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“A Surrogate for the Soul”: Wittgenstein and Schoenberg

[Penultimate draft]

Eran Guter

One need not be a confirmed Humean in order to observe the effects of habit. When it comes to the contingencies of history, the conjunction of facts and a propensity to relate them to one another might indeed give rise to philosophical confusion. The practice of yoking Ludwig Wittgenstein and Arnold Schoenberg as intellectual comrades-in-arms of sorts seems to have already become commonplace. The *prima facie* appeal of such a practice is undeniable, and, indeed, one could hardly find a text on *Fin-de-Siècle* Vienna that does not underscore at least some similarity between the two great men—their biography, their cultural background, their intellectual projects, their personal fate. In such collage works, historians and philosophers alike often share an enthusiasm for bold brush strokes, which certainly serve a purpose within their overall perspective: to paint a picture of a cultural period to highlight common themes. Yet the thrust of the present essay is, in this sense, antithetical. This is an essay about differences and some of my brush strokes will be cautious and inevitably tentative. I contend that what sets Wittgenstein and Schoenberg apart from one another is much more interesting philosophically than the historical contingencies that seem to force them together.

My discussion is divided into four parts. I pay a modest tribute in the first section to the historical leads and impasses that serve, so to speak, as a color palette for all those who paint with bold brush strokes. I then move, in the second and third sections, to explicate the various grounds for Wittgenstein’s dissenting attitude toward the contemporary music of his time, which I take to be a necessary step in any argument whose conclusion pertains to any relation between the respective ideas of Wittgenstein

and Schoenberg. Finally, I turn in the final section to Schoenberg's method of composing with twelve tones, framing it in the context of Wittgenstein's philosophical views on music. I shall try to show that the most plausible sense in which Schoenberg's 12-tone system could indeed be rendered a serviceable image for Wittgenstein's view of language is by way of contrast; by underscoring precisely what is unique about Wittgenstein's attitude toward language as music.

Leads and Impasses

The literature abounds with bold brush strokes. A few major examples should suffice. Hilde Spiel, for instance, is quick to compare the decisiveness with which Schoenberg and his disciples introduced new musical forms that ousted those of the past to the attempts of Wittgenstein and Schlick to purge metaphysics from philosophical thought.¹ William Johnston sketchily suggests that the aphoristic style of Schoenberg's gigantic *Gurrelieder*, his last post-Romantic work, bore an affinity to fragments written by Wittgenstein;² and that Wittgenstein (by unmasking self-deception in logicians) and Schoenberg (by deploring excesses of late Romantic music) "unleashed a conservative counterrevolution so drastic as to threaten their own values."³ Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin offer an elaborate argument for the relevance of Schoenberg's 12-tone composition technique—peculiarly interpreted as an extension of Karl Kraus' cultural critique into the realm of music—for the understanding of the intellectual milieu from which Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* emerged.⁴

On occasions, the yoking of Wittgenstein and Schoenberg is merely juxtapositional, suggesting an inert connection via resemblance.⁵ However, my concern is with the more ambitious claim that certain technical aspects of Schoenberg's music may be used as a heuristic device for unlocking or shedding light on certain aspects of Wittgenstein's philosophy.⁶ Here, I suggest, the terrain is so uncharted that even an experienced traveler might go astray. For instance, in a recent lecture, delivered at Harvard on the occasion of a conference on Schoenberg's chamber music, Stanley Cavell made the following suggestion:

My suggestion is that the Schoenbergian idea of the row with its unforeseen yet pervasive consequences is a serviceable image of the Wittgensteinian idea of grammar and its elaboration of criteria of judgment, which shadow our expressions and which reveal pervasive yet unforeseen conditions of our existence, specifically in its illumination of our finite standing as one in which there is no complete vision of the possibilities of our understanding—no total revelation as it were—but in which the assumption of each of our assertions and retractions, in its specific manifestations in time and place, is to be worked through, discovering, so to speak, for each case its unconscious row.⁷

What kind of light might Schoenberg's theoretical conception of the 12-tone row throw on Wittgenstein's conception of grammar? Cavell maintains that Schoenberg's use of the 12-tone row exemplifies the communicability of the omnipresence of the inexpressible (or the "unheard," as the title of his lecture suggests);⁸ and, apropos Wittgenstein, such characterization does strike a familiar note, or so it seems. The real question is actually whether the relentless striving for communicability, or rather for comprehensibility—to use Schoenberg's own term⁹—that propels Schoenberg's dodecaphonic compositional procedures is on a par with the relentless, genuinely philosophical striving for the surveyability of grammar. Here, it seems to me, one cannot hope for a real answer before considering seriously what a truly Wittgensteinian response to Schoenberg's work might consist in. Yet such a response is not palpably within reach. It should be stated right at the outset, that any attempt to yoke Wittgenstein and Schoenberg for interpretative purposes is bound to occur in a convenient contextual limbo, underplaying a total absence of evidence, of any kind, of any direct influence, interaction or mutual interest between the two men. There is absolutely no reference to Arnold Schoenberg in Wittgenstein's entire *Nachlass* or in the ancillary correspondences that have been made available to scholarship heretofore. Similarly, and perhaps less surprisingly, there is absolutely no reference to Ludwig Wittgenstein in Schoenberg's literary estate.¹⁰ So here is our first impasse.

Another dead end is the alleged “Labor connection.” Composer, pianist and organist, Josef Labor, was “the Wittgenstein family court composer” and musical mentor of some of its members, and for a time he was a well-known musical figure in Vienna. His bust still stands in the garden of the Konzerthaus in Vienna, a forlorn witness to his long forgotten fame. His teaching, composition and musical performances exerted a significant impression on Ludwig Wittgenstein, as we can learn from numerous references in his writings and family letters.¹¹ He actually counted Labor’s music among the very best of Austrian art (MS 107, 184 – CV, 3).¹² Arnold Schoenberg was also acquainted with Labor. In his autodidactic beginnings as a composer, unsure of his talent and prospects, Schoenberg asked Labor for his opinion on one of his (Schoenberg’s) youth compositions. Labor graciously encouraged Schoenberg to pursue a professional career in music despite his lack of formal training in music and his lack of proficiency in playing the piano. Years later, Schoenberg expressed his appreciation for Labor’s favorable response in a letter sent to the elderly composer, in which he politely acknowledges the gratitude and respect of “modernists” like himself to old masters such as Labor.¹³ Schoenberg also included a performance of Labor’s clarinet quintet in D major Op. 11 in a concert of his *Society for Private Musical Performances* in Vienna. However, beyond these polite exchanges, and despite Schoenberg’s evident familiarity with at least some of Labor’s music, there is neither any reference to Labor in Schoenberg’s writings on music and musicians nor any reason to believe that Labor had any influence as a composer on Schoenberg’s own music. *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (first edition, 1980) seems to have initiated the common misconception that Schoenberg was actually Labor’s pupil.¹⁴ In the last analysis, the conjecture of a ready-made musical link between Wittgenstein and Schoenberg through the teaching and influence of Josef Labor remains unwarranted.

However, it is still undeniable that Schoenberg’s presence was inescapable in the music scene of central Europe, in particular in Vienna, until he fled the Nazis in 1933 to settle eventually in the United States. As Leon Botstein points out, the kind of outrage expressed at Schoenberg in Vienna during the first decade of the 20th Century surpassed

anything that had been leveled against Mahler and Strauss, or even against the new works of Pfitzner, Zemlinsky and Bartók, as Schoenberg drew heavy fire from eminent Viennese critics such as Robert Hirschfeld, Ludwig Karpath and Hans Liebstöckl.¹⁵ It seems unreasonable that his musical activity was totally unknown in the Wittgenstein family, which was so deeply involved and heavily invested in Viennese music; and indeed, quite on the contrary, Karl Wittgenstein, Ludwig's father, actually supported Schoenberg financially at some point.¹⁶ It is also hard to believe that the resounding scandals that occurred in 1907 and 1913 during major performances of Schoenberg's music in Vienna, the first even involving Gustav Mahler—Vienna's music czar and a distinguished guest in the Wittgenstein Palais—could have escaped the attention of members of the Wittgenstein family.¹⁷ Not unrelated is that fact that Schoenberg's music emerged as a concern in the Wittgenstein family: Paul Wittgenstein, the famous concert pianist, while being no less a 19th Century man of music than his younger brother Ludwig, made a sincere effort to assimilate the various styles of contemporary music, and yet had no success with Schoenberg's atonal idiom.¹⁸

A few further contextual observations can also be made. The first decades of the 20th Century proved to be the most dramatic and eruptive period in the history of Western music. According to Paul Griffiths,

At the moment when the First World War was about to begin, composers from quite different backgrounds, with Debussy, Schoenberg, Stravinsky and Webern at the head of them, had brought about the most rapid and far-reaching changes ever seen in western music. In the course of a few years the standard principles of tonality, formal direction and equilibrium, thematic continuity, rhythmic stability and orchestral homogeneity had all been questioned, sometimes all at once.¹⁹

It is highly unlikely that Wittgenstein—a probing, well-informed and relentless intellect, immensely sensitive to music—was totally unaware of the violent shock waves emanating from the heart of the European continent, in particular from his native Vienna, which shattered Western tonal system and threatened to change forever the very essence

of music. In fact, Wittgenstein is on record for saying that the music of Alban Berg, Schoenberg's famous pupil and enthusiastic advocate of 12-tone composition, is scandalous.²⁰ Moreover, David Pinsent noted in his diaries of 1912-1913 vehement arguments between Wittgenstein and his fellow students in Cambridge concerning modern music.²¹ On the other hand, we see that when Rudolf Koder reported to Wittgenstein from Vienna about an upcoming high-profile concert of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra featuring Bruckner's eighth symphony, he neglected, or found no reason to mention that the evening's program featured also the Viennese première of the three orchestral pieces from Alban Berg's *Lyric Suite*.²² Such circumstantial evidence suggests that the lack of reference to Schoenberg or to his 12-tone school in Wittgenstein's writings was initially due to a lack of interest rather than to a lack of knowledge. On the eve of the Second World War, when Wittgenstein was in exile in England and Schoenberg in exile in the United States, this lack of interest was probably sealed by a lack of knowledge as well.

The only lead that seems to promise something of an indirect and, as we shall see, ultimately antithetical link between Wittgenstein and Schoenberg is the alleged "Kraus connection." It has been widely acknowledged that Karl Kraus' influential preaching for the purification of language made a long-lasting impression on both men. Even in 1931, after his return to philosophy, Wittgenstein explicitly counted Kraus among the thinkers from whom he took a line of thinking for his own "work of clarification" (MS 154, 33 – CV, 19). On his part, Schoenberg gave Kraus a copy of his *Harmonielehre*—a book that contains the germ of his later embrace of atonal idiom in his own compositional practice—with the dedication "I have perhaps learned more from you than one is permitted to learn if one wishes to remain independent."²³ One could also think of a related secondary connection between Wittgenstein and Schoenberg through their respective friendships with Adolf Loos, Karl Kraus' brother-in-arms in the fight against what the two perceived as the culturally malignant aestheticism and hedonism of that time. The facts in this case are established enough. Loos personally supported and promoted Schoenberg's music, and his work clearly inspired certain aspects of

Wittgenstein's solemn design of the house in Kundmannngasse in Vienna, built for Margaret Stoneborough-Wittgenstein.²⁴ It is also clear that both Wittgenstein and Schoenberg admired Loos' work and cultural stance.

Still, the mere acknowledgement of such connections cannot carry us very far in terms of philosophical understanding; and, as it happens, a closer historical look only blurs the big picture. In the case of Loos and Schoenberg, there is at least an apparent asymmetry: for Loos, architecture was not a form of art. Loos argued passionately that while a work of art is revolutionary in its power to tear one out of one's comfortable existence, a house is conservative: it is pleasant, practical, public. Loos' revolt against the upsurge of ornamentation in practical design was, for all present purposes, an attempt to purify language precisely in Kraus' sense of the term. For houses, like the components of language, are artifacts designed for daily use.²⁵

In one of his most famous aphorisms, Karl Kraus vividly portrays the cultural mission that he and Loos took upon themselves:

All that Adolf Loos and I did—he literally, and I linguistically—was to show that there is a difference between an urn and a chamber pot, and that in this difference there is leeway for culture. But the others, the “positive ones,” are divided into those who use the urn as a chamber pot and those who use the chamber pot as an urn.²⁶

Here we certainly can find more than a merely accidental resemblance in at least Wittgenstein's erstwhile attitude toward language. Now, one might ask, was Schoenberg's quest for “the emancipation of the dissonance” akin to a purification of language in this sense? The answer is both yes and no. On the one hand, as Kraus suggests, the purification of language by means of showing the difference between an urn and a chamber pot entails a corresponding “purification,” or rather, liberation of the arts. For the arts must be unbounded by use, the sublime safeguarded. For that reason, Schoenberg of the middle period, the so-called atonal period in his music,²⁷ enjoyed the critical patronage of Kraus together with Oscar Kokoschka and other artists of the

younger generation: the expressionists who dared “to express unmediated a raw and febrile existential truth that honored *no* cultural convention,” as Carl Schorske puts it.²⁸ One is tempted to say that, in defiance of aestheticism, Schoenberg of the middle period presented an urn that could no longer be used as a chamber pot.

On the other hand, Schoenberg’s reaction to Post-Romantic excess in music was fundamentally different from Loos’ reaction to the Secession movement. The meaning of the emancipation of the dissonance cannot be captured in terms of a sort of removal of a façade of excessively embellished harmony from a *bona fide* musical structure. It is the culmination of a process that was already underway in the music of Gustav Mahler, Richard Strauss, Max Reger, Claude Debussy, Alexander Scriabin and others, in which the degree of emphasis on non-chordal tones reaches a point where tones lose their inclination to resolve at all. The dissonant harmonic complexes are no longer regulated by an underlying tonal structure but are “set free” as absolute harmonic entities, capable of standing on their own and related solely to one another. In his works from this atonal period, Schoenberg actually offered the arguably inevitable outcome of what he perceived as a complete and irreparable exhaustion of the hierarchic tonal system.²⁹ Thus, if there is a sense of purification involved in the emancipation of the dissonance at all, it is purification in the sense of stamping out.

