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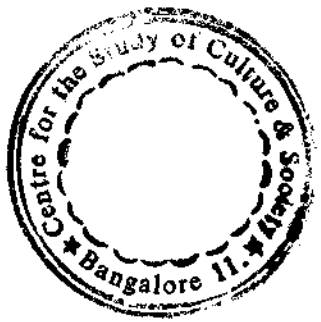

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mais que c'est encore un tissu d'hiéroglyphes entassés les uns sur les autres

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1

Music and language

"Music is a non-signifying art."[1]

With a few exceptions, including the recent formation of a musical semiotics, official discourse on music in the twentieth century has largely resisted discussion of music as it might be related to language or meaning.[2] Composers and theorists from Webern to Babbitt have sought to place the art of musical composition in an autonomous space adjacent to mathematics where, as in the Middle Ages, it would be exclusively concerned with carefully controlled pattern-making, according to rules that are particular to music.[3] Thus the meaning of music has generally been restricted to intramusical formal relations, considered independent of any verbal content and free of ideological influence. Discussing the widespread reluctance to link music to meaning or ideology, Rose Rosengard Subotnik gives the example of Stravinksy, for whom composition was "a specimen of purely autonomous craft."[4] The academic discipline of musicology appears largely complicitous with this view. First, musicology as an academic discipline arose during a particular moment in the history of Western aesthetics when theorists reacted against eighteenth-century mimetic principles and placed great emphasis on music as an "absolute" art

[1] Pierre Boulez, *Points de repère* (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1985), 18.

[2] Umberto Eco is one of these exceptions. He argues that music is another kind of language which has "different systems of articulation, freer and differently structured" (*La Structure absente*, trans. Uccio Esposito-Torrigiani [Paris: Mercure de France, 1972], 356). More recently, Jean-Jacques Nattiez, following Jean Molino, has insisted that musical meaning should not be defined by, or restricted to, linguistic meaning. He rejects the structuralist concept of a fixed code which would establish a direct and fixed correspondence between the signifier and the signified, adopting instead a modified version of Peirce's more complex theory of the interpretant. See Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Musicologie générale et sémiologie* (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1987).

[3] Albert Seay has likened the isorhythmic motet of the French Ars Nova to serial composition. He notes that "twelve-tone composition is, in many ways, a modern application of the principle of *color* repetition" (*Music in the Medieval World* [Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1975], 134).

[4] Subotnik, *Developing Variations*, 7.

which was by nature free from the constraints of determinate meaning, and detached from the contingencies of life and history. The study of music today carries with it the heritage of its early history. Second, musicology adopted a scientific and strictly empirical approach to the score – its preferred object – isolating it from all context in order to better discern its internal structures, restoring it to its original, and thus true, form. Musicology may be willing to consider music as a kind of "language," but only if this identification is strictly metaphorical – devoid, that is, of any epistemic validity. And if music is a language, then it is one that operates on its own terms, independently of any pre-existing meaning.

Linguists seem to share this view, for Benveniste is also able to draw music away from verbal or linguistic meaning by eliminating it from his theory of semiotics. In *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, he asserts that, although music does have something comparable to a syntax, it can have no semiotics since, among other things, musical notes or phrases have no meaning that can be specified in language – as do road signs, for example.[5] Music theorists and most semioticians consider music to be only a "code" – that is, a system of elements (pitches, rhythms, timbres, dynamics, etc.) which are arranged according to culturally determined rules and constraints.[6] Kristeva notes that music does not exhibit the same binary differences that structure verbal language: *"while the two signifying systems are organized according* to the principle of the *difference* of their components, this difference is not of the same order in verbal language as it is in music. Binary phonematic differences are not pertinent in music."[7] Furthermore, as Benveniste explains, contrary to what one might at first suspect, the simultaneities and sequences inherent in music have no relation to the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes of language:

> the axis of simultaneity in music contradicts the very principle of the paradigmatic in language, which is the principle of selection, excluding all intrasegmental simultaneity; and the axis of sequences in music does not coincide with the syntagmatic axis of language either, since a musical sequence is compatible with the simultaneity of sounds, and since this sequence furthermore is not subject to any constraint of linkage or exclusion with respect to any sound or group of sounds whatsoever.[8]

[5] Emile Benveniste, *Problèmes de linguistique générale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), 2:54–56.

[6] For more on the distinction between language and code, see Oswald Ducrot and Tzvetan Todorov, *Dictionnaire encyclopédique des sciences du langage* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1972), 137.

[7] Julia Kristeva, *Language the Unknown*, trans. Anne M. Menke (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 309.

[8] Benveniste, *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, 2:56.

Music is a code with rules governing the combination of its elements. But there is little or no affinity between these procedures or the structures which result from them, and the rules and combinations of verbal language. In addition, music has no meaning which can be translated into language; it does not share its semiotic capacity. It would appear, then, that music has become an object of study for contemporary linguists and semioticians precisely because it differs so much from language.

If this is the position taken by most musicologists and semioticians regarding modern Western music, once outside the restrictive framework of their analyses, and in other periods of Western history or in other cultures, it becomes clear that their views no longer apply. Edward Said has spoken of the tendency in Western culture since the late eighteenth century to view music as autonomous, and has pointed out musicology's complacency towards this view. Said notes

> the generally cloistral and reverential, not to say insular, habits in writing about music. For the closer one looks at the geography of Western culture and of music's place in it, the more compromised, the more socially involved and active music seems, the more concealed its social energies have been beneath its technically specialized, rigorously circumscribed, and, since the seventeenth century, perfected articulations.[9]

The standard semiotic theory outlined above is not able to address music as a signifying or social practice within our culture. It cannot explain, for example, the ways in which music interacts with and grounds public occasions or other social activities in which it is included. With specific reference to language, one only has to think of the (verbal) meanings and narratives that are popularly associated with or attributed to music. These associations are found not only in daily conversation and concert-hall programs, but also in the writings and interviews of many musicians and some composers.[10] Even such seemingly autonomous works as Chopin's second Prelude have been read as articulating specific moods or emotions, not only by nineteenth-century critics such as Hans von Bülow ("the right hand bears the inexorable voice of death, though toward the end it falters and loses the measure in uncertain tones, as if saying, 'He comes not, the deliverer!'") but also by twentieth-century musicologists such as Leonard Meyer who hear "doubt and uncertainty" in the music.[11]

[9] Edward Said, *Musical Elaborations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 58.

[10] As part of his varied attempts to popularize music and music theory, Leonard Bernstein created a model for a universal musical "language" based on Chomsky's notion of innate grammatical competence. See his 1973 Norton Lectures published as *The Unanswered Question* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976).

[11] Subotnik, *Developing Variations*, 139.

Indeed, as Lawrence Kramer has argued, these discursive meanings "are not 'extramusical,' but on the contrary are inextricably bound up with the formal processes and stylistic articulations of musical works."[12] This aspect of our understanding of Western music has not been sufficiently studied by traditional musicology.

Ethnomusicologists have examined more coded or formal relationships between music and what has generally been considered extramusical culture. Harold Powers has observed that in some cultures music can function referentially or signify, like a language:

> First of all, music is often said to express or evoke something that might have been conveyed verbally. In certain restricted cases, like drum or whistle languages, something like music is even used as a referential coded substitute for language; the Tepehua "thought" songs described by Boilès (1967) seem to be the extreme case. But many musical cultures recognize conventionally coded induced associations of specific musical entities with persons, events, or things, in real life as well as in ritual or drama.[13]

Although Powers only gives examples of non-Western cultures in this passage, similar uses of music also exist or have existed in Western culture. Using the recent insights of ethnomusicologists and anthropologists, much could be written about the musical practices of contemporary Western cultures, or those of the past. A glance at early Western music theory would confirm the fact that the kinds of extramusical associations Powers describes have always been central to Western musical culture. The various notes of the Egyptian scale system, for example, were directly associated with the days of the week and the planets. Each of the Greek modes was considered to reflect the ethical characteristics of a tribe. Plato, in *The Republic*, reviews in detail the ethical importance and meaning of the musical modes and banishes all but the Dorian and Phrygian, "the violent and the willing" modes, which are useful to the State.[14] Throughout the Middle Ages and most of the Renaissance, music theorists used Pythagorean metaphysics to provide music with carefully detailed meanings in political, social, and theological contexts. According to the Pythagorean account of music's place in the world, the harmony generated by the divine act of the Creation infused the entire universe, expressing itself hierarchically in layers of order. This harmony balanced the cosmos – the famous music of the spheres – the elements, the soul and the body, and the political institutions of the State.[15]

[12] Lawrence Kramer, *Music as Cultural Practice: 1800–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 1.

[13] Harold S. Powers, "Language models and musical analysis," *Ethnomusicology* 24.1 (1980), 1.

[14] Plato, *The Republic*, trans. G.M.A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1974), 69.

[15] Neubauer, *The Emancipation of Music*, 11–17.

Music expressed and sustained a theological conception of the place of men and women within the larger machinery of the State and the universe.

This chapter will focus on a particular view of music and language which, beginning with the decline of earlier cosmological conceptions of music in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, continued through the eighteenth century. Music and language were considered throughout this period as intimately related, though the meaning of this relationship shows considerable variation.[16] In the "Discours préliminaire" to the *Encyclopédie*, for example, d'Alembert notes that "music . . . has gradually become a kind of discourse or even language."[17] Diderot also claims that "music is a language" in the *Leçons de clavecin* that he wrote with Bemetzrieder.[18] Although it was certainly not the only approach to music, what John Neubauer calls the "verbal paradigm" could be considered to form the dominant discourse on music during the eighteenth century.[19] In his *Dell'origine et della regole della musica*, Antonio Eximeno devotes a chapter to the uselessness of musical mathematics, explaining that music is most intimately related to language through a common origin. Like the Pythagorean and other conceptions of music mentioned above, the verbal paradigm integrated music into the network of meanings, into the signifying practices that make up culture. But beyond this generalized function as part of cultural practices or systems of belief, the verbal paradigm opened music to the possibility of (what we would call today) a semiotics. In Leibniz's *Nouveaux essais sur l'entendement*

[16] One might object that language and music were considered to be related during many periods of occidental history. Yet my argument is that the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries rely on a conception of music and language which differs, at least at its inception, from that of other periods. If the Middle Ages was concerned with the setting of words to music, theorists tended to emphasize techniques in which the musical voices were organized to form, and derived their meaning from, strictly musical patterns which were essentially unrelated to the narration of a story-line. The isorhythmic motet of the Ars Nova, and Machaut's crab canon rondeau "Ma fin est mon commencement," could be cited as examples to illustrate the importance medieval music gave to formal principles (Seay, *Music in the Medieval World*, 127, 144). One might also object that certain strains of nineteenth-century poetics (Verlaine, Mallarmé) imagined language as music. Yet in this case the relation is reversed. Instead of music being thought of as a language because of narrative and rhythmic elements common to both, language attempts to de-signify itself, or rather to be able, like music, to form constellations (the word is Mallarmé's) of sound and sense, which would belong to a higher and more naturalized order of meaning than does ordinary language.

[17] *Encyclopédie*, 1:xij.

[18] Denis Diderot, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Jean Varloot (Paris: Hermann, 1975–86), 19:384.

[19] See also Kevin Barry, *Language, Music and the Sign* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

humain, "Théophile" considers the prospect of a musical language: "we must consider that one could speak, that is, make oneself understood by vocal sounds . . . if one used musical *tones* for this purpose."[20] In his *Traité du récitatif*, published in 1707 and reissued throughout the eighteenth century, Grimarest suggests that vocal music has already become a type of communication: "vocal music is a kind of language that men have agreed upon to communicate their thoughts & feelings with more pleasure."[21] Considered by these writers as a language, music became much more than the semantically neutral code to which Benveniste refers.[22] For the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it offered the possibility of representation and communication, and these possibilities gave music a particular role in culture. The theorists who described this role offer valuable insights into the interrelations of art and theories of culture. The verbal paradigm would make music speak at the same time that it would rationalize and regularize a discourse on music.

One way to explain the existence of the verbal paradigm for music would be to call it a version of logocentrism. I do not think that this answer is sufficient. At the risk of digressing for a moment, I want to attempt to explain my reasons for objecting to it. Indeed, it would be difficult to begin a study such as this one without discussing Jacques Derrida's approach to Western metaphysics. If during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries music was thought of as a kind of language (so the argument could be construed), then perhaps this is tantamount to saying with Derrida that, despite other upheavals in philosophy, voice and reason (*logos*) remain inextricably linked: "within this logos, the original and essential link to the *phonè* has never been broken . . . the essence of the *phonè* would be immediately proximate to that which within 'thought' as logos relates to 'meaning,' produces it, receives it, speaks it, 'composes' it."[23] In the philosophical tradition of

[20] Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Nouveaux essais sur l'entendement humain* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1966), 235.

[21] Jean Léonor le Gallois de Grimarest, *Traité du récitatif* (1740; New York: AMS Press [1978]), 120.

[22] The examples I have given are by no means exhaustive. Many others addressed the question of music and language in more or less detail: Turgot in his *Discours sur l'histoire universelle* and Maupertuis in his *Dissertation sur les différens moyens dont les hommes se sont servis pour exprimer leurs idées* (see *Varia linguistica*, ed. Charles Porset [Bordeaux: Ducros, 1970]); Charles de Brosses in his *Traité de la formation méchanique des langues* (Paris: Saillant, Vincent, Desaint, 1765); and Court de Gebelin in his *Histoire naturelle de la parole ou Origine du langage, de l'écriture et de la grammaire universelle* (Paris: n.p., 1772). Music appears more or less prominently in each of these texts as part of an effort to pin down the question of the origin of signs.

