CHAPTER 10
Schoenberg’s “Poetics of Music,” the Twelve-Tone Method, and the Musical Idea
JOHN COVACH

In a well-known letter to his friend Rudolf Kolisch dated 27 July 1932, Arnold Schoenberg reacts to Kolisch’s analysis of the third string quartet as follows:

I can’t utter too many warnings against over-rating these analyses, since after all they only lead to what I have always been dead against: seeing how it is done; whereas I have always helped people to see what it is!1

Schoenberg goes on to write that he has tried to convince Theodor Adorno, Alban Berg, and Anton von Webern of this fact, but they will not believe him. He then goes on to explain:

My works are twelve-note compositions, not twelve-note compositions: in this respect people go on confusing me with Hauer, to whom composition is only of secondary importance.2

What may seem perplexing about such statements—especially in the context of North American music-analytical practice since the late 1940s—is that Schoenberg seems to be advising against the structural analysis of his twelve-tone music. In fact, reacting in 1936 to an early analytical article by Richard S. Hill, Schoenberg again takes technical analysis to be a kind of barrier to what he feels is most central in his musical expression: while Hill’s article “shows a highly astonishing amount of work of research based on much ability and knowledge to find
out what he was looking for," Schoenberg finds that Hill has "applied [his diligence] in the wrong place." Part of what troubled Schoenberg must have been the critique Hill offers of Schoenberg's deployment of row forms; lamenting over the complexity of certain passages, Hill writes: "Obviously, such distributions of the row could not be sensorily perceived and intelligently grasped as motival structures however much practice the listener may have had in hearing such music." Schoenberg's response to Hill's critique is to argue that he is more of a composer than a theorist, and he recounts the famous first announcement of the twelve-tone method to his students:

And when I gathered about twenty of my pupils together to explain to them the new method in 1923, I did it because I was afraid to be taken as an imitator of Hauer, who, at this time, published his Vom Melos zur Pauke. I could show that I was on the way to this method for more than ten years and could prove so by examples of works written during this time. But, at the same time, already I did not call it a "system" but a "method," and considered it as a tool of composition, but not as a theory. And therefore I concluded with the sentence: "You use the row and compose as you had done it previously." That means: "Use the same kind of form or expression, the same themes, melodies, sounds, rhythms as you used before."

In this passage, Schoenberg seems anxious to stress that there is more to his twelve-tone music than its technical musical structure; and implicit in his claim that one composes as one had done previously is the notion that the particular musical context in which a piece may participate (here he refers to the twelve-tone context) is only a means in the expression of this "something more." The references to Josef Matthias Hauer in both his letter to Kolisch and his reaction to Hill are particularly telling in this context, because for Hauer musical meaning is intimately and exclusively bound up in the "twelve-tone universe": for Hauer, projecting the twelve-tone structure in music is an aesthetic end in itself. Schoenberg seems to suggest, by contrast, that his twelve-tone method serves rather as a means to expression in his music, and thus he is not so much criticizing Hauer personally (although there is certainly a hint of that), as much as making a crucial aesthetic distinction between his approach to twelve-tone composition and that of Hauer.

It would be a mistake, however, to conclude from the remarks quoted above that Schoenberg did not take great pride in his twelve-tone method; he repeatedly defended his discovery of the twelve-tone method against claims that Hauer, Webern, or Fritz Heinrich Klein may have discovered it first. One may recall as well the dispute between Thomas Mann and Schoenberg over Mann's use of the twelve-tone method in his novel, Dr Faustus—a dispute which resulted in Mann agreeing to have a notice acknowledging Schoenberg as the inventor of the method appear in every copy of the book. It seems more likely that in playing down the importance of "counting the tones," Schoenberg wanted to draw attention to the ways in which his twelve-tone music had much in common with his other music, and perhaps more importantly, with other music in the nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century German tradition. Thought of in these terms, Schoenberg's twelve-tone works might be viewed as "twelve-tone compositions," where the interpretive and analytical emphasis rests more on how the work is structured in ways that transcend the specifics of the twelve-tone method, and less on the particular twelve-tone relationships as ends in themselves.

All this, however, runs markedly counter to the ways in which Schoenberg's twelve-tone music is usually discussed by theorists and musicologists; it is certainly fair to characterize most English-language analysis of Schoenberg's twelve-tone music as taking the specific structure of any particular work to be the crucial aspect of the piece. But if, following Schoenberg, one takes the specific twelve-tone structure of any particular work to be only one aspect of that piece, one must face the question of what Schoenberg might have considered the other, and by his lights more crucial aspects of his music to be; in other words, what makes Schoenberg's twelve-tone music like his other music? This essay will explore this question, proceeding in three parts: first, certain writings of Carl Dahlhaus will be discussed in order to explore his notion of Schoenberg's "poetics of music." Paying especially close attention to Dahlhaus's distinctions among structural concerns in Schoenberg's thought, the roles played by the Schoenbergian notions of developing variation, Grundgestalt [basic shape], and musikalische Gedanke [musical idea] in outlining an interpretive approach to Schoenberg's twelve-tone music will be explored. It will be argued that the twelve-tone method constitutes only one musical context among others within Schoenberg's poetics. A number of musical examples drawn from Schoenberg's Variations for Orchestra, op. 31 will then be discussed, as a way of exploring and illustrating the analytical consequences of employing this interpretive model. Finally, we will consider the philosophical and aesthetic aspects of Schoenberg's thought. This discussion will focus on Schoenberg's problematic use of the term "musical idea."
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and the relationship of the idea, thought of in its broadest and most mystical sense, to his poetics of music and to the twelve-tone method.

Dahlhaus on Schoenberg's Poetics

Whatever happens in a piece of music is nothing but the endless reshaping of a basic shape.11

In a 1976 article, "Schoenbergs musikalische Poetik," Carl Dahlhaus discusses the possibility of reconstructing the thought structures that make up what he terms Schoenberg's "poetics of music."12 Dahlhaus's aim is to compare Schoenberg's music with the claims—polemical, aesthetical, and theoretical—that Schoenberg makes for it. This hermeneutic enterprise seems in some ways to follow the lead of the philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer, as Dahlhaus sets out to mediate the intellectual and cultural gap that exists between his world and that of his readers and the intellectual-aesthetic world of the late nineteenth century.13 To reconstruct Schoenberg's poetics of music is first of all to take account of how Schoenberg's music is made, or more broadly conceived, to take account of how Schoenberg thought all music perhaps should be made. In its broadest sense, reconstructing Schoenberg's poetics of music involves an attempt to view Schoenberg's music, and even music generally, with Schoenberg: figuratively cast, it is to think with his mind, to hear with his ears. It is also to understand the intellectual context in which Schoenberg's music and thought developed. Dahlhaus is mindful of the fact, for example, that Schoenberg's remarks must be read critically, as sometimes Schoenberg reacted to issues that were highly charged at the time he was writing and are now forgotten or very much changed; such remarks are potentially misleading when taken out of the broader cultural-historical context that Dahlhaus attempts to draw.