Yet by 1923 Schoenberg’s expressionist phase reached a dead end. Disillusioned by his prewar, largely non-systematically atonal writing, Schoenberg set himself on a new course toward a rigorously systematized control over the chromatic materials from which he had emancipated himself. As I shall argue below, with this new musical project, Schoenberg decisively, albeit inadvertently, transgressed the Krausian framework of the urn and the chamber pot. Wittgenstein, who never did share Kraus’ and Loos’ enthusiasm for expressionism in art, and, in particular, for the progressive approach to musical composition, also set himself, before too long, on a new path, disillusioned by his own onetime quest for language in its pure and uncorrupted form, which is to be found underneath the rubble of language as used. Thus, we have reached another historical impasse; the divergent shifts in Wittgenstein’s view of language and in Schoenberg’s

view of the practice of composition circumscribe the grain of truth in the alleged “Kraus connection”. Yet this grain of truth is of genuine philosophical importance and in order to pursue it, we must break through this impasse. Hence we now turn to consider Wittgenstein’s attitude toward the contemporary music of his time.

Aspects of Decline

Wittgenstein’s fierce animosity toward modern music, noted *en passant* in the previous section, is well documented. Yet it is this explicit rejection of modern music that is being patently suppressed when Wittgenstein and Schoenberg are yoked together, rather than serving as a major premise in any attempt to spell out the true nature of whatever relation may obtain between their respective projects.³⁰ It is worthwhile, I suggest, to look closely at this issue, not simply just as a matter of demarcating Wittgenstein’s musical taste, but rather as an important and highly instructive manifestation of his general attitude to his times. And as Georg Henrik von Wright so aptly put it,

Fichte’s famous words ‘Was für eine Philosophie man wählt, hängt davon ab, was für eine Mensch man ist’, may not be interestingly applicable to the average, mediocre, academic philosopher. But for the great ones it is, I think, profoundly true. Their philosophy reflects their personality, and *vice versa*. And if personalities differ profoundly, so will the philosophies. Therefore it is not futile to look for the way in which Wittgenstein’s thought can be said to reflect his view of life.³¹

Only three contemporary composers—all of them closely associated with the Wittgenstein family—are actually named in Wittgenstein’s writings or in related documentation: Richard Strauss, Gustav Mahler and Josef Labor. As noted before, Labor, the only contemporary composer unequivocally praised by Wittgenstein, is an exceptional case, and I shall have something to say about this later on. The other two composers had already been pressing music hard against the brink of atonality by the first

decade of the 20th Century, and, evidently, Wittgenstein was familiar with at least some of their music. Mahler and Strauss each had a crucial role in driving Western tonal music into a dead end that resulted in nothing short of a crisis in musical language itself. This fact has been observed by Felix Salzer,³² and the particular reference to this eminent musicologist in the present context is, of course, far from being accidental. Felix Salzer was Ludwig Wittgenstein's nephew, and according to Brian McGuinness, the two men spent some time together discussing Salzer's own work and the music theory of Heinrich Schenker, who was Salzer's mentor.³³ These discussions began in 1926 and continued on to summers on the *Hochreit*, the Wittgenstein family country estate, in the early 1930s.³⁴

These intellectual exchanges on music set up an important nexus of ideas for our discussion. Evidently, Wittgenstein and Salzer shared an overall pessimism with regard to the prospects of recent musical innovations. This brand of cultural pessimism is clearly traceable to Oswald Spengler, on the one hand, and to Heinrich Schenker, on the other. Wittgenstein came under the spell of both thinkers around the same time. While exchanging ideas on music with Salzer, he was also reading Spengler's magnum opus, *The Decline of the West*, in the late spring of 1930. Both thinkers enjoyed at least some credit in his eyes. According to Salzer, Wittgenstein's judgement of Schenker's view of music was not entirely negative.³⁵ As for Spengler, despite being critical about what he perceived to be a number of irresponsible ideas in *The Decline of the West*, Wittgenstein nevertheless wrote in his diary on May 6, 1930: "Many, perhaps most [of Spengler's ideas] are in total accord with what I have been thinking myself" (*D*, 24). Of course, the mere conjunction of these facts does not imply that Wittgenstein was inclined to entertain the ideas of the two thinkers on the same track. Yet, luckily, we do have a "smoking gun": by 1931 Wittgenstein felt himself versed enough in Schenker's approach to music to relate it to his own notion of "family resemblance," which he had adapted from Spengler's morphological approach to cultural epochs.³⁶

The direct influence of Oswald Spengler, a philosophical dilettante full of sound and fury, on Wittgenstein's work—corroborated by the latter's own admission (MS 154, 33 – *CV*, 19)—caught most scholars by surprise in 1977 upon the publication of the

posthumous volume *Vermischte Bemerkungen* (later published in English as *Culture and Value*). However, since then, this influence has been widely acknowledged, and it is now fairly established that Wittgenstein espoused Spengler's views on two major fronts. First, as Georg Henrik von Wright has argued on various occasions, Wittgenstein shared Spengler's cultural pessimism and his perspective of epochal decline. According to von Wright,

Wittgenstein did not, like Spengler, develop a philosophy of history. But he *lived* the '*Untergang des Abendlandes*', the decline of the West, one could say. He lived it, not only in his disgust for contemporary Western civilization, but also in his deep awe and understanding of this civilization's great past.³⁷

Furthermore, according to Rudolf Haller,

Wittgenstein finds in Spengler not only an intellectual kinsman, who declares his alienation from the surrounding civilization, with its symptoms of a declining epoch, but also the initiator of an approach or 'line of thinking' which seems to him most appropriate as the methodological tool for the investigation of language games.³⁸

This "line of thinking" is the main principle of comparative morphology or the "physiognomic method," originally derived from Goethe's writings—a conceptual iceberg, of which Wittgenstein's adaptation of the pervasive notion of "family resemblance" in his later writings is merely the tip.

Wittgenstein's famous 1930 sketch for a forward to his *Philosophical Remarks* provides a sweeping impression of Wittgenstein's alienation from the contemporary art of his time (he names modern music and architecture in particular) and its deceptive spirit of progress (MS 109, 204ff. – CV, 6-7). The "great suspicion (though without understanding its language)" with which Wittgenstein approached modern music, by his own admission, and his lamentation of "the disappearance of the arts" mark a clear point

of convergence with Spengler's somewhat more furious yet strikingly similar remarks on the impotence and falsehood of contemporary art:

What do we possess today as 'art'? A faked music, filled with artificial noisiness of massed instruments; a faked painting, filled with idiotic, exotic and showcard effects, that every ten years or so concocts out of the form-wealth of millennia some new 'style' which is in fact no style at all since everyone does as he pleases.³⁹

Spengler's fingerprints are unmistakable also in Wittgenstein's later comments on the deterioration of high culture in his 1938 lectures on aesthetics, especially in Wittgenstein's characterization of artistic decline in terms of a breakdown of artistic necessity through reproduction of artifacts and a corresponding deterioration of sensitivity leading to indifference, and also in his curious remark concerning vintage furniture (*LC*, 7).⁴⁰

So much is obvious; yet I suggest that Spengler's impact on Wittgenstein's thinking about art runs deeper still. To realize this, we need to turn now to Heinrich Schenker. Schenker's pessimism concerning the prospects of modern music is intrinsically related to his unique view of musical composition. Working up his case by meticulously analyzing masterworks of Western music, Schenker theorized that works of music that are tonal and exhibit mastery are temporal projections of a single element: the tonic triad. According to Schenker, the projection of this triad comprises two processes: (a) the transformation of the triad into a basic contrapuntal design, which he called *Ursatz*;⁴¹ and (b) the *Auskomponierung* or elaboration of the *Ursatz* by various techniques of prolongation. This notion of music is highly abstract; in practice, as Schenker shows in his own analyses, the process of elaboration begins when the *Ursatz* is already in an articulated form—this he called *Hintergrund*, or the "background" of the work. The number of possible forms of background is theoretically infinite.

Yet, at the heart of Schenker's abstract notion of music, one finds the conviction that the masterworks of Western music teach us that hearing music consists in

recognizing a structural standard, which is shared by anything that we may rightfully call music. Hearing music as an "exfoliation" of this fundamental structure is part of the "phenomenology" of musical perception, rather than a matter of inference or analysis. As Milton Babbitt pointed out, the crucial idea in Schenker's view of music is "the perception of a musical work as a dynamic totality, not as a succession of moments or a juxtaposition of 'formal' areas related or contrasted merely by the fact of thematic or harmonic similarity or dissimilarity."⁴² According to Schenker, all works of music (in particular all masterworks) are, in a sense, extended commentaries on the tonic triad. In effect, Schenker's theory embodies an attempt to describe musical thinking itself: it describes how we keep a single triad in mind over a period of time, and how we interpret configurations of notes as contributing to the continuity of that cognition.

Thus, it becomes a matter of analytic truth, that all works of music that digress from triadic tonality—that is, whose Schenkerian analysis shows that their surface, or "foreground," cannot be hierarchically related by a series of expansions ("middleground" layers) to a constant "background", and ultimately, to the *Ursatz*—are to be patently rejected by Schenker as unsuccessful, superficial, or altogether musically nonsensical, depending on how severe the digression is. Schenker's hostility toward contemporary music was fueled not only by his mighty theory of music, but also, and perhaps even more significantly, by his conviction that the results of his theory betoken a disintegration of musical culture on all fronts.⁴³ Irreverence toward the laws of tonal effect, he believed, reflects a loss of musical instinct for the inner complexities of the masterworks of Western music among performers and composers alike, which in turn hinders the musician's almost sacred mission to provide access to the world of human experience contained in such masterworks. Thus, he likened contemporary music making to a Chinese person picking up a text by Goethe without having sufficient knowledge of the German language.⁴⁴

In the face of the dramatic changes in compositional techniques that had taken place at the turn of the 20th Century, Schenker stated as early as 1910 that music, like the once-great cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii, lay in ruins. He openly disapproved of the

compositional practice of Mahler, Strauss, Reger, and Schoenberg.⁴⁵ He also deplored the fact that people no longer made distinctions between the output of composers like Debussy, Ravel and Stravinsky, and the masterworks of Bach, Mozart and Beethoven, and, in effect, treated them as if they were all "music" in the same sense. In Schenker's view, the emancipators of the dissonance were merely reveling in empty sonorities, being unable to bind them together as elaborations of a single chord.⁴⁶ Of course, Arnold Schoenberg's musical and theoretical output was an anathema for Schenker, and the two men were entangled in bitter, extensive polemics against one another.⁴⁷ I shall return to the roots of this dispute in the next section.

My précis of Schenker's highly technical writings is inevitably oversimplified. Yet it allows us to see fairly easily how the main thrust of Schenker's view of music coincides with Wittgenstein's thinking. In section 58 of the so-called "Big Typescript" (cf. MS 111, 119 – CV, 14), Wittgenstein reprimands Spengler's dogmatism in sorting cultural epochs into families, ascribing properties, which only the prototype, or archetype (*Urbild*) possesses, to the object that is viewed in its light. This is the context in which Wittgenstein saw a connection with the Schenkerian view of music. The Schenkerian *Ursatz*, which encapsulates the whole of triadic tonality, is the *Urbild* in Wittgenstein's analogous construal. Hence, analogously, Schenker's mistake is in the way that he extends the scope of statements true of tonality (in its pre-articulated form) to particular works of tonal music. Clearly, behind this mistake stands the "craving for generality" that Wittgenstein often diagnoses and condemns (see e.g. *BB*, 17-18). Indeed, Schenker seems to have envisioned that his theory amounts to nothing less than a fully-fledged essentialist account of music, a complete analytic definition of the concept of music, which lays down necessary and sufficient conditions for its application, and hence, as we have seen before, entails a clear demarcation between *bona fide* cases of music and what is to be regarded, in lieu of a better term, as non-music.

The upshot of Wittgenstein's conflation of Schenker and Spengler is this. Wittgenstein is committed to the contention that triadic tonality is the focal point for comparing musical instances; he also maintains that various musical instances may bear

more or less family resemblance to one another, to the extent of the exclusion of certain instances. Yet Wittgenstein is bound to deny that the general validity of the concept of tonality depends on the claim that everything which is true only of the abstract Schenkerian *Ursatz* (qua the prototype of the observation) holds too for all the musical instances under consideration. Rather, when the prototype is clearly presented for what it really is, and thus becomes the focal point of the observation, the general validity of the concept of tonality will depend on the fact that it characterizes the whole of the observation and determines its form. In this anti-essentialist vein, the Schenkerian *Ursatz* becomes a mere methodic device that can be laid alongside the musical instances under consideration as a measure.⁴⁸

While Wittgenstein never did address the concept of tonality directly, at least the rudiments of what we might call his "philosophical conception of tonality" can still be extracted from what he did write about such matters as the rules of harmony and their effects. I shall dedicate the remainder of this section to the fleshing out of this crucial issue. Yet, before I do that, a few general remarks on Wittgenstein's various texts on musical experience are in order. The bulk of these texts belong, by and large, to his later work, and they are thematically indigenous to his thinking on philosophical psychology. Wittgenstein's discussion of musical experience occurs at the intersection of three often-overlapping concerns: (a) the grammatical complexity of language games that pertain to aesthetic phenomena and to musical experience in particular; (b) the pervasiveness of aspect dawning, in particular in music; and (c) the notion of physiognomy and its philosophical ramifications. I have dealt with these issues in some detail elsewhere,⁴⁹ so I will restrict myself here to a brief summary.

