

Ashgate Studies in Theory and Analysis of Music After 1900

THE MUSICAL THOUGHT AND SPIRITUAL LIVES OF HEINRICH SCHENKER AND ARNOLD SCHOENBERG

Matthew Arndt



In this stylishly written, profoundly argued, richly evidenced account, Arndt explores how Schoenberg, modernism's most revisionist composer of Western art music, and Schenker, its commanding theorist dedicated to preserving our understanding of classical masterpieces, conducted their complementary, lifelong quests. Much more than a disquisition on modernist music and music theory, this is a rigorous exploration of contemporaneous kinds of faith in genius.

Jonathan Dunsby, *Eastman School of Music,
University of Rochester, USA*

Schenker and Schoenberg – often regarded as polar opposites who embody a fissure in the history of Western music and the collapse of a common language – are brilliantly reevaluated in Matthew Arndt's scholarly debut. Through a meticulous analysis of notated and written sources and a virtuosic interplay of disciplines and methods, Arndt delves beneath the surface of the usual narrative to sound out the musical thought and spiritual beliefs that shape the theory and music of both thinkers. As a result, what modern scholarship has divided is reintegrated, not only by melding the technical and metaphysical elements to illumine each other, but by drawing Schoenberg and Schenker so tightly together that, like repellent magnets held in tension, their proximity reveals the secret of the other's meaning. This is a bold, brave, brilliant book.

Daniel Chua, *Hong Kong University, China*

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The Musical Thought and Spiritual Lives of Heinrich Schenker and Arnold Schoenberg

This book examines the origin, content, and development of the musical thought of Heinrich Schenker and Arnold Schoenberg. One of the premises is that Schenker's and Schoenberg's inner musical lives are inseparable from their inner spiritual lives. Curiously, Schenker and Schoenberg start out in much the same musical-spiritual place, yet musically they split while spiritually they grow closer. The reception of Schenker's and Schoenberg's work has sidestepped this paradox of commonality and conflict, instead choosing to universalize and amplify their conflict. Bringing to light a trove of unpublished material, Arndt argues that Schenker's and Schoenberg's conflict is a reflection of tensions within their musical and spiritual ideas. They share a particular conception of the tone as an ideal sound realized in the spiritual eye of the genius. The tensions inherent in this largely psychological and material notion of the tone and this largely metaphysical notion of the genius shape both their musical divergence on the logical (technical) level in theory and composition, including their advocacy of the *Ursatz* versus twelve-tone composition, and their spiritual convergence, including their embrace of Judaism. These findings shed new light on the musical and philosophical worlds of Schenker and Schoenberg and on the profound artistic and spiritual questions with which they grapple.

Matthew Arndt, Associate Professor of Music Theory at the University of Iowa, holds a PhD from the University of Wisconsin–Madison, an MM from the University of Colorado at Boulder, and a BA with honors from Lewis & Clark College. He has previously taught at Mercer University, Lawrence University, and the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Professor Arndt primarily studies the application of insights from the history of music theory to music theory pedagogy, analysis, and criticism. He also studies technical aspects of sacred music from the Republic of Georgia.

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Matthew Arndt

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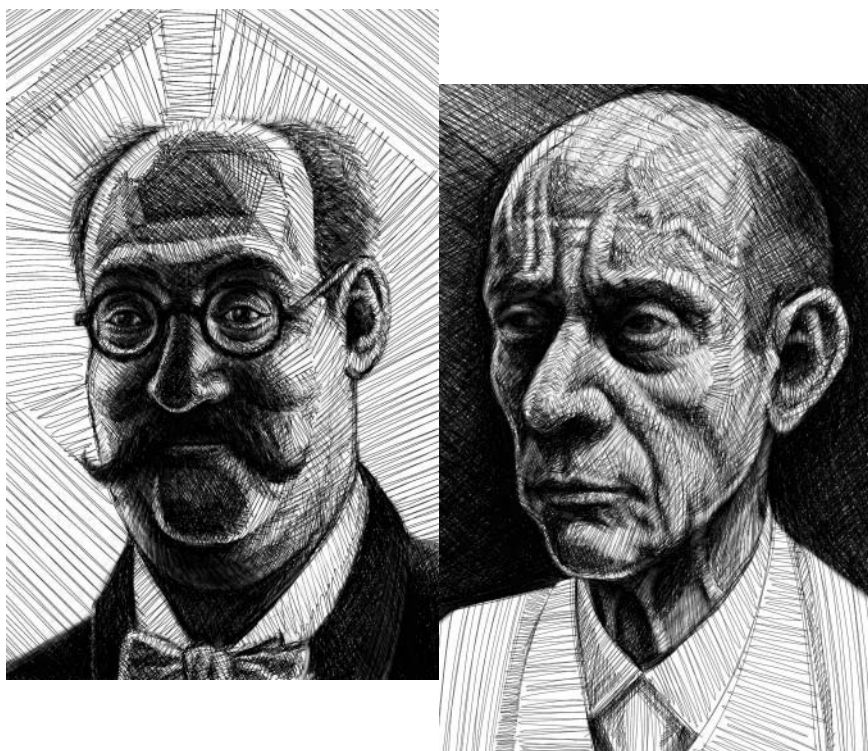
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Frontispiece: Heinrich Schenker and Arnold Schoenberg. Drawings by Tony Carter.

