Schenker's Theory of Music as Ethics

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I

When we read Schenker's writings today, we tend to pick out the plums and ignore the rest. We appropriate his analytical techniques and accept his insights into musical structure, performance and editorial practice, while ignoring the broader context of his philosophical and political views, or at best relegating them to the occasional footnote.

Until recently, published editions of Schenker's writings embodied this selective, or even censorious, approach to the extent of actually deleting passages of the original that were considered unnecessary or undesirable. Some of these deletions were concerned with purely technical issues; in his 1954 edition of *Harmony* (the first volume of Schenker's "New Musical Theories and Fantasies"), Oswald Jonas omitted a few sections that were inconsistent with the later development of Schenker's theories, including, for instance, a discussion of the seventh-chord. Jonas presumably did this in order to transform "New Musical Theories and Fantasies" as a whole into the statement of a fully consistent dogma; this also explains his fierce defense of canonical Schenkerian theory against the extensions and adaptations of Schenker's ideas proposed by Felix Salzer and, later, Roy Travis.[1] But when, in the following year, he edited *Free Composition* (the final volume of "New Musical Theories and Fantasies"), Jonas extended his policy of deletion to Schenker's frequent excursions into metaphysics, religion and politics. He justified this on the grounds

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[1] See *Harmony*, trans. Elisabeth Mann Borgese (Chicago, 1954), p. viii, for Jonas' comments on Salzer's *Structural Hearing*; and Jonas' reply to Travis' "Towards a New Concept of Tonality" in *Journal of Music Theory* IV (1960), 85.

that such passages had "no bearing on the musical content,"[2] and in his introduction to the English edition Allen Forte concurred with this judgement:

> The modern-day English language reader may be somewhat puzzled, or perhaps even offended, by the polemical and quasi-philosophical material in Schenker's introduction and elsewhere. . . . In part, this material is typical of many other German language authors of an older period; in part, it is characteristic of Schenker, and must be placed in proper perspective. Almost none of the material bears substantive relation to the musical concepts that he developed during his lifetime and, from that standpoint, can be disregarded; it is, however, part of the man and his work.[3]

There is no doubt that we can effectively apply Schenker's theories to technical issues in music without much consideration of the philosophical and historical background from which these theories emerged; present-day analytical practice shows as much. And it is certainly true that the kind of purple prose—or rather deep-blue prose[4]—in which Schenker sometimes indulged was characteristic of the time when he was writing; to this extent we can reasonably discount the style of such passages as merely reflecting the literary conventions of the day. But if we want to understand Schenker's thinking about music in his own terms, rather than simply in ours, then we should not in the same way discount the polemical and quasi-philosophical nature of his writings: Schenker's polemics and philosophizing are a matter of substance and not just of style. Or so I hope to establish in this article.

II

Polemical writings are by definition directed against something or somebody. So if we are to understand Schen-

[2] *Free Composition*, trans. Ernst Oster (New York, 1979), p. xvi. Oster retained and even extended Jonas' policy in his draft of the English edition, but most (not all) of the deleted passages were reinstated after his death, in the form of a separate appendix. For an account of the circumstances surrounding this, see William Rothstein, "The Americanization of Heinrich Schenker," *In Theory Only* IX/1 (1986), 8. Jonas made similar emendations in his 1971–72 revision of Schenker's *Erläuterungsausgabe* of the late Beethoven sonatas; on this see William Drabkin. "The New Erläuterungsausgabe," *Perspectives of New Music* XII (1973–74), 319–30.

[3] *Free composition*, p. xviii.

[4] See the final pages of Schenker's essay "The Organic Aspect of the Fugue," in *Das Meisterwerk in der Musik*, Yearbook II. For a translation see Sylvan Kalib, "Thirteen Essays from the Three Yearbooks 'Das Meisterwerk in der Musik' by Heinrich Schenker: An Annotated Translation" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1973), ii, pp. 318–20. Subsequent page references to *Das Meisterwerk in der Musik* refer to Volume II of Kalib's dissertation.

ker's polemics, we have to ask who or what they were directed against; or to put it another way, what Schenker's problem was.

In the most immediate sense, the problem to which Schenker's work was addressed was the falling standards of musical culture. In Yearbook I of *Das Meisterwerk in der Musik*, published in 1925, he wrote that "people who have heard performances of masterworks of over twenty years ago can absolutely not comprehend how performances of today could so soon have become so much poorer" (p. 153). In the following yearbook he went into more detail, saying that "performances of Mozart's works fail to convey all its connections; they are unimaginative, stiff, humdrum, constantly oriented to the next line of tones, therefore entirely lifeless and untrue. The performers possess too insufficient sophistication of musical intellect, and therefore fail to achieve true mastery of their instruments" (p. 325). And in his essay on ornamentation, which was first published in 1904, Schenker amplified these criticisms in his description of Hans von Bülow as typifying the virtuoso "whose primary inner artistic instincts disappeared during a general decline, and who, in a one-sided, academic cultivation of finger velocity, failed to develop interpretative methods, as [C.P.E.] Bach would say, failed to develop the ability to 'enliven' the tones appropriately and intelligently."[5]

But what is the precise nature of this failure of interpretation? The answer may be found in the specific methods by which Schenker sought to remedy it. Any analytical method serves to emphasize certain aspects of music as against others; and it is useful to the extent that these emphasized aspects are the problematical ones. Schenker's method suppresses foreground contrast so as to stress the large-scale continuity of the music—the connections that, as he said, performers of Mozart's works failed to convey. The basic problem was, then, one of incoherence: performers played everything as it came, without projecting the large-scale structure which gave significance to the details. Schenker saw this as a failure of basic musicianship, and even a failure of hearing; hence his complaint, in *Das Meisterwerk*, that "theorists as well as performers . . . plod along from one passage to the next with the laziest of ears and without the slightest musical imagination. All they hear is the constant change between tonic and dominant, cadence after cadence, melodies, themes, repetitions, pedal point" (p. 170). And this basic failure of musicianship was equally characteristic of contemporary composition: speaking of the neoclassical composers of the 1920s, Schenker commented that "under the rallying cry 'Back to Bach, Mozart, Beethoven,' they write melodies loosely and badly, without connection within themselves and to

[5] "A Contribution to the Study of Ornamentation," trans. Hedi Siegel, *Music Forum* IV (1976), 98. Siegel's translation is of the revised (1908) edition.

the whole because they do not know what melody, in reality, actually is" (p. 315). The neo-classicists in particular attracted Schenker's wrath because, as he saw it, they attempted to measure themselves against the masters of the past while displaying their inability to grasp the music of these masters in any coherent sense. Similarly, Schenker made Reger's *Variations and Fugue on a theme of J. S. Bach* the subject of a blistering attack in the second yearbook of *Das Meisterwerk* because, in Schenker's opinion, Reger had proved himself incapable even of reading Bach's theme properly. As he put it, "today's generation even lacks the ability just to understand the existing techniques of the masters, which would be required as the first step toward any kind of progress."[6]

As is well known, Schenker saw Wagner as the preeminent source of this decline. In 1906, when *Harmony* was published, he had no doubts as to the attractions of Wagner's music, writing that Wagner "employs scale-steps and voice-leading with a most beautiful instinct; but how fleeting is this splendor! In most cases it lasts for only a few measures, which form a whole" (p. 174).[7] These words, which recall Nietzsche's poisonous description of Wagner as the greatest musical miniaturist of the day,[8] locate the fundamental problem of musical composition as Schenker saw it: that of creating length. Schenker repeatedly emphasized this problem in his writings, from the earliest to the latest; his interpretation in *Free Composition* (which was published posthumously in 1935) of the historical development of the music in terms of a yearning "for greater length, further extension in time, greater expansion of content from within" (p. 94) merely restated and amplified ideas he had first expressed in print as early as 1895.[9] According to this interpretation, music in its earlier stages depended on texts for its extension: there were no purely musical means of creating length. The development of such means was the achievement of the German musical genius, and resulted in the astonishing series of masterworks of the period bounded by J. S. Bach

[6] *Counterpoint* (New York, 1987), i, p. xxi.