[23] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 13. "Or dans ce logos, le lien originaire et essentiel à la *phoné* n'a jamais été rompu . . . l'essence de la *phoné* serait immédiatement

the West, according to Derrida, the voice is accorded a privileged status as immediately close to truth, presence, and being. Following Derrida, it would be possible to claim that music, like language, is given the metaphysical attributes of truth, presence, and being because of its close relation to voice. Insofar as music and language are both dependent on the voice, they are also, *a priori*, linked to thought or meaning (*logos*). Music's privileged relation to voice – as lyric – associates it, moreover, with the most intimate confines of subjectivity. One could argue, then, that the connection of voice and *logos* to which Derrida refers is what allows music access to meaning within the framework of Western epistemology, and to be considered, as d'Alembert writes, "a kind of discourse or even language."[24]

Derrida's interpretation offers an elegant and persuasive explanation for the verbal paradigm; yet it does not account for the waxing and waning of this paradigm. It thus would be necessary to account for the shift to an aesthetic ideology for which language must be left behind and which argues for the unmediated formal play of music. The overarching compass of logocentrism cannot be expected to fully explain the meanings of particular discourses on music. For when Derrida discusses the persistence of logocentrism, he is referring to the history of Western metaphysics as a whole, a grand narrative which cannot always be expected to correlate with events on a smaller scale. The Derridian view I have outlined, which reads the history of Western metaphysics up to the present as a history of logocentrism, produces a systematic reading where a more detailed approach to the linking of music and language in eighteenth-century discourse is also required. Even if one were to entertain the possibility of a deconstructive reading of the history of music and the voice, it would still be necessary to explore the particularities of musical understanding during a given period, particularities that may escape or be left unaccounted for by the overarching systematization of a deconstructive reading. Thomas Kavanagh has remarked on the current appeal of all-encompassing visions: "the contemporary preoccupation with theory has had as one of its effects the displacing of interest away from what is specific to any individual work and toward presuppositions and systemic cogency of the theoretical constructs that allow us to carry out our analyses."[25] Echoing Kavanagh's comments, I do not wish to take a position against theory, for of course to do so would also

proche de ce qui dans la 'pensée' comme logos a rapport au 'sens,' le produit, le reçoit, le dit, le 'rassemble'" (Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie* [Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1967], 21).

[24] *Encyclopédie*, 1:xij.

[25] Thomas M. Kavanagh, Introduction, *The Limits of Theory*, ed. Thomas M. Kavanagh (Stanford: Standford University Press, 1989), 2–3.

be a theoretical stance. I simply want to insist that the global explanation is acceptable only as a global explanation, not as a substitute for understanding the contingencies of individual moments and texts.

Commentators have frequently judged referential or expressive theories of a musical "language" as inferior or misguided. Contemporary critics and musicologists see instrumental music as the telos of all music, and non-representational aesthetics as the welcome replacement for outmoded mimetic paradigms for the arts. While this position undoubtedly reveals what aesthetic theory has come to expect from music, it also forces our reading of eighteenth-century discourse on music. Upon closer inspection, it is possible to argue that eighteenth-century conceptions of music do not always abide by the polemical categories and historical narratives invented by Romantic and post-Romantic theorists in order to stake a claim for their aesthetics of detachment from meaning or from ideology. The simple opposition of representational versus absolute music that is the touchstone of most critics even to this day is part of an outmoded polemic which necessarily disregards the complexity of eighteenth-century writings on music – the texts of Rousseau, Diderot, and Condillac that are the focus of this study. Furthermore, as Christopher Norris argues, the organicist vision of an absolute art is, like the mimetic art it condemned, "a version of aesthetic ideology in so far as it ignores the ontological difference between word and world."[26] Norris takes issue with the notion that "art can actually *achieve* that state of 'unmediated expressiveness' that often features in high-Romantic claims for the superiority of symbol over allegory, or for metaphor as a trope that transcends the limitations of other, more prosaic devices like metonymy."[27] By claiming that non-mimetic or non-representational theories transcend the traditional bounds of art, commentators ignore the fact that absolute music is itself ideologically bound. Furthermore, the ideology that promotes absolute music is, *a priori*, complicitous with the views of music theorists and semioticians who would isolate music from language because of its lack of semantics. Such thinking in most cases also blinds the critic to the wider cultural significance of music theory. My intention is not to argue against absolute music or to praise mimesis. Both could be said to exhibit a version of what Christopher Norris, after Paul de Man, calls "aesthetic ideology." I hope to show that commentators' assumptions about aesthetic detachment have led them to ignore the possibility of a more contextual reading of music and its discourses, to put forward absolute music more or less unaware

[26] Christopher Norris, *What's Wrong with Postmodernism* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), 217.

[27] *Ibid.*, 216–217.

of their own "ersatz jargon of authenticity."[28] Although we no longer have a trivium and a quadrivium, and although we do not understand music as rhetoric or representation – at least not when we are in a professional capacity – eighteenth-century philosophers and aesthetic theorists assumed and cultivated the verbal paradigm as part of the ways they wrote about their culture, its origins, and its projected future. Borrowing Michel Foucault's concept of an archeology of knowledge, I want to undertake a study of writings on music, a study of the implications of music as voice (and of the voice as music) in eighteenth-century discourse. By revealing the theoretical work that music performs for eighteenth-century culture, I want to convey the unavoidably "engaged" character of musicology and theory.

Although I will refer to musical practices in the following pages, I am more specifically concerned with the theory that attempted to account for these practices, both real and ideal. Musical composition and performance were undoubtedly undergoing radical change during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These changes have been well documented by musicologists. My interest lies with the discourses that gave meaning to the musical object which in turn contributed to a larger context of cultural practices and visions. Although music came to be understood as a kind of language, the emergence of a verbal paradigm for music was accompanied by conceptual shifts within representation, that is within the idea of a direct correspondence between the sign and the external world.[29] The emergence of the verbal paradigm for music, I argue, eventually led to a change in the concept of representation that underlay that paradigm.

The verbal paradigm for music resulted from changes in the way musical composition was conceived and carried out. In the late sixteenth century, a conceptual shift occurred in the relationship between language and music. Towards the end of the reign of Charles IX, the Académie de Poésie et de Musique led by Jean-Antoine de Baïf attempted to re-create and to re-enact what they imagined to be the Greek *mousiké* – sung verse, composed and performed by the poet – in

[28] *Ibid.*, 215.

[29] Critics have often confused two senses of the term "correspondence" when speaking of the relation between language and the world. I use the term here to mean a sending or a referral, and not a similarity. As Umberto Eco has pointed out, the sign should not be understood, as it often is, as functioning through resemblance, equivalence, or identification between expression and content (*Sémiotique et philosophie du langage*, trans. Myriem Bouzaher [Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1988], 33). Eco notes that the sign is that which opens up onto something else, generates other meanings (59–60).

a verse form that Baïf called *vers mesuré*.[30] Taking humanism to its theoretical limits, Baïf's group sought to force the strictly quantitative meter of Greek and Roman poetry onto the French vernacular. Patterned directly on these poetic meters and reduced to a bare harmony, the accompanying music would superimpose its rhythms onto the newly created vernacular meters. In this way, both language and music, acting as doubles, would be conflated into rhythm, which became the central focus of the linear, melodic music composed by *académiciens* such as Le Jeune and Lassus. Unlike earlier polyphony, which according to Baïf distorted the text, the new music would in principle act as a perfect catalyst for the textual meters; both music and language would become transparent to each other, disappearing into a reincarnated *mousiké*. Although Baïf and his followers had little influence on later composition, his strict coupling of music and language remained a point of reference for theoretical discussions of music into the eighteenth century. In his *Histoire générale, critique et philologique de la musique* (1769), for example, Blainville sees Baïf's experiments as the origin of a new conception of music: "it is therefore to this so estimable man [Baïf] ... that we owe the first glimmers of music and poetry."[31]

By the mid seventeenth century, large-scale medieval and Renaissance polyphony and the compositional techniques which underlay them – those same techniques which Baïf had rejected, such as *cantus firmus* and mensuration canons – were considered arcane and antiquated. In his *Compendium musicae*, Descartes notes his disapproval of these practices: "I do not believe that artificial counterpoint, as it is called, in which one uses such an artifice [imitation] from the beginning to the end, belongs any more to music than acrostics and retrograde poems belong to poetics; this art, like our music, was invented to excite the movements of the soul."[32] Thorough-bass texture replaced traditional, equal-voice counterpoint, and this new kind of polyphony, in which a melody stood out against the bass, took precedence. Marking this change, Descartes likens an older practice in which composition was dictated by the "artifical" rules of counterpoint to a formalist poetics such as that of the *grands rhétoriqueurs*. The reliance on a musical formalism of set procedures and preconceived schemes

[30] In the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Winnington-Ingram notes that "no real distinction can be drawn between the rhythms of Greek music and the metres of Greek poetry" (s.v. "Greece"). Claude Palisca notes that Aristoxenus (fourth century BC) uses the term *poiétiké* to refer to the composition of music (s.v. "Theory, theorists"). This imbrication of poetic and musical form is precisely what Baïf's Academy sought to theorize and recapture in late sixteenth-century France.

[31] Charles Henri Blainville, *Histoire générale, critique et philologique de la musique* (1769; Geneva: Minkoff, 1972), 85.

[32] René Descartes, *Abrégé de musique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1988), 134–136.

which ignored the text had lost its credibility. Music, like poetry, should be closely linked to the human voice and thus to the movements of the soul. With the advent of *airs de cour* and recitative, to which Baïf's experiments can be related, seventeenth-century French theorists placed great emphasis on the solo singing voice, supported by continuo.

Although this modern music was as equally dependent on polyphony as the music of the Renaissance which relied on "artificial counterpoint," the harmony created by the figured bass was principally designed to exhibit, to drive the linear motion of the solo voice and to represent the concurrent movements of the soul. The preeminence of the voice could be explained by the importance of the verbal paradigm which now accounted for music's beauty and meaning: as one modern commentator explains, "music was like an image of speech, whose rhythm and accent were reinforced, sustained, enlivened."[33] Music was associated with, revealed, and even created a narrative progression: it told a story in conjunction with or in addition to the text. As Brossard remarked from the vantage point of the turn of the eighteenth century, music had become closer, even wedded, to the language it sang: "*antiquo-moderna* music is the solemn and serious music in several parts which prevailed since Guido of Arezzo until the beginning of the last century; truly *modern* music is that which we have begun to perfect over the past 50 or 60 years, making it gayer, more expressive, and better suited to the long and short syllables of the text."[34] Accompanying this shift of emphasis from the old-style harmony to the new thorough-bass composition for which the melodic line was all-important, music theory reorganized the discourse in which it defined and gave meaning to its object. Since Boethius (470?–525), music had been divided into three categories or levels of meaning – *musica mundana, humana,* and *instrumentalis.* The lowest level, *musica instrumentalis,* consisted of vocal and instrumental music, and could be used to demonstrate the ratios that governed all three categories of "music." *Musica humana,* the middle level, referred to the harmonious relationship between the body and the soul, and the balance and symmetry in the arrangement of the organs and members of the body. The highest level, *musica mundana* (the music of the spheres), directed the movements of the heavens, the earth, and its elements and seasons.[35] Marking a distance from Boethius' conceptions, an early seventeenth-century theorist rearranged these classifications which organized music into genera and species. Nicolas

[33] Georges Snyders, *Le Goût musical en France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: Vrin, 1968), 20.

[34] Sébastien de Brossard, *Dictionnaire de musique* (Paris: n.p., 1705), 60.

[35] Seay, *Music in the Medieval World,* 17–20.

Bergier reduced the importance of cosmology and undertook, in theory, the realignment of music toward the voice that Brossard remarked in compositional style.[36] In his *Musique speculative,* Bergier divided music into three categories very different from those of Boethius: first, music addressing itself solely to the senses, such as the noise birds make, which is without (human) proportion or measure; second, music accessible only to the the understanding, which groups together the old *mundana* and *humana;* and third, music to be heard and understood, in other words what we commonly call music. After devoting a scant few pages to the first two categories, the rest of Bergier's treatise is devoted to the last category, vocal and instrumental music, divided into *musique rithmique, prosodique,* and *harmonique.* Not only is it clear that macrocosmic divisions have been set aside, but the object of the greater part of *La Musique speculative* is precisely those categories that refer to a linear music conceived of in conjunction with language: the *rithmique* and the *prosodique.* Bergier is careful to distinguish pleasing noise, which can be found in nature and concerns only the physical senses, from true music, which has meaning and thus affects the whole being. In the categories it creates, Bergier's treatise de-emphasizes the cosmological or mathematical concerns of the quadrivium, and relocates music within the rhetorical and the human. Bergier was neither the first nor the only theorist to question earlier theory, but his work testifies to the new discourses being developed by "modern" music theory. If composers had stopped writing music designed to express the hierarchical intricacies of the universe in order to place more attention on the movement of the voice, theorists also had to develop a discourse that would emphasize the verbal and rhetorical concerns of the new music.