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Audio examples

The audio examples can be accessed via the online Routledge Music Research Portal: www.routledgemusicresearch.co.uk. Please enter the activation word RRMusic and your email address when prompted. You will immediately be sent an automated email containing an access token and instructions, which will allow you to log in to the site.

- | | | |
|-----|--|-------|
| 4.1 | Heinrich Schenker's Fantasy for Piano, op. 2, I | 16:09 |
| 4.2 | Heinrich Schenker's Fantasy for Piano, op. 2, II | 13:45 |

Performed by Luiz de Moura Castro in *The Music of Heinrich Schenker*
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Abbreviations

- CP Schenker, Heinrich. *Kontrapunkt*. Vol. 2 of *Neue musikalische Theorien und Phantasien*, 2 bks. 1910 and 1922. Reprint, Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1991. Translated by John Rothgeb and Jürgen Thym as *Counterpoint*, vol. 2 of *New Musical Theories and Fantasies*, ed. John Rothgeb, 2 bks. New York: Schirmer Books, 1987.
- FC Schenker, Heinrich. *Der freie Satz*. Vol. 3 of *Neue musikalische Theorien und Phantasien*. 1st ed. Vienna: Universal Edition, 1935. 2nd ed. Edited by Oswald Jonas. Vienna: Universal Edition, 1956. Translated by Ernst Oster as *Free Composition*. Vol. 3 of *New Musical Theories and Fantasies*. New York: Longman, 1979. German page number references are to the second edition.
- FM Schoenberg, Arnold. *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*. Edited by Gerald Strang with Leonard Stein. London: Faber and Faber, 1967.
- HL Schenker, Heinrich. *Harmonielehre*. Vol. 1 of *Neue musikalische Theorien und Phantasien*. 1906. Reprint, Vienna: Universal Edition, 1978. Translated by Elisabeth Mann Borgese as *Harmony*. Edited by Oswald Jonas. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1954.
- HL Schoenberg, Arnold. *Harmonielehre*. 1st ed. Leipzig: Universal Edition, 1911. 3rd ed. Vienna: Universal Edition, 1922. Translated by Roy E. Carter as *Theory of Harmony*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978. German page number references are to the first edition except where indicated.
- HS Federhofer, Helmut. *Heinrich Schenker: Nach Tagebüchern und Briefen in der Oswald Jonas Memorial Collection*, University of California, Riverside. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1985.
- MI Schoenberg, Arnold. *The Musical Idea and the Logic, Technique, and Art of Its Presentation*. Edited and translated by Patricia Carpenter and Severine Neff. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995.

- MW Schenker, Heinrich. *Das Meisterwerk in der Musik: Ein Jahrbuch* 1–3 (1925–1930). Translated by Ian Bent, Alfred Clayton, William Drabkin, Richard Kramer, Derrick Puffett, John Rothgeb, and Hedi Siegel as *The Masterwork in Music: A Yearbook*. 3 vols. Edited by William Drabkin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994–1997.
- OC The Oster Collection: Papers of Heinrich Schenker. New York: Music Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations. Reprint, New York: The New York Public Library, 1990. Citations in the form file/item.
- OJ The Oswald Jonas Memorial Collection. University of California, Riverside, Special Collections & University Archives. Citations in the form box/folder, page number.
- SC Arnold Schönberg Center. Vienna. www.schoenberg.at.
- SD Schenker Documents Online. www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org.
- SF Schoenberg, Arnold. *Structural Functions of Harmony*. Edited by Leonard Stein. Revised ed. New York: W. W. Norton, 1969.
- SI Schoenberg, Arnold. *Stil und Gedanke: Aufsätze zur Musik*. Edited by Ivan Vojtěch. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1976. *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*. Translations by Leo Black. Edited by Leonard Stein. Rev. ed. Reprint, Berkeley: University of California Press, [2010].
- TW Schenker, Heinrich. *Der Tonwille: Flugblätter/Vierteljahreszeitschrift zum Zeugnis unwandelbarer Gesetze der Tonkunst einer neuen Jugend* 1–10 (1921–1924). Reprint, Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1990. Translated by Ian Bent, William Drabkin, Joseph Dubiel, Timothy Jackson, Joseph Lubben, William Renwick, and Robert Snarrenberg as *Der Tonwille: Pamphlets/Quarterly Publication in Witness of the Immutable Laws of Music, Offered to a New Generation of Youth*. 2 vols. Edited by William Drabkin. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004–2005.

