Schoenberg's (Analytical) Gaze: Musical Time, The Organic Ideal, and Analytical Perspectivism

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As many scholars have pointed out, the theme of organic unity appears often in Arnold Schoenberg's writing on music, especially in those passages that engage musical analysis. For Schoenberg, organic unity plays an important role in tracing the emergence of modernism (and ultimately twelve-tone composition) out of the German tradition from Bach to Brahms and Wagner. But even as privileging organismism supports Schoenberg's claims to historical continuity, it also suppresses other aspects of musical structure and expression. This paper will argue that while an organismic reading is only ever a partial one, and while few pieces actually live up to the ideal that the aesthetics of organismic celebrate, the aesthetic lens of organismism ("Schoenberg's analytical gaze") nevertheless produces rich and compelling interpretations of the music, especially when understood within the context of Friedrich Nietzsche's notion of perspectivism (The Will to Power). Schoenberg's gaze may be partial, but it is also powerful.

This article will explore two aspects of Arnold Schoenberg's thought and writing. Organicism has long been considered a cornerstone in Schoenberg's thinking on coherence and dynamic development in music, and has often been associated with the pragmatic and composerly dimensions of his writing. Schoenberg's remarks on musical time, on the other hand, are usually considered to be more abstract—perhaps more aesthetic and philosophical, concerned more with the deeper meaning of the music than with the development of motives or connections between themes. Both organicism and musical time are central to Schoenberg's approach to musical composition in a pragmatic sense, as well as to the how he understood music in a perhaps deeper and even more philosophical and aesthetic way. As many scholars have pointed out, the theme of organic unity appears especially in those passages that engage musical analysis—aspects of Schoenberg's "poetics of music" and "aesthetic theology," as Carl Dahlhaus (1987) put it. For Schoenberg, organic unity plays an important role in tracing the emergence of modernism (and ultimately twelve-tone composition) out of the German tonal tradition of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. But even as privileging organismism supports Schoenberg's claims to historical continuity, it also suppresses other aspects of musical

structure and expression (and this even in the composer’s discussions of his own music). This article will argue that while an organicist reading is only ever a partial one, and while few pieces actually live up to the organic ideal that the aesthetics of organicism celebrates, this aesthetic lens—"Schoenberg’s analytical gaze"—nevertheless produces rich and compelling interpretations of the music, especially when understood within the context of his conception of musical time and space and in light of Friedrich Nietzsche’s notion of perspectivism. Though Schoenberg’s gaze may be partial, it is also powerful.

In terms of musical time and space, let us consider something Schoenberg called "the unitary perception of musical time and space." This phrase is used most famously in his 1941 lecture, "“Composition With Twelve Tones”—a lecture that has, in the decades since he delivered it at UCLA, often been characterized as Schoenberg’s definitive theoretical statement on his twelve-tone method of musical composition (Schoenberg 2000b). Schoenberg invokes the unitary perception of time and space to explain a general approach to musical composition that was hardly new with him and his music; in fact, Schoenberg is quite proud that this idea is at the core of the great tradition of European composers, from Bach to Mozart to Beethoven to Brahms and Wagner.

Schoenberg does not introduce his idea about musical unity right away, however; the essay begins with a consideration of comprehensibility in music. As his argument unfolds, it turns out that the unitary perception of musical time and space is an important element in establishing musical coherence. It is clear that Schoenberg likely would not have begun a lecture on twelve-tone music with such a discussion if comprehensibility in his atonal and dodecaphonic music was self-evident; and he acknowledges that tonality had been an extremely important factor in the comprehensibility of earlier music. He offers an argument for the turn away from tonality, citing the chromaticism of Wagner and Strauss, the non-functional harmony of Debussy, and his emancipation of the dissonance as factors that led composers to atonality:1 In discussing his development of the method of composing with twelve tones, he offers a weak argument for the use of only one row in a piece, basing his rationale on avoiding the repetition of any single note, though he also suggests—much more importantly—that the row establishes a crucial musical context for the logical unfolding of musical ideas. Schoenberg then comes to the four transformations of the row, and this is where he brings the unitary perception of musical time and space into consideration. The prime, retrograde, inversion, and retrograde-inversion forms are equivalent expressions of the same basic musical object; the various transformations

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1 Schoenberg objected to the term “atonality”; see Schoenberg 2000a. For an extended discussion of this term with regard to Schoenberg’s music, see Haimo 2006, esp. pp. 1-7.
provide for a wealth of variety, but most importantly they assure unity, and through unity, comprehensibility—and this, of course, brings us back to where the discussion began.