Through the way in which it reorganized the categories of "musicology," Bergier's treatise testifies to the displacement of the antiquated hierarchical and macrocosmic visions that did not easily conform to new conceptions of music. Not only did performance and compositional practice change drastically in the seventeenth century, but theoreticians, who nonetheless borrowed elements from earlier metaphysical systems – whether Greek, medieval, or humanist – began thinking of music in terms that were common to language theory, rearranging and discarding the elements of earlier theories which no longer seemed admissible. The new conception of a musical language was haunted by an image of ancient performance practice – that of the singer accompanying himself on the lyre. Centered around the solo voice, the new music, rhythmic and prosodic, was seen as continuing

[36] See Nicolas Bergier, *La Musique speculative* (Cologne: Arno Volk, 1970). Bergier was born in 1557 and died in 1623. The date of his treatise is not known.

or re-creating the texture and spirit of ancient Greek music.[37] In *L'Art de bien chanter* (1679), Bénigne de Bacilly reinforced this image of performance by insisting that the theorbo was preferable to the viol and the harpsichord for accompanying solo voice because it did not do violence to vocal clarity.[38] Imagined to be something resembling the Greek *mousiké*, music was thought of and written as a double to language and this vocal or operatic song had become the model for all music.

The rise of a musical language and a long-standing "fantasy" about Greek civilization and the place of music in that culture naturally led to rhetorical concerns. The meanings that Greek writings attributed to music undoubtedly lent weight to the idea of perfecting a modern musical "language." Even as late as 1754, the abbé François Arnaud in his *Lettre sur la musique à Monsieur le compte de Caylus* hoped to offer musicians "a musical rhetoric," based on Quintilian: "I examine all the tropes, all the figures, that music uses, like eloquence, to please, to touch & to persuade."[39] During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries music theorists relied on the remnants of Greco-Roman theory and accounts of performance practice in order to imagine a music of enormous rhetorical and affective force. Writers shifted their thoughts on music from cosmological speculation to theories of the universal musical proportion of *Homo sapiens* – the specifically human production of voice and melody, and the effects that these produce on the body and the soul.[40] Through the narrative and rhetorical manipu-

[37] Some writers were uneasy about the relationship between their modern music and what they imagined as Greek music. Constantly comparing contemporary music with their image of Greek monody, some theorists were not always convinced of the superiority of their own opera and instrumental music. Speaking of certain authors' desire to explain away the impressive accounts of Greek music, Rousseau notes that "the majority of these opinions are founded on the conviction that we harbor concerning the excellence of our *music*, & on the scorn that we have for that of the ancients. But is this scorn as well founded as we claim?" (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Dictionnaire de musique* [Paris: Veuve Duchesne, 1768], s.v. "Musique"). For Blainville also, Greek music "must have had a beauty of expression in poetic subjects which might lead us to reflect on our own" (*Histoire générale*, 36).

[38] Bénigne de Bacilly, *L'Art de bien chanter* (1679; Geneva: Minkoff, 1974), 18.

[39] L'abbé François Arnaud, *Lettre sur la musique à Monsieur le compte de Caylus* (n.p.: n.p., 1754), 3, 33.

[40] It is interesting to note that this discourse on the passions allows the seventeenth century to reappropriate the medieval category of *musica humana*. In other words, one might see shifting continuities in the ruptured categories I have described: music that arouses the passions could be considered a displacement and relocation of the conceptual framework of the older *musica humana*. Though instead of forming a category separate from what had once been *musica instrumentalis*, *musica humana*, in the new guise of affect theory, includes vocal and instrumental music. See Neubauer for an informative discussion of music and the passions in relation to seventeenth-century medicine: "indebted to the hermeticism and ancient cosmological speculation that Cardanus, Ficino, Agrippa von Nettesheim, Paracelsus, and Giordano Bruno had revived in the Renaissance[,] the analogy between the elements, the humors, and the temperaments was adopted not only by Fludd and Kircher but also by thinkers of a more Cartesian bent. The particular contribution of the seventeenth century was to reformulate these analogies in terms of new, mechanistic models for the circulation of the blood and other physiological processes" (Neubauer, *The Emancipation of Music*, 46).

lation of voice, music was supposed to dispose the listener in certain predictable ways. Like rhetoric, selected rhythms, intervals, modes or keys, and instrumental temperaments, could affect the balance of animal spirits of the body, which in turn could occasion the soul to experience the various passions.

Descartes' *Les Passions de l'âme* provided a model for those theorists who considered music to be the vocal expression of the passions, or affections, of the subject.[41] Descartes explained the source and functions of the passions and described in some detail the six principal passions – "admiration, love, hate, desire, joy, and sadness" – together with the secondary emotions derived from these.[42] Descartes is careful to distinguish the body-machine (*automate*) from the purely intellectual functions of the soul. Taken in the strictest sense of the term, the passions of the soul differ from other perceptions in that they are said to originate neither in the exterior objects that act upon the senses nor in the body, but rather in the soul itself. Like other thoughts, then, passion occurs in the soul; but unlike reason or will, passion is the hybrid result of outside influence. Through a complex series of physiological mechanisms involving the action of nerves and flow of animal spirits, the body affects the soul, disposing it toward certain affective states. The persistence of a given passion is due to lingering animal spirits which fortify and perpetuate it. Because the passions trespass on the soul's autonomy, its quest for self-determination, they stand for the accidents and contingencies that threaten to disrupt the stability and universality of thought. If properly managed by force of will, the passions can be directed to good use. If the soul is left to the whim of its emotions, however, it will remain "enslaved and unhappy."[43] Descartes thus stages a contest between will and passion.

In his sparse writings on music, as in his other works, Descartes insists on the distinction between the body and the soul. Like his contemporaries, Descartes finds a specifically human and partially physiological basis for harmony, although he carefully sets aside the physiological as that which simply "occasions" the soul to perceive music. In his letters to Mersenne, music takes on the same mind/body duality that appears in the *Discours de la méthode*:

[41] George J. Buelow, "Music, rhetoric, and the concept of affections: a selective bibliography," *Notes* 30 (1973–74), 252.

[42] René Descartes, *Les Passions de l'âme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), 196.

[43] *Ibid.*, 186.

the twelfth is simpler than the fifth. I say simpler, and not more agreeable; for it is important to note that all this calculation serves only to demonstrate which consonances are the simplest or if you wish, the sweetest and most perfect, but not the most agreeable ... But in order to determine what is more agreeable, it is necessary to estimate the capacity of the listener, which changes, like taste, from person to person.[44]

Consonances are more or less perfect, and this perfection can be determined through calculation. The simplicity of harmonic intervals can be judged according to the universals of mathematical knowledge. Yet whether or not these consonances are (physically) pleasing depends entirely upon the contingencies of the physical world and on the different makeup of individual human bodies. Descartes refuses to consider further the pleasure of music, the sensations that the listener finds pleasing. For according to the Cartesian system the physical and affective force of music cannot be made correlate with or correspond to the absolute knowledge made possible by dualism. The above citation seems to reveal an epistemic gap created by the terms of the philosophy which would separate the mind from the body-machine. Music theorists would attempt to fill that gap.

Although seventeenth-century "musicology" borrowed heavily from Descartes' model, it did not necessarily endorse the metaphysics to which Descartes subscribed in its entirety. In particular, music theorists tended to de-emphasize the possible adverse effects of the passions and the desirability of detachment from the body. While *Les Passions de l'âme* was principally concerned with establishing a metaphysics of passion – and a system for the understanding and management of that passion – music theorists retained Descartes' categories, seeking to specify the correlation between musical sounds and the passions. This correlation was understood by Marin Mersenne as a kind of semiotics: "the voice of animals serves to signify the passions of the soul."[45] As La Voye Mignot's mid seventeenth-century *Traité de musique* shows, the task of musicology was to locate and explain the affective semiotics of existing musical components and structures: "since the modes (as I imagine) were only invented to express the various passions of our souls, it would appear that there is some

[44] "La douziéme est plus simple que la quinte. Je dis plus simple, non pas plus agréable; car il faut remarquer que tout ce calcul sert seulement pour monstrer quelles consonances sont les plus simples ou si vous voulez, les plus douces & parfaites, mais non pas pour cela les plus agréables ... Mais pour déterminer ce qui est plus agréable, il faut supposer la capacité de l'auditeur, laquelle change comme le goust, selon les personnes" (René Descartes, "A Mersenne," janvier 1630, *Œuvres et lettres*, ed. André Bridoux [Paris: Gallimard, 1953], 917).

[45] Marin Mersenne, "Traitez de la voix et des chants," *Harmonie universelle* (1636; Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1963), 2:8.

relationship between the six modes and the six principle passions that arise in us: that is, Joy & Sadness, Love & Hate, Hope & Fear."[46] Given the signifying capacity of the voice, it should be possible to communicate the state of the soul in melodic inflections, "all the more so since one can retain the same ratios in musical intervals that are found in the movements of the soul, of the body, of the elements, & of the heavens."[47] In Mersenne's view, music joins universal perfectibility with the contingent pleasure that Descartes could only explain as a purely heterogeneous phenomenon. The movements of the soul and those of the body, once they are expressed mathematically, Mersenne claims, exhibit analogous structures. Sensation, emotion, and thought are unified in the intervals that express them. By reproducing the same intervals that correspond to the balance of bodily humors and passions, music could be used to represent and communicate the affections. This systematic use of musical intervals would not only allow for the representation of passion. It could also generate or alter passion and have an effect on the mind as a whole: "chords order the mind ... polish it, and make it more gentle, and more tractable, as many people experience every day."[48]

Mersenne notes, however, that "no one has yet established sure rules for making beautiful tunes or songs on all sorts of subjects."[49] In order to fill this gap, he suggests the possibility of establishing a universal musical code: "it is necessary to follow & imitate the movement of the passion that one wants to excite in the audience ... [and it is necessary] to use the same intervals or degrees used by the passion that one wants to excite."[50] Mersenne hopes that this musical code could be used to construct a universal musical discourse, primarily epideictic – appealing to the affect rather than producing logical argument – through the proper ordering of the musical elements representing the passions: "just as the purpose of the orator is to persuade his audience, that of the musician is to please the multitude."[51] This musicology, like the philosophy of language at Port-Royal, proposes and seeks to develop a theory of representation within a regulated discourse. Music theory imagines a practice in which the movements of the soul would be represented in the inflections of the human voice; and this representation could be used in a social context for various kinds of persuasion, for making the human mind "more gentle, and more tractable," as Mersenne suggested.

In order to develop musical representation, theorists would have to

[46] La Voye Mignot, *Traité de musique* (1666; Geneva: Minkoff, n.d.), pt. 4, p. 5.

[47] Mersenne, *Harmonie universelle*, 2:92.

[48] Marin Mersenne, *Questions harmoniques* (Paris: Fayard, 1985), 125.

[49] Mersenne, *Harmonie universelle*, 2:97.

[50] *Ibid.*, 99.

[51] Mersenne, *Questions harmoniques*, 157–158.

carefully examine the constituent elements of musical discourse. First, the essential affective components of music – tonality, rhythm and meter – had to be reconsidered in order to define a new field of musical discourse. And secondly, once these universal elements of music had been defined and organized into a compositional "grammar," the singing voice – like the speaking voice – would have to be subject to rules homologous to those prescribed in rhetoric. Batteux insisted that music and language (together with dance) share a common rhetorical principle: "since musical sounds and the gestures of dance have a meaning, like words in poetry, the expression of music and of dance must have the same natural qualities as oratorical elocution."[52] This musical rhetoric would be necessary for the composer to build an affective melody – a certain motion together with rhythmic and pitch structures that would alter the listener's affective state in certain predictable ways. Although he never bases his arguments on extensive references to language, Descartes nevertheless reminds the reader at the end of his *Compendium musicae* that "this sort of figure in music [the cadence] is comparable to the figures of rhetoric in language," and that poetics, "like our music, was invented to excite the movements of the soul."[53] If Descartes refuses to theorize the pleasure of music – that is, the relationship between music and the body – in his letters to Mersenne and later writings, he nonetheless recognizes (at least in the *Compendium musicae*, his first work) that the movement of music engenders an analogous movement in the soul.

From this standpoint, as Johann Mattheson argues, a composition should be understood as a series of musical figures – certain rhythmic patterns and melodic motifs – comparable to the figures of rhetoric, each with a specified affective meaning:[54]

> Musical disposition differs from rhetoric only in its medium, for it must observe the same six parts as does a speaker ... *exordium, narratio, propositio, confirmatio, confutatio, et peroratio* ... Even in common conversation nature teaches us to use certain tropes, certain suggested meanings of words, certain arguments or reasons, and to keep them in some order even though the speaker may never have heard of rhetorical rules or figures. This very natural mental instinct, which causes us to present everything in good order and form, has given certain clever heads the basis for their rules. Up to now the outlook in this respect has been dark in the field of music. We hope that it will gradually grow lighter and we shall try to make a contribution toward this goal.[55]

[52] Charles Batteux, *Les Beaux arts réduits à un même principe* (Paris: Durand, 1746), 270.

[53] Descartes, *Abrégé de musique*, 135–136.

[54] In Johann Kuhnau's *Biblische Historien*, for example, certain rhythmic motifs are intended to denote more or less specific states of mind; dotted rhythms, for instance, represent determination, *orgueil*, or even defiance. The major and minor modes are used in the same manner. See Johann Kuhnau, *Six Biblical Sonatas* (New York: Broude Bros., 1953).

