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Discursive Power: On Canon, Language, and Music as *Dispositif*

Abstract

This essay aims to interconnect the aspects of canon, cultural musicology, music and language with the systematic category of *dispositif*. In a short overview on the disciplinary canon debate, the essay describes the idea of a musical canon and questions its methodological status in musicology. The conclusion is that (aesthetic) value judgements are to be rejected as scientific (consequently rational or intersubjectively reasonable) selection criteria. The second argument draws on Lawrence Kramer's notion of "constructive description", which addresses the relation of music and language and helps in understanding the canon as a specific historical agency of different overlapping discourses. In order to outline an integrative ontology for the epistemological interest of cultural musicology, the last section synthesises these arguments in the Foucauldian idea of *dispositif*.

Keywords

cultural musicology, methodology, *dispositif*, ontology, canon

I.

Harold Bloom's book *The Western Canon*,[1] published in 1994, caused a sensation in departments of literature studies—understandably, if we consider that, against the backdrop of a perceived "postmodern arbitrariness" and a "politically correct" advocacy of minority issues, Bloom polemically demanded the recurrence of traditional "literary values". Although this essay is not the place to describe this controversial debate, it is conspicuous that in musicology the "canon question" got stuck on another level. In literature studies the debate was so well established that Bloom's claim to re-establish a canon was possible; in contrast to historical musicology, there is (and sometimes was) an unquestionable Eurocentric or even "Germanocentric"[2] canon, which is so common, that it also governs the distinction of acceptable or non-acceptable dissertation topics.[3]

However, since the late 1980s and early 1990s we can detect a beginning shift of the paradigm[4] within the entire discipline of (historical) musicology. Driven by interdisciplinary impulses and rapprochements of cultural studies, feminist theory, ethnomusicology, and popular music studies, new perspectives and methodological concepts confronted the "old", "predominantly historicist and value-based view of music scholarship", which was "intimately tied to the late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century formulation of musicology as a kind of musical philology".[5] Or as Nicolas Cook put it once in his famous article: "Musicology has traditionally been a retrospective

1 H. Bloom, *The Western Canon: The Books and School of Ages*, New York—San Diego—London 1994.

2 A. Gerhard, *„Kanon" in der Musikgeschichtsschreibung, Nationalistische Gewohnheiten nach dem Ende der nationalistischen Epoche*, "Archiv für Musikwissenschaft" 2000, No. 57/1, p. 20. For a historical perspective *vide* C. Applegate, *How German Is It? Nationalism and the Idea of Serious Music in the Early Nineteenth Century*, "19th-Century Music" 1998, No. 21/3.

3 D.M. Randel, *The Canons in the Musicological Toolbox*, [in:] *Disciplining Music: Musicology and its Canon*, K. Bergeron, P.V. Bohlman (eds.), Chicago—London 1992, p. 11.

4 T.S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago—London 1962.

5 G. Born, *For a Relational Musicology: Music and Interdisciplinarity, Beyond the Practice Turn*, "Journal of the Royal Musical Association" 2010, No. 135/2, p. 216.

discipline, […] turning back so as to arrive at the Urtext."[6] The critique attacks the common notion of music as "absolute" or "autonomous" as well as the exclusion of the "extra-musical"—the "social" or "cultural"—by just and self-evidently focusing on "music itself". To use an example for this conjuncture, in his *Foundations of Music History* Carl Dahlhaus, to whom the "interest of music history attaches mainly to the poetics that underlie a composer's work",[7] accords a "relative autonomy"[8] to musical works. This means that Dahlhaus conceptualises music history as a self-contained musical process.[9] On the one hand, this notion exempts music from a cultural and social-historical understanding.[10] On the other, it is built upon a highly ideological premise of an aesthetic of autonomy, which is in the Dahlhausian perspective the "summit" of an evolutionary developing canon of musical "masterwork".

At first, in 1983, Joseph Kerman's reflections on the methodological groundings of the traditional musicology and its implicit and seldom explicit canon of "masterworks" took up the problem of canon in a fashion and aroused a broader reaction within North American musicology.[11] Nearly one decade later, in 1992, Katherine Bergeron and Philip V. Bohlman published the collected volume *Disciplining Music*, which questioned the canon and its place within musicology. The main aim of the volume is to open up the canon and replace it with "a set of multiple canons".[12] In the synoptic epilogue Bohlman advocates this extending multiple or pluralistic canon:

> That musicology's canons today are many and varied, that they must be plural and pluralistic, is abundantly evident in the range of essays in this volume. By no means do we mean to claim that this range is exhaustive; ideally, we would

6 N. Cook, *We are All (Ethno)musicologists Now*, [in:] *The New (Ethno)musicologies*, H. Stobart (ed.), Lanham 2008, p. 58.