The poetics as Dahlhaus interprets them are different from, and in a sense prior to, any specific musical context; functional tonality, the twelve-tone method, and free atonality are viewed as alternative musical contexts within which aspects of Schoenberg's poetics unfold.14 Dahlhaus thus clearly distinguishes a general musical poetics from the particular musical context in which they are played out. This is a crucial distinction because it opens the possibility of, for instance, comparing Schoenberg's tonal and twelve-tone compositions in a way that avoids the usual problems encountered in such a comparison.15 Indeed, the poetics eliminate the need for establishing tonal/twelve-tone correspon-

dences by adding a third element to the discussion: contexts do not relate directly to one another, but rather relate separately to a common poetics. Moreover, Dahlhaus casts the poetics as the common thread that runs through all of Schoenberg's music, and he finds the poetics especially crucial in considering Schoenberg's late music, which consists of both tonal and twelve-tone works.16 Thus, in the context of the Schoenberg remarks quoted above, Dahlhaus can be seen as attempting to capture what makes Schoenberg's twelve-tone music like his other music.

The elements in Dahlhaus's model of Schoenberg's poetics of music are the familiar ones in English-language Schoenberg scholarship: Dahlhaus enumerates, for instance, developing variation, consequence and logic, and the musical Gedanke.17 With regard to his interpretation of the ways in which these elements interact within the basic model for music that Schoenberg proposes, Dahlhaus's conception again does not differ much—on the surface, at least—from the model that has arisen in British and American Schoenberg scholarship.18 Though such scholars as Josef Rufer, Hans Keller, Patricia Carpenter, and David Epstein may differ in their use of such terms as Grundgestalt and musical idea, they all roughly agree on a general model that might be characterized as follows: A piece opens with a short stretch of music that acts as the germ out of which the piece "grows"; this germ contains a latent set of relationships that the work unfolds; the piece unfolds according to a particular "logic"; the logical unfolding of these latent relationships and the structure creates, taken together with the predictiveness of the opening measures, expresses the Gedanke of the work.19 Interpretive paths tend to diverge when it comes to defining just what the "musical idea" is, and unfortunately Schoenberg himself had only limited success in bringing this notion to concise verbal expression.20

To return to Schoenberg's poetics of music, Dahlhaus's interpretation differs from others by making the clear distinction between the poetics on the one hand, and the musical context that projects them on the other. Dahlhaus also offers a number of penetrating insights into the elements of the poetics, and it is especially his understanding of the role played by developing variation in Schoenberg's poetics that sets his interpretation apart from more familiar ones. Dahlhaus emphasizes that developing variation is not simply thematic variation, but it is variation that unfolds according to a kind of logical progression. Admittedly, most accounts of developing variation hold that a motive, or some other kind of musical unit, should develop in a linear fashion, becoming ever more complex as the piece progresses.21 But the kind of dynamic unfolding
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Theoretical, Aesthetic, and Ethical Issues

Dahlhaus believes Schoenberg has in mind requires a background upon which musical materials can be seen to develop logically. As long as developing variation is viewed in tonal works of the nineteenth century, that background can be presumed to be functional tonality as it tends to be manifested across those works. But as one considers freely atonal and twelve-tone works, the question of the background against which events can be seen to unfold "logically" problematizes the possibility of developing variation in this music.

One approach to this problem has been to consider development solely in terms of thematic and motivic transformations; according to this way of thinking, variants "develop" inasmuch as they recombine or transform essential motivic units present in prior thematic or motivic statements. Successive thematic/motivic units are seen to create their own context within which logical development can be perceived and analyzed; and this network of motivic relationships constitutes something like a free-floating structure, operating independently of any other background context. But, according to Dahlhaus, there are a number of problems with developing variation when it is considered developmental in a strict sense. One must distinguish between variants that can be seen simply to change, or even to change systematically, from one to the next; and variants that develop in a logical manner, and in some way as a consequence of what has preceded them. Following the Aristotelian notion of development, a series of variants must be—or at least appear to be—goal directed. At the same time, the teleological and dynamic unfolding of material will be understood as part of a larger, static structure comprising the network of relationships found in the piece. These dynamic and static aspects of the music play off one another in a dialectical relationship which projects the Gedanke of the work. Dahlhaus describes the situation as follows:

The concept of entelechy—the goal-directed process of development—and the notion of musical space in which all the motivic shapes and relationships that serve to present an idea are collected together in imaginary simultaneity: these two concepts, even though they contradict each other or seem to contradict each other, were in a similar way constitutive elements in Schoenberg's musical thinking. To put into practice and make manifest in composition the dialectical unity underlying these divergent concepts is the idea which—as the perfect example of the problem that admits of no definitive solution—forms the substance or hidden basis of the principle of developing variation. 24

Schoenberg's "Poetics of Music"

The static structure of the work, and the dynamic unfolding of it, both depend upon relationships created against the background provided by some musical context, tonal or non-tonal. In the case of twelve-tone music, that context is one created by the constraints of the twelve-tone method; the dynamic and logical development of materials in twelve-tone music, according to Schoenberg's poetics as Dahlhaus interprets them, is made possible by the musical background provided by the twelve-tone method. The twelve-tone method can thus be seen to function in the same way within this poetic model as functional tonality does, though one musical context is not reducible to the other, nor, as was mentioned above, need there be any direct analogies between the two. Considering the twelve-tone method in this way, it is clear how one might "use the row and compose as you had done it previously"—while the twelve-tone context is new, the poetic model is familiar.

Most analysis of Schoenberg's twelve-tone music has tended to privilege the static dimension, viewing the piece—or more often passages from a piece—as a pattern of often very complex relationships. One may be convinced that material is related, and that gradations of relationship can be established in order to distinguish closely related from distantly related material or transformations; but one is less often provided with any strong sense of how the music develops dynamically according to musical criteria; one is able to view the static aspect of the work against the background provided by the twelve-tone method, but the dynamic aspect of the music tends to be given far less attention. Schoenberg's poetics of music, however, would require one not only to account for the static structure of a twelve-tone work, but also to account for the dynamic unfolding of materials 25.

