song, not an inability of instrumental music, but an inability on the part of people who misunderstand the melody and misuse it in a divagating way." "O friends not these tones," he concludes, refers "not to the fanfare but to the divagating third variation, including its coda, which violates [*vergewaltigt*] the order and meaning of the Joy-melody."<sup>36</sup> Although his identification is plausible, Steglich's ultimately formalist argument is flawed to the extent that the rejection is not literal but rhetorical—unless, that is, we are prepared to accept the third variation

as some kind of musical joke à la Mozart, in which case the end of the third variation amounts to a demonstration of "meaningless music," as Steglich calls it. The same objection would apply to Drabkin, who writes that "when the baritone solo exclaims [his words], it is to announce that there will be no more sonata form, but joyous singing instead."<sup>37</sup> Terminological anachronism notwithstanding, not to mention several authors who analyze the final movement as sonata form, Drabkin's point is well taken.<sup>38</sup> But again Beethoven is surely being ironic. The apparition of large-scale forms, the kind of hearing that Hanslick prized as "aesthetic," is the very opposite of what is implied by Kant's concept of "angenehm." The tones referred to are not just specific ones, as suggested at the outset, but tones in terms of their broader significance—technically (in terms of how they are manipulated by the composer), generically (in terms of their appropriateness to the demands made by tradition), and culturally (in terms of their reflecting an aesthetic attitude).

Intertextual moments, proposed by several authors, only strengthen the point about stylistic eclecticism in late Beethoven.<sup>39</sup> To talk of a

<sup>36</sup>Rudolf Steglich, "Motivischer Dualismus und thematische Einheit in Beethovens Neunter Sinfonie," *Festschrift Heinrich Besseler zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Institut für Musikwissenschaft der Karl-Marx-Universität Leipzig (Leipzig, 1961), pp. 411–24. "Allerdings hat Beethoven, indem er hier den Gesang mit dem Wort zu Hilfe rief, wirklich ein Unvermögen demonstriert, aber nicht eigentlich ein Unvermögen der Instrumentalmusik, die nicht allen Menschen deutlich wird, sondern ein Unvermögen der Menschen, welche die Melodie mißverstehen und ausschweifend mißbrauchen. Wenn er nach dem Verklingen der Schreckensfanfare die Singstimme mit den Worten beginnen läßt 'O Freunde, nicht diese Töne!', so meint er damit ja nicht die Presto-Fortissimo-Klänge der Fanfare, die gar nicht von den Freunden verübt werden, sondern jene ausschweifende, Ordnung und Sinn der Freude-Melodie vergewaltigende dritte Variation samt ihrer Coda" (p. 422).

<sup>37</sup>William Drabkin, "Composer and Convention: Beethoven's Progress as a Symphonist," liner notes to the cycle conducted by Leonard Bernstein, catalog number DGG 2740216-10 [1980].

<sup>38</sup>Ernest Sanders, "Form and Content in the Finale of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony," *Musical Quarterly* 50 (1964), 59–76; see also his article in this volume (pp. 54–60). James Webster, by contrast, stressing the "complex, multi-sectional construction of Beethoven's finale," states that "for this music, concepts like 'sonata form' will not do." See his article "The Finale of Beethoven's Ninth," *Beethoven Forum* 1 (1992), 25–62 (p. 27) and see p. 61. A conspectus of analytical approaches is included in Michael C. Tusa, "Noch einmal: Form and Content in the Finale of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony," in *Beethoven Forum* 7 (forthcoming), 111–35.

<sup>39</sup>In his article "Mozart—Schiller—Beethoven: Mozarts Modell für die Freudenhymne und die Fusion der Embleme im Finale der Neunten Symphonie," *Hudební věda* 2 (1993), 109–28, Hans-Werner Küthen identifies Mozart's *Offertorium de tempore "Misericordias Domini,"* K. 205a (formerly K. 222), as a model for Beethoven's *Freudenmelodie*. Nicholas Cook (1993) writes of "an entire network of Mozartean references," including at least one to *Die Zauberflöte* (p. 92). Michael Steinberg refers to "close and particular resemblances of the Beethoven Ninth recitatives to those in a piano concerto by Ludwig Böchner" (see Steinberg, *The Symphony: A Listener's Guide* [New York, 1995], p. 54).