7 C. Dahlhaus, *Foundations of Music History*, trans. into English by J.B. Robin, Cambridge 1983, p. 37.

8 *Ibid*., p. 108.

9 For an overview *vide*: J. Hepokoski, *The Dahlhaus Project and Its Extra-Musicological Sources*, "19th-Century Music" 1991, No. 14/3.

10 L. Kramer, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge*, Berkeley—Los Angeles 1995, p. 46.

11 J. Kerman, *A Few Canonic Variations*, "Critical Inquiry" 1983, No. 10/1.

12 R.P. Morgan, *Rethinking Musical Culture: Canonic Reformulations in a Post-Tonal Age*, [in:] *Disciplining Music: Musicology and its Canon*, K. Bergeron, P.V. Bohlman (eds.), Chicago—London 1992, p. 61.

> have preferred to bring even more musics and their canons into the debates begun within these pages, and we trust that others will in the future expand the discussions initiated here.[13]

One year later, Marcia J. Citron put the problem centre stage again by addressing major issues about musicology and the role of gender in music history.[14] In comparison to the situation in literature studies at that time it is obvious that musicology has been slow to recognise the problem of canon. According to William Weber, the interest of musicologists in questioning the canon and its formation has been delayed "because it is so embedded in their assumptions about music, and controls so much of what they do".[15] He suggests that we have to understand the historical and social function of its formation process. This becomes especially evident if we consider the historical circumstances on which the typical analytical methodologies are based. The "traditional" musicological apparatus, established in the beginning of the last century and prominently used by Hugo Riemann, for example, is formed and informed by a contingent historical formation of self-referentially organised and primarily instrumental music, which Lydia Goehr has called plausibly "the Beethoven paradigm",[16] as well as by the nationalistic ideologies of the nineteenth century.[17]

Despite the historical aspect, however, in the rest of my essay I will systematically investigate the methodological status of the canon and its value judgements as selection criteria in music historiography. In the second part I will open up the argument of value judgements to the general question of meaning and will address this topic using a perspective which is informed by cultural musicology: the so-called "New Musicology". In the last section I will outline an integrative on-

13 P.V. Bohlman, *Epilogue: Musics and Canons*, [in:] *Disciplining Music*, *op. cit.*, p. 207. One should note that Randel's article is very sceptical. In his view the pluralistic canon, as proposed by other authors in the volume, represents musicology's "traditional imperialism", which "colonises" new musical territories with the same traditional methods. D.M. Randel, *The Canons in the Musicological Toolbox*, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

14 M.J. Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon*, Cambridge 1993.

15 W. Weber, *The History of Musical Canon*, [in:] *Rethinking Music,* N. Cook, M. Everist (eds.), Oxford 2001, p. 337.

16 L. Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works. An Essay in the Philosophy of Music*, Oxford 1994, p. 205.

17 A. Gerhard, *„Kanon" in der Musikgeschichtsschreibung…*, *op. cit.*, pp. 22–30.

tology for historical musicological research based on the Foucauldian notion of *dispositif*.

II.

To start with one example from the *Grove Music Online* :[18] The critical appraisal of the composer Antonio Sacchini (1730–1786) starts with the notion that "[t]he high esteem" which "Sacchini enjoyed in the judgments of his contemporaries must certainly be modified and put into perspective from a present-day vantage point".[19] This aesthetic judgement, made by the authors of the article, questions directly the status in its own, musicological canon, rather than historical facts. Thereby, it unveils its whole methodological aporia:[20] Firstly, it is a historical fact that Sacchini was a popular opera composer in late eighteenth--century France. As a matter of fact, it is undeniable; there is nothing to differentiate or to be modified "from a present-day vantage point".

Secondly, the statement implies that today we could evaluate better and more scientifically whether or not a specific composition or composer is good or bad; that is, we should revise the wrong, historic judgment of the composer's contemporaries because we know it better today. An aesthetic judgment like this is only possible if one accepts the premise of a supratemporal aesthetic truth and objectivity. But, as we can see, musical taste has changed; it is primarily culturally formed. Taste depends on judging individuals, which are defined, from a sociological perspective, by the society and social group or their "habitus"[21]—judgments differ in time and between social groups.[22]

18 There is no explicit reason for this exact example of Sacchini; since there are so many examples following the argumentatively identical structure, any of them could have been used as well.