[7] Twenty years later, in *Das Meisterwerk*, Schenker was able to express this criticism in more precise terms, saying that "the world . . . does not begin to suspect how greatly Wagner lacked the musical capacity to coordinate several auskomponierung spans successively—which is his most serious shortcoming—nor how he was therefore compelled to satisfy the requirements of synthesis only in a cheapest foreground manner" (p. 198). But, he added, "that Wagner, in spite of all this, towered above all composers who came after him remains a fact"—except, of course, for Brahms.

[8] See Carl Dahlhaus, *Between Classicism and Modernism: Four Studies in the Music of the Later Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, 1980), p. 41.

[9] In "Der Geist der musikalischen Technik," which appeared in the *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* of Leipzig. For a translation of the relevant passage see William A. Pastille, "Heinrich Schenker, Anti-Organicist," *19th-Century Music* VIII (1984), 35.

on the one hand and Brahms on the other. And the decline of this art was closely associated with Wagner, whose "inability to achieve diminutions like those of the masters made it necessary to turn away from diminution, and, in the service of drama, to make expressiveness, indeed overexpressiveness, the guiding principle of music" (p. 106). In other words music had come, once again, to rely on a text or a dramatic scenario for its extension. The "music of the future" was in reality no more than a regression to a more primitive past.

In seeking to distinguish the principles of music from those of speech, and in seeing Wagner as having betrayed these specifically musical principles, Schenker was adopting the position of an older Viennese critic: Eduard Hanslick. Indeed Schenker's writings are full of echoes of Hanslick. A particularly clear example—one that stands out because it reads so unconvincingly—is Schenker's insistence that C.P.E. Bach's talk of the "passions" in the *Essay on the true art of playing keyboard instruments* has nothing to do with emotions or affects as commonly understood, and certainly nothing to do with extra-musical content, but refers merely to the properties of "individual diminution motives" and their combinations.[10] This labored explanation can only be read as a doctrinaire defense of the Hanslickian position regarding the autonomy of music.[11] But why should Schenker have been so keen to defend Hanslick's thesis even when it is controverted by the clear evidence of Bach's text? The reason, I think, is that Schenker's perception of the basic problem faced by music in his day was a specifically Hanslickian one. In *The Beautiful in Music*, Hanslick wrote that

> The logic in music, which produces in us a feeling of satisfaction, rests on certain elementary laws of nature which govern both the human organism and the phenomena of sound. It is, above all, the primordial law of 'harmonic progression' which . . . contains the germ of development in its main forms, and the (unfortunately almost unexplained) cause of the link which connects the various musical phenomena. All musical elements are in some occult manner connected with each other by certain natural affinities, and since rhythm, melody and harmony are under their invisible sway, the music created by man must conform to them—any combinations conflicting with them bearing the impress of caprice and ugliness.

[10] Kalib, pp. 11–12.

[11] Another particularly clear echo of Hanslick is Schenker's discussion, on the first page of *Harmony* and elsewhere, of ancient Greek music; compare this with *The Beautiful in Music*, trans. Gustav Cohen (Indianapolis, 1957), pp. 95–97. Again, Schenker's unfavorable view of Italian music is prefigured in Hanslick's explanation of its predominantly melodic nature as a consequence of the mental indolence of the Italian people (p. 98); and, more generally, if Schenker's writings are to be seen as being fundamentally a polemic against contemporary habits of listening, then the same applies to Hanslick's book.

> Though not demonstrable with any scientific precision, these affinities are instinctively felt by every experienced ear, and the organic completeness and logic, or the absurdity and unnaturalness of a group of sounds, are intuitively known. (p. 151)

It was a distinctly Hanslickian position that Schenker expressed when he wrote, on the first page of the introduction of *Harmony*, that "the theory of harmony presents itself to me as a purely spiritual universe, a system of ideally moving forces, born of Nature or of art" (p. xxv); and in a broader sense, Schenker's theories as a whole can be seen as attempting to supply the explanations and demonstrations that Hanslick had called for in *The Beautiful in Music*, and to make visible the connections between musical elements to which Hanslick referred. Schenker's statement in *Free Composition* that "all musical content arises from the confrontation and adjustment of the indivisible fundamental line with the two-part bass arpeggiation" (p. 15), then, represents a final solution of the uncertainties of definition evident in Hanslick's diagnosis of the malaise of contemporary musical culture.

III

In his essay on ornamentation, Schenker wrote that "the most important task of the present century will be to rectify the mistakes of the preceding one" (p. 36). This comment comes at the end of a discussion of Wagner's influence. But its scope is by no means restricted to music, for Schenker's critique of contemporary culture embraced the wider social and ethical issues which he saw reflected in music. It has often been pointed out that, in fin-de-siècle Vienna, art and society were so intimately related that, as Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin put it, "a critique of any of the arts was implicitly a critique of culture and society as a whole."[12] But the idea that music reflected broader human concerns was in any case a commonplace of nineteenth-century thinking; when Schenker says in *Free Composition* that "in its linear progressions and comparable tonal events, music mirrors the human soul in all its metamorphoses and moods" (p. xxiii), he is giving a technical interpretation to what is essentially a Schopenhauerian position.[13] Accordingly Schenker's critique of the virtuoso's exclusive concern for the events of the musical surface is at the same time an attack on the superficial values which had, in Schenker's view, become characteristic of society at large. This

[12] *Wittgenstein's Vienna* (New York, 1973), p. 197.

[13] According to Schopenhauer "music . . . mirrors the very rhythm of the will, its unity in multiplicity" (Claud Sutton, *The German Tradition in Philosophy* [London, 1974], p. 82).

association becomes explicit when Schenker criticizes Hans von Bülow's realization of the ornaments in C.P.E. Bach's sonatas, and then adds: "But in such an outwardly hectic life, one that encompassed so many different activities, where would Bülow have found even an atom of time to think about a small space in Bach's turns?"[14] The uncharacteristically facetious tone of Schenker's question masks its serious content: elsewhere Schenker wrote that "we must abandon the unwilling and incapable to bustle about in the foreground as he is accustomed to doing in the chaos of everyday life."[15] Schenker saw an absolute distinction between the hustle and bustle of the foreground and the calm and composure of the background. He put it like this:

> The urlinie masters all storm and agitation, all turbulence high and low. . . . It masters all these with a composure as only Nature similarly demonstrates in its earthquakes, tidal waves, and cloudbursts. On the other hand, the artist who lacks the urlinie emerges agitated and restless even though he might originally have intended to express calm, spiritual devotion, depth and quiet, because instead of submitting to the will of the urlinie, he remains the victim of his own will![16]

Here the influence of Schopenhauer is unmistakable—an influence which Schenker could hardly have escaped, since Schopenhauer, like Nietzsche, was widely discussed among the intellectual and artistic circles of the day.[17] For Schopenhauer, the highest function of art was as a means of escaping the turbulence of the will and attaining a calm, contemplative awareness of the unchanging world of ideas; as Schenker wrote in *Free Composition*, "whoever has once perceived the essence of a pure idea—whoever has fathomed its secrets—knows that such an idea remains ever the same, ever indestructible, as an element of an eternal order" (p. 161).[18] But Schenker did not just adopt and

[14] *Ornamentation*, p. 102.