According to Wittgenstein, our intercourse with music exemplifies a special kind of grammatical complexity: each move in the language game played logically presupposes corresponding moves in various other games, ultimately presupposing "the whole range of our language games" (MS 132, 59 – CV 52). In this sense of a logical hierarchy between language games, we may speak of the meaning of a musical gesture in terms of what I would like to call a "vertical axis".⁵⁰ Yet what makes our musical

experiences akin to aspect dawning on the one hand, and to what Wittgenstein calls “the use of words in a secondary sense” (*PI* II xi 216), on the other, is the manner in which we reach for a certain expression as the only possible way in which to express our experience, our perceptions, inclinations and feelings. Just like our expression of aspect dawning or our use of words in a secondary sense, the specificity of a musical gesture lies in the absence of a “more direct” way of expressing the experience in question. Here, according to Wittgenstein, music and language intertwine, or as he put it, “the [musical] theme is in reciprocal action with language” (MS 132, 59 – CV 52); the relation between the musical gesture and the thing expressed is internal.⁵¹

An important facet of Wittgenstein's discussion of musical expression is the logical implications of his emphasis on the notion of physiognomy. The notion of physiognomy—the meaningful irregularity of the living body—is central both to his explication of aspect seeing (*PI* II xi 193) and to his various discussions of musical expression (*LC* 4; *PI* §536; *RPP* I §434; CV 52). According to Wittgenstein, enormous variability, irregularity, and unpredictability are an essential part of human physiognomy and the concepts for which human physiognomy serve as a basis (*RPP* II §§614-615, 617, 627). Musical gesture is akin to human physiognomy in being fundamentally non-mechanical; it cannot be recognized or described by means of rules, and it introduces indefiniteness, a certain insufficiency of evidence, into our musical understanding that is constitutive in a logical sense, hence not indicative of any deficiency of knowledge (see e.g. MS 137, 67 – CV 73; *RPP* II §695; *Z* §157). The concept of musical expression, like the concept of “soul”, is diametrically opposed to the concept of a mechanism (cf. *RPP* I §324)—an exact, definite calculation and prediction is conceptually detrimental to what we regard as musical expression. Thus, musical gesture admits what Wittgenstein calls “imponderable evidence”: “subtleties of glance, of gesture, of tone” that form a basis for our *Menschenkenntnis*, our “knowledge of mankind”—a kind of knowledge or a skill that can be learned by some and taught by some, yet only through “experience” or “varied observation” and by exchanging “tips” (*PI* II xi 227-229). The imponderability of this kind of evidence is significantly reflected in the way we attempt to express our

experiences, and in the measure of the success of what we offer as our "justifications"; that is, significantly, in our interlocutor's willingness to follow the rules of the game that we are playing, using concepts based on indefinite evidence (*LWI* §927).

Considering musical meaning, an internal relation adjoining musical gesture and the life of mankind (shown by language), enables us to appreciate Wittgenstein's assertion: "For me this musical phrase is a gesture. It insinuates itself into my life. I adopt it as my own" (*MS* 137, 67 – *CV* 73). What we nonchalantly call "music" or "a melody" is already given to us with a familiar physiognomy, its impression vertically related to a myriad of other language games in its significantly human environment. And so, says Wittgenstein, "understanding music is an avowal of the life of mankind" (*MS* 137, 20). Wittgenstein's contention that music opens up a realm of *Menschenkenntnis* for us to partake underscores the strong affinity with Heinrich Schenker's aforementioned view of the role and the profundity of the great masterworks of Western music in providing access to the world of human experience.

Let us now turn to Wittgenstein's treatment of the notion of *Harmonielehre*. It should not be surprising that Wittgenstein regarded *Harmonielehre*, the systematic representation of the rules of tonal effect, as grammar.⁵² *Harmonielehre* typically describes the way we hear harmonic relations and prescribes methods for constructing chord progressions in a way that renders these relations clear and distinct. As one would expect, Wittgenstein maintains that a musical passage is not an arbitrary string of sounds; the right way to combine a musical tone with other tones is somehow already built into the tone itself.⁵³ In fact, this was considered the essence of tonality from roughly 1600 to 1910: a mere sequence of notes is not a musical phrase until it is heard as organized around one privileged tone, namely, the tonic. Wittgenstein says in acknowledgement:

[t]he finitude of the musical scale can only derive from its internal properties. For instance, from our being able to tell from a note *itself* that it is the final one, and so that this last note, or the last notes, exhibit inner properties which the notes in between don't have. (*PR* §223)

The privileged status of the tonic is a property which it cannot fail to possess, because it is essential to its being the thing it is. Thus, according to Wittgenstein, tonal relationships, represented by *Harmonielehre*, are internal, that is, they cannot fail to obtain, since they are given with, or constitutive of, the relata in practice; they cannot be underpinned or explained by postulating mediating links between the relata.

Wittgenstein illustrated this point in *The Brown Book* by discussing the phenomenon of hearing the same tone again in a diatonic scale (*BB*, 140-141)—certainly one of the most fundamental tonal effects in music. The question is why we call tones that appear in an interval of an octave “the same tone.” Wittgenstein asks us to imagine a case in which a person calls the tonic, the dominant and the octave, “the same tone.” His point is that we can say that this person hears different things than we do, insofar as we do not assert that there must be some other difference between this person and us besides the aforementioned. Simply put, the only thing that we can say in this case, and in any similar case, is that two tones that stand in the relation of “sameness” cannot be a tonic and a dominant, or a dominant and an octave. Tonality is mirrored by grammatical analysis.⁵⁴ Thus *Harmonielehre* represents the grammar of tones in a way that is analogous to Wittgenstein's onetime example of the color octahedron (see *PR* §1, §3): it is “at least in part phenomenology and therefore grammar” (*PR* §4).

We can see that quite in accordance with Wittgenstein's general view of musical meaning, which I described above, the most important feature of his treatment of *Harmonielehre* is the emphasis on its being a representation of internal relations, hence on the primacy of praxis. Tonality (experiencing and expressing certain relationships between tones) is effected by the way we recognize and describe things, and to that extent *Harmonielehre* is not a matter of taste (*PR* §4). In 1934, Wittgenstein wrote:

Is the *Harmonielehre* constructed in accordance with our feelings; do we try out whether a [chord] progression pleases us [insertion: more or less], in the way that we perhaps select the ingredients of a dish according to our taste? And is the difference perhaps in that there are valid rules for the taste in chord progressions that are more general than [the rules for the taste] in food? Could *one* reason be

given at all for why the *Harmonielehre* is the way it is? And, first and foremost, *must* such a reason be given? It is here and it is part of our entire life. (MS 157a, 24-26)

The comparison between rules of grammar and rules of cookery is standard in Wittgenstein's later writings (see e.g. *PG* §133; TS 213, 236). It serves the purpose of highlighting the unique status of rules of grammar. According to Wittgenstein, rules of cookery can be justified by appealing to their (external) purpose, i.e. creating a delectable dish. The goal of cooking is independent of the rules of cookery: if I decide to improvise in the kitchen, I should bear in mind the old maxim that the proof of the pudding is in the eating. The rules of cookery are therefore constituted externally by the desired result, which is causally effected by the activity of cooking and by various other contingencies (such as the kind of ingredients that I happen to have in my kitchen cabinet etc.). Thus we may legitimately speak of right or wrong rules of cookery (to wit, those which happen to bring about a tasty dish are right). In contradistinction, if rules of grammar define a practice (i.e., if they do not admit alternatives), then they cannot be said to be constituted externally in this sense. A systematic deviation from the rules of grammar entails a wholesale rejection of the practice defined by those rules.

The status of *Harmonielehere* as a representation of grammar means that, for Wittgenstein, tonality sets limits to what makes (musical) sense. Here Wittgenstein seems to be in complete agreement with Heinrich Schenker. Still the profundity of Wittgenstein's philosophical emulation of Schenker's view of music is revealed when we consider that for Wittgenstein, what a musical gesture means is determined by its "vertical axis", that is, by consisting in a move in a vertically complex language game of the kind described above. Wittgenstein makes this explicit in the following passage from 1946:

We can apply to the melodies by the various composers the principle: each species of tree is a 'tree' in a different *sense* of the word. That is, don't be misled by the fact that we say all these are melodies. They are stages along a path which

leads from something you would not call a melody to something else that you would equally not call a melody. If we just look at the sequences of notes and changes of key all these entities [Gebilde] seem to be in coordination [in Koordination]. But if you look at the environment in which they exist [das Feld in dem sie stehen] (and hence at their meaning), you will be inclined to say: In this case melody is something quite different from what is in that one (amongst other things, here it has a different origin and plays a different role). (MS 131, 12 – CV, 47)⁵⁵

From Wittgenstein's perspective, we can say that by showing that (great) works of music are, in the last analysis, extended commentaries on the tonic triad, Schenker has merely given us a focal point or a measure for the observation that each instance of a musical gesture is a gesture in a different sense of the word.⁵⁶ Wittgenstein's somewhat cryptic way of defining musical gesture as "stages along a path" that adjoins what is *not yet* music with what is *no more* music, betokens of an internal relation, which, as I have suggested, is the mark of musical meaning. Hence, for Wittgenstein, looking at the meaning of a musical gesture amounts to looking at the actual language game in which it is embedded, and its vertical relation to a range of other language games.

Since tonality cannot be vindicated by reference to putative facts about the world or about the mind, as Schenker believed, there is no sense in seeking the reason why *Harmonielehre*, the grammatical representation of tonal manifestations, is the way it is. As Wittgenstein put it, "[that reason] is here and it is part of our entire life"; that is, the musical distinctions that we make have to be important to us, given the kind of beings we are, the purposes we have, our shared discriminatory capacities, and certain general features of the world we inhabit. This leaves more than ample room for composers to extend the range of musical expression (see *LC*, 6; MS 133, 30 – *CV*, 55). Yet the boundaries of sense are also clear, and they suggest two important angles on the decline of modern music. First, since the rules of harmony are not constituted externally by concocting chord progressions according to taste, those composers who do so, those who revel in empty sonorities (to use Schenker's phrase), tarnish the tonal idiom from within,

so to speak, by ungrammatical and effectively senseless gesticulation.⁵⁷ Still, a comprehensive *Harmonielehre*—"just looking at the sequences of notes and changes of key"—can readily expose such grammatical mishaps for what they are: simply wrong. Second, a much more serious transgression of tonality would amount to a wholesale rejection of its praxeological foundation, ultimately a nonsensical transgression of the "reason" why the practice is the way it is, to wit, "our entire life". Wittgenstein's point is that such a perversion of musical gesture could no longer be either right or wrong, for it would amount to "speaking of something else" (cf. *PG* §133). To this latter, deeper worry we shall now turn.

The Music of the Future

It would be worthwhile, I think, to take a closer look at some of Wittgenstein's remarks on the music of Gustav Mahler—praised already in his lifetime as "the contemporary of the future"—the only truly modern composer, who apparently was great enough in Wittgenstein's eyes to be worthy of attention. Wittgenstein's somewhat abusive remarks on Mahler, those scattered in his various writings and those relayed to us by friends and disciples, exemplify a distinct duality toward Mahler's musical persona that was typical among Austrian literati at that time. Carl Schorske describes this as a duality in Mahler's functional relation to the classical tradition; an acute tension between Mahler's acceptance as a conductor—a guardian of the abstract, autonomous music so cherished by the educated elite—and his rejection as a composer, who subversively attempted to imbue abstract high-culture music with concrete vernacular substance.⁵⁸ Georg Henrik von Wright recalled from his conversations with Wittgenstein that Wittgenstein had a tremendous respect toward Mahler, not only as a conductor (Wittgenstein thought that as a conductor, Mahler was unequalled), but also as a composer, although he did believe strongly that there is something deeply faulty in Mahler's music.⁵⁹ Mahler was a genuine problem for Wittgenstein, a limiting case in the history of Western music—"You would

need to know a good deal about music, its history and development, to understand him,” said Wittgenstein at one point.⁶⁰

Let us first consider two passages that Wittgenstein wrote in 1931:

When our late, great composers *sometimes* write in simple [variant: clear] harmonic progressions [variant: relations], then they bear witness to their ancestral mother [Stammutter]. Mahler appears to me precisely at these moments (when the *others* move me the most) exceptionally unbearable, and I always would like to say: but you merely heard this from the others, this does not (*really*) belong to you. (*D*, 47)

A picture of a complete apple tree, however accurate, is in a certain sense much less like the tree itself than is a little daisy. And in the same sense a symphony by Bruckner is infinitely closer to a symphony from the heroic period than is one by Mahler. If the latter is a work of art it is one of a *totally* different sort. (But this is actually itself a Spenglerian observation.) (MS 154, 39 – CV, 20)

Given Wittgenstein's contention that musical meaning is an internal relation in which music and language are in reciprocal action, it is clear why he says that he is moved most strongly when composers (other than Mahler) write in the clearest tonal idiom. Such familiar musical gestures—a perfect cadence, for instance—are already deeply entrenched as parts of our life; as Wittgenstein put it, what is ordinary is filled with significance (cf. MS 132, 59 – CV, 52). Yet Wittgenstein believes that precisely in such moments of great expressive transparency, a transgression is taking place in Mahler's music: the avowal is not genuine. It is crucial to understand exactly why Wittgenstein finds Mahler most unbearable when he writes in simple tonal relationships, rather than in his many moments of extraordinary harmonic daring. Perhaps the best way to approach this problem is to acknowledge Wittgenstein's striking grasp of the essence of Mahler's musical language. Mahler's mature works—e.g. his fourth symphony—display significant ambivalence in the area of harmony and tonal relationships. On the one hand,

the music often seems deceptively conservative, employing undisguised dominant relationships that still play an essential structural role. On the other hand, as Robert Morgan observes, “tonality in Mahler comes close to reaching its final stage of dissolution: complete works, and even individual movements, no longer necessarily define a single key, but explore a range of related and interconnected regions, often closing in a different key from the one in which they began. ... Such procedures alter the very meaning of tonality, which becomes a complex network of interchangeable relationships, rather than a closed system that ultimately pulls in a single, uncontested direction.”⁶¹

This observation suggests that Wittgenstein’s criticism of Mahler’s music focused on its allegedly perverse toiling with tonality rather than on the vagaries of over-stretched chromaticism. In other words, Mahler was a problem for Wittgenstein because his musical gestures only play at being in reciprocal action with language (and our life), and what is familiar cannot be other-worldly at the same time. Wittgenstein’s comparison between Mahler and Bruckner provides further support of this view. To a significant extent, the music of these two great composers exhibits strikingly similar surface characteristics: the evident employment of Wagnerian compositional techniques, extended chromaticism, the enormous length of their works that extends far beyond the traditional symphonic form, the juxtaposition of contrasting musical materials, etc. Interestingly, Wittgenstein’s reaction to such musical innovations was quite favorable, as we can learn, for example, from his enthusiastic correspondence with his sister Hermine concerning Bruckner’s third symphony in D minor, in particular its third movement, the *scherzo*.⁶²