19 D. DiChiera, J. Johnson Robinson, *Antonio Sacchini*, [in:] *Grove Music Online*, https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000024251 [accessed 18.03.2019].

20 For the following argument *vide* F. Hentschel, *Über Wertung, Kanon und Musikwissenschaft*, [in:] *Der Kanon der Musik. Theorie und Geschichte*, K. Pietschmann, M. Wald-Fuhrmann (eds.), Munich 2013, pp. 73–75.

21 P. Bourdieu, *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. into English by R. Nice, MA thesis, Cambridge University, 1984.

22 For a Bourdieu "inspired" analysis of the "popular music" canon *vide* R. von Appen, A. Doehring, *Nevermind The Beatles, here's Exile 61 and Nico: "The top 100 records*

As a consequence of this consideration, we cannot falsify an aesthetic judgment; and therefore any aesthetic judgment must be considered as true. This also applies to judgments in the past as in the example of Sacchini; we have to accept the perception of his contemporaries as true. As historians who are precisely not philosophers, we should stick with David Hume's notion; so "all sentiment is right".[23]

Thirdly, for studying the history of music, however, the popularity of a composer or work should not be a confusing factor, which one has to "put into perspective from a present-day vantage point", but rather the starting point for reconstructing the presuppositions of judgments as well the musical culture at that time. A historical study of music should reconstruct and interpret the past. Therefore, it is irrelevant what music someone likes personally today. Methodologically, it is untenable to question the historical fact of the taste of Sacchini's contemporaries.

To clarify this argument, I will use a simple analogy, which can be found argumentatively reversed in Carl Dahlhaus's *Foundations of Music History*.[24] For this hypothetical purpose, we posit value judgements (for example: good/bad) as selection premises of any historiography, as is the case for any historiography based on a canon or for use in the example of Sacchini above. Following this methodological premise, a political historian could write a history of Europe from 1914 until 1918 without mentioning World War I, because the historian judged the war as "bad". To be concerned with a war and its politics as a historian definitely does not automatically presuppose considering war as "good". The value judgment (good/bad) of a historian as well as of posterity cannot be the basis for a decision on which historical facts are worthy to include. The works of aristocratic, amateur composers are historical facts, which are important not because they were written by undiscovered, so called *Kleinmeister*, but because they provide evidence about the cultural, musical practices at a particular place at a particular time.[25]

of all time"– A Canon of Pop and Rock Albums from a Sociological and an Aesthetic Perspective, "Popular Music" 2006, No. 25/1.

23 D. Hume, *On the Standard of Taste*, [in:] *Essays. Moral, Political, Literary*, E.F. Miller (ed.), Indianapolis 1987, p. 230.

24 C. Dahlhaus, *Foundations…*, *op. cit.*, p. 4. For a more detailed Dahlhaus discussion on value judgements and canon *vide* M. Everist, *Reception Theories, Canonic Discourse, and Musical Value*, [in:] *Rethinking Music*, *op. cit*.

25 F. Hentschel, *"Kanon" in der Musikgeschichtsschreibung…*, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

In historiographical studies, however, the idea of an absolute, pan-European canon displays an irrational principle of reducing historical complexity in order to convey seemingly intelligible ideas. But it is self-evident that historians have to select and reduce the complexity of events in history. Nonetheless, the argument must be controlled by a clear methodology and theoretical framework. Surely, this selection always depends on the specific epistemology used. Drawing on the second argument above, the aesthetic judgment as a culturally-formed product must be historicised; as a consequence, the canon builds an object for investigation, for example, as one aspect of a reception history, but is not "theory" for legitimising the selected objects of study. By rejecting the canon as a methodological premise, musicology can reconstruct and interpret such judgments from a "meta level".[26] We are able to consider this perspective on a meta level by rejecting our current aesthetic judgements and investigating historically- and culturally-conditioned judgments, as part of the reception history instead. To give a more concrete example, the widely discussed and prominent "Mendelssohn Problem",[27] including its long tradition of negative aesthetic judgments filled with anti-Semitic statements, is not a problem of Mendelssohn and his music; it is a problem that people have with Mendelssohn's music.[28] The "problem" tells us much more about such people, than about the music. This argument generally can be applied to all aesthetic judgments in music history.