As scholars have pointed out (Forte 1972, Hyde 1980 and 1982), Schoenberg’s more general claim is that the melodic and harmonic dimensions of any given musical figure can be seen as equivalent: put very simply, something stated melodically can return as a chord and something stated as a chord can return as a melody. Since melodies unfold as a series of individual tones in time, and chords are the result of a combination of musical tones in space, viewing these as musical equivalents requires a unitary perception—a unitary perception of time and space. The consequences of this kind of thinking help bring out the similarities among music in various styles, allowing Schoenberg to trace a continuous line of development from the tonal music of Beethoven through his own atonal, and eventually twelve-tone music.

What is fascinating in Schoenberg’s discussion of the unitary perception of time and space is not just what it tells us about his conception of twelve-tone music; it is also how he tells us about the unitary perception. Here is how he casts it in the lecture:

The unity of musical space demands an absolute and unitary perception. In this space, as in Swedenborg’s heaven (described in Balzac’s Séraphita) there is no absolute down, no right or left, forward or backward. (Schoenberg 2000b, 223)

Thought of simply in terms of presentation—and at the risk of privileging style over idea—Schoenberg could easily have discussed this notion in a much less mystically inflected manner. Perhaps he thought that a general intellectual audience would appreciate a more “poetic” image, one that was less musical “nuts-and-bolts” and more evocative and literary. But how many in his audience would have known Swedenborg’s theological writings, or even Balzac’s philosophical novel Séraphita? Of Balzac’s novels, Old Goriot might stand a good chance of recognition, but Séraphita is a relatively obscure reference. This particular mention of Swedenborg is used not solely to support the idea of the equivalence of the melodic and harmonic dimensions, but also to signal a kind of philosophical and aesthetic engagement with music. That is, by citing Swedenborg, Schoenberg is telling us something about what he thinks music “means”—why and how it is important in a way that transcends the notes and rhythms.

In order to gain a clearer understanding of how this reference to Swedenborg points beyond its immediate context, we need to explore the intellectual and cultural world that Schoenberg grew up in. In my published work on Schoenberg, Josef Matthias

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2 Indeed, most North American theorists have been doing just this for more than fifty years. For discussion of various religious and mystical dimensions of Schoenberg’s thought, see also Cross 1980, White 1985, and Ringer 1990. For a discussion of Schoenberg’s understanding of time in music, see also Cherlin 2007, esp. Chapter 6.
Hauer, Alban Berg, and turn-of-the-century Vienna, I have argued that the accounts of the Austrian *Jahrwende* provided by Carl Schorske (1980) and by Janik and Toulmin (1973) are somewhat incomplete. In addition to figures such as Sigmund Freud, Gustav Klimpt, Arthur Schnitzler, Adolf Loos, Karl Kraus, and Gustav Mahler, there were many others who contributed to Viennese intellectual life—and the influence of some of these figures is hard to detect in what has become the standard historical account of this period. William McGrath (1974) uncovers some of the colorful strangeness of Vienna in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and James Webb (1985 and 1988) chronicles what he calls the occult underground and occult establishment throughout Europe during this period and since. In the case of Schoenberg, Berg, and Hauer, I have argued for the influence of Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) and Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772). Let us turn first to Steiner and then return to Swedenborg.