Rhetoric is the codified version of a natural mental disposition, brought to perfection and theorization by "clever heads." Mattheson asserts that in music as in language, we naturally use tropes just as we naturally order our thoughts according to certain structural principles which were discovered later. Yet the outlook in music has been "dark" because, unlike the case of language, no one has bothered to codify the natural rules of musical rhetoric. Since musical "figures" are based on the universal nature of sound, a musical rhetoric should form, *mutatis mutandis*, a stable and entirely cross-cultural set of procedures.

Some theorists, such as Descartes, emphasized rhythm and meter as had Baïf's Académie de Poésie et de Musique, suggesting that the most effective way to arouse passions was the varied use of mensuration: "I say that in general a slow tempo likewise excites in us slow passions, such as languor, sadness, fear, pride, etc., and that a quick tempo also gives birth to quick passions, such as joy, etc."[56] Nicolas Bergier agrees, stating that rhythm, as that which gives form to music, has the greatest influence on the passions: "rhythm is the strongest & acts as the male in music, just as melody acts as the female."[57] In Bergier's analogy, the masculine, form-giving rhythm is complemented by the weaker, feminine shapes of melody. A melody, then, must be properly *rythmé* – rhythmic – in order to move the passions. Writing at the end of the seventeenth century, Masson too emphasizes the strong effect rhythm has on listeners: "measure is the soul of music, since it moves a great number of people with such precision, & since

[55] Johann Mattheson, "Concerning the disposition, elaboration, and decoration of melodies," trans. Hans Lenneberg, in Hans Lenneberg, "Johann Mattheson on affect and rhetoric in music (II)," *Journal of Music Theory* 2.1 (1958), 194.

[56] Descartes, *Abrégé de musique*, 62.

[57] "La rime est la plus fort[e] & tient lieu de masle au chant, comme la Melodie de femelle" (Bergier, *La Musique speculative*, 98). In the sixteenth century, the words *rime* and *rythme* were pronounced the same and *rime* was considered by poetic theorists such as Du Bellay to be a kind of of rhythm. Even in the late seventeenth century, Boileau uses the word *rime* to mean "verse." In the context of Bergier's chapter, it is clear that he intends *rime* to mean rhythm: "la Rime, comme par certain act virile, introduict la forme dans les sons, en leur donnant des mouvemens prompts ou tardifs, & des temps longs ou brefs ..." (98). Bergier is also taking advantage of a phallocentric metaphor that was not uncommon in philosophical texts of the period. In book three of *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke compares the charms (and deceits) of eloquence to those of the "fair sex" and contrasts this use of language with "dry Truth and real Knowledge" (John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975], 508). Thus, the male prerogative of form and essence is opposed to secondary, female "accessories."

through the variety of its movements it can arouse so many different passions, calming some & exciting others."[58]

Although certainly not in conflict with the rhetoric of rhythm and melody outlined above, other theorists maintained that, among other factors, the meantone temperaments used to tune musical instruments imparted specific affective properties to each key, in both the major and minor modes. Jean Rousseau, Marc-Antoine Charpentier, Charles Masson, Athanasius Kircher, Johann Mattheson (who believed that pitch, not temperament, was the cause of the key/affect correspondance), Jean-Philippe Rameau and others, drawing on Descartes' treatise on the passions, provided normative lists of the affects that were to be used to construct an affective musical discourse, and catalogued the various tonalities corresponding to these affects. Rameau, in his *Traité de l'harmonie* of 1722, explains the properties of each key: "the major mode in C, D, or A, is appropriate for songs of rejoicing and happiness; in F or B flat, it is appropriate for storms, furies & other similar subjects. In G or E, it is also appropriate for tender & gay songs; the grand & the magnificent occur in D, A or E."[59] Rameau lists the correspondences between key and appropriate subject matter (which in this citation appears specifically operatic) for the use of the composer. Accompanying and supporting the rhetoric of melody oulined by Bergier, Descartes, and Mattheson, Rameau's tonal rhetoric provided music with another means of building a predictable, affective discourse.

Yet this utopian idea of a self-evident, transparent musical idiom was already fractured from its inception, since each theorist attributed different and incompatible affects to each tonality. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Mattheson clearly saw the difficulty of a universal musical rhetoric: "the more one endeavours to establish something positive, the more one finds which is contradictory."[60] In this same text of 1713 – *Das neu-eröffnete Orchestre* – Mattheson sets out a complete list of keys and their corresponding affects while affirming that "at the same time, everyone has complete freedom to formulate different and better descriptions according to his own feelings."[61] Descartes' theoretical separation between the body and the soul –

[58] Charles Masson, *Nouveau traité des regles pour la composition de la musique* (1699; New York: Da Capo Press, 1967), 6.

[59] Jean-Philippe Rameau, *Traité de l'harmonie* (1722; Madrid: Arte Tripharia, 1984), 157.

[60] Quoted in Rita Steblin, *A History of Key Characteristics in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor: UMI Press, 1983), 51. I refer to Mattheson because of the interesting shifts in his position on music and affect, and because he was aware of the theoretical discussions taking place in France. Mattheson contributed to the debate on the affects in 1720, for example, by responding to an anonymous article in the *Journal de Trévoux* of 1718 (*ibid.*, 52).

[61] Quoted in *ibid.*, 44.

bodily pleasure being essentially distinct from rationality – returned as a problem for the music theorist. The analytical coordination of musical technique and affect could not be sustained at the level of individual feeling. As theorists attempted to establish positive rules for the correspondence between music and the passions, the unified subject upon which this enterprise was grounded was revealed as already fragmented. Wondering why one finds countless opinions as to the specific tonality/affect correspondances, Mattheson undercuts the universalist position by invoking the idiosyncrasies of individual dispositions: "I do not know of any other reason for this than the difference in human temperaments [*Complexionen*]."[62] Later, in his *Der Vollkommene Capellmeister* of 1739, affect lists are conspicuously absent from Mattheson's theoretical discussions.[63] Charles Masson, too, for unknown reasons, deletes from the 1699 edition of his *Traité* the specific key/affect descriptions which had made up a large section of his chapter "De la nature des modes" in the 1697 edition.[64] While the debate continued through the eighteenth century and beyond, disagreements abound on the reason for the affective properties of each tonality. Each writer had a particular agenda for the discussion of keys and affects; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, for example, would use the affects to argue against the adoption of equal temperament. The possibility of a universal, combinatorial discourse of musical affect no longer seemed possible even if music continued to be considered as discourse of affect.

The seventeenth-century concern with direct correspondences between musical structures and their so-called "extra-musical" meaning relies on the strict interdependence of compositional rules (grammar) and a system of musical figures (rhetoric). The belief in a universal rhetoric and the desire to provide an exhaustive list of musical devices or "tropes" relied on the dependability of rhetoric as part of a musical semiotics. The connection between a coherent musical discourse and affect, however, turned out to be elusive. As Timothy Reiss has argued in an article on changing conceptions of logic and rhetoric in the seventeenth century, the dependability of rhetoric was precisely what was put into question by a new scientific model of language.[65] Perhaps there is a similar hesitancy in music theory. As the writings of Mattheson and Masson testify, in any case, theorists were significantly less inclined to make the kinds of claims for their musical rhetoric that can be found in Mersenne's works. Yet, despite these difficulties, composition and "musicology" continued to

[62] Quoted in *ibid.*, 51. [63] *Ibid.*, 56. [64] *Ibid.*, 37.

[65] See Timothy J. Reiss, "Problems in logic and rhetoric," in *A New History of French Literature*, ed. Denis Hollier (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 278–284.

be marked by a concern for affect and rhetoric. As Elaine Sisman and Mark Evan Bonds have argued, rhetoric remained an important reference in musical treatises throughout the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth. Rhetoric, in this larger framework, "is not a specific body of rules or devices," but rather a rationale of discourse.[66] In his *Anfangsgründe der theoretischen Musik*, the French-influenced Marpurg "claimed that rhetoric included every aspect of musical composition and performance."[67] Later in the century, Grétry considered the sonata to be an oration.[68] Rhetorical issues remained towards the end of the century, even as confidence in mimetic codes waned. In *De la musique considérée en elle-même*, originally published in 1779, Chabanon argues that music may have effects and exhibit a certain representational capacity, but it does not contain any natural or predetermined meaning: "a musical sound alone carries no meaning."[69] Theoretical texts after Rameau, though they may deny music the possibility of determinate concepts or meaning, continue to exhibit an interest in musical signification.

Music theory, now caught between the trivium and quadrivium, also testified to the tensions generated by the divergence of rhetoric and science. In the eighteenth century, the interest in a musical rhetoric was qualified by the hope for a new musical "science" heralded by Rameau's theories. With Rameau, music theory overtly adopted what Reiss calls the "analytico-referential" discourse of modern science, but with music as its object of study rather than as a tool of inquiry.[70] Although he disagreed with some of Rameau's conclusions, d'Alembert imagined the possibility of a science of musical composition consisting of a rationalized set of procedures.[71] Commentators have often opposed the verbal and mathematical paradigms for music, claiming that the verbal paradigm restricted musical possibilities while the mathematical approach opened music to non-representational aesthetics.[72] The argument that is generally advanced

[66] Mark Evan Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric: Musical Form and the Metaphor of the Oration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 5.

[67] Elaine R. Sisman, *Haydn and the Classical Variation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 20.

[68] Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric*, 130.

[69] Michel Paul Guy de Chabanon, *De la musique considérée en elle-même et dans ses rapports avec la parole, les langues, la poésie, et le théâtre* (Paris: Pissot, 1785), 26.

[70] Timothy J. Reiss, *The Discourse of Modernism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 21–54.

[71] Jean le Rond d'Alembert, *Œuvres et correspondances inédites* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1967), 142.

[72] John Neubauer, for example, sees mathematical approaches to music as forward-looking. He suggests that these approaches were more useful than verbal or affect theories "when confronting the new music [classical music?], which had no definite

associates the verbal paradigm with mimesis and the mathematical paradigm with non-representational art, with the play of "pure form." As I suggested at the outset, this binary opposition is at best an oversimplification. One could argue, for example, that the rhetorical use of music in the late eighteenth century is concerned with eloquence and persuasion, operations involving the indeterminate values of consensus or community rather than preconceived, determinate contents. In any event, I see evidence that rhetoric and science were not always components of mutually exclusive epistemologies. The two paradigms appear to coexist during part of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, offering two different discourses on music for varying theoretical purposes. D'Alembert, while affirming that music is a kind of language, at the same time asserts a formalist approach to music, suggesting that with more scientific knowledge of the musical object, composers could "construct" increasingly perfect compositions: "making music would be like manufacturing glasses."[73] Together with a growing confidence in the possibility of a science of music, the interest music theorists paid to rhetoric through the mid eighteenth century suggests that they hoped to join social grace with virtue through the consistency of musical representation and its effects. Although many theorists had given up on neo-classical mimesis by the end of the century, the effects of music on the emotions and its possible political and civic uses were still of the utmost concern. From this standpoint, music could continue to be useful in the formation of communities and consensus however indeterminate its emotional content, and perhaps precisely because of this indeterminacy.

Though the project of an exhaustive classification of the figures of musical rhetoric failed, the affective uses of music nonetheless brought to the fore issues of representation, communication, and the place of music in culture. The emphasis on a musical language and rhetoric reveals a considerable cultural investment in music. More specifically, as I want to argue in the following chapters, music was a site from which culture itself – its origins and functions – could be theorized, its problems recast and its ideals articulated.

representational content" (*The Emancipation of Music*, 7). Given the fact that Neubauer is concerned with the ideological stances taken by the discourses that explain what music is and what it does, one might treat with a certain amount of skepticism the assertion that one kind of music does *in fact* have representational content whereas another does not.

[73] "Il en serait alors de la musique comme de la construction de lunettes" (d'Alembert, *Œuvres et correspondances inédites*, 142).

2

Origins

Relying heavily on the book of Genesis and on biblical hermeneutics, seventeenth-century theorists sought to recapture or re-create the transparence of knowledge to expression that characterized the biblical origin. In *An Essay Towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language* (1668), John Wilkens asserts that language was the work of divine fiat: "And 'tis evident enough that the first Language was *con-created* with our first Parents, they immediately understanding the voice of God speaking to them in the Garden."[1] Just as Adam and Eve were given language by God, they also must have received music in the same way; this is the supposition that introduces Jean Rousseau's 1687 treatise on the viol: "if we begin with our first Father after his creation, we will find that having been given the most admirable understanding of the mind & the most perfect physical dexterity, he possessed all the Sciences & all the Arts in their perfection, & consequently music as well."[2] The voice of God, music, language, and understanding are conflated, all immediately present to Adam in the Garden. Whether directly infused into Adam ("con-created") or invented by him, music is described as an emanation or a direct result of being: "one can answer that Adam sung the praises of God, & consequently that he invented Music, or that he received it through divine inspiration, like the other forms of knowledge, seeing that there seems to be no other possibility: one can reasonably say the same thing of our Savior."[3] Mersenne shows Adam singing God's praise after the Creation and uses this lyrical moment to support a theory of the origin of music. Uniting the perfection of all the arts and sciences, Adam possessed a perfect and complete understanding, and this fullness generates song. Language, music, and knowledge were all unified in a single, divine origin.