late style in the singular is misleading if it doesn't embrace the composer's ability to invoke a plethora of musical styles and to do so in generically incongruous contexts, to make those styles (as Robert Hatten would say) "marked."<sup>40</sup> Incongruity creates the hermeneutic demands of the crux. Adorno couched this point in the language of alienated subjectivity when he wrote that "conventions become expression in the naked representation of themselves."<sup>41</sup>

What are the implications of the perspective that I am proposing? One of course is the possibility of resolving some of the anomalies, mentioned earlier, that have dogged the Ninth's reception throughout its 174-year history. Several prominent commentators, including fairly recent ones, have seemed uncomfortable with the work, not just because of its checkered reception history but in spite of it. Two recent examples are Maynard Solomon and Wilhelm Seidel. Solomon has speculated about Beethoven's "sense of an ending," sensing himself that Beethoven "may have felt that the affirmation itself must be defective or, at least, incomplete, calling for revisions or new perspectives."<sup>42</sup> He cites the report from Czerny that Beethoven allegedly considered replacing the choral finale with a purely instrumental movement.<sup>43</sup> For Seidel, the central problem is this: "How can joy be articulated beyond the

delectability of the past?"<sup>44</sup> The *Fremdwort* used here, "Delektabilität," can be translated into German as "Angenehmheit." Seidel suggests that Beethoven needed words because expressions of joy were no longer a matter of course, a natural outcome of musical material, but rather the product of compositional effort. Seidel relates his own discomfort with the piece to that expressed by Wagner in a letter to Franz Liszt from 1855, in which Wagner declared the choral finale to be the work's "decidedly weakest part." Wagner detected "the embarrassment of a real tone-poet who doesn't know (after hell and purgatory) how finally (and finitely) he is going to represent paradise."<sup>45</sup> J. W. N. Sullivan's later injunctions against the piece in his account of the composer's "spiritual development" argue along similar lines. After presenting his case that Beethoven "[failed] to rise to the height of his great argument," Sullivan suggests that Beethoven himself felt this "inadequacy," citing "the greatest difficulty" he had "in making a plausible bridge passage to the last movement from the other three"—something mentioned by several authors of sketch studies. The irony of which I speak might be seen as expressing Beethoven's awareness of not being able, as Sullivan puts it, to "order this new experience on the scale required." It is the awareness of a limitation, not just on the part of the composer and his medium, but also on that of his audience.<sup>46</sup>

This awareness has to do not just with Beethoven's "lifelong consciousness of the creative process itself," as Lewis Lockwood has called it, but specifically with his consciousness of the creative obligations attaching to different genres.<sup>47</sup> The symphony wears its aes-

<sup>40</sup>Robert Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation* (Bloomington, 1994).

<sup>41</sup>Theodor W. Adorno, "Spätstil Beethovens," *Der Auftakt* 17 (1937); rpt. in *Moments musicaux* (Frankfurt/Main, 1964), pp. 13–17. "So werden beim letzten Beethoven die Konventionen Ausdruck in der nackten Darstellung ihrer selbst" (p. 16).

<sup>42</sup>Maynard Solomon, "Beethoven's Ninth Symphony: The Sense of an Ending," *Critical Inquiry* 17 (1991), 289–305; also in *Probleme der symphonischen Tradition im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Siegfried Kross (Tutzing, 1990), pp. 145–56 (p. 151).

<sup>43</sup>Czerny claimed, according to separate reports by Leopold Sonnleithner and Gustav Nottebohm, to have been present when Beethoven voiced his misgivings about the choral finale. In Sonnleithner's words, Czerny said that Beethoven "admitted that he had committed a mistake [*Mißgriff*]; he wanted to discard it and write an instrumental movement without voices." See Gustav Nottebohm, *Zweite Beethoveniana: Nachgelassene Aufsätze* (Leipzig, 1887), p. 182. A full and judiciously skeptical discussion of this issue can be found in Baensch, *Aufbau und Sinn*, pp. 72–78.

<sup>44</sup>Wilhelm Seidel, "9. Symphonie op. 125," in *Beethoven: Interpretationen seiner Werke*, vol. II, ed. Albrecht Riethmüller et al. (Laaber, 1994), pp. 252–71, quotation on p. 257.