By making this point about Schoenberg's poetics, I do not mean to imply that perspectives on his music that do not account for this dynamic dimension in addition to the static one are thereby fundamentally flawed. In fact, following hermeneutic philosophy, we can never come to think in terms of Schoenberg's poetics as he might have done; all interpretations are impacted by the interpreter's position in regard to the past. Thus, strictly speaking, it is very difficult to make an argument for privileging one interpretation—no matter how "Schoenbergian" it may be supposed to be—over another on purely hermeneutic grounds. Rather, I am arguing for an approach that attempts to hold both the static structure of the entire work in the mind's ear while simultaneously attending to the dynamic unfolding of material. This amounts not so much to changing
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what one finds in the structure of this music, but instead to shifting the emphasis of what we hear and say about Schoenberg's twelve-tone music to elicit an account that tends to hold the static and dynamic dimensions in a more openly dialectical relationship. If the claim is that Schoenberg's twelve-tone music is made in ways that are very much like his other music, and if Dahlhaus's reading of Schoenberg's poetics is an effective generalization of how those works as a group are made, then the task is to determine analytically how and to what extent Schoenberg's twelve-tone music can be seen to manifest these common characteristics that make up Schoenberg's poetics of music.

Schoenberg's op. 31 and the Twelve-Tone Method

The furtherance of the musical idea (stick to the point) may ensue only if the unrest-problem—present in the Grundgestalt or in the motive (and formulated by the theme or not, if none has been stated)—is shown in all its consequences. These consequences are presented through the destinies of the motive or the Grundgestalt. Just how the Grundgestalt is altered under the influence of the forces struggling within it, how this motion to which the unrest leads, how the forces again attain a state of rest—this is the realiza-

As indicated earlier, this study will be mostly concerned with exploring how Schoenberg's poetics of music operates within a twelve-tone context generally, using examples drawn from Schoenberg's Variations for Orchestra, op. 31 for purposes of illustration. The main focus of discussion will be to determine how the poetics are operative in this work and to explore how the poetics are worked out within the specific twelve-tone context of the piece. Following the poetics as sketched above, a number of developmental paths through various sections of the work will be traced. It will be argued throughout that one must consider both the static, structural aspect of the music as well as the dynamic, developmental aspect. It is the dialectical tension opened up by this dual focus which is at the heart of Schoenberg's poetics of music.

Schoenberg began composing op. 31 in May 1926; he interrupted his work on the orchestral variations to compose his third string quartet, op. 30, and then returned to op. 31, completing it in September 1928. Variations for Orchestra consists of an introduction, followed by a theme with nine variations; the piece concludes with a substantial finale. Figure 10.1 shows the opening measures from the work. These opening bars present the initial trichords from the combinatorial row pair P* and I*. (the row chart for the work is found in Figure 10.2.) The b3 in the harp and violins initiates a statement of P*, and the g in the violas and basses initiates P*. In the third measure, two tritone oscillations may be found, b3 to e (in the clarinet and harp), and g to c6 (in the bassoon and harp). In m. 5, this oscillation is interrupted by the perfect fifth b to f in the horns. As the piece continues, it becomes clear that these initial five measures are presenting the first trichords of two distinct rows and even that these two rows are combinatorial. But at first this organizational framework is not yet clear; all one knows is that an oscillating diminished-seventh chord is interrupted by a perfect fifth. Perhaps one also notes that the perfect fifth adds two new pitches and that the horns constitute a contrasting timbre. The ritard leading to a fermata in all parts serves to reinforce the interruptive effect of m. 5 and helps to set these first five measures off from what follows.

Let us consider these opening measures to be the “seed,” or Grundgestalt, of the work. According to the poetics as outlined earlier, therefore, the subsequent measures should unfold possibilities latent in this material. In fact, in mm. 6–23 this is exactly what happens: first, in mm. 6–16 the P* and I* rows are presented, in alternation and by hexachord, in their entirety. What follows is a rapid-fire statement of eight row forms as shown in Figure 10.3. These eight statements fall into two groups of four: the first four, in mm. 16–19, are characterized by the melodic statement of pitch-classes b-flat and e. By referring to the row chart in Figure 10.2, one may note that the four rows used here, P*, I*, P*, and I*, are the only four that begin with pcs t and 4. The second group of four rows, in mm. 20–23, projects the initial pitch-class dyad g–c# as a harmonic interval, the first three times in the brass, and the last time in the oboes. Again, one may note that the four row forms used here, I*, P*, I*, and P*, are the only four that start with pitch-classes g and c-sharp. In viewing the entire eight statements together, it is clear that Schoenberg alternates P and I forms in each group, and that as the first four are organized P–I–P–I, the second four proceed I–P–I–P, forming a retrograde disposition scheme.

Figure 10.2 indicates that these eight row forms can be grouped together into what is here termed “row-family A.” Row-family A forms are characterized by having the pcs 1, 4, 7, and t in order-number positions 0, 1, 7, and 8. Row-families B and C in Figure 10.2 merely list the
what one finds in the structure of this music, but instead to shifting the emphasis of what we hear and say about Schoenberg's twelve-tone music to elicit an account that tends to hold the static and dynamic dimensions in a more openly dialectical relationship.\(^{27}\) If the claim is that Schoenberg's twelve-tone music is made in ways that are very much like his other music, and if Dahlhaus's reading of Schoenberg's poetics is an effective generalization of how those works as a group are made, then the task is to determine analytically how and to what extent Schoenberg's twelve-tone music can be seen to manifest these common characteristics that make up Schoenberg's poetics of music.

**Schoenberg's op. 31 and the Twelve-Tone Method**

The furtherance of the musical idea (stick to the point) may ensue only if the unrest—problem—present in the Grundgestalt or in the motive (and formulated by the theme or not, if none has been stated) is shown in all its consequences. These consequences are presented through the destinies of the motive or the Grundgestalt. Just how the Grundgestalt is altered under the influence of the forces struggling within it, how this motion to which the unrest leads, how the forces again attain a state of rest—this is the realization of the idea, this is its presentation.\(^{28}\)

As indicated earlier, this study will be mostly concerned with exploring how Schoenberg's poetics of music operates within a twelve-tone context generally, using examples drawn from Schoenberg's Variations for Orchestra, op. 31 for purposes of illustration. The main focus of discussion will be to determine how the poetics are operative in this work and to explore how the poetics are worked out within the specific twelve-tone context of the piece. Following the poetics as sketched above, a number of developmental paths through various sections of the work will be traced. It will be argued throughout that one must consider both the static, structural aspect of the music as well as the dynamic, developmental aspect. It is the dialectical tension opened up by this dual focus which is at the heart of Schoenberg's poetics of music.