[15] Kalib, p. 239. For another critique of musical listening that is at the same time a critique of contemporary society, see Adorno's account of the "universally regressive tendencies" that have resulted in a "deterioration of the faculty of musical synthesis, of the apperception of music as an esthetic context of meaning" (*Introduction to the Sociology of Music* [New York, 1976], p. 51).

[16] Kalib, p. 151.

[17] On this, and the role of Wagner in disseminating Schopenhauer's ideas, see Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York, 1980), p. 228.

[18] This is reminiscent of Goethe's "whoever does not possess [the Idea] will perceive it nowhere in the world of appearance; whoever possesses it easily becomes accustomed to looking beyond, far beyond appearance." William Pastille, who translates this remark in "Ursatz: the Musical Philosophy of Heinrich Schenker' (Ph.D. diss., Cornell, 1985), p. 89, provides a comprehensive demonstration of the affinities between Schenker's theories and the idealist philosophy set out, in particular, in Goethe's works. All the writers discussed in this article worked against the background of this philosophy.

rephrase Schopenhauer's ideas. Through his association of the timeless world of ideas with the background, and the chaotic world of will with the foreground, he gave them a precise formulation in musical terms such as they lacked in Schopenhauer's own thinking.[19] The most crucial concept which Schenker shared with Schopenhauer, however, was that of genius.

For Schopenhauer genius means the ability to penetrate to the timeless world of ideas, and to communicate this through art. Schenker simply translates Schopenhauer's conception into his own terms. As he puts it,

> The genius alone creates out of the background of tonal space, out of the first urlinie passing tones. Whereas non-geniuses, whether in composing or listening, always fail when it comes to musical succession, the genius connects the freedoms in foreground successions to the requirements of the passing tones in the background.[20]

Ruth Solie and William Pastille[21] have both pointed out the connection between Schenker's increasing conviction of music's organic nature and his increasing concern with the genius, a process which culminated in his statement in *Das Meisterwerk* that "for art, only the geniuses enter into consideration."[22] Here again Schenker's thinking

[19] Schenker was aware of this: in *Counterpoint* he discusses some of Schopenhauer's views, and concludes that "despite many correct presentiments, the philosopher finally fails because of lack of clarity. . . . If the philosopher, using counterpoint as a point of departure, could only have formed an idea of the absolute nature of music, it might have been so much easier for him to understand the ultimate mystery of the world, its absolute nature, and perceive the dream of the creator of the world as a similarly absolute phenomenon!" (p. 16). Schopenhauer's limited grasp of musical structure is illustrated by the curious account he gives, in *The World as Will and Representation*, of the way in which the organization of music represents the gradations of reality. This is a hierarchical scheme according to which the ground-bass represents the lowest level of creation, inorganic nature, while melody corresponds to the highest level of human intellect; other textural elements take up an intermediate position. Jamie Croy Kassler has pointed out the affinity between this conception and Schenker's theory of levels in "Heinrich Schenker's Epistemology and Philosophy of Music: An Essay on the Relations Between Evolutionary Theory and Music Theory," in David Oldroyd and Ian Langham (eds.), *The Wider Domain of Evolutionary Thought* (Dordrecht, 1983), pp. 238–39.

[20] Kalib, p. 160. In his early writings, Schenker freely refers to Wagner as a genius (for example *Ornamentation*, p. 35); but he ceases to do so in his later work. Maybe this represents not just a narrowing of Schenker's aesthetic sensibilities (as I suggested in *A Guide to Musical Analysis* [London and New York, 1987], p. 58) but also the increasingly precise definition that he gave to the term "genius."

[21] Ruth A. Solie, 'The Living Work: Organicism and Musical Analysis," *19th-Century Music* IV (1980), 154–56; Pastille, "Heinrich Schenker," 32–35.

[22] Kalib, p. 162. The section in which both these statements about genius are found, "Clarifications" (or "Elucidations"), is reprinted from the *Tonwille* booklet of the

is Schopenhauerian in nature. In the *Geist* essay of 1895, Schenker argued that music cannot be truly organic because of the intrusion of the composer's will. But he added that it is possible for the details of a composition to develop in an organic manner, provided that they remain "untainted by consciousness." As he put it,

> After the composer's imagination has generated a particular pattern, it is literally besieged by a multitude of similar patterns. The force of these is often so irresistible that the composer includes them in the developing content without ever recognizing their similarity. Often—and one can discover this only by an absolutely faithful study of the artwork—the composer would have preferred to conjure up a completely different pattern. But his imagination refuses to change its original direction, and compels him to accept a similar pattern instead.[23]

And eleven years later, in *Harmony*, he specifically associated this process with the genius:

> A great talent or a man of genius, like a sleepwalker, often finds the right way, even when his instinct is thwarted by one thing or another or . . . by the full and conscious intention to follow the wrong direction. The superior force of truth—of Nature, as it were—is at work mysteriously behind his consciousness, guiding his pen, without caring in the least whether the happy artist himself wanted to do the right thing or not. If he had his way in following his conscious intentions, the result, alas! would often be a miserable composition. But, fortunately, that mysterious power arranges everything for the best (p. 60).

Genius, then, consists in the ability of the artist to transcend his individual will so that the work of music, as it were, speaks through him; a few pages later Schenker refers to masterworks as having been achieved "whenever the genius of the artist was so strong that Music could use him as a medium, so to speak, without his knowledge and quite spontaneously" (p. 69).

Schenker's theory of music, as it emerges from his later writings, is not actually a theory of music at all: it is a theory of genius, or of mastery in music. It is concerned with the relationship between foreground and background; and since it is only the genius who can penetrate to the background, the theory has no application to the

previous year (No. 8/9). If the very title "Der Tonwille" echoes Schopenhauer, that of "Das Meisterwerk" reflects Schenker's preoccupation with the genius.

[23] Pastille, "Heinrich Schenker," p. 36.

works of the non-genius. (I shall return in due course to the significance of this for music theory.) In other words, although it is worked out in musical terms, Schenker's theory is fundamentally about self-realization. As such it is allied, not only to the Schopenhauerian tradition, but to a current of philosophical, psychological and political thinking which was extremely influential during Schenker's lifetime and indeed remains so to this day. In his book on Nietzsche, J. P. Stern pursues a comparison between Nietzsche, Freud and Karl Marx as representatives of this movement. As he says,

> Their systematic thinking was directed toward, and in turn issued from, a briefly statable leading idea—an *idée maîtresse* by means of which the secret of all that men do is to be explained; and in each case this explanation of *what men do* proceeds by way of an account of *what moves them* to do what they do. . . . Each of these leading ideas . . . is said to be the hidden secret in the depths of men's souls. . . . It is also, by definition, unavailable to a man's 'ordinary,' that is motivated and therefore unenlightened, consciousness.[24]

Everything that Stern says here applies with equal force to Schenker. But I would like to suggest that there may have been another, and more immediate, source of Schenker's conception of the artist as someone who achieves self-realization, and this is Karl Kraus.