As many scholars have noted, most especially Severine Neff (1993, 2000), a significant element in Schoenberg's theoretical approach is influenced by the scientific writings of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Schoenberg was probably familiar with the mystical interpretations of Goethean science forwarded in the 1880s and 90s by Steiner. Though Steiner began his career as a scholar editing Goethe's works for two editions, including the prestigious Weimar edition, his thinking took a distinct turn toward the occult after the turn of the century. In 1902 he became head of the German-speaking branch of the Theosophical Society, and in 1913 he formed his own organization, the Anthroposophical Society. Steiner always maintained that his later occult philosophy was founded in German Idealism, and especially in the writings of Goethe. This later writing was markedly occult and new age, but Steiner had a way of weaving together such mystical ideas with the writings of German intellectual heavyweights like Kant and Goethe. This blend was very appealing to certain German-language intellectuals, and Steiner's take on Goethe's science was the one that made its way to artists and musicians like Schoenberg, Berg, Webern, and Hauer, as well as to painters like Wassily Kandinsky. Steiner believed—and argued that Goethe believed—that there exist realms finer than our coarse physical one and that through intuitive perception one can gain access to these higher spiritual realms. We do not simply imagine these finer realms, they are really there and we can actually see them via a process Steiner calls "supersensory seeing." In 1897, Steiner wrote as follows:

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4 For a detailed but also somewhat controversial account of Kandinsky's interest in Steiner's ideas, see Ringbom 1970.
Goethe's basic conviction was that something can be seen in the plant and in the animal that is not accessible to mere sense observation. What the bodily eye can observe about the organism seems to Goethe to be only the result of the living whole of developmental laws working through one another and accessible to the spiritual eye alone. What he saw in the plant and the animal with his spiritual eye is what he described. (Steiner 1985, 77)

We will return to the importance of Goethe’s morphology in just a moment, but for now let us pursue this idea of supersensory seeing, or the notion that we—or some people at least—can see into other dimensions, finer worlds, or even spirit worlds. This notion figures strongly into Schoenberg’s remark about Swedenborg above, so it is worth following up by considering the Swedish mystic and theologian.

Emanuel Swedenborg abandoned a seemingly well-established and successful career in the sciences to write dozens of volumes of biblical commentary. We know that Schoenberg’s fascination with Swedenborg goes back to the first decade of the twentieth century. The evidence suggests, however, that Schoenberg did not get his knowledge of Swedenborg’s ideas from reading Swedenborg directly, but rather he seems to have gleaned almost all of his knowledge second hand from the philosophical novels of Honoré de Balzac (Séraphita being the most important of these). The third chapter of that novel is given over entirely to a description of Swedenborg and his work. Balzac tells us that Swedenborg had the gift of seeing into other worlds—worlds Swedenborg called heaven and in which he conversed with angels. Consider the following passages from Séraphita that describe Swedenborg’s heaven (these are likely the passages that Schoenberg refers to in his lecture):

In fact, to the spirit, time and space are not. Distance and duration are proportions proper to matter; and spirit and matter have nothing in common. (Balzac 1989, 143)

But the spirit was in the infinite, and they did not know that in the infinite time and space are not, that they were divided from him by gulls, though apparently so near. (Balzac 1989, 147-48)

In short, everything was at once sonorous, diaphanous, and mobile; so that, everything existing in everything else, extension knew no limits, and the angels could traverse it everywhere to the utmost depths of the infinite. (Balzac 1989, 151)

Here we can detect a crucial decision on Schoenberg’s part: he casts the idea that melodic and harmonic events are equivalent in markedly mystical terms, and he goes out of his way to do so. According to Schoenberg, musical space is a lot like spiritual space. But why invoke Swedenborg or his description of heaven at all, even if it is only offered as a fanciful idea from a nineteenth-century novel? There must be something more central

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5 See also Swedenborg 1979.
about it, and for Schoenberg there was.

Let us return to organicism and consider how Schoenberg understood organicism in music. Schoenberg's ideas on this are familiar from his writings; and in fact, much of his take on the organic ideal can be found in one of his best-known essays, "Brahms the Progressive" (2000c). The basic components are motivic development ("developing variation"), the presentation of a basic shape at the beginning of a piece (Grundgestalt), a dedication to an economic use of motivic materials, which often develop rapidly and avoid repetition (musical prose), and the big picture that brings all of this together (musikalische Gedanke). It is useful to think of Schoenberg's conception of organicism in terms of two kinds of metaphor: the first of these casts musical material in terms of growth; as a seed contains within it all the possibilities for the mature form of the plant, it grows and develops over time, unfolding its potential in many directions and in different ways. The second organic metaphor is that of unity: every single part of the organism is marked by its particular identity within the whole. The first of these metaphors is dynamic; the second is static. Example 1, from Nadine Hubbs (1991, 145), provides a very useful chart that captures the range of possibilities within the organic metaphor.