Schoenberg began composing op. 31 in May 1926; he interrupted his work on the orchestral variations to compose his third string quartet, op. 30, and then returned to op. 31, completing it in September 1928.\(^{29}\) Variations for Orchestra consists of an introduction, followed by a theme with nine variations; the piece concludes with a substantial finale.\(^{30}\) Figure 10.1 shows the opening measures from the work. These opening bars present the initial trichords from the combinatorial row pair P, and I\(_1\) (the row chart for the work is found in Figure 10.2).\(^{31}\) The b\(_5\) in the harp and violins initiates a statement of P\(_{v}\), and the g in the violas and basses initiates P\(_g\). In the third measure, two tritone oscillations may be found, b\(_8\) to e (in the clarinet and harp), and g to c\(_#\) (in the bassoon and harp). In m. 5, this oscillation is interrupted by the perfect fifth b to f\(_#\) in the horns. As the piece continues, it becomes clear that these initial five measures are presenting the first trichords of two distinct rows and even that these two rows are combinatorial. But at first this organizational framework is not yet clear; all one knows is that an oscillating diminished-seventh chord is interrupted by a perfect fifth. Perhaps one also notes that the perfect fifth adds two new pitches and that the horns constitute a contrasting timbre. The ritard leading to a fermata in all parts serves to reinforce the interruptive effect of m. 5 and helps to set these first five measures off from what follows.

Let us consider these opening measures to be the "seed," or Grundgestalt, of the work. According to the poetics as outlined earlier, therefore, the subsequent measures should unfold possibilities latent in this material. In fact, in mm. 6–23 this is exactly what happens: first, in mm. 6–16 the P, and I\(_1\) rows are presented, in alternation and by hexachord, in their entirety. What follows is a rapid-fire statement of eight row forms as shown in Figure 10.3. These eight statements fall into two groups of four: the first four, in mm. 16–19, are characterized by the melodic statement of pitch-classes b-flat and e. By referring to the row chart in Figure 10.2, one may note that the four rows used here, P\(_g\), I\(_1\), P\(_4\), and I\(_4\), are the only four that begin with pcs t and 4. The second group of four row statements, in mm. 20–23, projects the initial pitch-class dyad g–c\(_#\) as a harmonic interval, the first three times in the brass, and the last time in the oboes. Again, one may note that the four row forms used here, I\(_7\), P\(_4\), I\(_1\), and P\(_7\), are the only four that start with pitch-classes g and c-sharp. In viewing the entire eight statements together, it is clear that Schoenberg alternates P and I forms in each group, and that as the first four are organized P–I–P–I, the second four proceed I–P–I–P, forming a retrograde disposition scheme.

Figure 10.2 indicates that these eight row forms can be grouped together into what is here termed "row-family A." Row-family A forms are characterized by having the pcs 1, 4, 7, and t in order-number positions 0, 1, 7, and 8.\(^{32}\) Row-families B and C in Figure 10.2 merely list the
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Row Family A

Row Family B

Row Family C

Figure 10.2. Row families A, B, and C.

other two possibilities that exist if one assigns the [0369] tetrachords {258e} and [0369] to the 0178 order positions.33

Returning to the question of the poetics discussed in the previous section, mm. 6–23 can be seen to follow from the first five measures logically, and in at least two important ways: first, according to the notion of developing variation as a thematic process, Schoenberg gradually unfolds the complete statements of the P and L row forms, giving the impression that these statements slowly emerge from the oscillating texture (see Figure 10.3); first the initial hexachord of L, then its P, combinatorial partner, then the second hexachord of P, followed by that of L. Hexachords are distinguished by register, and these hexachords play off one another antiphonally. Once the initial row statements are finished, the musical pace is picked up as the composer quickly works out the
other two possibilities that exist if one assigns the \([0369]\) tetrachords \([258e]\) and \([0369]\) to the \(0178\) order positions. 33

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consequences of the two initial pitch-class dyads b–e and g–c♯ within in the context of the row-complete row class. The eight row forms enunciated in this passage turn out to have been implicit in the opening oscillating [0 3 6 9] tetrachord—a four-note sonority composed of row structurally referential b–e and g–c♯ dyads (see Figure 10.1).

But the eight-row family is not simply a consequence of the thematic work alone, but rather is also an important underlying structural component of the entire work. That such a group of rows can exist in a work depends upon the structure of the row and the constraints of the twelve-tone method; that such a group of rows is articulated through a dynamic process that favors development from simple to more complex formulations is a product of the poetics. Here, then, is the second way in which mm. 6–23 follow from the initial measures of the work: the entire passage from m. 1 to m. 23 constitutes the unfolding of structural properties of the material for the entire work (see Figure 10.3). First comes the {1 4 7 t} collection, and an interruption; the ps c and d that interrupt the oscillating tetrachord are not only pcs from outside that tetrachord, but are pcs drawn one each from the other two possible [0 3 6 9] tetrachords. Thus, in the initial gesture of the work (see Figure 10.1), the {1 4 7 t} collection that forms the basis of row-family A is juxtaposed with material that can be seen to belong to the other two contrasting row families.

The {1 4 7 t} collection then becomes part of a combinatorial row pair, and finally three more combinatorial pairs are introduced in which the {1 4 7 t} collection plays a crucial organizational role. While on the surface of the piece we see motivic developing variation based on two tritones, underlying it is an unfolding of relationships which are ultimately not thematic. This kind of gradual unfolding of relationships from simple to more complex might also be thought of as a kind of developing variation, but one that develops relationships. It just so happens that in this instance the thematic unfolding and the unfolding of relationships coincide; but they need not coincide. As will be shown below, it is this developing variation of structural relationships that is crucial in accounting for the dynamic aspect of the work; more than the strictly thematic or motivic type (though this technique also plays an important role in the work), it is this broader kind of developing variation that controls the overall unfolding of material in the Variations for Orchestra.34

In fact, after row-family A appears in the introduction, it serves as the primary group of row forms for the theme and nine variations that follow.35 Figure 10.4 shows that the theme is made up of the P₁ and I₁ combinatorial pair, and its retrogrades, with the addition of P₁ in the
consequences of the two initial pitch-class dyads b–e and g–cf within in the context of the now-complete row class. The eight row forms enunciated in this passage turn out to have been implicit in the opening oscillating [0 3 6 9] tetrachord—a four-note sonority composed of row structurally referential b–e and g–cf dyads (see Figure 10.1).