IV

Kraus was a poet, satirist, and critic who, like Schenker, was active in Vienna from the 1890s to the 1930s, and whose influence on such contemporary Viennese figures as Schoenberg, Loos and Wittgenstein has been increasingly recognized in recent years. His multifarious activities have to be seen in the context of the last years of Habsburg rule and the early years of the Austrian republic. The reign of Emperor Franz Joseph, which lasted from 1848 to 1916, was marked by a steadily widening gap between the institutions of political authority and the realities of social and economic power. And the years after the collapse of the Habsburg Empire in 1918 saw a general loss of national self-identity. These circumstances lie behind the alienation of appearance from reality, and of thinking from feeling, which characterized—and constituted the essential subject matter of— progressive Viennese art throughout this period. Against this background of alienation Kraus maintained that

[24] J. P. Stern, *A Study of Nietzsche* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 45. Indeed Stern's phrase "hidden secret" echoes the very words of Schenker's statement that "the fundamental structure amounts to a sort of secret, hidden and unsuspected" (*Free Composition*, p. 9).

personal integrity was the supreme, or even the only possible, ethical goal, and in his criticism of artistic works Kraus' main criterion of value was the extent to which the artist had achieved this.[25] In terms of the creative process this meant the integration of the intellect and reason on the one hand with the unconscious sources of fantasy and feeling on the other.[26] Kraus spoke of such fantasy as a "return to the origin," and expressed this idea in a poem:

> Two runners run the track of time,
> Reckless the one, the other strides in awe.
> The one from nowhere, wins his goal; the other—
> The origin his start—dies on the way.
> And he from nowhere, he that won, yields place
> To him who ever strides in awe and e'er
> Has reached his terminus: the origin.[27]

In this way, according to Kraus, the significance of art lay not in the effects it made on the audience—that is to say, in its beauty—but in how far the artist, in creating it, had attained the "origin" and so been true to his vocation.

Kraus' essentially ethical rather than aesthetic view of art had a great impact upon progressive Viennese artists of the time. Loos' philosophy of architectural design was ethical in just this sense, while Schoenberg wrote of beauty that "the artist has no need of it. For him truthfulness is enough."[28] Schenker's diaries reveal that he, too, was at one time interested in Kraus' work, though his attitude became increasingly critical later on,[29] and similar thinking may be found in

[25] Janik and Toulmin, p. 81.

[26] Perhaps this lies behind the strange collective title Schenker gave to his three main works: "New Musical Theories and Fantasies - by an Artist." Kraus' thinking at this point is reminiscent of Nietzsche's account of artistic creation as an interplay of the Dionysian and Apollonian impulses. Despite its Freudian ring, Schenker's talk of the great composers being "obsessed with the daemonic forces of the middleground and background" (*Free Composition*, p. 111) probably reflects the influence of Nietzsche rather than Freud.

[27] This translation (by Paul Engelmann) is quoted in Janik and Toulmin, p. 75. For a discussion of the poem, with an alternative translation, see Edward Timms, *Karl Kraus, Apocalyptic Satirist: Culture and Catastrophe in Habsburg Vienna* (New Haven, 1986), pp. 232–36. It first appeared in the 300th number of Kraus' satirical journal, *Die Fackel* (1910).

[28] Quoted in Schorske, p. 358.

[29] See Hellmut Federhofer, *Heinrich Schenker: Nach Tagebüchern und Briefen in der Oswald Jonas Memorial Collection, University of California, Riverside* (Hildesheim, 1985), pp. 283–86. Schenker's declining sympathy for Kraus, after 1915, is not surprising in view of the contrast between the two men's social and political views—not to mention musical tastes (Kraus had a passion for Offenbach). There is no evidence that they were personally acquainted; but Schenker read *Die Fackel*.

many of his writings. The very first words of *Free Composition* echo Kraus' philosophy of integrity and even his terminology:

> The origin of every life . . . becomes its destiny. . . . The inner law of origin accompanies all development and is ultimately part of the present. Origin, development and present I call background, middleground and foreground; their union expresses the oneness of an individual, self-contained life.[30]

And Krausian thinking can perhaps explain Schenker's otherwise puzzling statement in one of the *Tonwille* booklets that "the great masters of German music have not *made* the art of music; rather, they *are* the art of music itself."[31] For it was one of the principal tenets of Kraus' literary criticism that, as Janik and Toulmin put it, "the writer who manipulated words was immoral in proportion to his talents, because he lacked integrity; the man and his work were not one and the same" (p. 88). Consequently Kraus directed his most scathing attacks at those writers who employed language as merely a technique for communicating preconceived ideas, and so reduced literary art to the level of journalism. Again there is a parallel in Schenker's writings: in the essay on ornamentation he describes preconceived ideas as "the death of all art" (p. 36), while in *Free Composition* he derides " 'idea' composers" as "unworthy of an attack" (p. 27).

The condemnatory sense in which Schenker uses the term "idea" in *Free Composition* has to be distinguished from his use of "idea" as a term of approbation in earlier works such as *Ornamentation* and *Harmony*. Despite the apparent contradiction, Schenker's thinking remains consistent; what he attacks is not the musical idea, but the preconceived idea that is simply expressed in musical terms. (Once more the influence of Hanslick is obvious.[32]) It is for this reason that Schenker describes Stravinsky as a "rationalist."[33] Referring specifically to the Piano Concerto, Schenker says that Stravinsky's music possesses no background and accordingly has no musical motivation as such; in other words, it is merely calculated to create preconceived effects through musical means. While Stravinsky incorporates certain traditional tonal structures in his music (with some difficulty Schenker discovers a "small trace of spans which resulted from the folk-like

[30] Both Kraus and Schenker use the same word for "origin": Ursprung.

[31] *Der Tonwille* IV, p. 22, as translated in n. 14 to Ian Bent's translation of Schenker's "Domenico Scarlatti: Keyboard Sonata in D minor," *Music Analysis* V (1986), 168.

[32] See in particular *The Beautiful in Music*, p. 52.

[33] Kalib, p. 216. Adorno used the term "intellectualist" in the same sense (*Philosophy of Modern Music* [New York, 1973], p. 1).

material" in the first sixteen bars of the piece,[34] these have no organic connection with the larger context; as Schenker puts it, it is

> useless to ponder . . . as to which connection the cited passage might have in relation to that which precedes and follows, because a composer who is incapable of expressing even sixteen bars with convincing connection cannot possibly master the full breadth of form (p. 216).

And he continues:

> Now, the gestures of such progress will one day certainly fail, and it will be recognized that the puppets of progress twisted the simplest things for the sole purpose of passing them off for something new. . . . The musicians of today believe, in the name of progress, to be free to and to have to testify against the masters[35]. . . . But since we see in the thinking of the agents of progress their horrifying ignorance, provable to anyone, then we must say that such ignorance of the art of genius cannot be admitted as testimony against genius!

It is easy to dismiss Schenker's view that music ended with Brahms as the product of simple prejudice or conservatism. However Schenker's reactionary stance becomes more comprehensible when it is considered from a Krausian perspective. If, like Kraus, Schenker believed that the artist's supreme duty was to return to the "origin," and if in music this meant creating out of the background, then music like Stravinsky's was inadequate or irresponsible in an ethical sense. The sense of freedom that composers felt in the 1920s—the freedom that led them on the one hand to combine historical styles with eclectic abandon, and on the other to devise new systems of musical organization—was in Schenker's eyes "a falsely understood freedom, which instead of guiding the human soul rips it into a thousand pieces" (p. 150). Even in a strictly musical sense, Schenker believed, the progressive composers' search for new forms of expression was delusory; as he put it, "the quest for a new form of music is a quest for a homunculus."[36]

What did Schenker mean by this strange expression? A homunculus is a mechanical man:[37] it embodies the outward semblance of

[34] Kalib, p. 215.