Style

I omit citations, editorial additions, and obvious typos in quoted text. I omit capitalizations of common nouns in quoted translations, but I capitalize all untranslated German nouns. I omit cross-outs and the like in quoted text. I render all pitch names with regular capital letters. Emphasis in quotations is in the quoted text except where indicated. Two citations separated by a slash—e.g., *HL*, 1/1—refer to the original and the published translation for the purpose of comparison. A single citation of a translated work refers to the published translation. I omit dynamics, tempo, phrasing, and the like in many of the musical examples to avoid clutter.

I signify distinct motives and Gestalten with separate letters, and I signify distinct “motive-forms” and Gestalten-forms “produced through variation” by adding primes or manipulating the letters. I do not use separate symbols for “variants” that “have little or no influence on the continuation” (*FM*, 8 and 9). I heuristically supplement Schenker’s and Schoenberg’s theories with William E. Caplin’s (1998) theory of formal functions, Hepokoski and Darcy’s (2006) theory of sonata form, and Janet Schmalfeldt’s (2011) theory of formal reinterpretation. I use a mix of Schenkerian and Schoenbergian Roman numerals, supplemented by chord symbols and by “Q” for fourth chords (quartal chords), fifth chords (quintal chords), and Viennese tri-chords (which are frequently voiced as altered fourth chords).

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Introduction

Art and theory are in essence a single, inseparable concept.

—Heinrich Schenker (1916)

Fundamentally the human mind is capable of only *a single manner of thinking*.

—Arnold Schoenberg (1936)

This book examines the origin, content, and development of the musical thought of Heinrich Schenker (1868–1935) and Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951), two of the most influential and intriguing musicians of the twentieth century. The first premise is that there is such a thing as their musical thought evident in their scores and writings, involving both their “*thinking in tones and rhythms*” (Schoenberg) and their thinking about “strange mysteries... behind tones” (Schenker).¹ This premise is fully in keeping with their own attitudes that “*art and theory are in essence a single, inseparable concept*” and that “the human mind is capable of only *a single manner of thinking*.”² The notion of musical thought is an old one, so this premise may seem undistinguished, but in fact it has been explored only to a limited extent. While Schenkerian theory (in the Anglo-American world) and Schoenberg’s music have become canonical, Schenker’s music and—to a lesser degree—Schoenberg’s theories have been neglected.³ This is not to say that Schenker and Schoenberg are both equally accomplished in both domains. Nor is it to say that their theories merely explain their compositions or that their compositions merely apply their theories. Theory and composition with Schenker and Schoenberg stand in a relation of *mutual mediation*, where their music relies on their theory (and subsequent analysis) for decipherment, while their theory—especially with Schoenberg—relies on their music for embodiment and transformation of its concepts.⁴ (Naturally, their music embodies other concepts as well.) The same relation of mutual mediation applies to theory and performance or listening—especially with Schenker—but I will consider only the theoretical end of this exchange.

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The second premise of the book is that their musical lives—for Schoenberg, primarily in composition, and for Schenker, primarily in performance and listening—are inseparable from their spiritual lives. This premise is in keeping with Schenker's belief that "music mirrors the human soul" and Schoenberg's belief that music actually gives humanity "an immortal soul" to begin with.⁵ Here again, music scholars have minimally explored this notion, inasmuch as they have too often historicized, politicized, or ignored spiritual matters.

Curiously, Schenker and Schoenberg start out in much the same musical-spiritual place. During the nineteenth century, ethnic Jews flocking to Vienna are attracted to studying music as "the most effective and rapid means to establish themselves in the metropolis," and ironically "Viennese Jews [become] the quintessential bearers, defenders, and ultimately inventors of a self-conscious Viennese late-nineteenth-century musical tradition" (Botstein 2004, 50 and 57). The Viennese ethnic Jews Schenker and Schoenberg continue this practice: They share a set of beliefs in art as a moral, spiritual practice; in music as an autonomous art; and in the masters of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, especially Johannes Brahms, as models for their own time, and accordingly they side with the critical modernists influenced by Karl Kraus in opposing "the corruption of musical culture in their own time."⁶ They also start out with substantially similar artistic sensibilities, which I show to be embodied in their early music.