### ORGANICISM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ATTRIBUTES</th>
<th>DISPOSTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>THE ORGANIC PRINCIPLE</strong></td>
<td>Opposition of the organic and mechanical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unity of parts and whole</td>
<td>Valorization of concealed phenomena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Natural-law rationale of beauty</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Artist as unconscious genius</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Organism metaphor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Necessary form</td>
<td>Metamorphosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essential permeation</td>
<td>Teleology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater whole than sum of parts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example 1
Organicism chart from Hubbs 1991.

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Note that Hubbs divides the attributes into growth and unity, while listing below these attributes something she calls "dispositions"—which are essentially kinds of arguments that can be made by using some dimension of the attributes as evidence. These dispositions will be familiar to those who know Schoenberg's writing, most especially the "valorization of concealed phenomena" and "artist as unconscious genius." A useful companion to Hubbs's article is the classic study of organicism in European art music by Ruth Solie (1980), and almost everything that Solie identifies can be found somewhere in Hubbs' chart.

Hubbs' discussion of organicism takes the writings of Schenker as its focus, and in that sense can be read along with similar writing of William Pastille (1984), Gary Don (1988), Allan Keiler (1989), Matthew Arndt (2018) and others. Among these scholars, there is consensus that the scientific writings of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe are a key source of inspiration for Schenker's organicism, with the *Ursatz* and *Urlinie* often being compared with Goethe's *Urpflanze*. As mentioned above, Severine Neff (1993, 2000) has made the most compelling and detailed case for the influence of Goethe's scientific thinking on Schoenberg's approach to analysis. Neff begins her essay, "Schoenberg and Goethe," as follows:

"I believe Goethe would be quite satisfied with me," Arnold Schoenberg wrote in his sketchbook upon discovering the set for the third movement of his Wind Quintet Op. 26. Goethe's exceptionally powerful influence on Schoenberg was crystallized in 1934 in his major unfinished theoretical work, "Der musikalische Gedanke und die Logik, Technik, und Kunst seiner Darstellung." This manuscript adapts the terminology and epistemology of Goethe's comparatively neglected scientific work. (Neff 1993, 409)

Neff's article goes on to explore the influence of Goethe's science on Schoenberg, presenting convincing evidence to support her case. Let us pause a moment to consider the last sentence quoted above, and especially on the phrase "Goethe's comparatively neglected scientific work." Neff is right to point out that Goethe's work on the morphology of plants, as well as his color theory, were largely discredited in the early twentieth century. In the opinion of some experts, Goethe's scientific writing was a just bit of dabbling by an artist—as a scientist, so to speak, Goethe was a fantastic poet. So how could Goethe's ideas have reached Schoenberg, Schenker, and so many others.

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7 Goethe's color theory took the harshest criticism. As Wells points out, "his views in physical optics were almost universally rejected" (1978, 9). Writing in 1853, Hermann von Helmholtz considered Goethe's scientific writing to be driven by his artistic perspective: "Instead of trying to investigate the phenomena of nature under certain definitions regardless of intuition, he is facing them, as he would look at a work of art that sooner or later would reveal his central idea to a sufficiently susceptible student." Cited in Kesselring 2013, p. 154. See also Barnouw 1987 and Amrine 1996.
in the arts who seemed to be so interested in them? The answer is, as suggested above, that Goethe’s science reached these artists via Rudolf Steiner, and their fascination was not primarily for the botany of it, but rather for the spiritual dimension that the botany revealed. All of which brings us back to the dynamic and static attributes of “the organic principle,” as Hubbs puts it. The key to Schoenberg’s take on organicism is that the static and dynamic aspects of any piece need to be kept in the mind’s eye (or ear) simultaneously. As Carl Dahlhaus (1987, 133) has pointed out, the Musical Idea (musikalische Gedanke) arises from at once experiencing the teleological growth of musical materials and an out-of-time experience of the whole: musical organicism and the unity of musical time and space that result from super-sensory seeing (hearing) are intimately linked.