In a letter dated January 22, 1948 to Ben Richards, Wittgenstein’s commented on this work:

Of course what you say about the ending of the 3rd movement (Bruckner) isn’t final. His ‘abruptness’ is an essential part of his language. He writes in ‘main clauses’ (I’m not sure if that’s the right grammatical term; I mean the opposite of ‘subordinate clause’). He doesn’t say “If it rains I shan’t go”, but “It rains. I don’t

go.” A good example of it is the introduction to the first movement, which sounds like so many scraps but is a connected whole. People generally, when they first hear Bruckner, and for a *long* time, can’t hear his music ‘*connected*’. In the same way that ending of the 3rd movement is *not* abrupt, but of course it seems so, unless you can listen to his way of telling the story. (By the way, the 3rd movement does not lead into the 4th.)⁶³

What Wittgenstein calls “Bruckner’s way of telling the story” pertains essentially to Bruckner’s typical approach to the large-scale tonal-narrative of his symphonies. As Wittgenstein suggests, this is intrinsically related to the problem of hearing Bruckner’s music as a “connected whole.” The first obstacle for anyone who tries to hear Bruckner’s music “connected” is its unprecedented monumentality. The sheer size of a Bruckner symphony is attained mainly through a slowing of usual musical processes. The ideal of the Classical sonata form—which underlies the symphonies of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, for example—was dynamism: the music evolved both tonally and motivically to create the effect of goal-orientated forward motion. This dynamism was created both by harmonic motion and logical motivic transformation. Yet, as seen clearly in the first movement of Bruckner’s third symphony, instead of the classicist’s brief contrasted themes, skillfully bridged by interludes, Bruckner upsets the sonata form by setting forth a number of independent theme-groups, each consisting of well-contrasted motivated portions, and allowing each motif its full elaboration and expanse of time. This results in huge stretches of thematic development, and expansive sections of static harmony.⁶⁴

Bruckner’s unaccustomed juxtaposition of blocks of unlike musical material—his ‘abruptness’, in Wittgenstein’s words—is a related obstacle that renders his music “unconnected” for many listeners. The fragmented introduction of the first movement of the third symphony begins to make sense once we attain a clear grasp of the typically Brucknerian so-called “redemptive” narrative of the symphony, especially of the fact—pointed out indirectly by Wittgenstein—that the first and the last movements must be regarded as logical sequels, indispensable and supplementary to each other (thus, indeed, as Wittgenstein said, the third movement does not lead into the fourth). The “redemption”

lies simply in the success in securing tonic closure. Bruckner's imaginative unorthodoxy with regard to the key schemes of his sonata form and his formal strategic innovations enables him to postpone the definitive arrival on the tonic. Only in the coda, which remains outside the sonata space proper, can the triumphant tonic be reasserted and, in terms of the narrative, bring about redemption (hence the considerable importance of the coda in a Bruckner symphony).

The upshot is this: acknowledging that Bruckner's 'abruptness' is an essential part of his musical language, hearing his music as a 'connected whole' rests on an overview of the tonal-narrative of the work with its uncontested, inevitable directionality. Here we come to a profound difference between Bruckner and Mahler, and to the reason for Wittgenstein's contention that "a symphony by Bruckner is infinitely closer to a symphony from the heroic period than is one by Mahler." As noted before, for some aspects of Mahler's music there are precedents in Bruckner; yet Mahler's approach to large-scale form was completely and radically new. Whereas a Bruckner symphony still exemplifies a closed system of musical relationship, Mahler introduced an innovative conception of musical form as a developing succession of individual episodes, held together by a complex network of interchangeable tonal relationships and by an elaborately developed system of motivic correspondences. This more open conception of form enabled Mahler to incorporate materials whose extreme contrasts would destroy the internal consistency of a more traditional context.

Georg Henrik von Wright recalled that Wittgenstein said that there was something initially incorrect in the architecture of Mahler's music.⁶⁵ Taken at face value—as when the term "architecture" is straightforwardly taken to denote large-scale form—Wittgenstein's observation may sound quite trite, and perhaps it is. Still, one is obliged to consider that the simile of "architecture" is not uncommon also in Wittgenstein's *Nachlass*. In particular, he refers to the architecture of mathematical systems, making the general point that a mathematical proposition can carry any weight, and is of any use, only insofar as there exists also a practice; otherwise it is no more than "a free floating piece of mathematical scaffolding" (see MS 121, 41-42). From Wittgenstein's point of

view, when compared to Bruckner's "way of telling the story," Mahler's way consists in precisely such a flawed architecture: if Bruckner is said to have composed in "main clauses," then Mahler must have been composing, oddly enough, *only* in "subordinate clauses."⁶⁶ Thus understood, Mahler's musical gestures veer away from their vertical axis; they become a kind of musical *Scheinarchitektur*.

Mahler's way of altering the meaning of tonality itself by means of his compositional procedures yielded music that may be fairly regarded as constructed. One may recall, in this context, Mahler's comment that to him writing a symphony means *constructing* a world with all the *technical* means at his disposal.⁶⁷ Such considerations illuminate Wittgenstein's assertion that Mahler is most unbearable precisely when he writes something that appears to be a perfectly grammatical musical phrase, for it is precisely in Mahler's deceptive simplicity—not in his embellished harmony—that the constructed nature of his music becomes painfully acute. To use Wittgenstein's own words, when writing in simple harmonic progressions, Mahler only *appears* to bear witness to Beethoven's or Bruckner's ancestral mother; in reality, since its rules of grammar are radically altered, Mahler's music bespeaks different things, involving concepts that are different, and ultimately, if it is a work of art at all, "it is one of a *totally* different sort." Thus Wittgenstein's point in reproaching Mahler—"you merely heard this from the others, this does not (*really*) belong to you"—begets its real philosophical thrust in a way that underscores the striking depth of Wittgenstein's ambivalence toward Mahler's musical persona: these musical gestures are merely *Scheinarchitektur*, not genuine avowals of the life of mankind—for how could they be?—and in this sense they are not authentic (*unecht*).⁶⁸

We may conclude that the crux of Wittgenstein's hostility toward Mahler, of all other contemporary composers, was not atonality in itself, but rather the constructed nature of his musical language. As I suggested before, in a sense, atonality *per se* was simply uninteresting for Wittgenstein. It was not even a problem. The following diary entry from January 27, 1931 lends further support for these claims:

The music of past times always corresponds to certain maxims of the good and the right of that time. We recognize Keller's principles in Brahms, etc, etc. Thus good music, which is being conceived today or has been conceived recently, that is to say modern, must seem absurd; for if it corresponds to any of the maxims *pronounced* today, then it must be rubbish. The following sentence is not easy to understand but this is how things are: today no one is clever enough to formulate what is right [das Rechte], and *all* formulations and maxims that are pronounced are nonsense [Unsinn]. The truth would sound *quite* paradoxical to everyone. And the composer who feels this within him must stand with this feeling in opposition to everything that is nowadays pronounced, and thus must seem by the present standards absurd, foolish. But not absurd in the *attractive* sense (for that is basically what the contemporary view corresponds to), but rather in the sense of *saying nothing* [nichtssagend]. Labor is an example of this, where he really created something important, as he did in some few pieces. (*D*, 38)

Wittgenstein presents three categories of contemporary music here: the good, the bad, and the meaningless. At least two of them—the first and the third—are genuinely intriguing from a philosophical perspective. According to Wittgenstein, bad modern music is conceived in accordance with prevailing contemporary principles, which are equally ill conceived. Most probably, Wittgenstein refers here to the predominant maxim of progress for which he had the deepest mistrust, as I noted before. Such was indeed the case with the emancipators of the dissonance in the name of progress during the first two decades of the 20th Century, and Wittgenstein clearly had no patience with their senseless musical gesticulation.⁶⁹ In his view, such music was plain rubbish.

Josef Labor exemplifies the intriguing category of the meaninglessly absurd. As I mentioned above, Labor, a protégé of the Wittgenstein family, was perhaps the only contemporary composer who won kudos from Ludwig Wittgenstein.⁷⁰ It is reasonable to say that even the best of Labor's music must have seemed absurd by the prevailing standard of progress. Indeed, against the background of the musical scene of *Fin-de-Siècle* Vienna, Labor's ultra-conservative, through-and-through tonal music gives the

impression of having been composed in a time warp. Some of Wittgenstein's later remarks on Labor (dated approximately six months after the one just quoted above) corroborate this impression of inadequacy in Labor's music:

Labor's seriousness is a very late seriousness. (MS 110, 231 – CV, 10)

Labor, when writing good music, is absolutely unromantic. This is a very remarkable and significant characteristic. (MS 111, 2 – CV, 13)⁷¹

If we may recognize Keller's poetry in Brahms's themes, and if there is objective significance to the fact that these two men lived at the same time, as Wittgenstein suggested (cf. *LC*, 32), then, quite conversely, we may experience in Labor's meaningless absurdity, in the fact that such music is seriously composed so very late, "a dissolution of the resemblances which unite [a culture's] ways of life," to use G. H. von Wright's words.⁷² In other words, Labor's music lends an experience of an aspect of decline.

A further observation is in place here. It may seem as if Wittgenstein simply took sides in the great musical dispute that pervaded *Fin-de-Siècle* Vienna between Brahms' supporters and Wagner's enthusiasts. His clear rejection of progressive music seems to place him squarely among arch-conservatives such as composer Josef Labor and music critic Eduard Hanslick. Hanslick, like Labor, was closely associated with the Wittgenstein family; he was the most outspoken champion of Brahms' music in Vienna and the fiercest critic of Wagnerian innovations. Yet, as one would expect, Wittgenstein's position is ultimately much more complex and fine-shaded. His great admiration for Brahms' genius notwithstanding, Wittgenstein was still highly critical of some aspects of his music. His various comparisons between Brahms and Bruckner, for example, in which he points out that Brahms' music lacks orchestral color, suggest the convictions of a true *Wagnerianer* (see *D*, 44; 55-56). In fact, this kind of critique was fairly widespread among Brahms' detractors at that time. Still, Wittgenstein's most striking remark concerning Brahms was: "Music came to a full stop with Brahms; and even in Brahms I can begin to hear the sound of machinery."⁷³ Here, once again, Wittgenstein expresses a

familiar train of thought held by others, ultimately traceable back to Heinrich Schenker, who felt that the great tradition of Austro-German music had come to an end with Brahms.⁷⁴ My point is this: by conceiving Brahms' music as a kind of zenith in the development of music, Wittgenstein sets the grounds for rejecting both the progressive approach and the conservative approach as viable options. Thus Wittgenstein's position actually transcends the Brahms-Wagner controversy. Labor's noble yet meaninglessly absurd rehash of classicism and Strauss' base, contrapuntal tinkering with harmony are both symptomatic of cultural decline.

This leaves us with the last alternative—good modern music—which, according to Wittgenstein, is actually no alternative at all. Incommensurability entailed by the concept of cultural decline renders the endeavor to create good modern music an absurd, albeit, according to Wittgenstein, an *attractive* absurd. One cannot, or at least one is not clever enough to formulate the right maxim or principle for our times—for what principle could be coherently pronounced amidst a dissolution of the resemblances which unite a culture's ways of life?—so, *ipso facto*, one cannot conceive of music that would correspond to the unpronounced. Thus, the precious little that Wittgenstein has to say about the category of good modern music is that this very notion is paradoxical.

Granting that contemporary music is a futile project *tout court*, what is left for a music of the future? Wittgenstein's tentative answer betrays, once again, a deeply Spenglerian vein:

I should not be surprised if the music of the future would be monophonic [einstimmig]. Or is this just because I cannot clearly imagine several voices? In any case, I cannot imagine that the old *large* forms (string quartet, symphony, oratorio, etc) could play any role at all. If something like this comes, it will have to be—I believe—simple, *transparent*. In a certain sense, naked. Or will this apply only to a certain race, only to *one* kind of music (?) (*D*, 31)⁷⁵

For Spengler, the future is always transcendent to the current epoch—“only youth has a future, and *is* future”, he wrote⁷⁶—and it is always marked by a return to the simplest,

most basic expression of life.⁷⁷ A passage that Wittgenstein wrote in September of 1931 echoes Spengler's cyclic conception of cultural rejuvenation: "The works of great masters are suns, which rise and set around us. The time will come for every great work that is now in the descendent to rise again" (MS 111, 194 – CV, 15). We may, then, understand Wittgenstein's notion of the music of the future as the transcendent beginning of a new cultural epoch, hence the rejuvenation of music as a genuine avowal of the life of mankind. Thus Wittgenstein's position regarding the music of the future is consistent with his rejection of the aforementioned three categories of contemporary music, which are all immanent in the declining present epoch.

Wittgenstein envisions that a return to musical meaningfulness would take the form of monophonic music, or music in unison. Monophony, as distinguished from either polyphony or heterophony, simply means music for a single voice or part. Yet it is crucial to emphasize that the term monophony is not synonymous with an unaccompanied melody. A melody specifically exemplifies musical movement that is set within internal musical boundaries: we hear that it begins, that it ends, and that it moves from its beginning toward its end. It is a closed system, as Wittgenstein acknowledged (*RPP* I §647). In tonal music, this has largely, albeit not exclusively, to do with harmony. But a monophony can be melodious without having a melody. An obvious example of such unbounded musical movement is a plainchant, or Gregorian chant, which is also the standard reference for monophony. The context of the passage quoted above strongly suggests that such a pre-tonal monophony is precisely what Wittgenstein had in mind. First and foremost, Wittgenstein's special interest in the problem of understanding *Kirchtonarten* (church modes or Gregorian modes) is evident in the *Nachlass* (see e.g. *PR* §124; *RPP* I §639; *PI* §535), and in fact, Wittgenstein's first discussion of aspect perception in relation to music occurs in the *Philosophical Remarks* in reference to church modes.