But musically Schenker and Schoenberg split. These two Viennese Jewish critical modernist musicians clash bitterly over Viennese Jewish aesthetic modernist music, with Schenker rejecting it (especially Schoenberg's music) as the destruction of tradition and Schoenberg upholding it (especially his own music) as a renewal of tradition, and they lock horns over a number of theoretical issues, such as what counts as a chord.

While musically Schenker and Schoenberg split, spiritually they grow closer. For example, while it is common knowledge that in the early 1920s Schoenberg embraces an individualistic form of Judaism, as I will show, there is a parallel, simultaneous change with Schenker, who represents himself as more consistent in his Judaism than he actually is. Both of them identify with the prophet Moses, but Schoenberg does so in proclaiming the law of the emancipation of the dissonance, while Schenker does so in proclaiming the diametrically opposed law of the *Ursatz* (the originary statement).

So it is that Schenker, while writing his crowning work, *Free Composition*, which explains the activity of the *Ursatz*, records in his diary on January 6, 1932, that his wife Jeanette "heads the index: With God!" From that point on, the phrase becomes an urgent refrain: It reportedly appears again in the manuscript in his wife's hand and in his own script on the last page (which is later pasted into his diary), it heads his final diary, and it opens his final diary entry.⁷ And on May 31, 1922, while working out his new twelve-tone compositional method, which is to be underwritten by the emancipation of the dissonance, Schoenberg similarly dedicates a sketchbook: "With God."⁸ These are also the last words of the libretto for his twelve-tone masterwork, *Moses und Aron* (Schoenberg 1957, [305]).

The reception of Schenker's and Schoenberg's work has sidestepped this paradox of commonality and conflict. Instead, it has chosen to amplify and universalize their conflict. A few writers have explained their conflict primarily in terms of opposing theoretical paradigms (Borio 2001, 274; Pieslak 2006; Peles 2010, 167). But starting with Carl Dahlhaus, many writers have interpreted Schenker's and Schoenberg's conflict in terms of "a gulf which could hardly be imagined deeper" between their conceptions of musical coherence as tonal and motivic, respectively, attributable to their "directing their attention to different stages of musical history."⁹ In this way, the reception has informed the notion of a "rupture" in music history at the beginning of the twentieth century consisting in a "collapse" of the shared language of tonality, and this notion has conversely shaped the reception.¹⁰

This notion of a collapse of tonality has been shown to have serious problems: the obvious continuance of tonal music post-1908; the ideological nature of the concept of tonality, which has served both modernist and reactionary agendas; the conflicted nature of tonality as both historical and psychological; and a greater degree of continuity between tonal and so-called "post-tonal" music than has previously been recognized.¹¹ Schenker's and Schoenberg's conflict cannot be attributed to their attention to different historical periods if the periods in question do not exist. This is not to say that a dissolution of tonality plays no role in Schenker's and Schoenberg's musical thought; certainly it does, as I will explain. But that is just the thing: It is an element of their *thought*, not a historical reality that conditions their work.

Nevertheless, the prevailing musicological narrative has been that Schenker theorizes tonal music, while Schoenberg composes "post-tonal" music. In the United States and the United Kingdom, this narrative has shaped the development of music theory as an academic discipline, which at first consists of Schenker and sets (for "post-tonal" music). Although the discipline of music theory has outgrown this original binary division, the reception of Schenker's and Schoenberg's work continues to hew to this narrative through its neglect Schenker's music and Schoenberg's theories and through the non-intersection of Schenker specialists and Schoenberg specialists.¹²

In repudiation of this falsely dichotomous reception, I argue that Schenker's and Schoenberg's conflict is a reflection of contradictions *within* their musical and spiritual ideas. They share a particular conception of the tone as an ideal sound realized in the spiritual eye of the genius. The tensions inherent in this largely psychological and material notion of the tone and this largely metaphysical notion of the genius shape both their musical *divergence* on the logical (technical) level of theory and composition and their spiritual *convergence*, including their invention of the *Ursatz* and twelve-tone composition and their simultaneous return to Judaism.¹³ These findings shed new light on the musical and philosophical worlds of Schenker and Schoenberg and on the profound artistic and spiritual questions with which they grapple.