The late philosopher Ronald H. Brady, writing on Goethe’s study of morphology, casts this experience of the dynamic-static dialectic in a common-sense way. Brady tells us to think of a table: as we look at the table, we can only ever see it from one angle at a time, yet we know that as we change our angle on the table—which literally changes how it looks to us—we nevertheless understand it as the same object. Brady writes:

So in order for the mind to perform this little miracle that keeps the table constant, one has to be able to think the table in a form that is identical with no view of the table available to the senses. To make sense of that table, one must think the table in a form that illuminates, as a law illuminates, all the exemplary views of the table, but always reveals each of them as partial. Therefore, whatever the form is, it is not any of the views themselves. (Amrine and Zucker 1987, 381)

The most important dimension of Brady’s remarks for the present argument is this: our conception of what a particular table is does not reside in any individual perception of it. Its “existence” is in some sense intellectual, and this understanding of it is perhaps more “real” than any physical observation can be. Steiner would say that this understanding is not intellectual, but rather spiritual (though admittedly, the German word geistige makes this a matter of interpretation). We can understand the table only by thinking it in a form that does not present itself to our senses: it is an image that presents itself to thinking. For artists like Schoenberg and others, this critical intellectual move constituted a kind of vision, or as Steiner called it, “supersensory seeing.” For Goethe the Urpflanze or color circle was this kind of thing, for Schenker it was the Ursatz, for Schoenberg it was the musikalische Gedanke, and for fellow Viennese composer Josef Matthias Hauer it was the twelve-tone universe.

Schoenberg would have agreed with Brady regarding to the Goethean/Steinerian unitary perception of time and space, and he reminds us in his twelve-tone lecture that
Just as the mind always recognizes, for instance, a knife, a bottle, or a watch, regardless of its position, and can reproduce it in the imagination in every possible position, even so a musical creator's mind can operate subconsciously with a row of tones, regardless of their direction, regardless of the way a mirror might show the mutual relations, which remain a given quality. (Schoenberg 2000b, 223)\(^8\)

As mentioned above, Schoenberg could have cast his unitary perception idea in a more matter of fact way, but that he clearly does not do so suggests that he prefers the more mystical take on it. In fact, if we look elsewhere in the essay, we can find other passages that tend toward the spiritual. Consider, for instance, the way the lecture opens, quoted here at length because it is especially rich in references to key elements in Schoenberg's aesthetics:

To understand the very nature of creation one must acknowledge that there was no light before the Lord said: "Let there be Light." And since there was not yet light, the Lord's omniscience embraced a vision of it which only His omnipotence could call forth.

We poor human beings, when we refer to one of the better minds among us as creator, should never forget what a creator is in reality.

A creator has a vision of something which has not existed before this vision.

And a creator has the power to bring his vision to life, the power to realize it.

Alas, human creators, if they be granted a vision, must travel through the long path between vision and accomplishment; a hard road where, driven out of Paradise, even geniuses must reap their harvest in the sweat of their brows.

Alas, it is one thing to envision in a creative instant of inspiration and it is another thing to materialize one’s vision by painstakingly connecting details until they fuse into a kind of organism.

Alas, suppose it becomes an organism, a homunculus or a robot, and possesses some of the spontaneity of a vision, it remains yet another thing to organize this form so that it becomes a comprehensible message "to whom it may concern." (Schoenberg 2000b, 214-15)

Of course, the biblical references here are obvious. Schoenberg's focus in this passage on the creative vision and the artist's struggle to bring that vision to some kind of expression is important, as is his reference to the work as an organism. His concluding ironic remark about being misunderstood is especially interesting and revealing. While the image of the misunderstood romantic genius was securely established by the early 20th century, it is interesting to compare Schoenberg’s remarks with a passage in Wassily

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\(^8\) Dineen (1993, 435) cites Porter (1957) and Carpenter (1967) in relating similar remarks by Schoenberg.
Kandinsky’s Concerning the Spiritual in Art (1914). Kandinsky’s book was originally published in late 1911 and we know that Schoenberg had read more than half of it, writing to Kandinsky that he resonated with much of it. Kandinsky describes the artist as genius in terms of a triangle. The following passage comes from the beginning of Chapter Two of the book:

The life of the spirit may be fairly represented in the diagram as a large acute-angled triangle divided horizontally into unequal parts with the narrowest segment uppermost. The lower the segment the greater it is in breadth, depth, and area.