III.

One could criticise the premise of this argument by using the analogy of political history: "Music historiography has a different legitimation from political historiography. It differs from its political counterpart in that the essential relics that it investigates from the past—the musical works—are primarily aesthetic objects."[29] In Dahlhaus's perspective these aesthetic objects are based on an aesthetic presence, which he

26 *Ibid.*

27 *Das Problem Mendelssohn*, C. Dahlhaus (ed.), Regensburg 1974.

28 A. Riethmüller, *Das "Problem Mendelssohn"*, "Archiv für Musikgeschichte" 2002, No. 59/3, pp. 210–221.

29 C. Dahlhaus, *Foundations…*, *op. cit.*, p. 4. This quote is the analogy I have mentioned above in order to use it in the direct opposite way.

defines as the presence in the present.[30] Music from the past is undoubtedly present in our daily life. For example, we hear a piano sonata by Beethoven in a café while having a coffee, at the airport as we wait for a flight, or in a concert hall. Dahlhausian "presence" not only means to be present in our environment, but also includes an "aesthetic presence of individual works"[31] as a continuing existence of the genuine or autonomous artwork, which prevents it from being removed from the accidental conditions from which it arose.[32] The presence of the artwork, the text, invites "reflective explication through the differing epochs and places of historical time".[33] We also can add that his "reflexive explication" is a procedure of decrypting the essential, historical invariant meaning through a hermeneutic approach.

To return to our argument about the canon, according to Frank Hentschel the underlying premises of the Dahlhausian "aesthetic presence" is the canon itself as an uninterrupted tradition. In this tradition as contingent historical process, emerging around 1800 concurrent with the differentiation of an art system, the canon shaped musical practices and repertoires in modern society. "Musical artworks", therefore, are present in concert halls as well as in our aesthetic perception; the tradition provides the possibility of a perceptual presence.[34] However, if we don't accept the canon as a premise for historiographic selections of information, by the same token, we also have to reject "aesthetic presence" as a criterion because it is intertwined with the canon as a specific and contingent cultural and aesthetic circumstance.

In order to address the larger problem of music and language, we must consider another problem deriving from the notion of "aesthetic presence": the exclusion of "context". The consequence of "presence" as an invariant meaning of "artworks" is that culture and society, in

30 *Ibid.*

31 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

32 This instance marks the Dahlhausian distinction between work (*Werk*) and event (*Ereignis*) and equates with the distinction of art and non-art. *Vide* J. Hepokoski, *Dahlhaus's Beethoven-Rossini Stildualismus: Lingering Legacies of the Text-Event Dichotomy*, [in:] *The Invention of Beethoven and Rossini. Historiography, Analysis, Criticism*, N. Mathew, B. Walton (eds.), Cambridge 2013, p. 19.

33 *Ibid.*

34 F. Hentschel, *Ein musikhistoriographischer Sonderweg? Probleme mit Dahlhaus' Geschichtstheorie*, [in:] *Carl Dahlhaus' Grundlagen der Musikgeschichte. Eine Re-Lektüre*, F. Geiger, T. Janz (eds.), Paderborn 2016.

which music is always imbedded, becomes accidental. It denies the prefiguring force of external cultural and social influences and their manifestation in the creation of compositions. Therefore, music history can be described as detached from its cultural context with an inherent logic of aesthetic qualities combined with the climax of autonomy aesthetics—a connection to which the favouring of structural analysis, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, becomes apparent. This mixture of approaches shaped by autonomy aesthetics and its disciplinary history[35] constitutes the main point of criticism and reflection by a new movement in the late 1980s. The various ideas and creators of this movement have been subsumed under the term "New Musicology". According to Lawrence Kramer, the so called "New Musicology" or, in his wording, cultural musicology "represents a habit of thought more than a program or consensus", but this habit is unified by a "widespread interest in the interaction of music with social and cultural forms".[36] The changed methodological perspective aims to understand specific semantic attributions as well as cultural practices:

> Words situate music in a multiplicity of cultural contexts, both those to which the music "belongs" in an immediate sense and those to which it stands adjacent in ways that often become apparent only once the words are in play. […] Neither the speech nor the contexts—this can't be stressed too much—are "extrinsic" to the music involved; the three terms are inseparable in both theory and practice.[37]