Method

As the motto quoted above already illustrates, there are several difficulties with understanding Schenker's and Schoenberg's thinking about music: While Schenker's writings are generally more cogent than Schoenberg's, in both cases their writings are often aphoristic or fragmentary, contradictory, figurative, and alien in the ways they combine "music theory" with history, sociology, philosophy, and poetry. Who or what is or is to be "with God"? What does God have to do with music?

In the case of Schenker, scholars have tended to characterize certain aspects of his writings as extraneous to the canonical theoretical content. For example, Nicholas Cook (2007, 307 and 67) distinguishes between "the specifically theoretical content of Schenkerian theory" and "Schenker's claims about the ultimate agency of music," which "do not just defy common sense: they are vague and contradictory, or perhaps we should see them as simply rhetorical and figurative." Robert P. Morgan similarly makes a distinction between "Schenker's ideological-aesthetic position and his theoretical formulations," his "specifically theoretical" formulations, again denying theoretical status to parts of his theoretical writings.¹⁴ But Schenker regards such things as his "long forwards or aphorisms" as necessary "to prove [himself] and [his] theory."¹⁵

In the case of Schoenberg, scholars have interpreted his laconic and charged writings with reference to various ideologies ascribed to his canonical music, such as Wagnerism or modernism.¹⁶ A particularly common theme, again starting with Dahlhaus and persisting to this very day, is that Schoenberg's theories are disingenuous attempts as self-justification or at least out of touch with his music. Dahlhaus writes that Schoenberg's theories, with their "irritat[ing]" mixing of genres, "are characterized by a helplessness which prevents us from taking them at their word as being motives for compositional decisions."¹⁷ Michael Cherlin characterizes Schoenberg's theories as behind the times of "the music itself":

In many ways Schoenberg's critical writings cling to a teleological world-view. Yet, Schoenberg's abandonment or repression of tonality was concomitant with the development of a musical syntax that did not, and could not, end in perfection. Despite Schoenberg's formidable contributions to theory and criticism, his intuitions and vision as a composer outstripped his capacity as a theorist and critic.¹⁸

Cherlin makes Schoenberg out to be Schoenberger than most but not the Schoenbergest. It is as Schoenberg reports,

Many people call me Schoenberger; I have obviously not done enough to imprint my name on them. So then I have to defend myself: "Please, don't compare; the comparative is too little—I can make no increase; so please, simply the positive: Schoenberg, I myself am the superlative."¹⁹

And Julie Brown (2014, 6) says of Schoenberg's concept of the musical idea that "it was less a serious music-theoretical concept than a figure [of speech]... through which he constructed and reconstructed his compositional project." So in both cases, wherever Schenker's and Schoenberg's theoretical writings are marked by the difficult aspects mentioned above, writers have tended to dismiss them—as not theoretical, not serious, and so forth.

Just as we need a method for analyzing Schoenberg's difficult music, so too we need a hermeneutic method for *analyzing* ambiguity, contradiction, figurative language, and hybridity in Schenker's and Schoenberg's writings. This is not to defend Schenker and Schoenberg; this is just to say that *criticism requires analysis*. This point cannot be overstated. Inadequate analysis has resulted in misinterpretations on all levels of their musical thought, from the technical to the metaphysical. I use an *intertextual, deconstructive, synoptic, metaphorical, integrative, dialogical, post-secular* method to analyze Schenker's and Schoenberg's writings. I am embarrassed to bedeck my work with all these badges and tarry from the work itself, but it is necessary so as to prepare the reader to consider my iconoclastic interpretations.

The literary critical technique of *intertextual* reading is relevant for understanding ambiguity in Schenker's and Schoenberg's writings. An intertext is any text "the reader may legitimately connect with the one before his eyes." It is not simply the source of an idea; rather, an intertext is based on varied repetition of "structural invariants." "Intratextual anomalies—obscure wordings, phrasings that the context alone will not suffice to explain"—can signal an absent intertext.²⁰ Music theorists will recognize the similarity of intertextual analysis to motivic, voice-leading, and twelve-tone analysis. Just as motivic labels already embody interpretation of context, so quotations of texts embody interpretation of intertextual contexts; in other words, I do not spell out my reasoning for every quotation. I read Schenker's and Schoenberg's writings on music across all periods and genres to find their structural invariants. I look to Goethe's and Schopenhauer's writings as intertexts. Above all, I use Schenker's and Schoenberg's writings as *each other's* intertexts. Schenker and Schoenberg must be read in tandem, because they read each other as they write, perhaps more than they admit,²¹ and they pursue different sides of their shared contradictions. Schenker and Schoenberg are like repellent magnets, whose properties are only revealed when they are brought into proximity.