Furthermore, by referring to something like a pre-tonal monophony as the music of the future, Wittgenstein echoes a broad intellectual concern regarding the putative origins of music that became widespread in central Europe from the turn of the 20th

Century.⁷⁸ A brief historical excursion is required to substantiate this claim. Wittgenstein's Vienna was the intellectual cradle for the newly founded discipline of *Musikwissenschaft* (musicology): in 1870 Eduard Hanslick was the first to be offered a professorial chair in musicology. In 1898, musicologist Guido Adler was offered a professorial chair in Vienna. In his inaugural speech at the University of Vienna, Adler defined for the first time the agenda for musicological research in the German speaking universities for the years to come, establishing an archeology with which to reconstruct music history from its very first beginnings.⁷⁹ The interest in the origins of music also flourished in England, already during the second half of the 19th Century: both Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer offered evolutionary theories of music. These theories were received with great interest in the continent, and in 1911 psychologist and comparative musicologist Carl Stumpf published his book on the origins of music,⁸⁰ in which he criticized Darwin and Spencer for failing to account for the specific features of music.

In the same year, Wittgenstein arrived in Cambridge and engaged intensely in problems pertaining to the psychology of music under the supervision of Charles S. Myers.⁸¹ Stumpf's work had a substantial presence in the milieu of the experimental psychologists in Cambridge: Myers himself used Stumpf's technical notion of "fusion" (*Tonverschmelzung*), sometimes without explicit reference;⁸² the work of his colleague, C. W. Valentine, is replete with references to Stumpf's writings.⁸³ In Cambridge, Wittgenstein was exposed to Myers's own work on primitive music and the origins of music.⁸⁴ Myers clearly followed Stumpf in connecting the question concerning the origins of music with the question of how music evolved in the way it did. With these historical observations in place, a further important point is required to drive home my claim regarding Wittgenstein's reference to pre-tonal monophony as the music of the future. As Alexander Rehding observes, the search for the origins of music in the early 20th Century was not merely of archeological interest; it became instrumental in defining the tradition of tonal music as the subject matter of a science of music, not coincidentally, at a time when this tradition was increasingly perceived to be under threat from contemporary composition.⁸⁵ Against this backdrop, I suggest that Wittgenstein's

advocating of monophony as the music of the future can readily be seen as a certain condensed version of this broad concern.

With this notion of pre-tonal monophony as the putative origin of music, we come full circle back to our use of language with its fine-shades of behavior and meaning. One must acknowledge the fact that plainchant means primarily a vocal setting of a text: in liturgy, word and music are indissolubly connected. Instead of a melody in the modern sense, we have a series of inflections from a *reciting tone* that corresponds to the actual verbalization or vocalization of the text. According to Jeremy Yudkin:

The music [in plainchant] is composed to words, which form grammatical units of sense, and the music reflects this sense. This does not mean that the music is “emotive” in the modern usage of the term, nor does it mean that the music indulges in “word painting” as in the Renaissance and Baroque eras (although instances of both of these practices can be cited). It means rather that in the clearest possible way the music is tied to the *structure* of the text, illuminating and clarifying the grammatical sense.⁸⁶

To a large extent, the establishing of the reciting tone, the inflections and their range are vocal gestures, which are used like punctuation signs in a sentence. Plainchant epitomizes the “significant irregularity” that Wittgenstein points out as the hallmark of “phenomena akin to language in music” (MS 121, 26 – CV, 34).⁸⁷ The earliest chants must simply have been repetitions of a single pitch for every syllable of the text. Small inflections were added to mark the beginning of the whole reading and its end, the end of a sentence, or even a question form. Long segments were divided into smaller phrases by “musical commas”—endings that differ in pitch and formula from the ending of the whole sentence. Thus, a plainchant was originally an instrument of communication.⁸⁸

Interestingly, a vivid impression of the sheer impact of the musical gestures of plainchant in relation to the spoken word at the very beginning of the Western musical tradition can be found in Saint Augustine’s *Confessions*, a text that Wittgenstein knew all too well. Augustine had a tremendous impact on the acceptance of music into the church

despite deep misgivings concerning the dangers in the musical obfuscation of language, which are given remarkable expression in book ix of the *Confessions*. However, he was able to conclude that the power of music to convey the truth of the sacred texts separated it from the mindless pleasures, and his embrace of musical practices in his own services at Hippo—introducing into his worship several Ambrosian hymns and the Milanese antiphonal manner of singing—proved crucial to the development of Christian liturgy. One would imagine that Wittgenstein, being so repulsed by the Post-Romantic excesses of his times, must have felt great sympathy for Augustine’s advocacy of the simplest musical expression.

These considerations ultimately suggest that in Wittgenstein’s vision of the music of the future we find a harbinger of both his later vision of musical expression, and his later general emphasis on language in use.⁸⁹ The history of music palpably teaches us that in plainchant we find the happiest marriage of music and spoken language. When Wittgenstein writes about the strongly musical element in verbal language, he speaks of “a sigh, the intonation of voice in a question, in announcement, in longing; all the innumerable *gestures* made with the voice” (Z §161). It is in this flux of finely shaded intonation, Wittgenstein tells us, that we experience the meaning of words and make aesthetic judgments about them (cf. *LC*, 4). The music of the future is destined to be transparent precisely in the sense that sadness is transparent in a face; ideally, it is destined to be a physiognomy. Indeed such conception of “intransitive transparency” makes Wittgenstein’s alternative metaphor, that of “nakedness,” more apt.

Music for the Meaning-Blind

The history of 20th Century music shows that it was Schoenberg, perhaps more decisively than any other composer of his time, who set sail toward a sonic landscape that became, at least for a while, the unmistakable music of the future. In the aftermath of the Second World War, Schoenberg’s notion of the 12-tone system, rigorously emulated and applied by Schoenberg’s most devoted disciple, Anton Webern, served as a catalyst for the young

post-war generation of composers on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean for breaking completely with common compositional practice. This "music of the future" even has a name: total (or integral) serialism. The name refers to the fundamental conception behind this music, which was a consistent treatment of *all* musical elements—pitch, rhythm, dynamics, texture, and ultimately, form itself—according to strictly serial procedures, resulting in a complete departure from previous musical assumptions and traditional musical gestures. Consistent application of this idea brought about also—in what I am tempted to dub as an act of oedipal instinct—the ultimate abrogation of the Schoenbergian principle of the 12-tone row, which was ironically conceived as a relic of the “Old World” by prominent avant-garde composers of the second half of the 20th Century, such as Pierre Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen and John Cage.

Our discussion has so far suggested that given the Spenglerian *cum* Schenkerian forces found at play in the background of Wittgenstein’s attitude toward contemporary music, we may expect nothing short of an insurmountable chasm between Wittgenstein the cultural pessimist, who admitted that he belongs together with Spengler “to the same group that is characteristic of these Times” (*D*, 28), and Schoenberg, the quintessential modernist, who avowed that he might be regarded conservative insofar as he conserves progress.⁹⁰ The precise nature of this chasm and its philosophical depth will now have to be made clear. Thus, the question before us is straightforward: how far removed is Schoenberg’s 12-tone music from Wittgenstein’s vision of the music of the future? To approach this question, a still closer look at the genesis of Schoenberg’s conception of the 12-tone system is required.

It is crucial to realize that the origins of atonality in Schoenberg’s music are already deeply seated in his theoretical approach to tonal music. As Ethan Haimo points out, this can be seen in a variety of ways in Schoenberg’s *Harmonielehre* (1911): he treats harmonic progression as not defining or establishing the tonic as the referential sonority; in his view, the diatonic collection does not define a key; and his explanations of chord formation blur the distinction between dissonance and consonance.⁹¹ Tonality for Schoenberg was ultimately something of a contingency, causally explainable and

susceptible to progress. Of course, such a conception of tonality betrays the concerns of a progressive composer, rather than those of a theorist speaking apparently of an aspect of the past. As Leon Botstein observes, this theoretical stance was at the heart of Schoenberg's confrontation with Heinrich Schenker:

The crucial point of comparison between Schenker and the young Schoenberg was their shared conviction that music, although independent of words, operated by laws that were analogous to those of linguistic grammar... The divergence between the two men rested on their assumptions about the possible future range of evolution for musical grammar, and not on the principle that music required the use of formal structures adequate to its autonomous character. For Schoenberg, musical grammar had both a teleology and an evolutionary history. For Schenker its nature was fixed.⁹²

The quarrel between the two men extended far beyond technical matters. At stake were diametrically opposed views of the musical mind, and ultimately, I suggest, diametrically opposed attitudes toward language.

Consider, for instance, their dispute over the issue of non-chordal notes.⁹³ Traditionally conceived, non-chordal notes—passing notes, suspensions, auxiliary notes etc.—differ from chordal dissonances in that their resolution does not involve a change of harmony. A non-chordal dissonance is therefore incidental, for it does not impinge on the harmonic progression; it yields a momentary sonorous effect without harmonic consequence. As Carl Dahlhaus pointed out, both Schenker and Schoenberg rejected this traditional view, but for opposite reasons: while Schoenberg thought that the notion of an *incidental* dissonance is a misnomer, Schenker denied that a dissonance might be in any sense *essential* to the harmony. Schenker's position can readily be understood in the light of the *précis* of his theory, which I provided in the second section of the present essay ("Aspects of Decline"). If hearing music is to be understood as an "exfoliation" of a fundamental harmonic structure, then passing notes are the layers, so to speak, cast off in the process.⁹⁴ Hearing music amounts to hearing *through* the non-chordal notes that

inhabit the various articulated musical layers (foreground, middleground or background), even those yielding the sonically harshest vertical combinations. In Schenker's words: "It is as if a vacuum existed between the dissonant passing note and the stationary cantus firmus note."⁹⁵ That is, the mere sonorous effect of the dissonance, its mere acoustics, has no musical meaning.

By contrast, Schoenberg's approach manifests a remarkable obsession with the "logic" of the musical surface. He dogmatically maintains that no musical occurrence can be without significance for the context of the harmonic progression, even those fleeing moments that are virtually imperceptible. Thus, any dissonant harmony resulting from a passing note is actually a chord and should be rendered vertically and independently as an essential phenomenon, to wit, as an emancipated dissonance. Simply put, according to Schoenberg, there is actually no such thing as a non-chordal note. Yet while the harmonic plausibility of the emancipated dissonance was something of an established fact for Schoenberg, it eventually led him to a painstaking—at times, arguably unsuccessful—pursuit of a justification of the harmonic function of the emancipated dissonance, and indeed, as I said before, to an obsession with what we could aptly call the "surface grammar" of music.⁹⁶

A further consideration of Schoenberg's attitude toward language—crucial for our discussion—brings us back to Karl Kraus, closing, in effect, a line of reasoning which I began by entertaining the alleged "Kraus Connection" between Wittgenstein and Schoenberg in the first section of the present essay ("Leads and Impasses"). It is evident that, on his part, Schoenberg misinterpreted the true nature of Kraus' thinking about language. In 1911, the same year he published his *Harmonielehre*, Schoenberg wrote:

One may let oneself be carried by language, but it carries only the man who would be capable, if it did not exist, of inventing it himself. 'Language, mother of the idea,' says Karl Kraus—as wrongly as if he had said the hen is there before the eggs. And as rightly. For that is how it is in the real work of art: everything gives the impression of having come first, because everything was born at the same moment. Feeling is already form, the idea is already the word.⁹⁷

From Karl Kraus' perspective, there is something misleading already in binding literature and music together as Schoenberg does. According to Kraus, there is an important difference between verbal art and the other arts:

Why do people treat literature so insolently? Because they know the language. They would take the same liberties with the other arts if singing to one another, smearing one another with paint, or throwing plaster at one another were means of communication. The unfortunate thing is that verbal art works with a material that the rabble handles every day. That is why literature is beyond help.⁹⁸

Yet the point is that music is not beyond help in this sense. We can see that Schoenberg gave Kraus' acerbic dictum, "language is the mother of thought [Gedanke]", a Romantic reading as a license (for the genius artist) to meddle with language if language proves to be inert. This is a blatant misreading of Kraus insofar as it ultimately renders the actual means of expression subservient to the notion of an idea or a thought.⁹⁹ This is a crucial observation for our present concerns: Schoenberg's understanding of music as language precisely in this sense, in addition to his conviction that tonality has exhausted its natural resources, set the course, already in his middle period, toward the ultimate application of this misunderstanding of Kraus—the 12-tone system.

As I noted before, by 1923 Schoenberg felt that he had exhausted the so-called "free atonal" style with its expressionist pretense. He then mobilized his forces to regain control over his own composition processes. Reflecting on his motivation to construct his 12-tone system, Schoenberg wrote:

[t]he desire for a conscious control over the new means and forms will arise in any artist's mind; and he will wish to know *consciously* the laws and rules which govern the forms which he has conceived 'as in a dream'. Strongly convincing as this dream may have been, the conviction that these new sounds obey the laws of nature and of our manner of thinking—the conviction that order, logic, comprehensibility and form cannot be present without obedience to such laws—forces the composer along the road of exploration. He must find, if not laws or

rules, at least ways to justify the dissonant character of these harmonies and their successions.¹⁰⁰

Schoenberg's obsession with "logic" took the form of a relentless quest—both in his theoretical thinking and in his compositional practice—for musical coherence; coherence that was lost when tonality was dissolved. "In music," he wrote, "there is no form without logic, there is no logic without unity."¹⁰¹ Schoenberg used the term "coherence" to designate relationships that justify connections or meaningful interactions between the components of a sonic object. His attempt to emulate language is most explicit in his focus on finding and devising "musical connectives," akin to connectives in logic, that, so he believed, regulate the element of fluency in music and clarify the logic of its formal progression. He maintained that musical material should be both coherent and varied: "The preservation of features constantly secures logic, and upon the presence or absence of these *connectives* is based the greater or lesser degree of *fluency*."¹⁰²

Now Schoenberg's 12-tone method was designed expressly to provide both coherence and variation in the musical material. At the heart of the system there is the 12-tone row, which is an "abstract" structure, a set of potential relationships without any motivic content that is "logically prior" to the actual composition. The row is embodied in the actual musical details of a given composition: it determines the succession of pitches used in a piece, although it does not determine their registers or their durations, nor prescribe the textural layout of the music or its form. Schoenberg conceived the 12-tone row as a pre-compositional fund for motivic possibilities, whereupon springs its sense of musical omnipresence. Thus according to Schoenberg:

The weightiest assumption behind twelve-tone composition is this thesis: Whatever sounds together (harmonies, chords, the result of part-writing) plays its part in the expression and in presentation of the musical idea in just the same way as does all that sounds successively (motive, shape, phrase, sentence, melody, etc.) and it is equally subject to the law of comprehensibility.¹⁰³

In Schoenberg's philosophy of composition, the notion of coherence is complemented by the notion of comprehensibility. "Composition with twelve tones has no other aim than comprehensibility,"¹⁰⁴ declared Schoenberg. Comprehensibility in general refers to conditions that allow the listener to grasp something as a whole, to bind impressions together into a form. As Carl Dahlhaus pointed out, the notion of comprehensibility, as Schoenberg uses it, is ambiguous: it refers to the emancipated dissonance *per se*, and at the same time it implies that the dissonance has a real function in the harmonic context.¹⁰⁵ Either way, according to Schoenberg's somewhat circular formulation, a musical content is comprehensible when it is surveyable and suitably articulated; that is, when its components share such coherence among one another and with the whole, as would in general be required for comprehensibility. In other words, coherence is a necessary condition for comprehensibility, which in turn ultimately amounts to the listener's ability to analyze quickly, to determine components and their coherence.