35 Guido Adler as prominent figure of the early disciplinary history is arguing for a structural history and its inherent logic: "Den höchsten Rang [of the historical musicology] nimmt 3) die Erforschung der Kunstgesetze verschiedener Zeiten ein; diese ist der eigentliche Kernpunkt musikhistorischer Arbeit. Wie von den Anfängen der Melodie ausgehend der Bau der Kunstwerke allmälich wächst, [...] wie an das Glied sich nach und nach eine Kette von Zellen anschließt und so organisch wächst, wie die außerhalb der fortschrittlichen Bewegung stehenden Elemente, weil nicht lebensfähig, untergehen". G. Adler, *Umfang, Methode und Ziel der Musikwissenschaft*, "Vierteljahrsschrift für Musikwissenschaft" 1885, No. 1, p. 9.

36 L. Kramer, *Subjectivity Pampant! Music, Hermeneutics, and History*, [in:] *The Cultural Study of Music. A Critical Introduction*, M. Clayton, T. Herbert, R. Middleton (eds.), New York and London 2003, p. 125.

37 *Ibid.*

Not the "presence" and the autonomy of an artwork, but context gives specific significance to music—the endowment of meaning through language attribution. This approach establishes a distance towards its subject area, so that it is not about creating an "imaginary dialogue", which "presupposes a common language, agreement on a matter in question, and an effort to understand the interlocutor […] as an individual with a distinct personality" as the methodological premises of the "*Verstehen* theory of history"[38] hold. In this perspective musicology is not asked to "decrypt a hidden message" of intentions mediated through a musical work by a composer using empathy,[39] but to disclose the semantics and discourse constructions—the contextual forces—which conditioned or condition today the process of listening to, speaking of, and writing (about) music.

Due to the lack of music's referential density, which was and is used to argue against musical meaning in general, the meaning of music can only transmitted and be negotiated through language; that is, musical meaning needs a relationship between the "unsematicisable" music and language.[40] Therefore, there is no need to free music from the "control by the dictatorship of linguistics",[41] but rather the opposite. The gap between music and its linguistic context, or music and its meaning decoded in a language-based interpretation, are often considered "as an arbitrary construction of the interpreter that at best addresses the strictly musical qualities of a work in superficial terms".[42] These gaps are not just arbitrary; on the contrary, they enable musical meaning and the building of a basis for the interaction of music and language or social context. According to Kramer, subjectivity, which comes into play using language about music, should not be an argument against musical meaning, but turned into a vehicle.

To conceptualise the understanding of the "vehicle", he introduces the term "constructive descriptions" as a specific function of language. In Kramer's view, descriptions of music are less a representation of the

38 C. Dahlhaus, *Foundations…*, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

39 Dahlhaus collateralise his theory of *Verstehen* through essentialism. He declares the ability to sympathise or empathize as "the historian's basic intellectual equipment". *Ibid.*, p. 73.

40 L. Kramer, *Subjectivity Pampant!*, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

41 C. Seeger, *On the Moods of Music Logic*, "Journal of the American Musicological Society" 1960, No. 13, p. 235.

42 L. Kramer, *Subjectivity Pampant!*, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

perceived musical stimulus than an invention; "description" is not used in an ordinary sense but as a constructive force, through which meaning is applied to the object addressed. "Constructive descriptions", therefore, do not decode the meaning, which is already there, but "construct" or "attach themselves to the music as an independent form or layer of appearance".[43] This kind of description applied to music can outlive the concrete circumstance of the utterance, thus becoming a historical fact that can be re-contextualised and, therefore, transform their meaning; that is, they are iterable[44] signs. "So constructive description is more than a historical artefact; it is a historical agency, a cultural practice that installs the past in the present, and installs its objects in history even in the absence of overtly historical language."[45] Even if speaking of music is considered as subjective, and therefore as "insignificant", the subjectivity is not ungrounded, but is culturally bound and a specific historical formation as well as a cultural agency itself; so the triad of music, subjectivity and culture are inextricably interwoven. Speaking about music shows culturally and historically formed subjectivity; by the same token, discourse about music constructs music as a particular kind of object and allows it to be experienced as meaningful, but it also constitutes forms of listening, i.e., it constitutes the subject of the listener.