Contradiction in Schenker's and Schoenberg's writings—when it is genuine and not merely apparent—can be a fundamental feature, an indicator of change, or simply a dead end. When it is a fundamental feature, I *deconstruct* the text, explaining the contradiction as a substructural invariant beneath the surface claims. When it is a dead end (or rather split end), I trim it away through "abbreviation," a basic principle of art for Schenker and Schoenberg, and by extension of theory (Schenker, *HL*, 28; Schoenberg, *HL*, 359). Schoenberg contrasts science with art in that "science must

explore and examine all facts; art is only concerned with the presentation of characteristic facts.”²² Like Charlotte M. Cross in her article “Three Levels of ‘Idea’ in Schoenberg’s Thought and Writings” (1980) and her dissertation “Schoenberg’s *Weltanschauung* and His Views of Music: 1874–1915” (1992), I thereby aim for a *synoptic* view of Schenker’s and Schoenberg’s thinking about music that weaves together widely dispersed strands of text through their invariants. Such a wide-angle view is not maximally fine-grained, but it reveals a certain wholeness that would not be visible otherwise. As Schoenberg says, “We must be at some distance from an object if we are to see it as a whole; up close we see just individual features, only distance reveals the general ones,” including what connects artists whose “personalities differ sharply from each other” (*HL*, 330 and 412).

A concern for structural and substructural invariants across texts tends to find aphorisms and fragments at least as revealing as large-scale works. This point also applies especially to my analysis and interpretation of Schoenberg’s music, which are not only highly selective but almost inversely proportional in scope to that of the works.

As for figurative language, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson have hypothesized that *metaphor* is a basic characteristic of thought, which means that apparent ornaments can be structural, as Schoenberg would agree.²³ Lakoff and Johnson claim that we conceptualize things in more abstract cognitive domains through the projection of structure from more concrete domains, forming *conceptual metaphors*. A central component of metaphor theory is the notion of *image schemas*, which are basic patterns of objects and forces that are said to be derived from our interactions with the world. The physical relationships in image schemas are claimed to enable logical reasoning in other domains. Three important image schemas are *source-path-goal*, derived from our experience of moving through space; *center-periphery*, derived from being surrounded by other things; and *part-whole*, derived from having a body with various members.

While recognizing that metaphor plays an important role in conceptualization, Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner (2008) have shown that mere cross-domain mapping cannot account for the full complexity of metaphor, nor can metaphor account for the full range of figurative language and thought. Fauconnier and Turner (2002, 2010) posit a general cognitive operation called *integration* or *blending*. Integration is the creation of *mental spaces*, or models for thinking and acting, through the blending of elements from two or more *input spaces*. The corresponding elements in the input spaces are connected by a *generic space*, which contains what the input spaces have in common. Generic spaces do not always need to be analyzed, because they merely spell out what is implicit in the counterpart connections. The generic space, the input spaces, and the resulting *blended space* form an *integration network*, or collection of interconnected mental spaces. According to Fauconnier and Turner, blended spaces can themselves become input spaces for further blends, and they can become entrenched patterns of thought.

Several writers have applied blending theory to music analysis. In these analyses, the music typically occupies a single mental space, which is blended with the contents of some extramusical space to create musical meaning.²⁴ I use blending theory not only in this way but mainly to analyze Schenker's and Schoenberg's concepts. In doing so, I draw on certain established conceptual metaphors and treat image schemas as a primary means of structuring mental spaces. Apart from Fauconnier and Turner themselves, who draw on image schemas to a certain extent, no other scholar to my knowledge has combined metaphor theory and blending theory in this particular way or applied blending theory to the history of theory.²⁵

The findings of blending theory and metaphor theory imply that reason and knowledge are not entirely objective; rather, the way we think is shaped by our particular brains, bodies, and interactions with the world.²⁶ What this means for understanding Schenker and Schoenberg, or indeed any historical theorist, is that nothing can be taken for granted, especially *what constitutes music theory* in the first place. It is all a matter of what is blended. Schenker's and Schoenberg's promiscuous mixing of genres, which has garnered them censure, is in fact characteristic of the fin-de-siècle Viennese liberal ethnic-Jewish community, which supports "the pursuit of a synthesis of the humanities, natural sciences, art, and culture such as scarcely can be imagined today, in which traditional and modern currents enriched each other" (Springer 2006, 364). As Cross (1980, 24) points out, "upon closer inspection, what might first be construed as philosophical tangents and religious overtones" in Schoenberg's writings "prove essential to the issues at hand," and the same is true for Schenker. Accordingly, we need to read historical theories, especially Schenker's and Schoenberg's, *dialogically*, listening carefully to all of a text's metaphorical resonances and responding to the questions that it raises through its foreignness (Christensen 1993; Tomlinson 1993, 1–43). As Schoenberg says, "the only correct attitude of a listener has to be[.] to be ready to listen to that which the author has to tell you."²⁷ We need to refrain from jumping to conclusions about what is relevant or irrelevant, just as we refrain from interrupting people.