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In fact, after row-family A appears in the introduction, it serves as the primary group of row forms for the theme and nine variations that follow. Figure 10.4 shows that the theme is made up of the P, and L, combinatorial pair, and its retrogrades, with the addition of P, in the
closing measures. Variations 1, 2, and 3 use nothing but row-family A row forms (with an occasional exception). Variations 4, 5, 6, and 7 each feature complete statements of the P/I, theme, but now with non-row-family A forms used to create the figuration for each variation.36 As Schoenberg suggests, variations 8 and 9 can be considered as a pair.37 Variation 8 returns to the exclusive use of the P/I, pair and the ninth variation juxtaposes melodic statements of the central row pairs with non-row-family A forms. These two variations could be seen to constitute a reference to the prelude and fugue, with variation 8 unfolding nothing but the “home” row pair, while variation 9 is structured according to “home” and “away” row statements, with some stretto occurring toward the end of the variation. Though variation 8 returns to the exclusive use of row-family A forms, and thus reverses the logic of expanding toward non-row-family A forms used in variations 4–7, this variation and the ninth drop the literal statement of the theme found in the earlier variations, and opt for a freer statement of the referential P/I, pair, with non-row-family A forms being juxtaposed to this pair in the ninth variation. Thus, the logic of these final two variations would seem to consist of the condensed recapitulation of the relationship between home and away row forms, and an increased freedom with regard to the theme of the variations.

As discussed above, Dahlhaus makes the important point that developing variation is not simply variation based on a model, but variation that has a developmental forward drive; thus one should be able to ask: why this variation in this spot and not some other?38 The notion that it is possible to establish a strictly logical and inevitable sequence of musical events seems questionable for any kind of music. It is possible to assert, however, if the word “logic” is defined as a forward development cast against some structural background, that some sequences of musical events can be interpreted as much more logical than others.39 From examining the disposition of the row forms over the theme and nine variations (Figure 10.4), it is clear that Schoenberg establishes an unfolding of row forms based on their closeness or distance from the central combinatorial pair, P/I, The theme uses almost nothing but that pair, the first three variations use the closely related row-family A forms, variations 4 through 7 use the remaining forms but in a subsidiary role to the central pair, and variations 8 and 9 drop the theme and rely on the established central family of rows, now set in musical juxtaposition to others. Looked at from a distance that takes in 300 or so measures at a time, and against the background provided by the interaction of this particular row class with the constraints of the twelve-tone method, the disposition of row forms thus can be seen to constitute what might be thought of as a “logical” development of twelve-tone materials.

Figure 10.4 shows how a logical unfolding of relationships, which can be thought of as a kind of developing variation of structural relationships, governs the structure of a large stretch of op. 31. Again it is important to stress the distinction between the twelve-tone method as a musical context and the poetics as a set of generalizations concerning how a work is made: that such structural relationships can be exploited depends on the constraints of the twelve-tone method; the possibility of defining groups of rows within the rules of twelve-tone composition is merely a resource—a resource that is unique within the twelve-tone method and dependent upon its rules and restrictions. It should be noted, however, that these constraints are not so much akin to natural laws, as much as they constitute what might be thought of as “bounds of musical behavior”; and these behaviors are established through consensus among composers.40

While Schoenberg makes brilliant use of this twelve-tone possibility, it is his poetics that are at work in its unfolding. As Dahlhaus points out, developing variation is only one manner of presenting material.
closing measures. Variations 1, 2, and 3 use nothing but row-family A row forms (with an occasional exception). Variations 4, 5, 6, and 7 each feature complete statements of the P/L theme, but now with non-row-family A forms used to create the figuration for each variation.36 As Schoenberg suggests, variations 8 and 9 can be considered as a pair.37 Variation 8 returns to the exclusive use of the P/L pair and the ninth variation juxtaposes statements of the central row pairs with non-row-family A forms. These two variations could be seen to constitute a reference to the prelude and fugue, with variation 8 unfolding nothing but the “home” row pair, while variation 9 is structured according to “home” and “away” row statements, with some stretto occurring toward the end of the variation. Though variation 8 returns to the exclusive use of row-family A forms, and thus reverses the logic of expanding toward non-row-family A forms used in variations 4–7, this variation and the ninth drop the literal statement of the theme found in the earlier variations, and opt for a freer statement of the referential P/L pair, with non-row-family A forms being juxtaposed to this pair in the ninth variation. Thus, the logic of these final two variations would seem to consist of the condensed recapitulation of the relationship between home and away row forms, and an increased freedom with regard to the theme of the variations.

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Figure 10.4. Disposition of row forms over Introduction, Theme, and nine Variations.

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Schoenberg could have begun by juxtaposing radically different or seemingly unrelated material, and then devoted the remainder of the piece to reconciling the opposing material, ultimately exploiting a common source or underlying structural affinity. Consider, for example, Benjamin Britten's *Nocturnal* for guitar, which utilizes motives drawn from John Dowland's lute song "Come Heavy Sleep." The Dowland piece, which is ultimately the source of the entire work, does not appear until the very end, creating a kind of "variations and theme" form. As David Lewin has shown in a discussion of Schoenberg's Violin Concerto, op. 36, Schoenberg's music does have crucial moments of synthesis, moments that Andrew Mead has subsequently called "nexus passages." But these moments always synthesize contrasting musical material that has developed dynamically from the same Grundgestalt. And of course, even that contrasting musical material should be reconciled at all as an aspect of the poetics.

While Figure 10.4 suggests a logical disposition of row forms over the course of the theme and variations, it specifies very little about the actual music surface. In order to demonstrate how certain kinds of long-range relationships can be developed in very specific ways, let us return to the Introduction to op. 31, and specifically to measures 24 and 25 (see Figure 10.5). At these measures, one hears the statement of the famous B-A-C-H theme. The theme is extracted according to what Ethan Haimo and Paul Johnson call an "isomorphic partitioning," and this partitioning is shown in Figure 10.6a. One may note how the trombone's b and a in m. 24 (Figure 10.5) are partitioned out of order-number positions 0 and 5 of R1, and how c and b in m. 25 are partitioned out of the same order-number positions of R1. The flute emphasizes the segmental half-steps in the second hexachords of both row forms by the insertion of rests. The English horn and cello parts emphasize the common segmental tetrad chord held invariant between P1 and R1. All parts in this partition scheme progress by half-step.