The contrived nature of 12-tone composition, in contradistinction to tonal composition, gives this notion of comprehensibility primary importance. In his third *Gedanke* manuscript (1925), Schoenberg points out that while compositions executed tonally proceed so as to bring every occurring tone into a direct or indirect relationship to the tonic, 12-tone composition presupposes knowledge of these relationships and does not render them as a problem still to be worked out. In this sense, 12-tone composition works with whole "complexes" akin to "a language that works with comprehensive concepts [umfassenden Begriffen], whose scope and meaning as generally known are presupposed."¹⁰⁶ Comprehensibility pertains to our ability to grasp and retain such fixed "concept-complexes", and to follow their implications and consequences.

Let us return now to our primary question: how far removed is Schoenberg's 12-tone music from Wittgenstein's vision of the music of the future? In a sense, by 1923 Schoenberg appeared to be heading back to a conservatively systematized conception of music. Yet, while his dodecaphonic works are thought out and worked out musically, they draw their motivic material from a contrived source: the 12-tone row.¹⁰⁷ Schoenberg

was painfully aware that there was no escape from total chromaticism; for him, the genie of dissonance, once emancipated, could never be returned to the bottle again. Schoenberg argued that the 12-tone system is a necessary step in the evolution of Western music, and he designed it for the sole purpose of replacing the structural differentiations formerly furnished by tonality. Thus Schoenberg's late period music actually exemplifies a phantom U-turn to the old Western tradition of composing, a deliberate, conscious leap beyond what had been regarded as the "natural fountain" of musical language; yet one that Schoenberg firmly believed would "insure the supremacy of German music for the next hundred years."

Not surprisingly, Schoenberg's hubris drew a vehement response from Heinrich Schenker:

The great proof against Schoenberg is the people; they have never gone along with him and never will. There are not two summits in an art. Schoenberg has already experienced the one, a second, like the one now being cultivated, cannot blossom. Schoenberg produces a homunculus in music; it is a machine. Machines are supposed to be substitute for human strength, a surrogate. Now there are of course surrogates, such as the one for traveling, the automobile, but *never can there be a surrogate for the soul*. Such a complicated operation is not intelligible for it. ... The product of Schoenberg's machine shall not be used.¹⁰⁸

Schenker's riposte remarkably encapsulates the main themes that comprise what I maintain would be an adequate Wittgensteinian response to Schoenberg's dodecaphonic music: a sense of transgression, of soullessness and of contrivance. I have already discussed the first theme in detail. Schoenberg's 12-tone system is undoubtedly a fully-fledged instance of a systematic deviation from the rules of harmony. Furthermore, as pointed out before, the system was conceived not only to dislodge tonality, but also to downright take over its status as grammar. Schenker contended that "the great proof against Schoenberg is the people." Yet a much deeper insight is gained along Wittgensteinian lines: there is simply no reason for the rules of 12-tone composition to be

what they are, given the kind of beings we are, the purposes we have, our shared discriminatory capacities, and certain general features of the world we inhabit. The kind of musical distinctions called for by dodecaphonic composition—for instance, identifying a certain passage as based on a certain transposition of the inverted retrograde form of the original 12-tone row used in the given piece—are not just very difficult to make; they are simply not important in our lives, certainly not in the sense that questions and answers, introductions and conclusions are.

There is no wonder, then, that the rules of 12-tone composition aim at nothing other than creating the conditions of comprehensibility. Schoenberg's striving for comprehensibility inevitably recalls Karl Kraus' repartee: "The most incomprehensible talk comes from people who have no other use for language than to make themselves understood."¹⁰⁹ A comparison between Schoenberg's standard of comprehensibility and Wittgenstein's standard of transparency or "nakedness" points at their crucial difference. According to Wittgenstein, a musical gesture is not transparent by virtue of the correct applications of "rules of transparency"; rather, its transparency resides precisely in their absence, indeed in the vacuity of the very notion of such rules. Transparency in this sense is not an epistemic notion. A musical gesture is transparent because it is already given to us with a familiar physiognomy, already vertically related to our world of thoughts and feelings, whereupon there is no sense in which we can say that it needs to be *made* comprehensible.

Soullessness and contrivance go hand in hand. Schenker's allegation that Schoenberg's music toils at becoming a surrogate for the soul is quite remarkable. For Wittgenstein, nothing that is premised upon exactitude, calculation and mechanism can said to be soulful, since our recognition and description of soulful expression, musical or otherwise, is informed with, and constituted by evidential uncertainty, or "imponderable evidence." The imponderability of this kind of evidence is significantly reflected in the way we attempt to communicate our *Menschenkenntnis* and in the measure of the success of our justifications. Here the contrast between transparency and comprehensibility comes to a head. As we have seen, Schoenberg's view of music as language is rooted in

what he perceived as a Krausian license to invent auxiliary means of expression in order to solve a particular problem—to wit, to regain control over unruly atonality.

The 12-tone system is an extraordinary attempt to derive, through a series of manipulations, a wealth of material, complex and varied, from an initial pitch collection that, in itself, is pre-compositional, hence musically inert and barren. In a banal sense, the fundamental elements of tonal composition—for instance, the particular pitch collection that we call the diatonic scale—are also “logically prior” to the composition. A tune like “Twinkle, twinkle, little star” has the particular effects of movement, rest and closure that it has because we hear the first and the last tones of the diatonic scale as the “same tone,” and because we hear a certain hierarchic relationship obtaining between the other tones in the scale. In Wittgenstein’s view, this phenomenology is embedded in, and makes any sense solely in terms of praxis (ultimately, our ways of life). Yet the point is that in Schoenberg’s 12-tone system, “pre-compositional” means primarily “a-gestural”; and the latter notion, if it means anything at all, denotes something lifeless, soulless (cf. *PI* §§284-285). It is in this sense that the 12-tone row in itself is musically inert and barren;¹¹⁰ hence at least some musical gestures found in 12-tone music are contrived by means of deliberate, rule-governed manipulation of this sort of pre-compositional material.¹¹¹ The result, to use Schoenberg’s own telling analogy, is to be likened to a language comprised of concept-complexes whose meaning is semantically rigid like labels or name tags.¹¹²

Schoenberg was painfully aware of the constructed nature of his music, and he tried to counterbalance this impression by appealing to a view of (real) art as an organic whole:

The inspiration, the vision, the whole, breaks down during its representation into details whose constructed realization reunites them into the whole. But this other constructed music which I have mentioned, and of which I have already seen examples, is different. It does not set out from the vision of a whole but builds upwards from below according to a preconceived plan or scheme but without a truly visualized idea of the whole, and it works up the basic material anxiously

and without freedom. So whereas I proceed from a vision, working out the details and fitting them out for the purpose they will have to fulfill—and these details do not exist without that purpose—truly ‘constructed’ music works material up into a systematically arrived-at, synthetically presented whole, which did not previously exist. In the former case it was the details that did not exist before; but in the latter, the whole.¹¹³

There is an obvious premonition in Schoenberg’s characterization of the “other constructed music”, of the kind of music making that was to take center stage in Europe under the banner of “total serialism” around the time of his death in 1951. Yet Schoenberg’s attempt to rebut the charges concerning the constructed nature of his own music on grounds of the primacy of the musical idea over the construction of means for its expression betrays, once again, his misreading of Karl Kraus. Thus his defense remains ineffective from a Wittgensteinian point of view; for what is infuriating from the Wittgensteinian perspective is not so much the alleged genesis of this kind of compositional practice, as its pretense to inherit music. We can learn this by analogy from Wittgenstein’s famous remark on Esperanto:

The feeling of disgust we get if we utter an *invented* word with invented derivative syllables. The word is cold, lacking in associations, and yet it plays at being ‘language’. A system of purely written signs would not disgust us so much. (MS 132, 69 – CV, 52)¹¹⁴

The striking analogy between Lazar Ludwik Zamenhof’s vision of an international auxiliary language and Schoenberg’s vision of the music of the future has not evaded scholarship.¹¹⁵ Both projects arose as an attempt to solve a particular problem by rational means, laying down publicly defined rules for generating diversified means for expressing ideas. Both projects set themselves to overcome an initial alienation by communities steeped in tradition and well versed in the old ways of expressing ideas, and ultimately both met a similar fate: to be embraced only by a small, albeit passionate elite. Still, the most striking characteristic that Esperanto and dodecaphonic music share is the

decisive shunning of all local or contingent effects of interaction among the elements that comprise an utterance. As we have seen, in the case of 12-tone music, this took the form of a complete and irrevocable exorcising of the effects of tonality. In the case of Esperanto, this took the form of construing a vocabulary and a syntax that are exemplarily regular, efficient, consistent and accessible (to Europeans, at least).

As J. C. Nyíri observed, Wittgenstein's nausea had to do not so much with contrivance as with use.¹¹⁶ What seemed to him despicable about Esperanto was the fact that this is an invented language—learnable by memorizing an economical vocabulary and a few syntactic rules—that one might want to use poetically. Rudolf Carnap, a passionate champion of language planning in general and of Esperanto in particular, recounts Wittgenstein's vehemently negative response when he learned of Carnap's interest in the problem of an international language like Esperanto. "A language which had not 'grown organically,'" wrote Carnap, "seemed to him not only useless but despicable."¹¹⁷ It is significant to note in this context that Carnap was particularly enthusiastic about the poetic promise that Esperanto held.¹¹⁸ Carnap recalls a performance of Goethe's *Iphigenie* in Esperanto translation as one of the high points of an international Esperanto conference, which he attended. "It was a stirring and uplifting experience for me," he wrote, "to hear this drama, inspired by the ideal of one humanity, expressed in the new medium which made it possible for thousands of spectators from many countries to understand it, and to become united in spirit."¹¹⁹

It was this vain attempt—vain for its artificiality—at a "vertical leap" from the language game of information to the language game of expression that infuriated Wittgenstein (cf. *RPP* I §170; §888). In the case of *our* language—a language that had "grown organically"—such a "vertical leap" to an (intransitively) expressive use of words is actually quite mundane, and significantly so. In fact, this is precisely Wittgenstein's point in suggesting that "understanding a sentence is much more akin to understanding a theme in music than one may think" (*PI* §527ff.). We may experience the meaning of words as irreplaceable, the thought in the sentence as "something that is expressed only by these words in these positions" (*PI* §531). Not only poetic language, but all language

may be "musical" or "soulful" in this sense. Still, the seemingly unruly distinctions we make in experiencing the meaning of words, and the various ways in which we justify these distinctions are vertically complex in the sense exemplified by musical gesture (cf. *PI* §533; *LC* 40). Inability to make such distinctions or to understand these kinds of justification is the mark of what Wittgenstein calls "meaning-blindness" (*PI* II 175-6, 210; *RPP* I §§189, 202-6, 243-50, 342-4). The meaning-blind are locked out of that familiar physiognomy, which makes language something that we understand, not as a sign for something else, not transitively, but rather intransitively, like music, as "an avowal of the life of mankind". They are not attuned with the rest of us, not mutually voiced with respect to our fine-shaded use of language and behavior. For them, something has meaning only as part of an agreed symbolism used to convey information by depicting particular states of affairs. Such inability marks a total failure to become acculturated.

Thus, by conceiving language as music, Wittgenstein makes a fundamental point: words and phrases in language strike us as meaningful quite independently of their ability to convey information, and this feat, marking the success of acculturation, ultimately presupposes the entire range of our language games. We can invent a language, says Wittgenstein, in which "a b c d e" means "The weather is fine," and we could certainly use such an invented symbolism to communicate information about the weather. Yet the difference between such an invented language and natural, "organically grown" language is this:

[i]n the one I can't move. It is as if one of my joints were in splints, and I were not yet familiar with the possible movements, so that I as it were keep on bumping into things. (*RPP* II §259; *Z* §6)

A natural language is fine-shaded, containing a myriad of possibilities that open up with each nuance of tone, each hint of a smile, and with all those "innumerable transitions which I can make and the other [who is not a native speaker of the language] can't" (*RPP* I §1078). According to Wittgenstein, this is how understanding a sentence is comparable

with understanding a piece of music. By contrast, an invented language is rigid, spasmodic, cold and lacking in associations. Its vocabulary is “a-gestural” in the sense that we have “no objection to replacing one word with another arbitrary one of our own invention” (*PI* §530). Thus, an invented language is “soulless”: all that we have are signs that are translatable into action by means of rules. For Wittgenstein, such a language “does not get far as an impression, like that of a picture; nor are stories written in this language” (*Z* §145).

The analogy between Esperanto and Schoenberg’s 12-tone system yields a conclusive answer to the question how far removed Schoenberg’s post-1923 music is from Wittgenstein’s vision of the music of the future. From Wittgenstein’s perspective, Schoenberg’s 12-tone music would be music for the meaning-blind, modeled on a conception of language as an artificial edifice, whose conditions of meaningfulness primarily consist in deriving a wealth of forms from musically barren sonic material by means of rules of coherence and comprehensibility; a kind of music, whose very essence shuns the familiar expanse of our *Menschenkenntnis*, where tonal music roams (cf. *CV* 8-9). An actual performance of such music for the meaning-blind, enfolded by the gestural bravado of classically trained musicians, would be as despicable from Wittgenstein’s point of view as a theatrical performance of Goethe’s sublime poetry in Esperanto—it would be akin to an acquaintance with a surrogate for the soul.