[35] This was the period in which, as Aaron Copland described it, "composers vied with one another in damning all conservative music. Each new composition was accompanied by copious explanations as to its newness, as if that alone were justification for its existence" (*The New Music 1900/60* [London, 1968], p. 54).

[36] *Free Composition*, p. 9.

[37] Etymologically the word just means a "little man." But the term was widely used to mean a man created through human artifice, such as Frankenstein; see John Cohen, *Human Robots in Myth and Science* (London, 1966).

humanity, but not the spirit.[38] In the same way, Schenker saw the progressive composers of the inter-war period as attempting to create new music through a mechanical recombination of the external features of previous compositions. Because they lacked genius, these composers had no choice in the matter; as Schenker said, "without the urlinie, they remain incapable of structural hearing, and they remain poor imitators."[39] Schenker's attitude towards imitation, which he spelled out in some detail, helps to clarify the particular nature of his reactionary views. Schenker did not want composers to start imitating Brahms in any superficial sense; that would be no better than the kind of twisted imitation in which the progressive composers indulged. What he wanted was for composers to return to the background as the only spiritual source for musical composition: as he put it, "back to the fathers, back to the masters, but ultimately with the ear of depth!"[40]

Schenker reserved some of his most vitriolic prose for Riemann and other representatives of, as he expressed it, a theory "whose arrogance and pretentiousness match its erroneous content"; a theory which, he said, "claims to provide access to the art of music, but in fact does quite the opposite."[41] The tone of Schenker's language is not entirely to be explained by the fact that, as Forte says, "during Schenker's lifetime, instruction in music theory almost completely disregarded the traditional disciplines of species counterpoint (after Fux) and figured bass."[42] Forte's explanation of Schenker's outbursts against traditional theory is of course correct as far as it goes; Schenker himself says as much.[43] But Schenker is also saying that the purely intellectual theory of Riemann and the others is immoral, because it

[38] Elsewhere in *Free Composition* Schenker speaks of "today's idol, the machine," which "simulates the organic, yet since its parts are directed toward only a partial goal, a partial achievement, its totality is only an aggregate which has nothing in common with the human soul" (pp. xxiii–xxiv).

[39] Kalib, p. 152. For Schenker's account of the mechanical thinking of the non-genius see pp. 501–02.

[40] Kalib, p. 320.

[41] *Free Composition*, pp. 161, xxi. Schenker's strictures extended to Schoenberg's *Theory of Harmony*, which he attacked in *Das Meisterwerk* on the grounds that Schoenberg regarded as harmonies formations that were purely linear in origin (he goes as far as to comment that "Schoenberg is ignorant not only of the passing tone, but of the neighboring note as well" [Kalib, p. 206]). Conversely, Schoenberg was infuriated by Schenker's Spenglerian views, as Schoenberg put it, on modern music ("Those who complain about the decline," in *Style and Idea* [Berkeley, 1984], pp. 203–04). For further information regarding the not always very creditable relations between Schenker and Schoenberg, see Carl Dahlhaus, "Schoenberg and Schenker," *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 100 (1973–74), 209–15; Jonathan Dunsby, "Schoenberg and the writings of Schenker," *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* II (1977), 26–33; and Bryan Simms, "New Documents in the Schoenberg-Schenker Polemic," *Perspectives of New Music* XVI (1977), 110–24.

[42] *Free Composition*, p. xviii.

[43] *Free Composition*, p. xxi.

leads people to imitate the superficial aspects of the music of the masters, while remaining unaware even of the existence of the background from which these superficial aspects derive not just their aesthetic but their ethical significance. For Schenker, as also for Schoenberg (and despite the different ways in which the two men rationalized this belief), true composition results from the integration of background and foreground, heart and brain; it is not a matter of stringing notes together in one way or another. That is why Schenker says that "the greatest disaster for music is the so-called composition school"[44] and why, of Riemann's many works, it is his textbooks on composition that attract Schenker's most pungent criticism in *Das Meisterwerk*. As Schenker said in the opening paragraph of *Free Composition*, there could be no short cuts to genius.[45]

But if Kraus' ethical conception of the artist underlies these criticisms, Krausian thinking is even more in evidence when Schenker says, again in *Das Meisterwerk*, that "just as truth has hitherto discarded all sophism whenever, wherever and however it has presumed to undermine religious, artistic, philosophical, or social values, truth will some day likewise most assuredly rid itself of sophism in the field of music, as it is particularly in evidence everywhere today" (p. 298). At the heart of Kraus' crusade against the moral and intellectual corruption of contemporary Viennese society was his critique of language. Kraus believed that this moral and intellectual corruption was inextricably bound up with the corruption of the German language itself, the prime example of such corruption being the flowery and narcissistic prose of contemporary Viennese journalism. Hence the moral importance, as Kraus saw it, of "a ruthless analysis of language and a single-minded determination to rid that language of all its hypocrisies and evasions, its irrelevant ornamentation, its imprecision."[46] It is nowadays generally accepted that Kraus' critique of language had a seminal influence on Schoenberg, Loos, and Wittgenstein; each of these men attempted a corresponding critique of his own sphere. So did Schenker. Most obviously Krausian is his attack on the acronyms which were coming into widespread use at the time, and which Schenker described as expressing a "mad rage toward abbreviation. . . . The

[44] *Free Composition*, p. 9.

[45] p. xxi. The archetype of the rapid-results composition school must be the one which Rameau announced in 1737, which met three times a week, between three and five o'clock, and of which Rameau wrote "it is guaranteed that 6 months shall be sufficient for the student to master the science of harmony and its practice, for whatever application, even for those who can scarcely read music, but all the more for those more advanced" (quoted in Thomas Christensen, "Rameau's 'L'Art de la Basse Fondamentale'," *Music Theory Spectrum* IX [1987], 19).

[46] Frank Field, *The Last Days of Mankind: Karl Kraus and his Vienna* (London, 1967), p. 12.

machinery for shortening deprives man of his spirit and tends to make of him an automaton in the same way industrial machinery robs the worker of his soul."[47] (For Schenker this naturally corresponded to the loss, in music, of the capacity for prolongation.) And the anonymous poet Schenker quoted, who wrote that "we ceased to be Germans the moment we no longer experienced our language as something live,"[48] could easily have been Kraus himself. But in a broader sense, Schenker's writings as a whole can be construed as a polemic against the sloppy and narrowly intellectual approach to music which, in his eyes, was equally prevalent in the theory, composition and performance of the day.[49]

Perhaps the best illustration of Schenker's Krausian conception of music is provided by an article in *Das Meisterwerk* called 'Let's do away with the phrasing slur!,'[50] which not only reflects Kraus' view on language but exemplifies the way in which Schenker associated the technical minutiae of music with the largest issues of philosophy and even politics. Schenker's basic argument in this article is that the phrasing slur, which is a performance indication, is an invention of the nineteenth-century editor. The masters of the past, Schenker says (and he illustrates his argument by citing a number of Mozart's autographs), did not use phrasing slurs: they used legato slurs. The difference is that the legato slur is not a performance indication. Rather, "it designates the connectedness of a succession of tones . . . without prescribing its manner of performance" (p. 55). In other words, the slur as used by the masters is a direct expression of the music's structure; how it is to be interpreted in performance—in terms of dynamics, articulation, pedalling and so forth—is the per-

[47] Kalib, p. 132. Schenker was a member of the Allgemeine Deutscher Sprachverein (William Drabkin, "Felix-Eberhard von Cube and the North-German tradition of Schenkerism," *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 111 [1986], 188), an organization founded in 1885 in order to protect the German language from the use of unnecessary foreign words and neologisms, and so to further German national consciousness. According to C. J. Wells (*German: a Linguistic History to 1945* [Oxford, 1985], p. 401), the Sprachverein achieved its widest success around 1914, when "the purism it had encouraged was furthered by the anti-French and anti-British feeling, when firms and restaurants even changed their names." After the war, however, it "lapsed into a largely critical, unfashionable, and outdated nationalism of elegaic character"—an appropriate backdrop, indeed, for Schenker's writings of the 1920s.