The original character, lost after the deluge, was considered a direct reflection, an imprint, of the nature of the world and reproduced the

[1] John Wilkens, *An Essay Towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language* (London: John Martin, 1668), 2.

[2] Jean Rousseau, *Traité de la viole* (1687; Amsterdam: Antiqua, 1965), 2.

[3] Mersenne, *Questions harmoniques*, 136.

internal structure of all things and the logic of their interrelationships.[4] The language created along with Adam not only commanded the immediacy and fullness of being, but also served as an epistemological map extending to all realms of knowledge. Modern languages, however, had been hopelessly confused and scattered about the globe following the construction of Babel. The recovery of the original character or the creation of a philosophical character thus became an important goal for philosophy. Descartes had shown that thought was the innate gift of all thinking subjects, and the authors of the Port-Royal logic carried Descartes' insight into the realm of signs: since words are signs of thought, and since reason is universal, one must be able to find latent traces of this universal reason in every language, and to construct a universal grammar that would be one with logic. Many seventeenth-century language theorists sought to rediscover, or to artificially re-create, this language in which naming would be identical to defining and understanding.

The history of music as represented by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century music theory also refers to a loss (like language's Babel), and to a desire for perfecting a universal music.[5] In *La Musique universelle* (1658), Antoine Ducousu uses the anecdotes of the historians of Greek and Roman culture to support assertions about the power of ancient music. In order to prove music's "natural power [*naïfve puissance*] & secret energy," he relates the historians' account "that in the city of Amasya in Hellespont, Pythagoras healed a child who had almost died of drinking too much with a song in the

[4] For a general introduction to the many facets of language theory during the seventeenth century, see Paul Cornelius, *Languages in Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century Imaginary Voyages* (Geneva: Droz, 1965), and M. M. Slaughter, *Universal Languages and Scientific Taxonomy in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). For an introduction to eighteenth-century debates, see Aarsleff, *From Locke to Saussure*, 278–292, 146–209; and G. A. Wells, *The Origin of Language: Aspects of the Discussion from Condillac to Wundt* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1987). Sylvain Auroux's *La Sémiotique des encyclopédistes* (Paris: Payot, 1979) is a comprehensive and invaluable study of language theory in the eighteenth century.

[5] It is important to note that music history as we conceive of it today only begins to emerge, at least in France, in the early eighteenth century. The first history of music in French, Bourdelot's and Bonnet's *Histoire de la musique et de ses effets* (Paris: Cochart, 1715), wasn't published until the early eighteenth century. Perhaps the emergence of this field could be related to the notion of progress that empiricism fosters. W. D. Allen asserts, in a pan-European perspective, that the "history of music, during the eighteenth century, came to regard music as *an* art that had 'developed' in the course of time. This was a radical departure from the spirit and methods of Praetorius, who set out, in 1615, to study musical arts from a polyhistorical point of view." (Warren Dwight Allen, *Philosophies of Music History* [New York: American Book Company, 1939], 184).

Phrygian mode."[6] The Greeks had perhaps retained some of the original power and secrets of the first music. Mersenne, however, is skeptical of accounts such as that of Ducousu:

> Thus, it is possible that the Ancients wrote in praise of the effects of Music, not as it was, but as it would have been, had it achieved the perfection they imagined for it, so as to incite Musicians to seek musical effects, & to form an idea of the perfect Musician, just as Cicero created an idea of the perfect Orator, & others imagined the perfect Poet, the perfect Captain, & the perfect Courtesan.[7]

Perhaps truly harmonious music perished with Adam. Perhaps even the effects of Greek music, which constituted the imaginary reference point for music theory from the early seventeenth century into the eighteenth (since no original Greek music had yet been deciphered), were only a metaphor for the music of the Creation. Even if the lost power of ancient music could be explained away as a trope, the notion of perfection, however, remained an essential part of the vocabulary of theorists such as Mersenne.[8] In the seventeenth century, the quest for perfection was framed as a search for the essential, pre-existing, universal elements of music. Just as Port-Royal found the logic behind language, theorists generally viewed the basic elements of music as universal, since all music was considered to be based on "relations [*rapports*] and proportions."[9] Since these elements came to be known to us through the reason of the soul, in a nostalgia for what Augustine called "eternal and unchanging" numbers, music based upon them was likewise unchanging.[10] These universal "numbers," whether at

[6] Antoine Ducousu, *La Musique universelle, contenant toute la pratique et toute la théorie* (Paris: Robert Ballard, 1658), 5.

[7] Mersenne, *Questions harmoniques*, 196.

[8] Many writers imagined that music had been restored to its ancient grandeur with Lully. Those who spoke of the history of French music refer to the dark ages which preceded Lully's arrival in France: "in opera, we have *Lully*, a man beyond compare, a man whose equal we would seek in vain in the sixteen centuries that preceded him" (Le Cerf de la Viéville, *Comparaison de la musique italienne et de la musique française* [1705–06; Geneva: Minkoff, 1972], 197). Blainville would later reproduce a similar view of music history, speaking of Michel Lambert, a composer and older contemporary of Lully, as "the first man in France who brought music out of the shapeless mass of counterpoint, who created pleasant songs..." (Charles Henri Blainville, *L'Esprit de l'art musical ou reflections sur la musique* [1754; Geneva: Minkoff, 1974], 32). There is clearly an effort to recapture or to re-create what Blainville called "pleasant songs," expressing a specifically human order through the language of song, as opposed to the abject order of counterpoint. This effort would continue to shape music theory throughout the next century.

[9] Bergier, *La Musique speculative*, 16.

[10] Augustine, *On Music*, trans. Robert Catesby Taliaferro, in *Writings*, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1947), 361.

the surface or latent in the structure, were present in the musics of every culture throughout the world:

> for the Canadians use our intervals, & they often sing in this way – F, C, E, D, C – without further raising or lowering [the tone]. And if one looks to all other nations, one will find that they use our intervals because these intervals are natural. One would have to say the same thing of chords as of intervals, since the octave pleases everyone.[11]

Christian Huygens takes this universalizing logic to its limits in his essay entitled *La Pluralité des mondes*, which was republished several times in France early in the eighteenth century. Huygens asserts that if one accepts the cosmology of Copernicus, then there must be other planets which are inhabited like our own. He goes on to suggest that the people of other planets probably also have music, a music which must necessarily be built according to universal principles: "all consonances are composed of a certain relation which is always the same ... that is why one finds the same intervals in every Nation, whether they move their voices in conjunct steps, or whether they leap from note to note."[12] Huygens sees music as the same throughout the world because he locates the essence of music in sounds and proportions that are naturally reproduced in the human voice. With these universal musical elements as given, it could be possible to tap them in order to create a code, supported by mathematical principles, yet capable of forming a universal "language." It is this aspect of music – its combinatorial possibilities – which explains the presence of a lunar tone-language in both Francis Godwin's *The Man in the Moone* and in Cyrano de Bergerac's *L'Autre monde*. In his music theory, Mersenne went as far as to calculate "all 720 possible permutations of Ut Re Mi Fa Sol La" in view of creating the perfect song.[13] Mersenne's exhaustive research into the universals behind musical practice reveals concerns similar to those of Leibniz, who hoped to devise a "characteristic by which all concepts and things can be put into beautiful order, and ... one whose signs or characters serve the same purpose that arithmetical signs serve for numbers."[14]

From Wilkens to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, from Leibniz to Condillac, an epistemological shift occurred, displacing interest from the dream

[11] Mersenne, *Questions harmoniques*, 136.

[12] "Toutes les consonances consistent dans un certain rapport qui est toujours le même ... c'est pourquoy l'on trouve les mêmes intervales de tons chez toutes les Nations, soit qu'ils conduisent leur voix par des degrez de sons conjoints, soit qu'ils aillent comme par saut" (Christian Huygens, *La Pluralité des mondes*, trans. M. Dufour [Paris: Moreau, 1702], 144–145).

[13] H. F. Cohen, *Quantifying Music* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1984), 112.

[14] Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, ed. and trans. Leroy E. Loemker (1956; Dordrecht: Reidel, 1970), 222. See also Cornelius, *Languages*, 101.

of recapturing or re-creating an original and universal language to the "anthropological" search for the origins of signs and culture. Rather than locate the spark that unites sign and meaning, voice and knowledge, in divine fiat, the eighteenth-century search for origins sought to evoke the self-determination of human language and culture. The eighteenth-century witnessed a proliferation of essays on the question of origins. The notion of a common humanity was no longer based on the singular perfection of an ideal characteristic, but rather on the assumption of the universal use of signs and speech among humans. In the *Essai sur l'origine des langues*, Rousseau noted that, as the first social institution, "speech differentiates man from the other animals."[15] Buffon, who attacked Rousseau in his *Histoire naturelle*, nevertheless agrees that language defines humanity and, consequently, that the beginning of semiosis announces the end of animality and marks the "birth" of *Homo sapiens*: "the most solitary savages, like other men, make use of signs and speech."[16] The search for origins was thus an attempt to locate the moment at which signifying practices and symbolic systems emerge, the moment at which culture separates from nature. The idea of the origin was a way of "resolving" the difficulty of universality (of generality) and particularity which became apparent when Europe began to explore and colonize, coming in contact with different practices and beliefs. As Pierre Estève argued in 1753, the very idea of a universal language was no longer plausible:

> Since from the specific genius of Peoples are born the various idioms, one can conclude first of all that there will never be a universal idiom. How could one give to all Nations the same customs, the same sentiments, the same ideas of virtue and vice, & the same enjoyment of images, when their difference, or rather that of the climates that they inhabit, is the central principle of their existence.[17]

In the place of language as a singular, universal object to be rediscovered or re-created, eighteenth-century "paleoanthropology" sought to describe the structural identity of a single origin in order to explain cultural difference.

As an alternative to a religious episteme which favored divine origins (although certainly not always opposed to it, since many

[15] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The First and Second Discourses together with the Replies to Critics and Essay on the Origin of Languages*, ed. and trans. Victor Gourevitch (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 240. English quotations from both the second *Discours* and the *Essai sur l'origine des langues* will be taken from this edition, hereafter cited as *Discourse* or as *Essay*, according to which text is being cited. In a few cases, I have altered the translations slightly for the sake of clarity.

[16] Georges Louis Leclerc, comte de Buffon, *Histoire naturelle*, ed. Jean Varloot (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), 156.

[17] Pierre Estève, *L'Esprit des beaux-arts* (Paris: Bauche Fils, 1753), 1:32–33.

writers posited a second, "secular" origin after the flood, thereby avoiding a direct confrontation with the first), eighteenth-century writers adopted the conceptual framework of empiricism, creating narratives that would link language, society, and culture to a common origin in human experience. As analogues of the story of the Creation, origin narratives created the security of a stable, singular reference point. Under the influence of Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, these writers asserted that the use of signs was that which initiated thought, memory, communication, and hence the development of culture. Considered as a placeholder for ideas, language allowed for their circulation and exchange, creating the means through which thought itself arose. As Condillac suggested in his early work, ideas existed only through the collection and manipulation of signs: "the ideas are connected with the signs, and it is only by this means, as I shall prove, they are connected with each other."[18] Vico claimed that the common origin of cultural institutions, which was the object of his "scienza nuova," was inscribed, and should be discovered, *in* language: "the vulgar tongues should be the most weighty witnesses concerning those ancient customs of the peoples that were in use at the time the languages were formed."[19] It was by studying the links between signs and culture that eighteenth-century writers precipitated the search for origins. Through this search, they hoped to be able to understand and shape contemporary conceptions and uses of language, and to form a critique and redemptive vision of the social order that is articulated in language. This chapter will examine how music provides important genealogical links for these narratives of the development of language and culture.

As Tzvetan Todorov has shown, at the foundation of all speculations about the origin of language is a search for a *motivation* in the relationship between the signifier and the signified.[20] Stories about the origin of language seek to explain the possibility of meaning itself. By what virtue can a given sign be said to indicate that which it signifies, and how could it have been possible for human beings to invent a language of signs in the absence of divine intervention? How is it possible for language to bridge the gap between sound and idea? The eighteenth-century Jesuit writer Yves André finds the question of the origin of language paradoxical and virtually insurmountable:

[18] Condillac, *Essay*, 7.

[19] Giambattista Vico, *The New Science*, trans. Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), 65.

[20] Tzvetan Todorov, *Théories du symbole* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1977), 266–267.

How many marvels of an infinitely more elevated kind, in its original institution [that of speech], in its essential purpose as the bond of our society, in the laws of Nature, which are always ready to serve it at the first command, & principally in the surprising property – which will always seem so paradoxical, although so familiar – of delivering from one mind to another thoughts that it [speech] does not contain?[21]

He notes further that "in order to create all the conventions necessary for the establishment of a language, one must already have one."[22] Finally, unable to resolve the question without recourse to God, he concedes that "man received with his being the gift of speech."[23] This interfacing of the spoken word (*la parole*) and being, as Jacques Derrida has held, is an essential preoccupation of Western metaphysics. Speech is the transmitter of thoughts, and what are thoughts if not the fleeting moments of being? The spoken word cannot be distinguished from the being which it manifests and by virtue of which it exists, and, in the view of Yves André, being can only be derived from God. The circle of this logic is thus closed.

