

# Madness Meets Method

Valentin Gloor

“I’ve completed the theory course up to the canon a couple of months ago with Dorn – I have then studied Marpurg’s writings about the canon. Marpurg is a very noteworthy theoritician. Apart from this, Sebastian Bach’s Wohltemperiertes Klavier is my grammar – the best one anyway. I’ve taken all the fugues apart one after the other and analyzed them down to their smallest parts; there’s a great benefit from this...”

Robert Schumann: Letter of the 27<sup>th</sup> of July 1832 to his teacher Johann Gotfried Kuntsch, quoted in: Robert Schumann, *Jugendbriefe*, ed. Clara Schumann (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1910), 187.

“I will never be able to mingle with Dorn, (...) he’s pushing me to believe that music is a fugue! Heavens! How can people be so different! Nevertheless, I do feel, that the theory studies have had a good influence on me. Everything had been momentary inspiration before, but now I look at my excitement and see it playing, sometimes I stand in the middle of it all, looking around to see, where I am.”

Robert Schumann: Diary from August 1832, quoted in Bernhard R. Appel: *Poesie und Handwerk: Robert Schumanns Schaffensweise*, in *Robert Schumann Handbuch*, ed. Ulrich Tadday (Stuttgart, Weimar: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 2006), 143.

“...I’ve taken all the fugues apart one after the other and analyzed them down to their smallest parts; there’s a great benefit from this and it has a strong ethical, uplifting effect on the whole human being, because Bach was a man – a man in every bit of his personality; there’s nothing half, nothing sick about him; everything is written as if it was meant for eternity.”

Robert Schumann: Letter of the 27<sup>th</sup> of July 1832 to Kuntsch, quoted in Robert Schumann, *Jugendbriefe*, ed. Clara Schumann (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1910), 187.

“The amount of activity at any given point in the brain-cortex is the sum of the tendencies of all other points to discharge into it, such tendencies being proportionate (1) to the number of times the excitement of each other point may have accompanied that of the point in question; (2) to the intensity of such excitements; and (3) to the absence of any rival point functionally disconnected with the first point, into which the discharges might be diverted.”

William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1983), 534. (New authoritative edition of the original text, first published in 1890.)

“... even though there be a mental spontaneity, it can certainly not create ideas or summon them *ex abrupto*. Its power is limited to *selecting* amongst those which the associative machinery has already introduced or tends to introduce.”

William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1983), 559 (original italics). (New authoritative edition of the original text, first published in 1890.)

Wenn mein Stündlein vorhanden ist  
und ich fahr wohl zu scheiden  
Du bist bei mir, Herr Jesu Christ,  
in meinem letzten Leiden.

*When my last hour has come,  
and I shall leave this world,  
You are with me, Jesus Christ,  
when I suffer for the last time.*

Herr, meine Seel an meinem End  
befehl ich Dir in beide Händ,  
Du wirst sie wohl bewahren!

*Lord, at my end, I give my soul into  
both your hands,  
you will take good care of it.*

Chorale “Wenn mein Stündlein vorhanden ist” (text by Nikolaus Hermann, 1562)

The chorale “Wenn mein Stündlein vorhanden ist” is Robert Schumann’s last “work”.

He wrote it during his final stay at the psychiatric clinic in Eendenich (1854-1856) before his death.