[48] Kalib, p. 515.

[49] Ironically enough, it was just the same sloppiness and narrowly intellectual attitude that Wagner repeatedly condemned in the Kapellmeisters of his day, for whom music was "an abstraction, a cross between syntax, arithmetic and gymnastics"; such musicians, Wagner added, were incapable of "breathing life and soul into a musical performance" ("About Conducting," in *Richard Wagner's Prose Works,* ed. W. A. Ellis [London, 1895–9], iv, pp. 303–04).

[50] Kalib, pp. 52–83.

former's business. And for this reason Schenker says that "the masters' manner of notation represents the most complete unity of inner and outer form, of content and symbols."

In what way is this argument Krausian? For Kraus, the language of a literary work and its content were the same thing. Stern expresses Kraus' position as follows:

> Language—that is, the way a statement is made—bears within itself *all* the signs he needs to understand the moral and ethical quality of that statement and of him who made it. Conversely it is necessary to read a statement in a way that is supremely sensitive to all its linguistic qualities, in order to discover the truth.[51]

In "Let's do away with the phrasing slur," Schenker is arguing that the same identity exists between the content of a masterwork and the manner of its notation. (He makes this clear when he says that for the genius "the struggle over notation always goes hand in hand with a struggle over the content; but once the content is worked out, then the only possible notation is also immediately present."[52]) And the reading of the masterwork that Schenker's analytical method was intended to achieve corresponds to the "supremely sensitive" reading to which Stern refers; this gives an extra dimension of meaning to Schenker's repeated complaint that conventional theory is incapable even of reading music properly.[53]

Equally Krausian is the manner in which Schenker sees the adoption of the phrasing slur as part and parcel of a general moral decline.[54] The phrasing slur has come about, Schenker says, because performers are no longer willing to shoulder the responsibility for

[51] J. P. Stern, "Karl Kraus's vision of language," *Modern Language Review* (January 1966), 73–74.

[52] Kalib, p. 74. Here there is another echo of Hanslick, who complained in 1857 about "the pronunciamento printed on top of all Liszt scores . . . . 'Although I have endeavoured,' it runs, 'to elucidate my intentions by definite instructions, I cannot deny that many, even the most essential ideas, cannot be put down on paper.' I leave it to the musically educated reader to decide how one can still speak of musical compositions when the 'most essential ideas' cannot be conveyed by notes" (*Musical Criticisms 1846–99*, trans. and ed. H. Pleasants [Harmondsworth, 1963], p. 55).

[53] In *Counterpoint*, for instance, Schenker states that writers about music "are able to read—just simply to read!—the works of our great masters no better than the performers" (vol. I, p. xxv). See also *Free Composition*, p. 8; a few paragraphs later Schenker adds that conventional analyses "resemble unsuccessful decipherings of papyrus rolls" (p. 9).

[54] Field recounts the story that, shortly before his death, Kraus was reproached for fussing over the punctuation of *Die Fackel*, while the Japanese were bombarding Shanghai. Kraus replied: "I know it is all pointless when the house is on fire. But I must do this as long as it is possible for, if the people responsible had always taken care that all the commas were in the right place, Shanghai would not be burning" (p. 30).

their own interpretational decisions. And he writes in the closing pages of the article that

> The musician has lost . . . the ability to appreciate details for himself. . . . The spirit of the musician has become lazier in direct proportion to the weakening of his character. Musicians evade difficulties instead of truly coming to grips with them. . . . I believe I am not in error when I relate this negative attitude to social and political ideology, which views unity only as uniformity. . . . Everywhere, in political and social life as well as in the arts, the same laziness is seen—the same mania to achieve unity through uniformity, only in order to escape the obligation toward particularity, to which even the unswerving stalwart is no longer equal; uniformity has become a catchword. Just as the masterworks under the editors' phrasing slurs stare at us as uniformity, this is exactly the way all music under the phrasing-slur of the enlightenment[55] stares at us as uniformity, whether it be the work of a genius or not. . . . And yet I am convinced that the political and social phrasing-slur uniformity can defraud mankind only temporarily of its true, higher unity. Mankind will not permanently remain a discord in God's creation; Nature itself will force mankind back to particularities as the only true vehicles of unity. (pp. 82–83)

It is all too easy for us to regard such passages as no more than conventionally bombastic prose. But to Schenker they surely represented an essential part of what he had to say.

[55] By "the enlightenment" Schenker means the egalitarian thinking symbolized above all by the French Revolution, the influence of which Schenker also detected in Rameau's fundamental bass theory (Kalib, pp. 498–99). Schenker's belief in the eternally aristocratic nature of art (p. 3) is the logical correlate of his belief in the role of the genius; but the particular virulence of his attacks on the masses and their hatred of genius (pp. 2–3) has to be seen against the background of the mass politics that became a permanent feature of Viennese political life from 1897 on, and which in part laid the ideological foundations for Nazism. (It is worth recalling that Freud made similar pronouncements against the masses; see Sutton, p. 118). Similarly, the pan-Germanism which becomes prominent in Schenker's writings during the 1920s obviously reflects the circumstances of the inter-war period; Schenker's comments about the need for the German people to throw off "the Versailles fetters of the French 'enlightenment' " (Kalib, p. 509) are closely comparable to Schoenberg's remarks in the third (1922) edition of his *Theory of Harmony* (p. 425 in Roy Carter's [London, 1978] translation). It is because I see the political beliefs which Schenker particularly expressed in the *Tonwille* booklets as little more than reflections of the time and place in which he lived that I have not discussed them further in this article. There was, however, a historical connection between nineteenth-century German nationalism, and Schopenhauer's account of the will becoming objectified through the genius: the same word, self-realization, was used for both.

V

Schenker's theory of music was conceived, then, as at the same time a theory of ethics, or maybe it would be more accurate to say that it was an application within the field of music of the general ethical position epitomized in Kraus' life and work.[56] But that is not how we read Schenker today; as I said, we pick out the plums and ignore the rest. How can we justify using Schenker's work in so selective a manner? How indeed can it make sense to do so?