<sup>45</sup>See n. 11.

<sup>46</sup>J. W. N. Sullivan: *Beethoven: His Spiritual Development* (London, 1927), p. 105.

<sup>47</sup>Lewis Lockwood writes of the recitatives "[telling] us that the process is that of a struggle for the creation and discovery of musical material that will be adequate for the expression of human brotherhood and joy embodied in Schiller's Ode," in "The Four 'Introductions' in the Ninth Symphony," *Probleme der symphonischen Tradition im 19. Jahrhundert*, pp. 97–112 (p. 111). In light of the forego-

thetic tenets on its sleeve: its "community forming" sociological aesthetic, to use Paul Bekker's description, with willed popularity and appeals to universal brotherhood.<sup>48</sup> (Walter Frisch has touched on this theory recently in his monograph on the Brahms symphonies.<sup>49</sup>)

In Nietzsche's famous phrase, Beethoven composes "music about music": not just tones about tones, but also words and tones about generic expectations.<sup>50</sup> It is not, however, a destructive, negative irony. To use a modern expression, it is deconstructive, expressing a desire to overcome polarities and transcend constraints. Put in its proper historical context, it is irony of the kind often discussed in the early nineteenth century, particularly in the German-speaking lands.

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ing, one could also say that the recitatives tell us of the material's inadequacy as well.

<sup>48</sup>Paul Bekker's theory of the symphony is most succinctly summarized in his 1918 pamphlet *Die Sinfonie von Beethoven bis Mahler* (Berlin, 1918). A pioneer in the field of music sociology, Bekker was interested above all in the genre's sociological significance, its function as the public art form par excellence. It is a significance that the Ninth, according to Bekker, embodies more than any other work.

Bekker cherishes the ability of Beethoven's symphonies to "form a unified, specifically individualized essence from the chaotic mass of the audience," to create what he calls "Gefühlsgemeinschaften." This he calls the symphony's "community-forming" (*gesellschaftsbildende*) function: "Es ist die besondere Art und das Maß der Kraft, in der dieses Kunstwerk Gefühlsgemeinschaften zu bilden vermag, also seine Fähigkeit, aus der chaotischen Publikumsmasse ein einheitliches, bestimmt individualisiertes Wesen zu schaffen, das sich im Augenblick des Hörens, des Kunsterlebens als unteilbare, von gleichen Empfindungen bewegte, gleichen Zielen zustrebende Einheit erkennt. Erst diese gesellschaftsbildende Fähigkeit des Kunstwerks bestimmt seine Bedeutung und seinen Wert. Die Kraft des Gesellschaftsbildens also bezeichne ich als die höchste Eigenschaft des sinfonischen Kunstwerks" (p. 17). Bekker's is a familiar narrative: the symphony's history after Beethoven is traced as one of decline brought about by Romantic introspection. In Bekker's version, the decline is halted only by Mahler's intervention, in particular by his Eighth Symphony, also a work with chorus. The reading presented here, however, suggests that the generic essence of the symphony, as identified by Bekker, is not only embodied by the Ninth's finale; it is also its subject matter, especially in the baritone recitative. That is the reflexive, self-referential point of the hermeneutic crux. Beethoven was more of a Romantic than Bekker's theory could admit.

<sup>49</sup>Walter Frisch, *Brahms: The Four Symphonies* (New York, 1996).

<sup>50</sup>Friedrich Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches II*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 2, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Munich, 1980), p. 616.

The concept of irony has appeared in various guises so far. One is the *inganno* of the implied *appoggiatura* on the words "not these tones." Another involves the putative object of negation: in referring to "not these tones," Beethoven actually quotes them. Yet another is his use of a foreign voice: the melismas in the recitative seem forced or exaggerated, incongruously pleasant and joyful. The quotation and ventriloquism of tone might, by extension, also apply to the whole "Ode to Joy": the song expresses a willed simplicity, a "studied naivety," which has a barbed complement in the Turkish music. If the latter invokes the topic of war, a potential abuse of "angenehme Töne," then fugal treatment of such tones is itself ironic, if the culture of fugue is taken to mean "learned style" and the enduring artistic values associated with such a style.