Conclusion

I began my essay with Stanley Cavell’s suggestion that Schoenberg’s idea of the 12-tone row is a serviceable image of Wittgenstein’s idea of grammar. The terrain is now carefully charted, and Cavell’s direction appears unwarranted. We have seen that the only possible way to yoke Wittgenstein and Schoenberg (albeit indirectly) is through the respective impact of Karl Kraus’s vision of language on both men. Yet this connection proved to be antithetical: Wittgenstein got Kraus’s idea that “language is the mother of thought” exactly right, whereas Schoenberg got it exactly wrong. For Wittgenstein,

thought presents itself only in our use of language, and understanding music is an avowal of the human life that shows itself in the grammar of our language. Music may be said to be transparent by letting itself be understood in this sense. Thus barren and inert, there is nothing in Schoenberg's row, the pre-compositional repository of musical thoughts, and in our presumed ability to comprehend these thoughts, that could compare to the power of grammar—as Cavell so aptly put it—to reveal pervasive yet unforeseen conditions of our existence. Wittgenstein's aversion toward modern music was shown to be rooted in his penetrating philosophical insight into musical meaning, not easily dismissible as a mere manifestation of a conservative musical taste.

A final passage from Karl Kraus would be appropriate for an epilogue to our discussion of these two incompatible visions of the music of the future:

My pointer turns backwards; for me, what has been is never complete, and I stand otherwise in time. In whatever future I roam, and whatever I take hold of, it always turns into the past.¹²⁰

In their mature work, both Wittgenstein and Schoenberg heralded a return to language, yet in different senses. Wittgenstein sought after transparency, Schoenberg after comprehensibility; for the one the very idea of a surrogate for the soul was an abomination, for the other—a fountain of youth. And so they roamed in different futures.¹²¹

¹ Hilde Spiel, *Vienna's Golden Autumn, 1866-1938* (New York: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987), p. 170.

² William M. Johnston, *The Austrian Mind: Intellectual and Social History, 1848-1938* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), p. 139.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

⁴ Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), especially Ch. 3 and 8. See also Allan Janik, *Wittgenstein's Vienna Revisited* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2001), Ch. 1.

⁵ See e.g. Aldo Gargani, "Techniques Descriptive et Procédures Constructives: Schönberg-Wittgenstein" in J. P. Cometti (ed.), *Ludwig Wittgenstein* (SUD Numéro Hors-série, 1986), pp. 74-121; Friedrich Wallner, "Webern und Wittgenstein: Verbindlichkeit durch Elementarisierung" in Roderick M. Chisholm, Johann Chr. Marek, John T. Blackmore, and Adolf Hübner (eds.) *Philosophy of Mind – Philosophy of Psychology*. Proceedings of the 9th International Wittgenstein Symposium (Wien: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1985), pp. 482-485.

⁶ The reverse case is relatively rare. See e.g. Wolfgang Hufschmidt, "Sprache und 'Sprachgebrauch' bei Schönberg." *Zeitschrift für Musiktheorie*, 1974, pp. 11-20.

⁷ Stanley Cavell, "Philosophy and the Unheard" in Reinhold Brinkmann and Christoph Wolff (eds.) *Music of My Future: The Schoenberg Quartets and Trio*. Isham Library Papers 5. Harvard Publications in Music 20 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 182.

⁸ It is noteworthy that Cavell relies here on a 1967 paper by David Lewin on Schoenberg's opera *Moses und Aron*. Lewin's paper was written without the benefit of Schoenberg's so-called "Gedanke manuscripts", which contain the composer's most elaborate attempt to explicate his philosophy of composition. The scientific edition of these manuscripts appeared only recently in Arnold Schoenberg, *The Musical Idea and the Logic, Technique, and Art of its Presentation*, ed. P. Carpenter and S. Neff (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

⁹ See e.g. Arnold Schoenberg, "Twelve-Tone Composition" in *Style and Idea*, ed. L. Stein (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975), pp. 207-208.

¹⁰ For the record, the single appearance of the name Wittgenstein in Schoenberg's literary estate is found in a letter dated November 21, 1913, in which Schoenberg asks his publisher to send a few of his *Lieder* to Frau Bahr-Mildenburg—presumably, Anna Bahr-Mildenburg, the great Austrian soprano—c/o Frau Wittgenstein at Salesianergasse 7, Vienna. Apparently, the reference is to Justine Wittgenstein née Hochstetter, wife of Paul Wittgenstein, Ludwig's uncle, who had been residing at this address at the time. See Allan Janik and Hans Veigl, *Wittgenstein in Vienna: A Biographical Excursion through the City and its History* (Wien: Springer-Verlag, 1998), p. 198-199.

¹¹ See Martin Alber's comprehensive essay "Josef Labor und die Musik in der Wittgenstein-Familie" in Martin Alber (ed.) *Wittgenstein und die Musik: Ludwig Wittgenstein—Rudolf Koder: Briefwechsel*. Brenner-Studien, Bd. 17 (Innsbruck: Haymon Verlag, 2000), pp. 121-137.

¹² I use the following abbreviations for Wittgenstein's standard editions:

<i>BB</i>	<i>The Blue and Brown Books</i>
<i>CV</i>	<i>Culture and Value</i>
<i>D</i>	<i>Denkbewegungen: Tagebücher 1930-1932, 1936-1937</i>
<i>LC</i>	<i>Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious</i>
<i>LW I</i>	<i>Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology</i> , vol. I
<i>LW II</i>	<i>Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology</i> , vol. II
<i>NB</i>	<i>Notebooks 1914-1916</i>
<i>PG</i>	<i>Philosophical Grammar</i>
<i>PI</i>	<i>Philosophical Investigations</i>
<i>PR</i>	<i>Philosophical Remarks</i>
<i>PT</i>	<i>Proto-Tractatus</i>
<i>RPP I</i>	<i>Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology</i> , vol. I
<i>RPP II</i>	<i>Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology</i> , vol. II
<i>TLP</i>	<i>Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus</i>
<i>Z</i>	<i>Zettel</i>

References to the *Nachlass* are by MS or TS number according to G. H. von Wright's catalogue followed by page number. Translations from the *Nachlass* or from other primary sources in German are my own.

¹³ Ernst Hilmar (ed.) *Arnold Schönberg Gedenkausstellung* (Wien: Universal, 1974), p. 160.

¹⁴ See Eric Blom (editorially revised), "Labor, Josef" in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. S. Sadie (London: Macmillan, 1980), Vol. 10, p. 342. This mistake is reproduced in Janik and Veigl, op. cit., p. 124, and was perpetuated for at least the next twenty years by the recently published second edition of *The New Grove Dictionary*. See Eric Blom and Malcolm Miller, "Labor, Josef", *The New Grove Dictionary of Music Online*, ed. L. Macy (Accessed 30 September 2002), <<http://www.grovemusic.com>>

¹⁵ See Leon Botstein, "Music and the Critique of Culture: Arnold Schoenberg, Heinrich Schenker, and the Emergence of Modernism in Fin de Siècle Vienna" in Juliane Brand and Christopher Hailey (eds.)

Constructive Dissonance: Arnold Schoenberg and the Transformations of Twentieth-Century Culture (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 3-22.

¹⁶ E. Fred Flindel, "Paul Wittgenstein (1887-1961): Patron and Pianist." *The Music Review*, 32 (2), 1971, p. 110.

¹⁷ See Spiel, *Vienna's Golden Autumn*, p. 171-172.

¹⁸ Flindel, "Paul Wittgenstein (1887-1961): Patron and Pianist," p. 119.

¹⁹ Paul Griffiths, *Modern Music: A Concise History*, revised edition (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1994), p. 50.

²⁰ Brian McGuinness, *Wittgenstein: A Life. Young Wittgenstein: 1889-1921* (London: Duckworth, 1988), p. 33.

²¹ Ray Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius* (New York: Free Press, 1990), p. 78. The subject matter of these exchanges remains unknown. Schoenberg's *Five Orchestral Pieces*, Op. 16, a thoroughly atonal work, received its première in London in 1912 under the baton of Sir Henry Wood. Whether or not this fact was reflected in any way in these arguments, it is still undeniable that by the time the arguments reported by Pinsent took place, the crisis of the tonal idiom in music, epitomized by Schoenberg's middle period music, was already imminent, and recognizably so, in the high profile works of Richard Strauss and Gustav Mahler.

²² Alber (ed.), *Wittgenstein und die Musik*, p. 46.

²³ Quoted in Werner Kraft, *Karl Kraus: Beiträge zum Verständnis seines Werkes* (Salzburg: Müller, 1956), p. 195.

²⁴ See Paul Wijdeveld, *Ludwig Wittgenstein, Architect* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994)

²⁵ For an illuminating discussion of this comparison between Wittgenstein and Loos see John Hyman, "The urn and the chamber pot" in Richard Allen and Malcom Turvey (eds.), *Wittgenstein, Theory and the Arts* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 137-152.

²⁶ Karl Kraus, *Half Truths and One-and-a-Half-Truths: Selected Aphorisms*, trans. H. Zohn (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 69.

²⁷ Schoenberg never approved of this title, although it has remained in use until the present day. Schoenberg's atonal period extends roughly between 1909 and 1923. It is characterized by an initial outburst of creativity that produced works like *Five Orchestral Pieces*, Op. 16, *Erwartung*, Op. 17 and *Die Glückliche Hand*, Op. 18.

²⁸ Carl E. Schorske, *Thinking with History: Explorations in the Passage to Modernism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 136.

²⁹ See Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, ed. L. Stein (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975), pp. 216-217.

³⁰ Cf., e.g., Cavell, "Philosophy and the Unheard," p. 177.

³¹ Georg Henrik von Wright, *The Tree of Knowledge and Other Essays* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993), p. 90.

³² Felix Salzer, *Structural Hearing: Tonal Coherence in Music*, 2 vols. (New York: Dover Publications, 1952), pp. 5-6.

³³ Salzer remained a champion of Schenker's theories all his life. At various times he edited two journals, first *Der Dreiklang* and later *The Music Forum*, which were dedicated primarily to the study of Schenker's theories. His famous pedagogic textbook *Structural Hearing* (op. cit.) is an attempt, rendered quite successful by many, to enhance Schenker's ideas and methods and rework them into a systematic course of study.

³⁴ Felix Salzer reported this to Brian McGuinness. I am grateful to Professor McGuinness for relaying this information to me (personal communication, 3/1/2002).

³⁵ Brian McGuinness, personal communication, 2/16/2000. I will have more to say about Wittgenstein's attitude toward Schenker below.

³⁶ This striking reference appears in the form of a hand written comment—"Schenkersche Betrachtungsweise der Musik" (TS 213, 259v)—on the occasion of introducing the concept of "family resemblance".

³⁷ Georg Henrik von Wright, "Ludwig Wittgenstein in Relation to his Times" in Brian McGuinness (ed.) *Wittgenstein and his Times* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 116.

³⁸ Rudolf Haller, *Questions on Wittgenstein* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), p. 80.

³⁹ Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, trans. C. F. Atkinson (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1939), Vol. 1, p. 194.

⁴⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 293-295.

⁴¹ The *Ursatz* is made of a fundamental line, or *Urlinie*, which is a linear descent to the root of the triad. The *Urlinie* is accompanied by an "arpeggiation" in the bass (*Bassbrechung*) from the tonic to the dominant and back.

⁴² Milton Babbitt, "Review of *Structural Hearing* by Felix Salzer," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 5, 1952, p. 262.

⁴³ See Robert Snarrenberg, *Schenker's Interpretative Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 145-150. I am indebted here to Snarrenberg's useful survey of a variety of primary sources.

⁴⁴ In his 1938 lectures on aesthetics, Wittgenstein uses a similar image of someone who admires a sonnet admitted to be good without knowing English (*LC* 6). Again, for Wittgenstein, music exemplifies the point being made: there is an intimate link between artistic experience of art and what he calls *Menschenkenntnis*, our acquaintance with mankind (cf. *PI* II xi 227).

⁴⁵ At some point Schenker wanted to publish an inflammatory essay titled "On the Decline of Compositional Art: A Technical-Critical Investigation". His publisher, Emil Hertzka, who was also the music publisher of Mahler, Strauss and Schoenberg, undermined this project.

⁴⁶ For instance, he accused Richard Strauss of trying to mask the primitive design of his music with heavy orchestration, with noise and polyphonic clatter, and of resorting to vulgar, extra-musical narratives in order to solve problems of musical continuity. As for Max Reger's music, Schenker's attempt to analyze Reger's Quintet Op. 64 suggested to him that the celebrated German composer had been abandoned by all instincts for music. It is noteworthy that Spengler expressed a similar opinion of the totally aloof character of Reger's music: "In the real command of a language there is a danger that the relation between the means and the meaning may be made into a new means. There arises an intellectual art of *playing* with expression, practiced by ... Reger in music" (Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, vol. 2, pp. 136-137).

⁴⁷ These disputes can be seen most openly in Schoenberg's *Harmonielehre* (1910) and in the second volume of Schenker's *Die Meisterwerk in der Musik* (1926).

⁴⁸ Thus it becomes quite clear in what sense Wittgenstein's judgement of Schenker's view of music must have been forthcoming to an extent, as Felix Salzer reported, and perhaps even why he also told Salzer (concerning the latter's own rendition of Schenker's theory) that he hopes that Salzer "has boiled it down" (reported by Brian McGuinness, personal communication 2/16/2000).

⁴⁹ See Eran Guter, "Wittgenstein on Musical Experience and Knowledge" in Johann C. Marek and Maria E. Reicher (eds.), *Experience and Analysis*, Contributions to the 27th International Wittgenstein Symposium (Kirchberg am Wechsel: Austrian Ludwig Wittgenstein Society, 2004), pp. 128-130.

⁵⁰ The term "vertical" in this context is adopted from Michel Ter Hark, *Beyond the Inner and the Outer: Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Psychology*. Synthese Library, Vol. 214 (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1990), pp. 33-42.