Frain du Tremblay's *Traité des langues* is similarly reasoned. After chiding Epicurus, Lucretius, and Vitruvius for the fantasies they invented to explain the origin of language, he declares that: "speech is the means by which men agree on everything; thus they would not be able to agree on speech itself without speech. If it would be impossible to make glasses without seeing, it would likewise be impossible to make a language without speaking."[24] He concludes these otherwise unsurmountable difficulties by reassuring the reader that there is a way out of the logical loop: "as Christians, we do not need extensive research in order to find the origin of all languages."[25] Since words are in and of themselves indifferent to meaning, God was required to assign meaning to words: "all Adam's thoughts joined with certain sounds which signified them."[26] Frain du Tremblay considers it impossible to conceive of the development of language without having recourse to an external origin.

Other eighteenth-century writers, setting aside the presupposition of the divine implantation of language in the soul, looked elsewhere for its origin. Attempting to explain the apparently arbitrary or unmotivated nature of the sign, these thinkers directed their attention to the diachronic analysis of language and to the human experience that

[21] Yves Marie André, *Œuvres* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1971), 101.
[22] *Ibid.*, 103.
[23] *Ibid.*, 104.
[24] Jean Frain du Tremblay, *Traité des langues* (Paris: Delespine, 1703), 23–24.
[25] *Ibid.*, 29.
[26] *Ibid.*, 35.

shaped it.[27] The epistemological shift can thus be described as a move away from the re-creation or recovery of objects of universal truth towards the creation of narratives of universal applicability. Taxonomy and universal *mathesis* give way to histories and anthropological narratives. Following the examples of Locke and Newton (both figure prominently in Condillac), the search for the origins of thought and its apparatus in the experience of the senses became the hallmark of an entire generation of philosophers: "our first aim, which we ought never to lose sight of, is the study of the human understanding; not to discover its nature, but to know its operations ... We must ascend to the origin of our ideas, we must unfold their formation."[28] Renouncing the Aristotelian or Cartesian quests for essences ("not to discover its nature"), Condillac asserts that only the steps or operations involved in the development and combination of ideas can be known. Knowledge must be derived from empirical evidence since all ideas are the product of experience. This position reveals the indelible mark of Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*:

Let us then suppose the Mind to be, as we say, white Paper, void of all Characters, without any *Ideas*; How comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store, which the busy and boundless Fancy of Man has painted on it, with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of Reason and Knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, From *Experience*: In that, all our Knowledge is founded; and from that it ultimately derives it self.[29]

The origin and development of ideas is also the history of human experience, both of which are intertwined with the origin and development of language. Condillac even goes as far as to assert, moving beyond Locke, that there are no ideas without language: "I am convinced that the use of signs is the principle which unfolds all our ideas as they lye in the bud."[30] Language, as a carrier of ideas, or as that which gives substance to ideas, becomes the focus of commentators. Sylvain Auroux has described this common ground of Enlightenment "semiotics": "whatever the particular study in which it is invested might be – theory of knowledge or etymology – the search for the origin of languages describes the *ternary organization of the linguistic sign* ... In every case, it is a question of determining what founds the connection between ideas, sounds, and objects."[31] Since in the

[27] The *Encyclopédie* shows the diversity of views on the subject. While Nicolas Beauzée, in the article "Langue," defended the biblical version against the paradoxical stance of Rousseau's second *Discours*, Jaucourt's "Langage" entertains the empiricist hypothesis.
[28] Condillac, *Essay*, 5–6.
[29] Locke, *Essay*, 104.
[30] Condillac, *Essay*, 11. "Je suis convaincu que l'usage des signes est le principe qui développe le germe de toutes nos idées" (Condillac, *Essai*, 103).
[31] Auroux, *Sémiotique*, 41.

sensationalists' view the whole of human culture, insofar as it consists of an immense web of signifying systems and practices, is derived from the knowledge of language (that is, from a privileged use of signs), essays on the origin of language necessarily delve into the origin of concomitant social practices – from the family to agriculture, laws, and the arts. Culture thus becomes implicated in the search for the origin of ideas in language – a point which is evident in the difficulty Rousseau has, in his second *Discours*, in distinguishing language and social organization, and in determining which came first: "I leave to anyone who wishes to undertake it, the discussion of this difficult problem: which was the more necessary, an already unified Society for the institution of Languages, or already invented Languages for the establishment of Society?"[32] The difficulty was that of deciding which came first, and above all, from where.[33] In this search for origins, natural theology, materialism, and of course empiricism suggested lines of reasoning that tended to converge. If all things came from the natural world, then human society must also be based on natural principles. Language, too, must be derived from the natural sounds produced by our vocal organs, and structured by the ideas imparted to us by our surroundings. If language could be shown to have links to the natural world at its origin, then the culture which seems to exist everywhere there is language would also be fundamentally natural. The question of the degree to which nature and culture participated in the formation of signs, and the degree to which Western culture had strayed or deviated from its "natural" origin, are questions which obsessed the eighteenth century. Even if modern languages were wholly conventional sign systems, perhaps at the beginning, at the origin of language and shortly thereafter, the sounds of words were organically linked to the things they signified; perhaps language could be found to be motivated, if traced back to its origin. Charles de Brosses sought to establish this claim, through the new science of etymology:

> the system of the first construction of human language & of the assignment of names to things is not, therefore, arbitrary and conventional as is commonly thought. Rather, it is a true system which is necessarily determined by two causes. The first is the make-up of the vocal organs which can only render certain sounds that are analogous to their structure. The other is the nature and properties of the real things to be named. This second cause makes it necessary to use for the names of things sounds that depict them, establishing between the thing and the word a relation by which the word can excite an idea of the thing.[34]

[32] Rousseau, *Discourse*, 157–158.

[33] Salvemini da Castiglione in his *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité*, published the year after Rousseau's, renounces the search for origins as impossible: "admit that the first institution of languages is beyond human forces" (G.F.M.M. Salvemini da Castiglione, *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité* [Amsterdam: Jolly, 1756], 76). He responds to Rousseau by retreating into the doctrine of divine inspiration, eliminating the specifically human origin Rousseau had set out to explore: "therefore, men were never without reasoning, without language, without society" (Salvemini da Castiglione, *Discours*, 85). In the *Encyclopédie*, Beauzée takes a similar position (s.v., "Langues").

For de Brosses, the "system" of language comes from necessary and natural conditions. Vocal sounds reveal the structure of the organs that produce them, and the objects of nature require mimetic representation in language in order to assure the passage from word back to object. In this account of the origin of language, as in Rousseau's, the objects of nature seem to be already pregnant with gestures, signs, language, which merely need to be articulated: "most root words would be sounds imitating either the accent of the passions or the effect of sensible objects: onomatopoeia would constantly make its presence felt."[35] The hypothetical situation of two children having never learned any signs and left to develop on their own, which Condillac proposed, allows language to develop from its origins as the expression of the natural world through the body of the speaker:

> their mutual converse made them connect with the cries of each passion, the perceptions which they naturally signified. They generally accompanied them with some motion, gesture or action, whose expression was yet of a more sensible nature. For example, he who suffered, by being deprived of an object which his wants had rendered necessary to him, did not confine himself to cries or sounds only; he used some endeavours to obtain it, he moved his head, his arms, and every part of his body. The other struck with this sight, fixed his eye on the same object.[36]

This *langage d'action* or body language, the expression of the children's perceptions and relations to the external world, is treated as the result of the natural imprint of objects on the body and on the voice. Rousseau's characterization of onomatopoeia, which "would constantly make its presence felt," is particularly apt in describing this vision of linguistic development in which objects make themselves felt in language. For some writers the cries and gestures were the natural signs for these objects. For others, they reproduced an intersubjective relationship to these objects. Consequently, our own language should furnish hidden links to the experiential world through the history of its origin and that of the culture that is contained in and grows out of language. Even if it was necessarily conventionalized by human

[34] De Brosses, *Traité*, 1:xiij–xiv.

[35] Rousseau, *Essay*, 248.

[36] Condillac, *Essay*, 172.

intervention, all language could nonetheless be seen as originally, and thereby essentially, motivated.[37]

These remarks apply equally well to theories of the origin of music. As with language, the eighteenth-century writings on music reflect a preoccupation with the opposition between nature and culture. As a classical theorist of the arts, Batteux insists that "Nature is the sole object of all the arts."[38] Yet art maintains a precarious, even contradictory balance between the imitation of nature, and the distance inherent in representation; art is "more perfect than Nature itself, without, however, ceasing to be natural."[39] Jaucourt, in his article "Imitation" for the *Encyclopédie*, displays the anxiety of the theorist for whom art might prove to be unnatural: "nature is always true; art risks being false in its imitation only when it takes a distance from nature, whether by caprice or through the impossibility of getting close enough to it."[40] Eighteenth-century music theory is extremely concerned with deciding what is or is not natural about music – determining the ways in which art constitutes the perfection of nature, or on the contrary (as with Rousseau, for example) finding the point at which art oversteps its bounds to become a perversion of nature.[41] Rameau fervently believed that the physical nature of the *corps sonore*, or resonant body, not only determined the harmonic structure of Western tonality, but also inscribed within us – as physical beings – an instinct for this tonality. He described this instinct in the *Observations sur notre instinct pour la musique*:

> What is it that drives these beautiful preludes, these felicitous caprices, executed as soon as they are imagined, principally on the organ? In vain would the fingers be proficient in every possible tune, and able to obey the imagination instantly, guided by the ear, if the ear's guide were not of the simplest sort. This guide of the ear is none other, in fact, than the harmony of a first *corps sonore*, which no sooner strikes it than it senses everything that can follow from this harmony, and return to it.[42]

Throughout his writings, to counter opposition from Rousseau and from d'Alembert, Rameau repeatedly insists that "music is natural to us" and that it is found in the harmony of the *corps sonore*.[43] Yet for so many eighteenth-century theorists, the suspicion is that the artfulness of music composition might at any moment stray from nature: "music

[37] For a more detailed discussion of language and motivation in the eighteenth century, see Auroux, *Sémiotique*, 48–53.

[38] Batteux, *Les Beaux arts*, 8. [39] *Ibid.*, 8. [40] *Encyclopédie*, 8:567.

[41] On eighteenth-century notions of civilization as perfection and perversion, see Jean Starobinski, *Le Remède dans le mal* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), 11–38.

[42] Jean-Philippe Rameau, *Complete Theoretical Writings*, ed. Erwin R. Jacobi (n.p.: American Institute of Musicology, 1968–69), 3:272.

[43] *Ibid.*, 150.

speaks to me in tones: this language is natural to me: if I do not understand it, then Art has corrupted Nature rather than perfecting it."[44] For eighteenth-century theorists, these questions encouraged reflection on contemporary cultural practices, and offered the possibility of locating the original shape and meaning of culture itself. The eighteenth-century search for the origins of music is directed by two compulsions: the fear of the corruption of nature by civilization through its (perversion of) representational practices; and the desire to determine a natural basis for these practices and to perfect them.

As commentators have noted for the second *Discours*, Rousseau's consideration of hypothetical past events – in particular, the moment at which private property emerges – serves to explain a present state of affairs. Likewise, considerations of the origin of music derive present compositional practices and uses of music from a natural origin, and through the necessary and natural course of events leading away from that origin. On the one hand, voice was given a transcendent relation to meaning, and a continuity is thereby established from simple vocal sounds to language and to opera. On the other hand, the ostensibly neutral, physical components of music – rhythm and sound – were put to use by those writers who felt the need to locate a pre-cultural moment at which the purely physical or physiological could be said to generate the cultural. By combining the transcendent and the "material," the empiricist explanation claimed an authority which had hitherto been the exclusive property of theology. Empiricism, with its emphasis on the natural or material transcendence of vocal sound and meaning, replaced the theology of divine infusion.[45] The natural human faculty of voice provided clues as to how the signifying practices of language and of music were derived from a common natural base – the primordial utterances, cries, vocalizations which established the first social bonds. These reflections on the physiological and conventional aspects of voice (such as articulation and what we would call "pitch") necessarily brought musical considerations into the scope of the many essays on the origin of language. Questions arose in these essays which had previously been absent from theoretical treatises on music. At what point did sounds become motivated – at what point, and how did culture intervene to reappropriate natural sound for its purposes? At what point in human history did sound differentiate into

[44] Batteux, *Les Beaux arts*, 262–263.

[45] Anthony Vidler, who has studied the implications of the return to origins in eighteenth-century architecture, notes that there is a "gradual fusion of the anthropological and religious models of origins." Much of eighteenth-century culture reveals borrowed theological elements. Vidler claims that within this discourse Adam becomes the first freemason ("The return to the origins: rituals of initiation in late eighteenth century France," *The Princeton Journal* 1 [1983]: 120).

linguistic units on one hand, and musical units on the other? At what moment did the "cry of nature" [*vagissement de la nature*] become song?[46]

It is perhaps not surprising that the invention of vocal signs is seen as a catacylsm for so many eighteenth-century writers. Breath, sound and articulated sound inaugurate history or provide juncture in many myths of the origin.[47] In the Bible, after the creation of the earth and the heavens, God animates (a word derived from the latin for breath or soul, *anima*) the world with a breath: "Yahweh God fashioned man of dust from the soil. Then he breathed into his nostrils a breath of life, and thus man became a living being."[48] According to Marie-France Castarède, the earliest myths describe the creation of the world as the exhalation of a sound: "in African cosmogonies, acoustical theories are just as widespread as in the Orient: it is from thunder, from a musical instrument, from a violent breath of air ... that the creation is precipitated."[49] Castarède also notes that for Hinduism, the creator is represented as a song.[50] I do not want to suggest that this collection of myths reveals a universal structure. What is clear with respect to the corpus of texts that concerns us here, however, is that the notion of the origin as exhalation or as sound was readily available for appropriation within a culture steeped in the Christian and Hebrew tradition.[51]

For eighteenth-century philosophy and music theory, then, articulated sound was found to be a particularly apt device for the representation of beginnings, of the origin of conventions and social practices. Generally critical of the Greek myths concerning the origin of music

[46] De Brosses, *Traité*, 2:5.