These two measures are set off by the material that precedes them, the still pianissimo of measure 24 contrasting with the previous rapid-fire fortissimo articulation of eight row forms. They are also conspicuous in their use of a non-row-family A row, R1. When the music after measure 25 does not take up the B-A-C-H motive, the measures seem even more self-consciously "positioned" by the composer and thereby marked for future reference, even though the half-step motion does reverberate through the orchestra for the rest of the Introduction. As is well known,
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These two measures are set off by the material that precedes them, the still pianissimo of measure 24 contrasting with the previous rapid-fire fortissimo articulation of eight row forms. They are also conspicuous in their use of a non-row-family A row, RL. When the music after measure 25 does not take up the B-A-C-H motive, the measures seem even more self-consciously “positioned” by the composer and thereby marked for future reference, even though the half-step motion does reverberate through the orchestra for the rest of the Introduction. As is well known,
the B-A-C-H motive, except for a few occurrences in the variations, is being saved for the Finale where it plays an extremely active role in synthesizing previous material. The B-A-C-H motive does not represent a strong departure from the preceding measures (see Figure 10.6b); it arises as a development of the b to an oscillation that occurs in m. 9 and after (see Figure 10.3). Dahlhaus has pointed out that since row form \( P_t \) has b and a in order-positions 0 and 5, and since the intervening segmental tetrachord of e, f, \( e^\# \), and f form an instance of collection class [0 1 2 3], there is a certain synthesis that occurs when b and a occur with c and \( b^\flat \), since the B-A-C-H motive is also an instance of collection class [0 1 2 3]. The partitioning pattern as shown in Figure 10.6a, or some portion of it, is often in force when half-steps arise in the instrumental parts throughout the variations.

Variation 5 is certainly a point of further development for this partition pattern. Figure 10.7 provides the opening measures of this variation, and Figure 10.8 is an analytical representation of the entire variation. One pc of \( P_t \) is extracted from each row except those in parentheses. Reading from top to bottom, one finds the row form, then the order-position from which the one pc of \( P_t \) is extracted, and at the bottom the specific pc that is partitioned out. Of course, at one pc per row statement, it takes twelve statements to make a complete statement of \( P_t \). Note that \( R_L \), \( R_P \), and \( I_5 \) are partitioned in the same way. Though in some instances the half-step partition pattern is altered slightly, it remains in force for the entire variation. Figure 10.8 also shows that Schoenberg kept the same partitionings for \( R_P \), that he used for \( P_t \), and the same partitionings for \( I_5 \) as he used for \( R_L \). Thus, each pc of the theme has exactly

\[
\begin{align*}
\{0 1 2 3\} & \\
B & A \\
\begin{array}{c}
P_t \ 4 6 3 5 9 \\
\end{array}
\end{align*}
\]

B-A-C-H = <t 0 e>, [0 1 2 3]

Figure 10.6b. B-A-C-H motive contained in the first hexachord as [0 1 2 3].

Figure 10.7. Variations for Orchestra, op. 31, mm. 178–80 (the beginning of Variation 5), showing extraction of the first five pitch classes of \( P_t \), followed by the first pitch class of \( I_5 \) (in parentheses). Used by permission of Belmont Music Publishers, Pacific Palisades, California 90272.
the B-A-C-H motive, except for a few occurrences in the variations, is being saved for the Finale where it plays an extremely active role in synthesizing previous material. The B-A-C-H motive does not represent a strong departure from the preceding measures (see Figure 10.6b); it arises as a development of the B\textsuperscript{b} to an oscillation that occurs in m. 9 and after (see Figure 10.3). Dahlhaus has pointed out that since row form P\textsubscript{t} has B\textsuperscript{b} and a in order-positions 0 and 5, and since the intervening segmental tetrachord of e, f, e, and f form an instance of collection class [0 1 2 3], there is a certain synthesis that occurs when B\textsuperscript{b} and a occur with c and B\textsuperscript{b}, since the B-A-C-H motive is also an instance of collection class [0 1 2 3]. The partitioning pattern as shown in Figure 10.6a, or some portion of it, is often in force when half-steps arise in the instrumental parts throughout the variations.

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\[
\begin{bmatrix}
[0 & 1 & 2 & 3] \\
\text{B} & \text{A} \\
\text{P}_t & 4 & 6 & 3 & 5 & 9 \\
\text{B-A-C-H} = \langle 9 \ 0 \ e \rangle, \ [0 & 1 & 2 & 3] \\
\end{bmatrix}
\]

Figure 10.6b. B-A-C-H motive contained in the first hexachord as [0 1 2 3].

Figure 10.7. Variations for Orchestra, op. 31, mm. 178–80 (the beginning of Variation 5), showing extraction of the first five pitch classes of P, followed by the first pitch class of I\textsubscript{t} (in parentheses). Used by permission of Belmont Music Publishers, Pacific Palisades, California 90272.
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two order-number locations. Pc t, for instance, occurs as order-number 0 of P, twice, and twice as order-number 6 in I. The same situation obtains for the other eleven pcs.

There is a surprising aspect to this variation: note that throughout the variation, row statements participating in the unfolding of the theme are interrupted by other row forms (see Figure 10.8). These interruptions are one, two, or even as many as six aggregates in length. Taken together these interruptions total twenty-four aggregates. If one extracts the first pc of the Hauptstimme part in each of these aggregates, the combined initial pcs constitute an unfolding of a statement of I, over the first half of the variation, and a statement of RP between the second half. This kind of “splicing” technique is more often associated with the music of Stravinsky than with that of Schoenberg, and it is perhaps interesting to note this unexpected similarity.47

Certainly the pervasiveness of the half-step in this variation is due to the partitioning pattern used. In fact, there is such a profusion of half-steps occurring in two-pc figures throughout the variation that it is sometimes very difficult to decide which row form is being used. In many places, the particular row form seems to be less crucial than the half-step motions partitioned out of it. There are a couple of aggregates in which any specific row label can only result through an arbitrary choice between at least two alternatives.48 In terms of the logical unfolding of this partitioning pattern present first in the Introduction, variation 5 is the place in the piece where this isomorphic partition is placed front and center.

In the Finale, Schoenberg combines the B-A-C-H motive with the partitioning pattern used to project it in the Introduction. In the Introduction, the motive was extracted from the order-number positions 0 and 5 only (see Figure 10.5). But since the partition extracts half steps, there should be other transpositions of P and I that allow the motive to be extracted from any of the other half-step pc pairs. Figure 10.9 shows mm. 310–23 of the Finale. In mm. 310–13, the B-A-C-H motive occurs. Because the ordered pc segment <4 6 3 5> is held invariant between P and RI, the flute and violin parts that project those pcs are no help in determining which row form is at work here. The unordered segmental collection {1 2 7 8} is also held invariant and so the cellos and basses are not much help in this regard either. In these four measures, then, it seems that the invariants held between the two row forms are more important than which row form is present when. In the six measures that follow, mm. 314–19, the row statements are clear, as B-A-C-H is partitioned out of order-number positions 0 and 5 of P and RI. Following the viola part
Figure 10.9. Representation of Variation 5 showing extracted theme and "spliced" statements.
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in mm. 320–23, one may readily see how B-A-C-H is partitioned out of statements of RP, and I_e, and now from order-number positions r and e.⁴⁹ When the B-A-C-H motive returns at m. 334 and forward, it is partitioned out of order-numbers r and e of statements of RP, and I_e as before, but then, in mm. 336 and 337, the motive is partitioned out of order-number positions 6 and 7 of P_6 and R_{I_e}. From this point up to the end of this section of the Finale at m. 343, the B-A-C-H is extracted from order-number pairs from the referential partitioning with only one exception, and the rows used are always different ones.