One of the basic principles of canonical Schenkerian theory that we no longer take very seriously today is the immediate link between the structural principles of the masterworks and nature, which Schenker was so anxious to establish in *Harmony*. It was Schenker's rigorous derivation of these principles from the "chord of nature" and the overtone series that led him to apply his concept of the Urlinie as a universal criterion of value—as illustrated for instance in his discussion of the Stravinsky piano concerto. Nowadays we do not apply Schenker's analytical techniques to Stravinsky's music in the literal-minded manner Schenker himself did; analysts like Travis and Forte have looked instead for alternative types of structural formation in terms of which the relationship of foreground to middleground may be expressed. In doing so, such analysts are still working on the assumption that "the principles of voice-leading . . . remain the same in background, middleground and foreground,"[57] or at least that there is some intelligible relationship among these different levels, because if that were not the case there would be no point in attempting a hierarchical analysis.[58] But they do not take it for granted, as did Schenker, that these principles are "organically anchored"—that is, derived directly from nature—and hence that there must be one specific form in which they apply to all music (or at least to all masterworks). What this means is that nowadays we generalize Schenker's concept of the background by interpolating an additional, historically-determined stage between the specific formations of the foreground and the foundation of music in the universals of physics and psychology; we view historically what Schenker viewed ahistorically and even

[56] Two reviewers of *Free Composition* drew attention to this, without however entering into detail: William Benjamin (*Journal of Music Theory* XXV [1981], 157) and Gregory Proctor (*Notes* XXXVI [1980], 879).

[57] *Free Composition*, p. 5.

[58] Cf. Derrick Puffett's statement in his article "The Fugue from Tippett's Second String Quartet" that "a Schenkerian analysis, of Tippett or of any other composer, succeeds to the extent that background and foreground are integrally connected: obviously the techniques of prolongation will vary from case to case, but in all cases one must be able to establish a significant relationship between large-scale structure and smallest detail" (*Music Analysis* V [1986], 247).

biologically. For us, if the music of the classics embodies the same types of formation at the level of a single phrase in the foreground and that of an entire section in the middleground, this is not because nature dictates that it must be so: it simply means that classical composers consciously or unconsciously chose to shape their compositions in similar ways at different levels. In this way what was for Schenker a discovery of the essential nature of music becomes, for us, an observation of style.[59]

One could argue that the historicization of Schenkerian theory represents an extension of the original, rather than a fundamental rethinking of it; after all, Schoenberg, whose *Theory of Harmony* also spelled out the foundation of music in natural principles, managed to accommodate the effects of historical change within his system.[60] But the second basic principle of Schenkerian theory that we no longer take very seriously is more deeply embedded, and this is the idea of the genius. Today we treat Schenker's theory as a theory of music, not of mastery. To be sure, we use Schenker's techniques to show the coherence of Beethoven's symphonies; but we also apply them to Czerny's *Der kleine Klavierschuler* Op. 823, which David Neumeyer describes in the course of an analysis as "seventy-three carefully ordered miniatures which, if not products of high art, are efficient vehicles of traditional tonal processes."[61] When we analyze Czerny by means of Schenkerian methods, or for that matter cite "Jingle Bells" as an illustration of the interrupted $\hat{3}$-$\hat{2}$-$\hat{1}$, we obviously do not mean

[59] Rudolph Réti made this point succinctly in a letter to Schenker: "I believe that you have provided the best description to date of the classical style in music, and your error consists in taking this to be a description of the laws of music [itself], valid for all time" (quoted in Federhofer, p. 187, and translated in Rothstein's view of Federhofer, *Music Analysis* VIII [1988], 236). The nature of this error is illuminated by a remark that Wittgenstein made about Freud. According to Rush Rhees, Wittgenstein said that Freud "wanted to find some one explanation which would show what dreaming is. He wanted to find the *essence* of dreaming. And he would have rejected any suggestion that he might be partly right but not altogether so. If he was partly wrong, that would have meant for him that he was wrong altogether—that he had not really found the essence of dreaming" (*Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief* [Oxford, 1970], p. 48).

[60] Schoenberg's view that novel and striking effects in music have only a limited life-span, so that music has to progress in order to retain its psychological effect, is anticipated by Hanslick in *The Beautiful in Music*. In view of this it is the more striking that Schenker rejected such historicism, specifically controverting Hanslick's argument that great works of art cannot survive forever (Hanslick, pp. 64–65; Kalib, pp. 325–26 and *Free Composition*, p. xxiv). Schenker never seems to have felt the inadequacy of the "great man" view of history associated with Nietzsche, and when he does speak of such matters as the evolution of tonality his thinking is teleological rather than historical. The equally ahistorical nature of Freud's and Wittgenstein's thinking has frequently been pointed out.

[61] "The three-part *Ursatz*," *In Theory Only* X/1–2 (1987), 5.

to say that the composer achieved self-realization through returning to the "origin." But in that case what do we mean to say?

A possible rationale for Schenkerian theory as we employ it today—one that has perhaps gained too ready an acceptance—is that it is a theory of perception. That is to say, the fact that "Jingle Bells" embodies an interruption tells us something about how we hear it; we hear Czerny's seventy-three miniatures as coherent pieces because of the seventy-three Urlinien that they prolong. And Lerdahl and Jackendoff's reformulation of some of the central tenets of Schenkerian theory as an explicit model of the perceptual process has met with some degree of experimental confirmation with regard to the perception of small-scale musical structures: people actually do seem to hear tonal music that way, and not just geniuses, or trained musicians, but ordinary listeners too.[62] The trouble is that, as Rosner and Meyer have pointed out, there is no reason to believe that such principles apply in the same way to the perception of large-scale structures, and it is these large-scale structures that we are primarily interested in as analysts or critics. In other words, people easily enough hear the unity of a phrase, but not the unity of an Urlinie that is prolonged through an entire movement lasting several minutes.[63] After all, Schenker himself was constantly stressing how difficult it is to hear large-scale structure, and the degree of talent and application which such perception requires. Viewed as a theory of perception, then, Schenkerian analysis becomes a theory of how people only hear music with difficulty, and maybe not even then.

I have argued that, perhaps as a result of Kraus' influence, Schenker's conception of music was fundamentally ethical rather than aesthetic. In this sense he was not, in essence, concerned with perception at all. As Leo Treitler says, "When Schenker speaks about how the listener hears things, he really means to be saying how they *are*. His analyses concern the musical object."[64] For Schenker, whose philo-

[62] This model is set out in Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff, *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983). For an empirical study of some of its predictions see Irene Deliège, "Grouping Conditions in Listening to Music: An Approach to Lerdahl and Jackendoff's Grouping Preference Rules," *Music Perception* IV (1986/7), 325–60.

[63] See Burton S. Rosner and Leonard B. Meyer, "The Perceptual Roles of Melodic Process, Contour and Form," *Music Perception* IV (1986/7), 37; for further data on the relationship between tonal perception and duration see Nicholas Cook, "The Perception of Large-Scale Tonal Closure," *Music Perception* V (1987/8), 197–205. Additional discussion and references may be found in my book *Music, Imagination, and Culture* (Oxford, in press).

[64] "History, Criticism, and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony," *19th-Century Music* III (1980), 199; see also Solie, p. 151. It would probably be more correct to say that Schenker's analyses concern the "pure perception" (in Goethe's sense) of the object, and (as Pastille puts it) "the *Urphänomenon* is first of all a phenomenon, something that

sophical roots lay in Schopenhauer and the tradition of German idealism, the musical object—or, more generally, the work of art—had an intrinsic reality in a metaphysical sense; it spoke through the artist, using him (to repeat Schenker's phrase) as a medium. But for today's analysts and critics this may be hard to accept, just as Schenker's essentially ethical approach to the compositional process may no longer seem congenial or even plausible. Our orientation to music nowadays is predominantly aesthetic: we seek to understand music and explain its significance primarily in terms of the effects it makes upon the listener, and that is what has led us to think of Schenkerian theory as a theory of perception. It might, however, be more appropriate to think of it as a means of modifying people's perceptions of music.