The whole triangle is moving slowly, almost invisibly forwards and upwards. Where the apex was today the second segment is tomorrow; what today can be understood only at the apex and to the rest of the triangle is incomprehensible gibberish, forms tomorrow the true thought and feeling of the second segment.

At the apex stands often one man, and only one. His joyful vision cloaks a vast sorrow. Even those who are nearest to him in sympathy do not understand him. Angrily they abuse him as a charlatan or madman. So in his lifetime stood Beethoven, solitary and insulted. (Kandinsky 1914, 6)

We might easily substitute Schoenberg for Beethoven in this last sentence to arrive at a fairly accurate view of the way Schoenberg sometimes saw himself, and especially as he might have seen himself years later with regard to dodecaphony: he was the one standing at the top of the triangle and what he could see was the twelve-tone method, based as it was on the unitary conception of time and space which assured comprehensibility. If he was the only who could see it, that would not ultimately be problematic, because future generations would certainly prove him right.

Viewed in this context, organismism in music emerges as an aesthetic ideal. Organismism is about hearing something in a piece that cannot be entirely perceived in the actual sounding surface itself. Part of the magic is in the thinking. We experience those opening measures, with all the developmental possibilities latent in them, and then the unfolding of various motives according to some kind of compositional logic, and all of this in real time. But we also experience the entire piece outside of chronological time, where the musical events unfolding in time collapse into a sense of the whole that is static and unified. The most important role of analysis, as Schoenberg would have it, is in directing the reader’s attention in such a way as to facilitate this kind of experience of the music. To understand a piece in this way is to catch a glimpse of the infinite.

9 For an examination of the relationship between Schoenberg and Kandinsky, see Hahl-Koch 1984.

10 A fuller consideration of this idea outside of my specific interpretation of Schoenberg’s remarks and thinking is beyond the scope of this paper. See, for instance, Carpenter 1967, Goehr 1992, and Butterfield 2002 for broader and much more detailed discussions of this idea.
Unfortunately, we are not left with many detailed and complete analyses by Schoenberg himself.11 We do have analyses from Alban Berg (1913a, 1913b, 1913c), Rudolf Reti (1951, 1967), Josef Rufer (1954), Alan Walker (1962), David Epstein (1979), Patricia Carpenter (1983), and others. Neff (1993) acknowledges this lack of analyses directly from Schoenberg’s hand and provides her own analysis based on Schoenberg’s ideas.12 Many who have embraced Schoenberg’s organicist ideas for years (including the present writer) would probably admit that it is the rare piece that can measure up to the strictest and most uncompromising organic ideal under analysis. It is not even clear that Schoenberg’s own music always measures up to the strictest version of this standard. Schoenberg sometimes writes as if organic unity is the most important aspect of a piece.13 There were times and musical situations in which even he himself did not believe this to be so.14 Consider the following passage from “Brahms the Progressive”:

> I wish to join ideas with ideas. No matter what purpose or meaning of an idea in the aggregate may be, no matter whether its function be introductory, establishing, varying, preparing, elaborating, deviating, developing, concluding, subdividing, subordinate, or basic, it must be an idea which had to take this place even if it were not to serve for this purpose or meaning or function; and this idea must look in construction and in thematic content as if it were not there to fulfill a structural task. In other words, a transition, codetta, an elaboration, etc., should not be considered a thing in its own end. It should not appear at all if it does not develop, modify, intensify, clarify, or throw light or color on the idea of the piece. (Schoenberg 2000c, 407)

Schoenberg here is discussing his own music, but he offers this statement in the context of analyzing the music of other composers. It is an almost impossible ideal, and one that would seem to dominate every other dimension of the music. But still, as impossible as this ideal may seem, and as rarely as it is fully achieved, is it still useful? Is this organic ideal—even in its strongest and perhaps most unlikely form—still an ideal worth

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11 See Dudeque 2005 and Jacob 2005 for comprehensive surveys of Schoenberg’s theoretical writings and analyses.