[47] As Auroux has noted, theological writings on language and those of Rousseau or Condillac are "far from being as opposed as they appear." Although their treatments of the origin and history of language (and, by extension, of music) are quite divergent, both are obliged to introduce "a rupture between the primitiveness of a language emerging from the non-linguistic universe and the properties of a language that is already born" (Auroux, *Sémiotique*, 58). In other words, there is a tendency for any theory of origins, whether religious or empiricist, to introduce the spark of semiosis – that which sets the ternary structure of idea/sound/object in movement – from the outside. That is precisely Rousseau's tactic in the *Essai sur l'origine des langues*: "he who willed man to be sociable inclined the globe's axis at an angle to the axis of the universe by a touch of the finger ... and it is only then that they [men] speak and cause others to speak about them" (*Essay*, 266–267).

[48] Genesis 2.7.

[49] Marie-France Castarède, *La Voix et ses sortilèges* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1987), 32.

[50] *Ibid.*, 31.

[51] Jean Blanchet noted in his treatise of 1756, *L'Art ou les principes philosophiques du chant*, that the superiority of vocal music over instrumental music is proven by the fact that both life and the voice have the same source in breath (*le souffle*). See Cannone, *Philosophies de la musique*, 211.

and the marvelous feats supposedly performed by musicians, the eighteenth century was nonetheless a prolific creator of fables in its own right, which were slowly being substituted for the old myths. Music would no longer be defined by the anecdotes of the classical writers, and would no longer be a part of the quadrivium. Eighteenth-century "musicology" became involved with theories of language and of the origin of society and culture. Even aspects of Rameau's theory – a theory that is always associated with "science" by twentieth-century commentators – could be said to depend on a narrative of origins. Anthropological fiction thus became a discourse in which music examined itself and understood itself as a cultural practice. Conversely, music accomplished theoretical work for eighteenth-century "anthropology," linking together the argument and conceptual apparatus necessary to explain the origin of language. I would like to investigate this relationship by selecting a few texts as specific instances which will serve to introduce the more detailed analyses of Condillac's *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines* and Rousseau's *Essai sur l'origine des langues* in subsequent chapters.

Bourdelot and Blainville

Presenting itself as something comparable to *De l'esprit des lois* in the field of music, *Histoire de la musique et de ses effets, depuis son origine jusqu'à présent* by l'abbé Bourdelot, and later revised by Jacques Bonnet, was published in 1715 – the first history of music in the French language.[52] Undoubtedly also France's first encyclopedia of music, the *Histoire* provides descriptions of the instruments and musical practices of many countries gleaned from travelers' accounts. This important work addresses not only the history of French music and other European music, but also "that of the most important Nations all over the world" (2). The authors, promising to describe the musics of the world in their stark plurality, note that "not one of our Historians has yet dared to undertake [this project]" (2):

> Many Historians and accounts of Explorers tell us that Music is in use all over the Universe; yet very few instruct us on its Origin and progress, though it is very likely that there may be Peoples who have their own principles and particular characters for the composition of Vocal Music [*chant*] and for the use of musical instruments, as well as differing opinions on the origin of these (2).

Bourdelot and Bonnet begin their historical study with a question of cultural difference. They assert the possibility of divergent practices in music composition, theory, and in the use of musical instruments:

[52] For a general survey of French music historiography, see *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, s.v. "Historiography."

"each Nation has its own practices [*usages*]" (437). The authors note that music appears to be one of the distinguishing marks of civilization, citing the discoveries made during the voyages of Columbus and of Champlain: native Americans had developed musical practices "although these Peoples did not even have writing" (48).

While stressing the differences between cultures, Bourdelot and Bonnet initially move towards a structural interpretation of the various myths about the origin of music, justifying their research with the argument that even though these accounts are simply stories [*visions fabuleuses*] this doesn't prevent their substance [*fond*] from being true (7). Fiction, then, is an acceptable vehicle for truth, and the historian can in principle reveal the "true story" which is contained within the ornaments of fable. Despite this argument on behalf of stories and their interpretation – which implies that the many fictional variations of myths conceal a single truth that can be uncovered by careful analysis – Bourdelot's and Bonnet's history of music falls short of postulating a unified *esprit de la musique* and stresses the plurality of customs and practices: "each Nation also has its own character in vocal music & in composition, as it does for public Festivals, which depend on the difference in climates, usages, customs, mores, & in the genius of Peoples" (32). This insistence on the interdependence of cultural development and local conditions can also be found throughout Rousseau's writings. Yet unlike Rousseau, who would never have justified his statement by referring to erudition, the authors support their statement with an immense bibliography.[53] As a compilation, the *Histoire* relies almost exclusively on the anecdotes and apocryphal stories of earlier writers, patched together with a few travelers' accounts: the Bible for the origin of Hebrew music; Lucan and Strabo on Greek music; Marco Polo, l'abbé le Pelletier, and Martin Martini on Chinese music. Most of these accounts either pass over the moment of origin itself, or attribute it to outside intervention. The Phoenicians, the authors note, "claim that it was Cadmus who brought to Athens the rudiments of Music" (109). Voyagers to China report the Chinese belief that the first emperor, Fossius, was the inventor of music because of his comprehensive and innate knowledge, like that of Moses (170). The Gauls are, of course, among the first to possess knowledge of music, beginning around 2140 years after the creation of the earth (256); but nothing is mentioned about how they received or invented music. In these instances, music is either already present or brought in from the outside. Bourdelot and Bonnet simply juxtapose the historians' accounts of the divergent origins attributed to music. Their *Histoire*, unwilling or unable to establish a universal, empirical principle underlying these stories, resorts to the *deus ex machina* of the divine inspiration theory. Since all nations attribute the origin of music to different causes, "it is better to believe that it was given to Adam, like other forms of Knowledge [*Sciences*], during the creation of the world" (49–50). By the mid-century, the theory of divine inspiration would be largely displaced by anthropological visions. Instead of dovetailing the divine origin with the anthropological origin (mythic or fictional) in the manner of Bourdelot and Bonnet, Condillac's and Rousseau's essays on the origin of language assert that their versions are separate from but do not contradict the biblical version:

> Religion commands us to believe that since God himself drew Men out of the state of Nature immediately after the creation, they are unequal because he wanted them to be so; but it does not forbid us to frame conjectures based solely on the nature of man and of the Beings that surround him, about what Mankind might have become if it had remained abandoned to itself.[54]

In their *Histoire*, Bourdelot and Bonnet rely on the traditional scholarship of citation to construct a history of music, and on the authority of the Bible in order to resolve the cultural differences exposed by conflicting myths of origin. Moving away from the assumption of divine inspiration adopted by Bourdelot and Bonnet, separate domains are established by Rousseau for theological discourse on the one hand, and for his own "anthropological" writing on the other.

Charles Henri Blainville's *Histoire générale, critique et philologique de la musique* (1769) also distances itself from the model of historical research adopted by Bourdelot and Bonnet. Although he includes references to earlier sources – Ptolemy, Kircher, Mersenne, Rollin – he pursues his own argument as to the origin of music more or less independently of the accounts of earlier writers. Whereas Bourdelot and Bonnet simply reiterate the classical authors' enthusiastic accounts of the effects of Greek music, Blainville adopts a critical stance, suggesting that these reactions were due either to the great force of the poetry, or to wine. As for the origin of music, Blainville attributes it to inexplicable, random events: "nothing is more common in Nature than sound; however, its imitation and artificial reproduction seem to be the result of chance" (1). The epistemological value of chance is in fact similar to the divine implantation used by Bonnet and Bourdelot, and by many seventeenth-century writers, in that it explains the inexplicable through the intervention of a gratuitous event. Blainville, however, goes on to

[53] In the second *Discours*, Rousseau claims to read, not in books, but directly into nature: "O Man, whatever Land you may be from, whatever may be your opinions, listen; Here is your history such as I believed I read it, not in the Books by your kind, who are liars, but in Nature, which never lies" (*Discourse*, 140).

[54] Rousseau, *Discourse*, 139–140. See also Condillac, *Essay*, 169–170.

describe the probable conditions in which human beings began to reproduce sound. Although Blainville tips his hat to the creation story, which is dubbed "in accord with reason" – as do Rousseau and Condillac – it would seem that he firmly places the origin of music within the sphere of human experience: "let us return to the most distant past: the gust of the winds, & the breath of certain animals would have initially given the idea of Flutes to our first fathers who, for the most part, lived in the woods & the countryside. They would have made flutes on the model that Nature itself had presented to them" (1–2). In his mention of the invention of flutes and the reproduction of natural sound, Blainville reveals a concern with the natural origin of technology. Similar to the derivation of language from the natural world found in de Brosses' *Traité de la formation méchanique des langues*, in Blainville's *Histoire générale*, nature provides the model which is mimetically adopted by culture through human activity. Blainville tells the story of the human activities that are at the origin of culture. Yet his emphasis on wind and other natural objects, which would ostensibly indicate an empiricist stance on the part of the author, reveal both something of an eighteenth-century commonplace and a mark of intertextuality. Rousseau, both in the article "Musique" of his *Dictionnaire de musique* and in a fragment on the origin of melody, notes that Kircher, following Diodorus Siculus, had attributed the inspiration for the invention of music to the sounds the wind produced in reeds growing on the banks of the Nile. Lucretius, again according to Rousseau, argued that the imitation of bird-calls led to the first songs.[55] By citing commonly received opinions in this way – and probably having read Lucretius, Diodorus Siculus, or others – Blainville hesitatingly forges his own hypothetical origin of music, displaying his erudition and appealing to authority, but avoiding the traditional direct references to Greek and Roman writers. His borrowings are generalized and abstracted from the original sources to fit into his own story of origins: Lucretius' bird-calls become simply the sounds of certain animals and Kircher's scene of resonating reeds on the edge of the Nile is reduced to the generic "gust of the winds." In this version, part erudition and part anthropological fiction, our forefathers simply came across music, discovering it in the sounds of the natural world.

[55] Marie-Elisabeth Duchez, in her edition of Rousseau's text on the origin of melody, gives Rousseau's sources in two footnotes; Lucretius' *De Natura rerum*, and Diodorus Siculus, who is cited by Kircher in his *Prodromus Coptus sive Aegyptiacus*, published in Rome in 1636 (Marie-Elisabeth Duchez, "Principe de la mélodie et origine des langues: un brouillon inédit de Jean-Jacques Rousseau sur l'origine de la mélodie," *Revue de Musicologie* 60.1–2 [1974], 77nn4–5). For more on Rousseau's fragment on the origin of melody, see also Robert Wokler, "Rameau, Rousseau and the *Essai sur l'origine des langues*," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 117 (1974), 179–238.

Music is already latent in the sounds of animal-calls and of the wind, requiring only reproduction, imitation, or adaptation in the hands of our ancestors. These gifts of nature, adopted by human beings, establish a continuity from nature to culture rather than a violent break.[56] Rather than finding an inherent difference at the origin of culture, Blainville claims that music is the continuation of natural sound just as culture is the extension of nature.

Another chance occurrence brings about the invention of musical instruments: "finally, as men were busy with different sorts of labor or crafts ... the objects that they used could render various sounds & from this, by a happy coincidence [*hazard*], came the instruments that we know today" (2). A second muted piece of intertextuality is woven into Blainville's history here. The story of Pythagoras' walk through the forest, as recounted in Boethius' *De Musica*, was well known and can be found in a number of eighteenth-century texts, including the article "Pythagorisme" from the *Encyclopédie*. While wandering through the forest, Pythagoras heard the harmonious sounds coming from a nearby forge; this experience led him to discover that the consonance or dissonance of intervals was determined by mathematical ratios.[57] In the *Histoire générale*, the forge scene is generalized, as were the borrowings from Lucretius discussed above – no longer hammers and anvil, but more generically the tools of "different sorts of labor or crafts" – and fashioned into an imaginary episode of protolithic discovery. First taken directly from nature, as in the example of the wind and animal sounds, music later developed from specifically human activities. Blainville stresses that because these occupations were necessary for the development and survival of the species, the music that grew out of these activities was an equally necessary and natural development: "since nothing was so necessary as the use of fibers and strings for binding, for joining various things together, and

[56] Continuity is precisely what disappears in René Girard's theory of the origin of culture, elaborated over the past thirty years. René Girard sees the origin of cultural forms and of collectivity itself in the sacrificial designation of an arbitrary victim in prehistoric times. In contrast to most eighteenth-century anthropological narratives, the act of designation Girard describes is violent. Following Girard, Eric Gans evokes the necessity of a violent origin in any project of generative anthropology. In order to prevent the escalation of anarchic violence, a victim is arbitrarily designated as the cause of a group rivalry: "the crisis can only come to an end upon the designation of a unique (or quasi-unique) victim if the aggressive acts of the collectivity toward this victim do not lead to the internal division of the collectivity itself. These acts are, as we have seen, themselves acts of appropriation which would naturally lead to the sparagmos of the body ... At a moment when all are about to carry out such a gesture, the fear of conflict is such that the gesture is aborted. This abortive gesture, which *designates* its object without attempting to possess it, is then the first *linguistic* act" (Gans, *The Origin of Language*, 35).