In an essay called "Understanding music," Roger Scruton discusses the motion of musical notes and lines, and he describes the listener's freedom to hear a passage in different ways as

> one of the foundations for structural criticism of music. It is because I can ask someone to hear a movement as beginning in a certain place, as phrased in a certain way, and so on, that the activity of giving reasons in support of such an analysis makes sense. Much of music criticism consists of the deliberate construction of an intentional object from the infinitely ambiguous instructions implicit in a sequence of sounds.[65]

Schenker's analyses involve the construction of an intentional object in just this sense. A Schenkerian analysis is not primarily a description of how a piece is, in fact, heard; it is rather a prescription for imagining it in a certain manner, or hearing it imaginatively. More specifically, it encourages a manner of experiencing the music which emphasizes its organic wholeness, and so helps to counteract the excessively foreground-oriented approach that Schenker condemned in the theory, composition, and performance of his own time. In this way, the point of Schenkerian analysis is to bring about a new, and more adequate, manner of listening to music. If Hanslick diagnosed the malaise of nineteenth-century musical culture, Schenker offers the remedy: and viewed in this light, a theory that simply reflected the

can be grasped by human faculties, that can be seen, if not by the outer eye, at least by the inner eye" ("Ursatz," p. 91). In practice, however, this comes to much the same thing; Pastille remarks elsewhere that Schenker's graphs "do not record the results of normal hearing—even the most acute—but rather, they record the results of an elevated sense of hearing, trained by *Anschauung* [contemplation] to recognize underlying models. For the same reason, Schenker would have considered it insufficient to defend a graphic interpretation with a simple 'that's the way I hear it' " (pp. 155–56).

[65] Roger Scruton, "Understanding music," *Ratio* XXV (1983), 108–09.

manner in which people ordinarily listen to music would be pointless or even irresponsible.

Roger Scruton describes musical motion as a metaphor that is entrenched in the experience of music; as he puts it, "take this metaphor away and you take away the experience of music" (p. 106). In the same way, I would argue, to hear a piece in Schenkerian terms is to experience it in terms of the metaphor of the Ursatz and its prolongation. Christopher Lewis has recently suggested that we ought, as a matter of general principle, to think of analyses as metaphors rather than as models, because (as he puts it) "to think of an analysis as a model can lead us to think of it as the only model, and perhaps even to substitute it for the piece itself as an artifact." By contrast, he says, thinking of an analysis as a metaphor calls attention as much to the discrepancies between the analysis and the piece as to their similarities.[66] Now Schenkerian theory is based on species counterpoint, the principles of which govern both the formation of the Ursatz and the manner of its elaboration; and doing a Schenkerian analysis means conceptualizing the discrepancies between the principles of strict counterpoint and the freely elaborated surface of music in question. It is precisely by virtue of such discrepancies—discrepancies that have to be explained in terms of the individual context of a given piece—that Schenkerian analysis leads to a heightened awareness of, to use Schenker's term, the particularities of the music.

Like any other metaphor, Schenkerian analysis can be applied in a satisfying or unsatisfying manner, convincingly or unconvincingly. But, as Lewis observes, no metaphorical explanation can be true or false in an absolute or scientific sense; unlike conflicting scientific theories, contradictory analyses of a given piece of music can be equally valid. For instance, a Schenkerian analysis of the opening of Beethoven's Sonata Op. 81a will tend to emphasize continuity at the expense of foreground contrast, whereas a rhythmic analysis based on Cooper and Meyer's symbols will tend to do the opposite. Which analysis is then to be preferred? This is not a question of which analytical approach is the more valid or correct in an abstract sense; it is a question of what the analysis is wanted for. If one is a performer, then one is likely to find little difficulty in projecting the foreground contrast of the opening bars of Op. 81a; where there may be a problem is in achieving some continuity at an underlying level, and for this purpose the Schenkerian approach is probably the better one. On the other hand, if it were detailed relationships of dynamic emphasis at

[66] Christopher Lewis, "Mirrors and Metaphors: Reflections on Schoenberg and Nineteenth-Century Tonality", *19th-Century Music* XI (1987), 27–28.

foreground level that were worrying the performer, then the rhythmic analysis might be more helpful.[67] A musical analysis, then, is valid to the extent that it fulfills its intended function—that it leads to enhanced performance, or to the solution of musicological problems, or to more efficient learning. It is true to the extent that it is useful.

VI

David Beach began his most recent survey of Schenkerian research by saying that

> One cannot help but wonder on occasion what Schenker's reaction would be both to the quantity and to the diversity of research resulting from his work. No doubt he would have some strong words of rebuke for those who have strayed from the straight and narrow path, so to speak, but on the whole one is inclined to think he would be pleased. After all, his work has exerted a strong and increasing influence on music research since his death fifty years ago.[68]

There is no doubting Beach's final statement. But has Schenker's work exerted the kind of influence that he would have wanted it to?

With regard to such undeniably important things as editorial practice and the technical understanding of tonal structure the answer must, on the whole, be yes. But Schenker formulated his analytical methods within the context of a comprehensive and coherent theory that embraced not only music but also psychology, metaphysics and ethics. He believed that his analyses were valid not simply because they led to useful insights into musical compositions—that is, because they were plums—but because the theory that they embodied was true in an absolute and universal sense; hence his insistence that "I was given a vision of the urlinie, I did not invent it!"[69] And he poured scorn on Bruckner, who promulgated musical laws to his students and then explained that he personally did not obey them in his own compositions, precisely on the grounds that Bruckner's so-called laws had no absolute and universal validity; they were nothing more than laws

[67] I have discussed this example in more detail in my *Guide to Musical Analysis*, pp. 88–89.

[68] "The current state of Schenkerian research," *Acta musciologica* LVII (1985), 275.

[69] Kalib, p. 218 (but see Pastille's remarks on this translation, in "Ursatz," pp. 126–27). Similarly Schoenberg spoke of having "discovered," not invented, the series. Schenker's idealistic conception of the Urlinie can be compared to the way in which Webern, in particular, conceived the series; Webern's remark (in a letter to Hildegard Jone, dated 26 May 1941) that in his Variations, Op. 30, "six notes are given . . . and what follows . . . is nothing other than this shape over and over again" is, after all, a perfect illustration of Schenker's motto "semper idem sed non eodem modo."

of convenience.[70] But nowadays we do not see Schenker's principles as having the kind of validity that Schenker himself imputed to them. Nor do we accept his theory as a totality. We more or less ignore his ethics and metaphysics, and even within the more narrowly defined field of music we readily put Schenker's analytical methods to uses which he would himself have deplored—such as explaining the coherence of Czerny's and Stravinsky's music. In other words we retain Schenker's methods but not his epistemology, his specific insights into music but not the system of beliefs that supported them.

I have argued that we are perfectly justified in doing this, for the simple reason that Schenker's methods and insights are useful to us as musicians. But I cannot believe that Schenker would have been willing to accept such an argument. On the contrary, I suspect that he would have regarded the use we make of his theories today, had he foreseen it, as representing the betrayal of his life's work, or at least a failure to grasp its true significance. And I wonder whether Schenker did not, in fact, have a premonition of what was to happen. At any rate, he began the Foreword to the first issue of *Das Meisterwerk in der Musik* with a quotation that seems singularly apt under the circumstances. The quotation is from Kant and it reads: "The danger here is not in being disproved, but indeed, in not being understood."

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[70] See in particular *Harmony*, pp. 177–78. Other references, together with a discussion, may be found in Sonia Slatin, 'The Theories of Heinrich Schenker in Perspective' (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1967), p. 17.