12 See also Dudeque 2005 and Neff 2006.

13 The model discussed in this article addresses only one of the ways in which Schoenberg discussed presenting musical material. Two other ideas, Abwicklung (envelopment) and juxtaposition are discussed in Neff 1999. Abwicklung accounts for a series of contrapuntal combinations in a piece, often in Baroque music, while juxtaposition addresses aspects of what we might consider modular form (in a general sense) in popular music. These three forms of presentation are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and each could be thought of in terms of organic models. In a sense, Abwicklung represents juxtaposition in space, while juxtaposition operates in time. For a fuller discussion of Abwicklung and juxtaposition, see Neff 2009, Heneghan 2009, and Jenkins 2016b, as well as Schoenberg 1994.

14 See Heneghan 2008 for a fuller consideration of Schoenberg’s shifting compositional philosophy—which she refers to as a volte-face—with regard to his Piano Pieces, Op. 11.
striving for analytically and aesthetically?

To address the question of the value—and even viability—of Schoenberg’s organic ideal, let us turn to the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche. Especially interesting is Nietzsche’s notion of perspectivism—a topic that arises throughout Nietzsche’s writing, including in the fragments from his Nachlass that were collected together and published as *The Will to Power*. Here is perhaps the most direct statement on the topic by Nietzsche:

Against positivism, which halts at phenomena—“There are only facts”—I would say: No, facts is precisely what there are not, only interpretations. We cannot establish any fact “in itself”: perhaps it is folly to want to do such a thing.

“Everything is subjective,” you say; but even this is interpretation. The “subject” is not something given, it is something added and invented and projected behind what there is.—Finally, is it necessary to posit an interpreter behind the interpretation? Even this is invention, hypothesis.

In so far as the word “knowledge” has any meaning, the world is knowable; but it is *interpretable* otherwise, it has no meaning behind it, but countless meanings.—“Perspectivism.” (Nietzsche 1967, 267)

It is certainly the case that, taken out of the broader context of Nietzsche’s thought and intellectual biography, this excerpt can be difficult to fathom. It is worth bearing in mind that a consistent feature in Nietzsche’s writing is an energetic pushing back against the standard understanding of things in his day, especially among professional philosophers and academics. Nietzsche’s well-known notion of Eternal Recurrence, for instance, can be seen—at least in part—as a disruption aimed at the notion of teleological history and chronological time. If everything that happens ultimately recurs, are our notions of how history progresses, and our understanding of time more generally, thus changed or challenged somehow? In a certain sense, it is less important whether Eternal Recurrence is a real thing; it is rather an intellectual disruption that rouses us from the waking slumber of overdetermined thought. So in a similar way, perspectivism challenges the notion that there is objective truth in the world. According to philosopher Alan D. Schrift (1990), “perspectivism is the Nietzschean doctrine that there are no uninterpreted ‘facts’ or ‘truth’” (145).

Philosopher Bernard Reginster (2001) identifies something he calls the “paradox of perspectivism.” He writes:

The last twenty years of English-speaking Nietzsche scholarship have been dominated by the paradox of perspectivism. Perspectivism is the view that any claim to knowledge is bound to the perspective formed by the contingent “interests” of the knower. Nearly all
existing interpretations fall within one of two categories. On the one hand, this relativity to perspective is thought to underwrite a generalized skepticism: we are irrevocably locked up in a perspective which may distort our apprehension of reality. On the other hand, perspectivism is interpreted as anti-essentialism: there is no independent reality the apprehension of which our perspective might distort; accordingly, our judgments are less a matter of correspondence to objective reality than expression of subjective attitudes. Unsurprisingly, this anti-essentialism is often associated with relativism. (217)

För Reginster, the paradox is that if each perspective is grounded in the interests of the knower, how is it possible to advocate for perspectivism to others?

The consequences of Nietzsche's remarks on perspectivism are far reaching; for the purposes of the present article, let us explore the notion that any approach to musical analysis is subject to the situation Nietzsche describes. All analyses arise out of "interests of the knower" and none can claim privileged knowledge of the piece or passage at hand. We might add that all analytical approaches are incomplete and somewhat distortive—incomplete in that they are driven by certain values at the expense of others, and distortive because the results provide a perspective that is unbalanced because of the incompleteness. Embracing analytical perspectivism in this case is accepting multiple interpretation to be the state of things. It need not extend to offering a way to remedy this nor to proposing a more inclusive and complete system.