Taking this stretch of music from the Finale alone, one can see how Schoenberg develops the idea of extracting the B-A-C-H motive from its hazy initial reintroduction, to the two specific order-number positions in P_6 and R_{I_e}, further to other order-number positions in RP and I_e, and then to other order-number positions in other row forms. Looking at the three examples together, one can see how Schoenberg introduces the B-A-C-H motive through the isomorphic partition in the Introduction, develops the isomorphic partition in variation 5, and finally returns to the B-A-C-H motive in the Finale, combining it with this referential partitioning to derive new ways of extracting a particular pitch-specific motive. According to the principle of developing variation as a dynamic principle, there is a sense in which these three events must come in this order and any change of order would constitute a violation of the logic of the development. But the crucial point that these analytical examples attempt to drive home is that each example is understood both in terms of the dynamic development of musical materials, and in terms of a static structure; each developmental moment takes its interpretive meaning not only according to the place from which it develops, but also according to the place towards which it is developing. This is also the case with the other examples cited above: the Introduction unfolds the combinatorial pair P/I_e, and then row-family A; the disposition of row forms develops from the use of row-family A forms, to the inclusion of non-row-family A forms in variations 4–7, to a free juxtaposition of these row forms in variations 8 and 9. At the same time, an understanding of any point in the work is enriched by interpreting that moment in the static terms of the work as a whole, or in terms of a certain developmental path as a whole.

Thinking of time in a chronological sense, it is paradoxical that an event early in the work could acquire meaning from an event that has not yet occurred. It is, however, a central tenet of Schoenberg’s poetics—though Dahlhaus does not make much of it—that works are composed to be studied and heard repeatedly. One can hold the entire work before the
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mind’s eye (or ear) because one knows the work. Consequently, Schoenberg was very much concerned with musical memory and its role in enhancing comprehensibility. For Schoenberg, a piece that is well known to a listener is much more capable of possessing rich meaning than one which is new: “New music is never beautiful on first acquaintance... The reason is simply this: one can only like what one remembers; and with all new music that is very difficult.”

The analysis of the passages drawn from op. 31 presented here indicate how Schoenberg’s poetics as outlined above can be brought to bear in the analysis of a twelve-tone work. Of course, the presentation of much more analysis would be required to verify any claim that the piece operates strictly and exclusively according to the poetics as Dahlhaus interprets them. But the analysis presented above does give some indication of the value of distinguishing the poetics from the specifics of the twelve-tone method. The twelve-tone method creates a wealth of potential relationships, a background upon which a dialectic between static and dynamic aspects of musical structure can be played out. The poetics dictates that some limited set of relationships should be developed according to a scheme that generally prefers a progression from closer to more complicated and remote variants. Thus, the twelve-tone method does not, strictly speaking, demand a particular poetics; though Schoenberg certainly developed his twelve-tone method with his own poetics in mind, other composers have developed alternative twelve-tone methods and deployed their relationships according to radically different poetic models. The twelve-tone music of Josef Matthias Hauer, to use Schoenberg’s own example, works to very different ends than that of Schoenberg. A corollary to this is that the poetics also do not demand the twelve-tone method; Dahlhaus’s argument is precisely that Schoenberg’s poetics bind together a number of his works that are composed in entirely different musical contexts and, to use Schoenberg’s words, employ “the same kind of form or expression.”

Schoenberg and the Musical Idea

What is the idea of a piece of music? The answer to this question would have to produce what is found here and far beyond. Or the related question: what is the inspiration of the composer? And, what is inspiration, what is realization: is realization also inspiration and to what extent? Or: How do individual works (ideas, inspirations) of a composer relate to one another, namely, do they form a unity...? Answering such questions is probably not the task of a musician who, at least as a musician, could at most contribute symptomatic experiences.

According to Dahlhaus, Schoenberg’s poetics of music require one to attend to both the entire piece as a static entity—one sees the piece whole—as well as to the dynamic unfolding of developing materials. Wherever the musikalische Gedanke of a piece resides (and that is an important aesthetic issue for Schoenberg), it is perceived—or conceived—in a mental state in which the dialectic of static and dynamic temporality can be played out. For Dahlhaus, the Gedanke does not reside only in those opening measures that constitute the Grundgestalt of the work, nor only in the development or in the logic of the development: the Gedanke is rather the experience of unity and balance in a musical work, while at the same time it is the experience of dynamic forward growth in the work. The poetics ultimately lead to, and operate in the service of, the contemplation of the musikalische Gedanke; and here we arrive at something Dahlhaus refers to as Schoenberg’s “aesthetic theology.”

Schoenberg’s attempts to formulate the notion of the musikalische Gedanke frequently met with frustration: at times it seems that his notion of the Gedanke is a technical-musical one; at other times his remarks about the musikalische Gedanke are permeated with a kind of spiritual mysticism. Patricia Carpenter, for example, has defined the musical idea as “that which a piece of music is ‘about,’” but then also as “the source of coherence in a work and the subject of the musical discourse.” As Carpenter’s analysis of Beethoven’s “Appassionata” sonata demonstrates, Beethoven creates a series of musical relationships by working within a set of self-imposed compositional constraints that are projected against the background of functional tonality. Carpenter, in contrast to the practice employed in the present study, calls the abstract representation of such constraints the Grundgestalt of the work. But, for Dahlhaus, “that which a piece of music is about” may also extend beyond the technical particulars of a specific piece, or also beyond the relationship of the specific particulars of a piece to some larger musical context such as functional tonality or the twelve-tone method. Following the consequences of Dahlhaus’s position leads to a crucial question: if Schoenberg’s poetics ultimately coax our attention to some level beyond the specific musical context—in the case of the op. 31 Variations,
mind’s eye (or ear) because one knows the work. Consequently, Schoenberg was very much concerned with musical memory and its role in enhancing comprehensibility. For Schoenberg, a piece that is well known to a listener is much more capable of possessing rich meaning than one which is new: “New music is never beautiful on first acquaintance.... The reason is simply this: one can only like what one remembers; and with all new music that is very difficult.”