Irony results, above all, from incongruous juxtaposition. More broadly, the gesture of the false start of the movement, with the composer audibly retracing his creative steps in public before proposing an alternative conclusion, is quintessentially ironic. It is a device with a theatrical counterpart in the works of Tieck, in particular those that have the actors destroying theatrical illusion by commenting on their roles and even appearing to negotiate the play's ending. A well-known example is Tieck's play *Die verkehrte Welt*, whose comical theatrical devices have been astutely analyzed by Peter Szondi in terms of the "aesthetic realization of self-consciousness" as opposed to mere "subject wilfulness."<sup>51</sup> It is such reflexive "self-consciousness," Szondi argues, that links Tieck to the romantic irony of Friedrich Schlegel. One could say the same for Beethoven. Here, in the symphony, the baritone steps up as a philosophically minded conferencier, blurring the barrier between audience and presentation, while also demonstrating the provisional nature of art, to steer the proceedings in the desired direction. If Beethoven seems to be "forcing joy down from Elysium to earth with every last effort," as one commentator on Tieck's

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<sup>51</sup>Peter Szondi, "Friedrich Schlegel und die romantische Ironie, mit einer Beilage über Tiecks Komödien," in *Schriften II* (Frankfurt, 1978), pp. 11–31 (p. 31).

play has remarked, any irony detected would seem to indicate some kind of authorial distance from this effort while acknowledging the necessarily finite nature of the artistic means employed.<sup>52</sup>

Such irony serves to invoke infinity in the midst of the finite. This latter aspect links Beethoven not only with the Romantic Schlegel but also with late Goethe. In a conversation with Eckermann about the composition of *Faust II*, Goethe famously remarked on the eclectic language he borrowed to achieve the effects he desired:

You must admit that the end where the redeemed soul rises upwards was difficult to do, and that dealing with such supersensory, scarcely intuitable matters, I could have lost myself in vagueness if I hadn't given my poetic intentions a comfortingly limiting form and solidity through the use of sharply defined figures of speech and images taken from the Christian church.<sup>53</sup>

According to Wayne C. Booth's distinction in his classic study *The Rhetoric of Irony*, none of this would qualify as "stable irony"; nor is the reader "required to reject the literal meaning."<sup>54</sup>

In a review of Scott Burnham's *Beethoven Hero*, Glenn Stanley noted that "the image of the ironic, self-subversive Beethoven is a popular one today; it is a postmodern trope on the modern image of the classical Beethoven that

in the twentieth century has challenged, without being able to replace completely, the romantic effusions of the composer's own century." Stanley goes on to comment that "modern scholars have been interested in stripping away the traditional romantic image that the nineteenth century bequeathed to us, and that is all to the good." While acknowledging that it is appropriate to speak of Beethoven's self-consciousness in artistic matters, he questions whether "this self-consciousness is best explained by drawing on the category of irony."<sup>55</sup> An initial response is that it all depends on what he means by irony. As already indicated, to talk of irony is not necessarily to invoke a postmodern trope but rather to relate the composer's work to intellectual trends of his time: to the irony of Schlegel, Goethe, and Tieck. Theirs was not a negative or subversive irony so much as the admission of a gap between ends and means. Thus richness and diversity fall short of forming, as Stanley claims with regard to the *Eroica*, "a complete musical and spiritual world"; at best they can only hint at it. Or rather, a complete musical world is not a complete spiritual world, and ironic tension acknowledges the gap between the two. The Ninth Symphony and the late quartets both evince a consciousness of that gap in their various ways, more so than any of the middle-period works had done.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>52</sup>Ludwig Tieck, *Die verkehrte Welt: Text und Materialien zur Interpretation*, ed. Karl Pestalozzi (Berlin, 1964), p. 110: "Aber während das Fidelio-Finale und der Schluß der IX. Symphonie diese Freude mit letztem Aufwand aus Elysium zur Erde niederzwingen wollen, bescheidet sich die Ironie damit, im Endlichen momentan den Blick für das Unendliche zu öffnen. Sie verharrt prophetisch in der Vorläufigkeit."