The possibility of historical dialogue means that when we are faced in music studies with ultimate questions such as the existence and nature of God, humanity, and art—and in Schenker and Schoenberg studies, that means *all the time*—we do not need to choose between historicizing them (parrotting instead of conversing), politicizing them (dominating the conversation), or ignoring them (cutting off the conversation). According to Lori Branch (2015), "if we live up to the insights of the religious turn" in humanities scholarship, especially the *post-secular* recognition that faith and knowledge are inseparable because of the uncertainties of language, "then we can engage ultimate questions not as buffered or distantiated selves but as persons in relation to these questions and writers who ask them, past and present." We need not restrict ourselves only to what is provable. As Schoenberg says, "as little as someone who sets up a theory should insist that his theory

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resolves all questions...., just so little should one maintain that such a theory is wrong, since after all it is merely incomplete” (*MI*, 91). We need only ensure that our claims are supported by our *premises, method, and evidence*. A notable example of such patient, critical engagement with ultimate matters is found in the work of Daniel K. L. Chua. His virtuosic “Beethoven’s Other Humanism” (2009), an article about Theodor W. Adorno and Ludwig van Beethoven that is roughly speaking a combination of history of theory with analysis and criticism, is the closest thing to a model for this book. Like Chua’s examination of Adorno’s and Beethoven’s musical thought, my examination of Schenker’s and Schoenberg’s musical thought is neither a regurgitation nor a diatribe; I simply analyze it and trace its consequences, both good and ill.

Schenker heads Chapter 1 of *Free Composition*—somewhat surprisingly in light of his dogmatism—with a quotation from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe that affirms the role of irony in theory, while Schoenberg somewhat similarly asserts in his *Harmonielehre* that “whenever I theorize, it is less important whether these theories be right than whether they be useful as comparisons to clarify the object and to give the study perspective” (*FC*, 3; Schoenberg, *HL*, 19). Now if Schenker and Schoenberg retain a certain degree of detachment in theorizing—in keeping with a certain skepticism towards language, which I explain in Chapter 1—all the more must I qualify my interpretations of their writings as lacking complete certainty, although I approach language more in a spirit of cooperation than suspicion.

I analyze and interpret Schenker’s and Schoenberg’s music using a method based on my interpretations of their writings, focusing on what Schoenberg calls *problems* or *unrest*—new, unclear relations of tones. My analyses of problems are compatible with those of Jack Boss in his recent *Schoenberg’s Twelve-Tone Music: Symmetry and the Musical Idea* (2014), but my theoretical understanding of problems is quite different, as I explain in Chapter 3. Although I make every effort to orient my analyses and interpretations objectively toward “the plan upon which the work itself is oriented” (Schoenberg, *HL*, 30), insofar as this plan interacts with their theories, I recognize the highly individualized perspective that I bring to the music, particularly in the intertextual connections that I make.²⁸ In my defense, I affirm that

the possibility of finding truth at all subsists only as long as the free interchange of various perspectives is given, regardless of whether this variety is to be traced back to the different standpoint of the observer or whether it rests on an error.

(Ratz 1973, 10)

Overview

To say that theory and composition with Schenker and Schoenberg are mutually mediating is to say that their theories are most basically *theories of*

composition. In his *Harmonielehre*, Schenker, who identifies himself only as “an artist,” writes, “In contrast to other books on music theory, conceived, one might say, for their own sake and apart from art, the aim of this book is to build a real and practicable bridge from composition to theory,” meaning that he wants to initiate “a reform process” in theory and composition (Schenker, *HL*, v, xxv, and vii/xxvi). And in his own *Harmonielehre*, Schoenberg writes, “Courses in harmony and counterpoint have forgotten that they, together with the study of form, must be the study of composition.”²⁹ He aims “to make things clear to himself,” not just to the pupil.³⁰ To be sure, Schenker draws his examples exclusively from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century music (at least, the examples he commends), but that is just because he believes twentieth-century music sets a poor example (for itself). And Schoenberg likewise focuses on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century materials, but that is just because he proceeds historically, and “we do not yet stand far enough away from the events of our time to be able to apprehend the laws behind them” (*HL*, 417).