[57] Seay, *Music in the Medieval World*, 19.

since these strings always make sounds depending on their tension ... nothing was more natural to men than to fit these strings onto instruments" (4). Blainville begins with the more or less concealed authority of bibliography – the earlier writers whose conjectures he repeats – but transforms them, creating his own narrative describing an empirical, natural origin of culture. From the sounds of reeds growing in nature to the coincidental discoveries of sounds within man-made objects, music derives from fortuitous, yet natural, events. The *Histoire générale* represents the origin of music as an unfettered progression. The result of simple, random, and natural events, music is molded directly on the sounds of nature and developed as an organic part of human activities and culture.

The emergence of anthropological narrative

The differences that separate the two texts discussed above – those of Bourdelot/Bonnet and Blainville – from the essays of Condillac and Rousseau are remarkable. In Condillac's essay, as in that of Rousseau, gone is the simple juxtaposition of the opinions of the ancients that we have seen to make up the fabric of Bourdelot's text, as are the muted intertextual echoes found in Blainville. In the *Essai sur l'origine des langues*, Rousseau's argument follows a separate course, and references to Greek writers or to the Bible are used as *exempla* to support the line of reasoning, not to replace it. One might argue that a certain distrust of traditional history, clearly present in Voltaire's article "Histoire" for the *Encyclopédie*, leads to the replacement of the notion of history as collection, anecdote and doctrine, with history as continuous auctorial narrative, as a story of origins.[58] For the study of the origin of music and language, the conjectural history that Rousseau posits in the second *Discours* is deemed more instructive than the histories handed down by earlier authorities: "Let us therefore begin be setting aside all the facts, for they do not affect the question."[59]

The starting point of the investigation has shifted from a nature out

[58] Whereas Rousseau dubs his text an *essai*, both Bourdelot/Bonnet and Blainville designate theirs as *histoire*. The use of the term *essai* would seem to imply a divergence with respect to traditional history and the adoption of a speculative historicism. There are exceptions, however, to this general rule. Laborde's *Essai sur la musique ancienne et moderne* – dating from the late eighteenth century and presenting, among other things, a summa of opinions about the music of the Hebrews, Greeks, Romans, Gauls, Chinese, Persians, Turks, etc. – more closely resembles what has been called *histoire*, rather than what Rousseau or Condillac call *essai*. See Jean-Benjamin de Laborde, *Essai sur la musique ancienne et moderne* (Paris: Ph.-D. Pierres, 1780).

[59] Rousseau, *Discourse*, 139. "Commençons donc par écarter tous les faits, car ils ne touchent point à la question" (Rousseau, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond [Paris: Gallimard, 1959–], 3:132).

in the world, masquerading as the sounds of the wind and the calls of animals, and which imposes itself from the outside onto human experience, to the inherent qualities of the human voice and its "natural" development. In a fragment on the origin of melody, parts of which would later appear in his *Examen des deux principes avancés par M. Rameau* and in the *Essai sur l'origine des langues*, Rousseau dismisses the accounts of the ancients which privilege outside intervention:

> I will not examine, with Lucretius, whether the invention of vocal music comes from the imitation of bird song, or, according to Diodorus, from the breeze in the reeds of the Nile, nor even whether echoes, after having long frightened men, could have contributed finally to their amusement and instruction. These uncertain conjectures cannot lead to the perfection of the art [of music], and I appreciate research into antiquity only when modern men can derive something from it. Besides, it is thoroughly useless to have recourse to outside influences to explain the effects when one can deduce these from the very nature of the things in question; such is the modification of the voice that is called song, a modification which must have naturally come into existence and been formed with language.[60]

Rousseau asserts the uselessness of searching for the origin of language and song elsewhere but in the human voice. As he insisted in the second *Discours*, "it is of man that I am to speak."[61] This strategy spans the difference between an imported nature (whether in the form of a divine intervention, or that of the fortuitous discovery of the sounds of nature) and a self-generating nature – that of *Homo sapiens*. In his *Dictionnaire de musique*, Rousseau again maintains that music does not derive from inanimate nature, but from human nature and activities:

> Kircher, following Diodorus, derives this term [music] from an Egyptian word, claiming that it was in Egypt that *music* began to be revived after the deluge, & that it was discovered from the Sound that reeds made on the banks of the Nile when the wind blew in their stalks. Whatever the etymology of the term may be, the origin of this Art is certainly closer to man.[62]

In the fragment on the origin of melody, Rousseau argues that since "man" learns through imitation, he undoubtedly imitated the actions of other animals – "thus, he will imitate first the cries of those that surround him."[63] Yet the *Essai* begins from the premise that the importance of vocalizations lies not in the physical capacity to produce sound or to imitate it, but in the specifically human ability to use vocal sounds as signs. Animal noises are not of the same order as those made by humans:

[60] Quoted in Duchez, "Principe de la mélodie," 61.

[61] Rousseau, *Discourse*, 138.

[62] Rousseau, *Dictionnaire de musique*, s.v. "Musique."

[63] Quoted in Duchez, "Principe de la mélodie," 61.

It would also seem from these observations, that the invention of the art of communicating our ideas is a function not so much of the organs we use in such communication as of a faculty peculiar to man which causes him to use his organs for this purpose ... Animals have a structure more than adequate for this kind of communication, yet none of them has ever put it to this use.[64]

Rousseau's remarks, many of which bear the mark of Condillac's *Essai* which appeared about ten years before Rousseau began his *Essai*, foreground many aspects of the complex debate surrounding music, language, and the origin of signs. Unlike Bourdelot/Bonnet and, to a certain extent, Blainville, Rousseau and Condillac have shifted the focus of the search for the origins of language and culture from nature in the world to human faculties and culture, and from past authorities and historical research to the fictions of a speculative anthropology. As I will argue in chapter 4, the focus on the human is at the center of the contentious disputes between Rousseau and Rameau. From the standpoint of a fledgling anthropology, Rameau's discovery of the *corps sonore* could be considered a story of origins, like that of Rousseau. Yet given its focus on the natural properties of resonance that are discovered "out there" in the world, it could also be compared to the story of Pythagoras that Blainville recounts. Indeed, like Pythagoras walking through the forest, Rameau writes that he came across the *corps sonore* as a chance occurrence, as a revelation.[65] The event is not integrally related to the development of language or culture, as it is for Rousseau, but rather to the pre-existing, natural conditions of resonance that are revealed by chance in certain kinds of objects.

Those writers who sought a specifically anthropological origin of music and language, despite their many differences, adopted a common narrative. For these writers who were active, generally speaking, from the 1740s to the 1780s, a proto-language came about as vocal cries were joined with simple gestures; these movements and cries were eventually codified to form a conventional language system of gestural and vocal signs. At this point in their development, music and language were undifferentiated. In other words, speech is said to be musical. Although for very different reasons, both Condillac and Rousseau were interested in explaining how and why the human voice came to have two separate functions – speaking and singing. Rousseau and Condillac sought to account for this separation by deriving both speech and song from a hypothetical "proto-voice." If the point of departure in the search for the origin of music was set at a hypothetical state in which melody and *parole* were one, then the eighteenth-century presupposition that music is expressive of something – meaningful – by virtue of its alliance with the human voice

[64] Rousseau, *Essay*, 244. [65] Rameau, *Complete Theoretical Writings*, 3:170.

comes into clearer focus. True music was always, and must always have been, vocal or operatic. Music without words was considered relatively unimportant, and music without meaning, inconceivable.[66] If the connection between *logos* and music was an issue of some theoretical importance and debate in the eighteenth century, it is not surprising that this very issue is projected back and resolved in narratives of original culture. As Michel Murat suggests, a common origin was designed to explain the history of the separation of music and language:

if the realization of an abstract, "original" structure immediately produces a history of language and of music which is partly hypothetical and partly real, it is because the structure was itself conceived as a synchronic projection of the historical facts, such that these facts could mutually guarantee their own validity. It thus goes without saying ... that music and language will necessarily be derived from a single form obtained through the neutralization of their existing differences.[67]

From this standpoint, one could claim that origins already exhibit within them the history that they produce. The projected point of historical and epistemological origin would allow theorists to reveal, first, an original indifference between language and music, and second, the beginning of a divorce that continues to the present day, though relations have not been entirely severed. This tenuous relation became a magnet for a number of other debates. The divorce between language and music, mended in descriptions of original cultural and signifying forms, also carried within it implications for the history of culture, politics, and social vitality.

A history of the voice would serve to justify current conceptions of and practices involving music; and at the same time, as I want to argue,

[66] Until later in the eighteenth century and especially in comparison with opera, instrumental compositions were considered relatively unimportant. Instrumental music could only acquire meaning through the imitation of voice (as in the well-known baroque "sigh," consisting of a pair of alternately stressed and less-stressed notes), or through its deliberate juxtaposition with narrative music (as in operatic overtures). Maria Rika Maniates observes that "it is not insignificant that chamber music was published in Paris at this time under such titles as *conversation* ... even some of Haydn's quartets and symphonies were published under the title of *quatuor dialogué* (Maniates, "'Sonate, que me veux-tu?'", 130). This hierarchy is entirely in line with eighteenth-century aesthetics as a whole, for which religious painting and other narrative works were of greater importance than the non-narrative still life. Even as late as 1780, Laborde maintained that "music without Poetry can generate enough interest to make tears flow, & to inspire a sweet melancholy; but it is difficult to imagine that it can give anyone a greater idea of himself, nor expand the scope of his ideas" (Laborde, *Essai sur la musique*, 1:x).

[67] Michel Murat, "Jean-Jacques Rousseau: imitation musicale et origine des langues," *Travaux de Linguistique et de Littérature* 18.2 (1980), 162.

the elaboration of this history functioned as a process of reflection on culture, its forms and their development. The unification of music and language at a utopian point of origin is the work of an anthropological discourse. The history of music was in the process of separating itself from theology, and the fledgling discourse of speculative anthropology was beginning to produce its own narratives to explain cultural practices as part of a larger order of events. For both Rousseau and Condillac, the point at which human beings began to use signs was the "moment" at which we withdrew from the animal world because the use of signs demarcates humans from other animals. The origin of conventional sound – of music and of language – becomes, for Rousseau in particular, a demonstration of human perfectibility. As he argues in the second *Discours*, the absolute dependence of our ideas on the vocal sounds which represent them is "one of the reasons why animals could not frame such ideas, nor ever acquire the perfectibility that depends on them."[68] Starobinski points out the specific importance of musical concepts (in particular, the concepts of melody and unison) for Rousseau's anthropological, social, and political theories, "so that the history of societies can be considered as a history of the voice."[69] This relationship explains why the *Essai sur l'origine des langues* constitutes an attempt to provide a fulcrum for the unresolved question of the origin of institutions and of the political order, as posited by Rousseau in the *Discours*; in fact, the two act as mirror images, reflecting the origin of vocal signs in that of social conventions and conversely, *ad infinitum*.

[68] Rousseau, *Discourse*, 156. [69] Starobinski, *Le Remède dans le mal*, 228.

3

Music theory and the genealogy of knowledge in Condillac's *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines*

Condillac is interested in the ways in which signs in general, and language in particular, allow us to combine thoughts and construct knowledge.[1] The larger aim of the *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines*, first published in Amsterdam in 1746, is to rid philosophy of the metaphysics of Aristotle, which is characterized as "a kind of magic incantation [*enchantement*]," and to supplant it with a radical empiricism based on Locke's rejection of innate ideas and inspired by Newton's single principle of the conservation of movement.[2] By analogy with the Newtonian, physical universe, Condillac claims that "the brain can be acted upon only by motion" (43n).[3] As he would later clarify in the *Traité des sensations*, all the operations of the mind are based on the displacement and transformation of basic sensation: "judgment, reflection, desires, passions, and so on are only sensation differently transformed."[4] The growth of our ideas should be conceived of as a natural process deriving from sensation – a series of ever-expanding equivalencies branching out from our immediate experience of physical nature to the most complex operations of the mind. This new philosophy sets itself the task, then, of extracting all of human knowledge from sensations. Yet Condillac tempers this empiricism with an emphasis on language. He recognizes that signs are

[1] The most complete and diverse of recent studies on Condillac and language is a collection of papers commemorating the 200th anniversary of his death: *Condillac et les problèmes du langage*, ed. Jean Sgard (Geneva: Slatkine, 1982). On language and materialism, see the excellent contribution by Sylvain Auroux, "Condillac, inventeur d'un nouveau matérialisme," *Dix-Huitième Siècle* 24 (1992), 153–163. For biographical and bibliographical information, see *Corpus Condillac*, ed. Jean Sgard (Geneva: Slatkine, 1981). See also Isabel F. Knight, *The Geometric Spirit* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

[2] Condillac, *Essay*, 3. Subsequent references given in the text are to the English translation, with the original French text cited in notes when necessary.

[3] "Il ne peut y avoir dans le cerveau que du mouvement" (*Essai*, 123n).

[4] Condillac, *Traité des sensations* (London: De Bure, 1754), 7–8.