<sup>53</sup>Johann Peter Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens*, ed. H. H. Houben (Wiesbaden, 1959), pp. 382–83: "Übrigens werden Sie zugeben, daß der Schluß, wo es mit der geretteten Seele nach oben geht, sehr schwer zu machen war, und daß ich bei so übersinnlichen, kaum zu ahnenden Dingen mich sehr leicht im Vagen hätte verlieren können, wenn ich nicht meinen poetischen Intentionen durch die scharf umrissenen christlich-kirchlichen Figuren und Vorstellungen eine wohlthätig beschränkende Form und Festigkeit gegeben hätte." For an in-depth study of Goethe's irony, see Ehrhard Bahr, *Die Ironie im Spätwerk Goethes: Studien zum West-östlichen Divan, zu den Wanderjahren und zu Faust II* (Berlin, 1972).

<sup>54</sup>Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago, 1974).

<sup>55</sup>Glenn Stanley's review appeared in *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 50 (1997), 464–83 (pp. 475, 479).

<sup>56</sup>In his book *The "Galitzin" Quartets of Beethoven: Opp. 127, 132, 130* (Princeton, N.J., 1995), Daniel Chua raises the issue of irony in the late quartets. Writing about the middle movements of ops. 130 and 132, he notes that they "present a veneer of such naivety and normality that it becomes difficult to disentangle irony from humour and critique from nostalgia" (p. 246). The quartets "are written in a style of historical extremes; the contemporaneity of the *Große Fuge* jars against seemingly innocent reincarnations of eighteenth-century styles, with Beethoven not only digging up his pre-Napoleonic sketches, but imitating pre-Classical dances, re-creating the Rococo, the Baroque, and even the Renaissance" (p. 7). "There is no stability in any of the readings—just possibilities and tensions between them" (p. 248). These comments, focusing as they do on late Beethoven's eclectic mix of styles—old and new, high and low—could readily be adapted to apply to the Ninth. Reflexivity and incongruity in Beethoven's late works, especially in the late quartets, are discussed as part of an aesthetics of paradox in Sylvia Imeson's study *The Time Gives It Proofs: Paradox in the Late Music of Beethoven* (New York, 1996).



In the novel *Doktor Faustus*, Thomas Mann's semifictional composer Adrian Leverkühn conceived of a "Song to Grief" (*Lied an die Trauer*); "the opposite path to the 'Song to Joy,' the congenial negative of that transition of the symphony into vocal jubilation, the revocation," as Mann describes it. Such critical misgivings, which amount to Leverkühn's revoking of Beethoven's symphony, are echoed in Mark Evan Bonds's recent study, *After Beethoven*. Bonds writes of Mahler, in his Fourth Symphony, having "found the means by which to counter the oppressive certainty of the Ninth's optimism."<sup>57</sup> The Ninth came to represent a generic model to be avoided partly because of the anxiety of influence ("Oh friends not these tones" acquires yet another meaning!), and partly because changed aesthetic sensibilities caused people to cringe at expressions of collective optimism—sentiments felt to be false, if not downright sham. History has caused the Ninth's finale to "put us in a melancholy mood"; its jubilation seems "imposed" and "forced."<sup>58</sup>

<sup>57</sup>Mark Evan Bonds, *After Beethoven: Imperatives of Originality in the Symphony* (Cambridge, Mass., 1996), p. 199.

<sup>58</sup>Andreas Eichhorn, "Warum stimmt Beethovens Neunte Symphonie traurig?" in *Festschrift Winfried Kirsch zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. P. Ackermann et al. (Tutzing, 1996), pp. 204–12.

But is it Beethoven's fault if the audience loses itself in Nietzsche's Dionysian excitement? Or might the vocal recitative represent an attempt on Beethoven's part, if not to "take back" the symphony, then at least to issue a disclaimer, however cryptic or ironic? Was Beethoven, if not "resisting the Ninth" outright, then at least distancing himself from the potential abuse of his music as merely "pleasant tones?" While, as Richard Taruskin has remarked, "we seem to respect his naiveté," the reading proposed here is predicated on Beethoven's employment of self-consciously ironic rhetoric.<sup>59</sup> Not that irony is a particularly effective instrument for forestalling any use that might be construed as abuse, especially where music is concerned. Beethoven's own "aesthetic superstitions," such as they might be conveyed in those words and tones, have gone unheeded time and time again.



<sup>59</sup>Richard Taruskin, "Resisting The Ninth," this journal 12 (1989), 241–56 [p. 250].