Schenker’s and Schoenberg’s *Harmonielehren* represent the first installments of comprehensive, theoretical-pedagogical studies of composition in the tradition of Adolph Bernhard Marx’s four-volume *Die Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition, praktisch theoretisch*.³¹ Although we have used Schenker’s theories for analysis, Schenker himself uses them to teach composition, as well as piano performance conceived as *re-composition*.³² Schenker’s project is encompassed by *New Musical Theories and Fantasies*, of which *Harmonielehre*, completed in 1906, is the first volume; *Counterpoint*, written 1906–1922, is the second; and *Free Composition*, written 1922–1935 and initially conceived as part of *Counterpoint*; is the third.³³ “The Decline of the Art of Composition,” drafted in 1906 and focused on the damage done by Richard Wagner, is also projected as part of *New Musical Theories and Fantasies*, but “since Schenker’s case against Wagner rested principally on the autonomy of music, rather than its subservience to a text or plot, that argument would not have provided sufficient grounds for discrediting the radically new music of Schoenberg and his school,” so he abandons it (Drabkin 2005, 12–13). Although *Free Composition* is meant as the capstone to *New Musical Theories and Fantasies*, the coherence of the volumes is far from transparent. Schenker often cites the earlier volumes in *Free Composition*, but their content is overshadowed by the *Urlinie* (the original line) and the bass arpeggiation, as if by a freeway overpass with its concrete pylons, and the concluding section on form is generally regarded as “hastily thrown together” (Smith 1996, 192). Schoenberg first articulates his vision of a series of works forming an overarching theory of composition in a letter to his publisher in 1911: The components are to be *Harmonielehre*, a volume on counterpoint, a book on orchestration, a three-part study of form, and a synoptic work.³⁴ Most of Schoenberg’s theoretical writings after *Harmonielehre*, completed in 1911, are connected to this grand project (Neff 1993–1994). *Coherence, Counterpoint, Instrumentation, Instruction*

in Form, partially drafted in 1917, sketches the remaining components, with coherence playing the unifying role. This sketch is then filled out somewhat by *The Musical Idea and the Logic, Technique, and Art of Its Presentation*, partially drafted 1934–1936 and corresponding to the earlier coherence section; *Preliminary Exercises in Counterpoint*, partially drafted 1942–1950; *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*, drafted 1937–1948 and focused on form; and numerous shorter writings. *Structural Functions of Harmony*, written 1946–1948, revisits the matter of harmony, but it is often unclear what comes from Schoenberg and what comes from his editor, Leonard Stein (Neff 2011). Neither of Schenker’s and Schoenberg’s theories, then, attains complete expression—especially Schoenberg’s—and certain key components must be recovered from fragmentary traces.

Part I reconstructs and deconstructs Schenker’s and Schoenberg’s theories of composition with respect to their shared conceptions of the tone and the genius mentioned above—an effort that is especially significant given the continued belief in genius to this day. This part is not intended as a comprehensive survey of their theories. Chapter 1 analyzes Schenker’s and Schoenberg’s understanding of the genius as the true artist who realizes the tone and the ideas of freedom, God, and immortality for themselves and others, a belief that draws on Goethe and Arthur Schopenhauer. Like Goethe and Schopenhauer, Schenker and Schoenberg metaphorize the state of pure, spiritual perception that is said to constitute the genius’s act of realization as a *self-seeing inner eye*, and they disavow the actual blindness of an eye that is turned entirely in on itself. The genius, who embodies this eye by realizing a vision of the tone, is in truth *blind and blinding, alienated and alienating*. I argue that these circumstances contribute to Schenker’s and Schoenberg’s divergent musical and convergent spiritual developments. Chapters 2 and 3 fill out Schenker’s and Schoenberg’s mature understandings of the logical level of a piece of music with respect to their concepts of interruption and problems, which both dramatize the realization of the tone and use the same image schemas, but with differing emphases on the organic significance of repetition versus variation. Chapter 2 also begins to show how Schenker’s re-compositions in performance and listening play a role for him comparable to Schoenberg’s compositions in seeking God, while Chapter 3 gives an overview of the analytical framework used in Part II.

Part II analyzes key pieces of Schenker’s and Schoenberg’s music that develop the findings from Part I about their divergent musical and convergent spiritual lives and the themes of the genius’s blindness and alienation. This part is not meant to suggest that Schenker’s oeuvre is on a level with Schoenberg’s, nor is it a comprehensive survey, but it does offer explanations for why Schenker stops composing and why Schoenberg goes through the three style periods described by Ethan Haimo (2006, 354–355). Chapter 4 shows that Schenker, like Schoenberg, emancipates dissonances and solves problems in his music, and that Schenker’s rejection of *suspended tonality*