From this point of view, Schoenberg's organicist ideal becomes one perspective from which to view a piece. It is necessarily partial, since no analysis is complete and pieces may not, in most cases, measure up to the most demanding tenets of the organic ideal. Nevertheless, Schoenberg's approach often reveals important relationships in the music. Organicism thus becomes an aesthetic lens. It cannot claim to provide the only way to interpret a piece, but it does provide an approach that has strong historical and aesthetic grounding within certain traditions—and these are not surprisingly, the traditions that Schoenberg celebrates and engages. Schoenberg's analytical gaze may be partial, but it can also be compelling and powerful. And for some, the power of the gaze penetrates beyond the music.

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In the discussion of Schoenberg's twelve-tone lecture above we focused not only on what Schoenberg tells us about his twelve-tone music in this lecture, but also on how he chose to tell us about it. Schoenberg scholars have known for years that the 1941 version of this lecture was not the first one; Schoenberg based this twelve-tone lecture on one he gave in Princeton in 1934 (Schoenberg 1974). A comparison between the two versions is revealing: the 1934 version has none of the religious, spiritual, or mystical
references. In his editorial discussion that precedes the lecture itself, Claudio Spies remarks that he likes the way the 1934 version dispenses with all of this extra-musical material, which he feels just gets in the way of the topic at hand. I would argue that this extra material, far from getting in the way, suggests instead that there is more than one topic at work here. Spies' work shows us that Schoenberg indeed went out of his way to add this material into what was otherwise a lecture that dealt with compositional nuts and bolts. Clearly, to Schoenberg at least, it mattered.

The picture that emerges of Schoenberg in the second version of the twelve-tone lecture is that of an artist who takes his creative responsibilities very seriously, not simply as a matter of professional reputation, but also out of a sense of moral, or even spiritual duty. The unitary perception of musical time and space, combined with the organic ideal, permit an understanding that places the composer or listener in a position that is similar to that of the Divine Creator—or the Supreme Commander, as Schoenberg refers to him or her in the lecture. One has a vision that recognizes unity in the face of diversity, that sees every element related to every other in a complex web of relationships. Schoenberg tells us at the beginning of the essay that this is about as close as the human composer, driven out of Paradise as he or she is, can come to a Divine vision. And even if that composer succeeds in bringing such an exquisite vision to full expression, composing works that push the progress of music forward, he or she may still end up like the genius at the top of Kandinsky's pyramid, reassured only by the hope that others sometime in the future may understand this accomplishment.

All of this sounds very strange to our modern ears—the idea that someone could take on such a heavy burden of responsibility, both musical and spiritual, as part of composing music. Much of this perspective is made easier to understand through a study of some of the cultural forces that were in place in Vienna and throughout Europe in general during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Schoenberg's aesthetic attitude was not uncommon among European composers and artists of his and previous generations. In addition, it is probably a mistake to view Schoenberg as perpetually somber and humorless, unable to have a laugh at his own expense. Consider, for

15 See Jenkins 2016a, 248-279, for a recent edition of Schoenberg's 1934 lecture, based on a revised version marked "letzte Fassung 1935." I refer here to Spies’s earlier edition and commentary, in part, because it highlights a marked contrast in the interpretation of Schoenberg's compositional thought and aesthetics.

16 See Covach 1992 and 1996 for a fuller discussion of Schoenberg's thinking in this regard. See also Arndt 2018.

17 In a critique of characterizations of Schoenberg found in the secondary literature, Sabine Feissl writes that "biographers have often been heavily influenced by Schoenberg's sometimes pessimistic perspectives," and that he is sometimes cast as a "strong and incorruptible prophet" (2011, 3).
instance, how he ends the 1941 lecture: he mentions Wagner’s development of the Leitmotiv and compares it to his own development of the twelve-tone row. Punning on the Biblical reference “Let there be light” at opening of the lecture, Schoenberg imagines that Wagner may well have commanded: “Let there be unity.”
Works Cited