⁵¹ By "internal relation", Wittgenstein means a relation that is given with, or at least partly constitutive of the terms adjoined. Such a relation cannot be established by examining the relata, since we could not identify the relata independently. The relata are adjoined in practice, so their relation is effected by the way we identify things. Thus, an internal relation is to be found in grammar. Wittgenstein's great insight was that musical meaning is an internal relation, or a grammatical relation, not a relation between music and something else. Indeed, as Roger Scruton correctly observed in a recent paper, "analytical philosophy of music has grown around the question of musical meaning, which became articulated, during the twentieth century, in ways that were inimical to Wittgenstein's vision" (Roger Scruton, "Wittgenstein and the Understanding of Music", *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 44 (1), 2004, p. 1).

⁵² It is noteworthy that, traditionally, the term *Harmonielehre* does not denote primarily a kind of abstract treatise on the nature of harmony, but rather refers to a practical handbook designed to teach a beginning pupil how to become a composer of tonal music through an explanation of rules and their application, accompanied by a standard regimen of examples and exercises.

⁵³ Wittgenstein stated this idea explicitly as early as 1915: “Nor is a melody a mixture of tones, as all unmusical people think” (*NB*, 41; cf. *PT* 3.1602 and *TLP* 3.141).

⁵⁴ Hypothetical objects, such as the vibrations of the air, the miniscule apparatus of the inner ear etc. are patently excluded (cf. *PR* §218).

⁵⁵ I modified Peter Winch's translation.

⁵⁶ Regrettably, as it happens in many of Wittgenstein's remarks on music, his non-standard use of technical terms in music (e.g. "melody") often results in the obfuscation of his philosophical point.

⁵⁷ Indeed, as Robert Morgan points out, we can see that even in Richard Strauss' most progressive music, such as his operas *Salome* (1905) and *Elektra* (1908), while stretched to its outermost limits, tonality is still present as an underlying control. See Robert P. Morgan, *Twentieth-Century Music: A History of Musical Style in Modern Europe and America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991), pp. 32-33.

⁵⁸ Carl E. Schorske, *Thinking with History*, pp. 172-174.

⁵⁹ Reported by Enzo De Pellegrin from an interview with G. H. von Wright, which took place in Helsinki, Finland in early summer of 1999. I am grateful to Dr. De Pellegrin for relaying to me relevant segments from this conversation.

⁶⁰ Quoted in John King, “Recollections of Wittgenstein” in Rush Rhees (ed.) *Recollections of Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 71.

⁶¹ Morgan, *Twentieth-Century Music*, p. 22.

⁶² See Brian McGuinness, Maria Concetta Ascher and Otto Pfersmann (eds.) *Wittgenstein Familienbriefe*. Schriftenreihe der Wittgenstein-Gesellschaft, Band 23 (Wien: Verlag Holder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1996), pp. 131-133. It is noteworthy that this symphony was the first to exhibit Bruckner's mature style, which was greeted with fierce hostility by the Viennese audience and critics in its premiere in 1877—Brahms condemned Bruckner's works as being *symphonische Riesenschlange*. I may also add, as an anecdote, that young Gustav Mahler was one of the very few people in the audience who stood up applauding at the end of the performance.

⁶³ Quoted in Michael Nedo, “Wittgenstein, die Musik und die Freundschaft” in Bruna Bocchini Camaiani and Anna Scattigno (eds.) *Anima e paura: Studi in onore di Michele Ranchetti* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 1998), p. 106. This letter, officially proclaimed to be unpublished and inaccessible, is in the possession of the Austrian National Library in Vienna.

⁶⁴ See Leon Plantinga, *Romantic Music: A History of Musical Style in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1984), pp. 435-440.

⁶⁵ See note 59 above.

⁶⁶ It is noteworthy that Mahler's critics fiercely condemned precisely this character of Mahler's music, calling his works “gigantic symphonic potpourries.” In a eulogizing essay on Mahler, Schoenberg explained: “The characteristic of the potpourri is the unpretentiousness of the formal connectives. The individual sections are simply juxtaposed, without always being connected and without their relationships (which may also be entirely absent) being more than mere accidents in the form” (Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, p. 462).

⁶⁷ See Natalie Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections of Gustav Mahler*, ed. P. Franklin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 130.

⁶⁷ In a passage from 1938, Wittgenstein wrote: “Lying to oneself about oneself, lying to oneself about one's own inauthenticity [unechtheit], must have a bad influence on one's style; for the result will be that one cannot discern within oneself between what is genuine and what is false. This may explain Mahler's style, and I am in the same danger” (quoted in Rush Rhees, “Postscript” in *Recollections of Wittgenstein*, p. 174). A further consideration of the deeply personal ethical tenor manifested in Wittgenstein's general attitude toward Mahler falls beyond the scope of the present essay.

⁶⁹ David Pinsent entered in his diary on October 4, 1912: “The second half of the concert began with two selections from Strauss’s *Salome*: Wittgenstein refused to go in for them, and stayed outside till the Beethoven, which followed.” Quoted in McGuinness, *Wittgenstein: A Life*, p. 124.

⁷⁰ Wittgenstein even attempted, albeit unsuccessfully, to promote a performance of Labor’s string quintet in Cambridge. See *ibid.*, p. 125.

⁷¹ The fact that both remarks, written a week and a half apart, were entered in code signifies that Wittgenstein considered them sensitive.

⁷² Georg Henrik von Wright, “Ludwig Wittgenstein in Relation to his Times,” pp. 116-117.

⁷³ Quoted in Maurice O’C. Drury, “Conversations with Wittgenstein” in Rhees (ed.), *Recollections of Wittgenstein*, p. 112. This remark is dated back to 1930.

⁷⁴ See Heinrich Schenker, “Johannes Brahms,” *Die Zukunft* 19, 1897, pp. 261-265. I am indebted to John Daverio for this insight.

⁷⁵ In order to understand this obscure, somewhat unfocused passage correctly, three points should be taken into consideration. First, Wittgenstein’s remark concerning his inability to imagine several voices should be placed here in brackets. Later passages addressing the issue of contrapuntal music suggest that the problem concerning imagining several voices is not related to the present issue (cf. MS 163, 54 – CV, 40). Second, the terms “string quartet”, “symphony” and “oratorio” do not denote musical *forms* in any technical sense (the notion of symphony as a musical form is ambiguous at best). Rather, they denote musical *formats* that are intrinsically related to a broad and highly complex cultural context (cf. *LC*, 8). Third, Wittgenstein’s final, distinctly Spenglerian qualification should also be placed in brackets. This comment anticipates Wittgenstein’s conceptual concession to cultural relativism, and as such it is irrelevant to our present concerns.

⁷⁶ Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, Vol. 1, p. 152.

⁷⁷ See Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, Vol. 2, p. 435.

⁷⁸ See Alexander Rehding, “The Quest for the Origins of Music in Germany Circa 1900,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 53 (2), 2000, pp. 345-385.

⁷⁹ See Guido Adler, “Musik und Musikwissenschaft,” *Jahrbuch der Musikbibliothek Peters* 5, 1898, p. 29.

⁸⁰ Carl Stumpf, *Die Anfänge der Musik* (Leipzig: J. A. Barth, 1911)

⁸¹ See McGuinness, *Wittgenstein: A Life*, pp. 125-128.

⁸² See, e.g., Charles S. Myers, *In the Realm of Mind: Nine Chapters on the Applications and Implications of Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937), p. 56.

⁸³ See, e.g., C.W. Valentine, “The Appreciation of Musical Intervals.” *The British Journal of Psychology* (1912).

⁸⁴ See Charles S. Myers, “A Study of Rhythm in Primitive Music,” *The British Journal of Psychology* 1, 1905, pp. 397-406; and “The Beginnings of Music” in *Essays Presented to W. M. Ridgway* (Cambridge, 1913).

⁸⁵ Rehding, “The Quest for the Origins of Music in Germany Circa 1900,” pp. 371-380.

⁸⁶ Jeremy Yudkin, *Music in Medieval Europe* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1989), p. 43.

⁸⁷ It is noteworthy that historically the plainchant is a precursor of the recitative, which Wittgenstein brings as an example. Recitative differs from plainchant mainly in its precise rhythmic notation, its harmonic support, its wide melodic range and its affective treatment of the words. In this respect, plainchant makes a far better example of the significant irregularity exemplified by phenomena akin to language in music.

⁸⁸ This characteristic was brought out most clearly by the great dispute in the 16th Century concerning the practice of polyphonic composition. One of the main claims against polyphony—advanced, for example, by Galilei in his *Dialogo della musica antica e della moderna* (1581)—was that its unequal rhythms, melodies and tempi, or its mingling of voices, impede communication, and that only uncluttered voice can communicate clearly. See John Neubauer, *The Emancipation of Music from Language: Departure from Mimesis in Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 26.

⁸⁹ For a discussion of Wittgenstein's particular stress on speech, see J.C. Nyíri, "Wittgenstein as a Philosopher of Secondary Orality." *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 52, 1996/7, pp. 45-58.

⁹⁰ Indeed, in an angry little essay from 1923 titled *Untergangs-Raunzer* or "decline-whiners" (an obvious allusion to Spengler's *Untergang des Abendlandes*), Schoenberg lashed out at "all these Spenglers, Schenkers, and so forth," who live the life of intellectual parasites, feeding on the works of art that they oppose. See Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, pp. 203-204.

⁹¹ See Ethan Haimo, "Schoenberg and the Origins of Atonality," in Brand and Hailey (eds.) *Constructive Dissonance*, pp. 71-86.

⁹² Botstein, "Music and the Critique of Culture," op. cit., p. 17.

⁹³ See Carl Dahlhaus, "Schoenberg and Schenker," *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 100, 1973/4, pp. 209-215.

⁹⁴ Schenker actually used the term *Schichten* (layers) as a technical term, denoting the long-range, mid-range and short-range melodic trajectories, divided under the headings background, middleground and foreground.

⁹⁵ Heinrich Schenker, *Die Meisterwerk in der Musik* (Munich, 1926), p. 25; quoted in Dahlhaus, "Schoenberg and Schenker," p. 210.

⁹⁶ It is noteworthy that Schoenberg's decisive leaning toward function in contradistinction to Schenker's leaning toward ornament in accounting for non-chordal notes aligns Schoenberg with Adolf Loos in a way that sheds a new light on the apparent asymmetry between the two, which I sketched in the first section of the present essay ("Leads and Impasses"). As I pointed out, Loos did not regard architecture as an art, whereas music, at least since the 19th Century, was regarded as the ultimate art, the art to whose condition all other arts should aspire to rise. Yet, if we acknowledge Schoenberg's quasi-linguist emphasis on function in his approach to music, as we must, then we should also acknowledge that, within the framework of the Krausian dichotomy between the urn and the chamber pot, Schoenberg's art seems to fall peculiarly on the side of the chamber pot rather than on the side of the urn. Here, I believe, lies the real asymmetry that obtains between Loos and Schoenberg; hence we should concede that, while endorsing Schoenberg's middle-period atonal music, Kraus and Loos nonetheless might have overlooked the true nature of Schoenberg's project.

⁹⁷ Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, p. 369.

⁹⁸ Kraus, *Half Truths and One-and-a-Half-Truths*, p. 64.

⁹⁹ Schoenberg's apparent appeal to a sort of Romantic "big bang" theory of artistic genesis does not justify the conclusion he draws from Kraus.

¹⁰⁰ Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, p. 218.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 244.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 287-288.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

¹⁰⁵ Dahlhaus, "Schoenberg and Schenker," op. cit.

¹⁰⁶ Schoenberg, *The Musical Idea*, op. cit., p. 416.

¹⁰⁷ Schoenberg never wanted his "method for composing with twelve tones which are related only with one another" to be freed of the conditions in which it had been conceived or of the ethical implications which it embodied. In 1923, two years after he had already begun experimenting with the use of 12-tone rows in his music, Schoenberg gathered twenty of his students in order to stress upon them that "you use the row and compose as you had done it previously." That means: 'Use the same kind of form and expression, the same themes, melodies, sounds, rhythms as you used before.'" See Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, p. 213.

¹⁰⁸ Quoted in Snarrenberg, *Schenker's Interpretative Practice*, p. 89 (my emphasis).

¹⁰⁹ Kraus, *Half Truths and One-and-a-Half-Truths*, p. 65.

¹¹⁰ The fact that we hear the first and the last tones of the 12-tone row as being the same is beside the point. In doing so, we merely hear an interval of an octave; a tonal phenomenon that the 12-tone system professes to undermine ultimately.

¹¹¹ Musical gestures that pertain to dynamics, form, performance practice etc. are excluded here.

¹¹² Obviously, here Schoenberg is exposed as being in the grip of the so-called Augustinian picture of language, which has been the elusive target of Wittgenstein's philosophical attack in his *Philosophical Investigations* (cf. *PI* §1).

¹¹³ Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, pp. 107-108.

¹¹⁴ Note that Wittgenstein jotted down this comment on 26.9.1946, only a day after writing one of his most elaborate passages on musical understanding.

¹¹⁵ See e.g. Joseph P. Swaine, *Musical Languages* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), ch. 6.

¹¹⁶ J. C. Nyíri, "On Esperanto: Usage and Contrivance in Language," in Rudolf Haller and Johannes Brandl (eds.) *Wittgenstein – Towards a Re-Evaluation*, Proceedings of the 14th International Wittgenstein-Symposium, part II (Wien: Verlag Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1990), p. 303-310.

¹¹⁷ Rudolf Carnap, "Intellectual Autobiography," in Paul Arthur Schlipp (ed.) *The Philosophy of Rudolf Carnap*, The Library of Living Philosophers, vol. XI (La Salle: Open Court, 1963), p. 26.

¹¹⁸ From the very beginning, Esperantists were concerned about the aesthetic aspects and values of their language over and above one of its initially professed objectives, which was to serve as a vehicle for scientific communication. In the first publication in Esperanto in 1887, Zamenhof had already published three poems, and since then, the growing original literature in Esperanto has served as a device for the elaboration and testing of the aesthetic rules implicit in the structure and principles of the language. See Pierre Janton, *Esperanto: Language, Literature, and Community* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), ch. 4.

¹¹⁹ Carnap, "Intellectual Autobiography," p. 69.

¹²⁰ Karl Kraus, *Rückkehr in die Zeit in Werke*, Vol. VII: *Worte in Versen* (Munich: Kösel, 1959), p. 236.

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