The question of music, language and meaning leads us back to methodology and canon, where we started in the first place. As soon as we place the connection of music with its linguistic context in the centre of attention, we disclosed its intrinsic qualities to music and musical meaning. However, the canon, in the proposed perspective outlined in the last section, can be re-conceptualised as an historical agency of discursive narratives. In general, the underlying value judgments represent powerful constructive descriptions, which render certain music as "prototypical" and worthy of examination. The canon can be analysed not only in its own temporal differences but also as constructive power. Emphasising music and context offers possibilities to discover presuppositions of musical culture and discursive narratives serving as interpretation and value taxonomy. Consequently, the canon can

43 *Ibid.*

44 For the Derridarian concept of iterability *vide* e.g. J. Derrida, *Signature Event Context*, [in:] *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. into English by A. Bass, Chicago 1982.

45 L. Kramer, *Subjectivity Pampant!*, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

(1) be understood as constructive power and also (2) be conceptualised as part of a larger *dispositif*, which forms listening, teaching, and performance practices, i.e. subjectivisations, as well as the process of normalisation and exclusion of music and interpretations.

IV.

As mentioned earlier, Kramer's notion of "constructive descriptions" implies that as "historical artefact" this cultural practice and "historical agency" installs "the past in the present".[46] In other words, the inscriptions or descriptions transmit and constitute the musical objects of the past into our present world. Therefore, we have to explain the stability of such constructive descriptions. We observed already the canon as one example of this conjuncture: certain ideas—what music is and what kind of musical is more worthy than other—are transmitted over time and became part of the musical practice of "western art music". But the problem of explaining stability in Kramer's idea seems to be described theoretically and explained by Foucault's formulation of discursive formations and the later developed notion of *dispositif* (also called apparatus).[47] To elaborate this argument, we have to understand Foucault's notion of a *dispositif*. In his words such a *dispositif* consists

> of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions—in short, the said as much as the unsaid.[48]

Therefore, a *dispositif* can be thought of as a heterogeneous ensemble or a "multilinear whole".[49] The different lines of the whole are

46 *Ibid*.

47 For discursive formation *vide* e.g. M. Foucault, *The Order of Things. An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, London—New York 2000. For the idea of apparatus *vide* e.g. M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*, trans. into English by A. Sheridan, New York 1978. For the connection of Kramer and Foucault *vide* also G. Born, *On Musical Mediation: Ontology, Technology and Creativity*, "Twentieth-Century Music" 2005, No. 2/1, pp. 14–15.

48 M. Foucault, *The Confession of the Flesh*, [in:] *Power/Knowledge. Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, C. Gordon (ed.), New York 1980, p. 194.

49 G. Deleuze, *What is a dispositif*, [in:] *Two Regimes of Madness. Texts and Interviews 1975–1995*, D. Lapoujade (ed.), New York 2006, p. 338.

discursive as well as non–discursive, heterogenic but isomorphic in their relation. Thus, Foucault distinguishes the three main instances of power, knowledge and subjectivity, which have "by no means […] contours that are defined once and for all but are chains of variables that are torn from each other".[50] A *dispositif* acts on an operational level; it is neither subject nor object, but order. The different lines are "regimes of utterances", which "cross thresholds that make them either aesthetic, scientific, political, etc."[51] Synoptically, a *dispositif* consists of a network of lines, divided in and acting as power, knowledge and subjectivity, which are all part of and defined by a general regime, regardless of whether the lines as utterances are part of a literate genre or a state of law. Furthermore, Foucault draws a distinction between lines of sedimentation or actualisation. This differentiation means "the part of history, the part of currentness. History is the archive, the design of what we are and cease being while the current is the sketch of what we will become."[52] As historians we can bare archaeologically the lines of sedimentation and the network of different curves in their discursive as well as non-discursive manifestations.

It becomes evident that Kramer's notion of "constructive descriptions" can be re-described in the vocabulary of the *dispositif*. "Constructive descriptions" are utterances, which are only possible under "the regime of utterances they engender".[53] But "constructive descriptions" inscribe themselves also as part of lines of actualisation in a larger discourse. Returning back to our starting point, we can understand the canon as lines of a *dispositif*, which, among other things, naturalises specific aesthetic values. Such aesthetic values of an autonomic aesthetic governed not only musicology for a long period of time, but also for musical institutions such as concert halls as well as their musical practices.[54]

As an analytical category *dispositif* becomes especially interesting because (1) it is not based only on language discourses but combines them with non-discursive elements as practices, institutional structures,

50 *Ibid.*

51 *Ibid.*, p. 339.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 345.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 339.

54 For autonomy aesthetics and hermeneutics in music as well as their post-figuration in different media (also in museums) of our contemporary culture *vide* B. Schlüter, *Murmurs of Earth. Musik- und medienästhetische Strategien um 1800 und ihre Postfigurationen in der Gegenwartskultur*, Stuttgart 2007.

or even architecture. We can now show interdependences of discourses, which were perceived as separate and never part of musicology; e.g. the connection of musical instrument makers and physics[55] or of pedagogical systems, politics, and musical instruments.[56] This also applies to performance practices and media (or "sound reproduction technologies"[57] in a narrower sense) as both shaped and shaping musical forms. This is especially evident in contemporary music practices—for example, an omnipresent DJ culture. Thus, (2) a *dispositif* explains the interconnection of musical forms and their performance and media practices. (3) It also integrates specific actors as the listeners with the analytic perspective. A listener (and of course also a musician) as subject is shaped by subjectivation lines of a *dispositif*; listening, as a bodily technique,[58] is not only historically contingent but also is a culturally conditioned practice.[59] A *dispositif* is also open to media studies insofar as it contains non-discursive elements as technologies and cultural techniques of a larger "discourse network".[60]

All of these reflections on the *dispositif* as an analytic category incorporate the idea that music always exists historically and cross-culturally in a multiplicity of ontologies. As Bohlman has shown, the practice of music automatically develops a specific conception of music and consequentially its ontology.[61] However, "multiple ontologies of music exist at both the individual and local level, as well as at the global level."[62] Ontology means to think of music *as* something: music *as* language, *as* notation, *as* process, etc. These notions of music

55 *Vide* e.g. M.W. Jackson, *Harmonious Triads. Physicists, Musicians, and Instrument Makers in Nineteenth-Century Germany*, MA thesis, Cambridge 2008.

56 *Vide* e.g. W. Scherer, *Klavier-Spiele. Die Psychotechnik der Klaviere im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert*, Munich 1989.

57 For definition and origin of the term *vide* J. Sterne, *The Audible Past. Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*, Durham—London 2003, p. 22.

58 M. Mauss, *Body Techniques*, [in:] *Sociology and Psychology: Essays*, trans. into English by B. Brewester, Boston 1979. *Vide* also J. Sterne, *The Audible Past*, *op. cit.*, pp. 91–93.

59 The change of listing transmitted and formed by different discourses is convincingly shown in P. Szendy, *Listen: A History of Our Ears*, trans. into English by C. Mandell, New York 2008.

60 For media studies and cultural techniques *vide* F. Kittler, *Discourse Networks, 1800/1900*, trans. into English by M. Metteer, C. Cullens, Stanford 1990.

61 P.V. Bohlman, *Ontologies of Music*, [in:] *Rethinking Music*, *op. cit.*, Oxford 2001, p. 17.

62 *Ibid.*

can overlap and be multiple. Nonetheless, when dealing with research on cultural objects, there are two different dimensions of ontologies: not only the ontology of the embedded musical or cultural subject of inquiry, but also the analytical ontology that is implemented in the epistemological interest and methodological approach.[63] Consequently, to use Edmund Husserl's words, the analytical perspective consists of overlapping "regional ontologies" brought to the subject.[64] Any concept such as genre, gender, etc., which we use as a theoretical framework, establishes (at least) one ontology of the music(s), which is/are object(s) of study. From this perspective, a *dispositif* on the one hand unveils the historical presuppositions of musics in a certain cultural context and, by the same token, its ontology becomes an integrative category in interdisciplinary research. Thus, it bridges the gap between the sciences and the humanities; different ontologies can be connected and placed in relation with each other by using them as frameworks (historical discourses of physics, media, physiology and musical forms, for example). Due its integrative quality the *dispositif* advances to the position of a helpful category for interdisciplinary research as well as for the epistemological interests of cultural musicology.

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63 *Vide* also G. Born, *For a Relational Musicology*, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

64 On E. Husserl and regional ontology *vide* L. Landgreben, *Regions of Being and Regions of Ontology in Husserl's Phenomenology (1956)*, [in:] *Apriori and World: European Contributions to Husserlian Phenomenology*, W. Mckenna, R.M. Harlan, L.E. Winters (eds.), The Hague—Boston—London 1981. For a more general examination on Husserl and the foundations of humanities *vide* M. Cavallaro, *Der Beitrag der Phänomenologie Edmund Husserls zur Debatte über die Fundierung der Geisteswissenschaften*, "Phänomenologische Forschungen" 2013.

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