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the poetics that guide its formation, acts a means to transport the listener to this "other world," the structure of a work and even the poetics are not to be considered as ends in themselves. The end in composition is always the representing of the ineffable musikalische Gedanke.

Unfortunately, consideration of Schoenberg’s mysticism does not go as long toward telling us exactly what the Gedanke of, say, op. 31 might be; and, again, it may be the nature of the Gedanke as Schoenberg conceives it that one could not put such a thing into adequate words anyway. But even if we are unable to come to a clear articulation of what the musical idea is, Dahlhaus’s interpretation of Schoenberg’s thinking suggests what the idea is not, and this is perhaps the most provocative consequence (for twelve-tone analysis, at least) of Dahlhaus’s thinking on this topic. The idea of a work cannot ultimately be “about” the specific structural relationships that it projects; though the idea will be bound up closely with its manner of presentation, it is not the same as its manner of presentation. Dahlhaus sums up his position as follows:

That the idea of a primaeval energy, which only constitutes itself as meaning or a message in a multitude of refractions, could be turned from theological to aesthetic use was only possible because Schoenberg, in the analysis of the works of others as in the design of his own, proceeded from the concept of a formal idea whose essence lies beyond the real tonal forms and the connections created between them. In order not to understand Schoenberg too quickly, and that means, wrongly, one has to become aware of the fact that his method of analysis, if pursued to its logical conclusion, dissolves musical works into a system of relationships in which—contrary to hidebound prejudice—not even interval structures form a clear, unalterable substance. What holds a movement together from within is intangible and cannot be written down, for—to put it in its ideal form—it is an embodiment of relationships between variants or manifestations of thematic material which can be divided into an unlimited number of constituent parts and whose every feature can be varied.

As mentioned above, “where” the Gedanke of an artwork might reside is a crucial ontological question. Dahlhaus, following his interpretation of the “idea of absolute music,” would have the Gedanke reside in a world created by the piece itself, in the dialectical push and pull of the dynamic and static aspects of the structure. An alternate interpretation—one that takes Schoenberg’s mysticism and his interest in occult matters into account—would posit that the Gedanke resides in a
beyond its specific twelve-tone structure—then precisely what might the poetics draw our attention to?

I have argued elsewhere that the reason Schoenberg's remarks about the Gedanke often seem to gravitate back toward the mystical is because the musikalische Gedanke is essentially a mystical idea.56 In fact, though mystical utterances about music tend to be discouraged in the scholarly discourse of post–World-War-II Europe and America, Schoenberg's remarks are not very unusual in the context of the fin-de-siècle Vienna in which he grew up. One need only consider Arthur Schopenhauer's views on music's ability to penetrate the coarse phenomena of everyday life and open a window onto Immanuel Kant's "thing in itself," which Schopenhauer takes to be the Will.57 The enthusiasm for Schopenhauer's writing demonstrated by Richard Wagner, and to some extent by Friedrich Nietzsche, gave Schopenhauer's ideas an authority in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century German culture that they might not otherwise have acquired.58 And it is—perhaps arguably—a small step from Schopenhauer's philosophy of music to the occult philosophy of Emanuel Swedenborg and the Goethe-based writings of Rudolf Steiner.59 In short, if the mystical version of the Gedanke is musical, then "musical" is here understood in its most cosmological sense. Following this interpretation, contemplation of the Gedanke ultimately becomes a kind of spiritual exercise; and this interpretation adds a new dimension to the notion of the musical idea as "that which a piece of music is about."60

The preceding discussion has perhaps suggested that the distinction Schoenberg draws between what a piece is and how it is made might be thought of as a distinction between the poetics—a piece is a composition—and the specific technical musical context within which it is situated—the composition is made in the twelve-tone context. It is also possible, however, to collapse this distinction into two different aspects of how a work is made: one aspect considers the specific way in which a piece is constructed within a given musical context; the other considers how this structure (in both its static and dynamic moments) compares with those of other works in other musical contexts. If one then views the specific structure of a piece and the broader poetics according to which it is constructed together as how a work is made, the question then returns regarding what a work is. Consideration of the mystical nature of the musical idea suggests that "what a piece is" lies somehow beyond the artwork that sounds in the material world. According to this interpretation, the musical artwork provides a kind of window that opens onto some "higher realm." A piece of music, through its specific structure and

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world that is really there; the musical artwork does not so much create a world as much as reveal one—or part of one—that is already and always present.64

In considering the Variations for Orchestra, whatever the ultimate Gedanke of this work may be, its specific manipulation of the twelve-tone method is not it. To cite Schoenberg, this is how it is made. But how this work is made, its particular structure, is the result of playing out the poetics against the background made possible by the twelve-tone method. At best, understanding the structure of a work can lead to the Gedanke—and that the Gedanke itself eludes precise verbal characterization does not diminish its importance—but understanding how a work is made, is not understanding what it is. To return to Schoenberg’s letter to Kolisch, the composer’s remarks must not be taken as a warning against careful analysis of his twelve-tone works; close analysis plays a crucial role in our understanding of Schoenberg’s music. Rather, the composer seems to warn that the aesthetic danger is in not moving beyond the specific structure of a given work; the danger, then, is not so much in discovering the means, as much as in mistaking the means for the end.

Notes

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the name "Hugo Tiebsamen," which the composer sent to Mann at the height of the dispute to underline his concern that future historians would wrongly attribute the discovery of the twelve-tone method to Mann.

10. This tendency can be traced back to Hill's 1936 article; it is continued in the seminal work of Milton Babbitt, George Perle, and David Lewin, and can be found in recent writings of Ethan Haimo, Andrew Mead, Martha Hyde, and Silvina Milstein, among many others. For a valuable discussion of trends in twelve-tone theory and analysis, see Andrew Mead, "The State of Research in Twelve-Tone and Atonal Theory," *Music Theory Spectrum* 11/1 (1989): 40–48.

11. Schoenberg, "Linear Counterpoint" [1931], in *Style and Idea*, 290.


15. The kinds of problems that can occur in attempting to draw one-to-one correspondences between tonal and twelve-tone contexts arise in Hill's "Schoenberg's Tone Rows," and the modal concerns addressed by Perle and Krenek, cited above. See also Milton Babbitt's review of René Leibowitz's *Schoenberg et son"
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12. Carl Dahlhaus, “Schönbergs musikalische Poetik,” Archiv für Musik-

wissenschaft 33/2 (1976): 81–88; translated as “Schoenberg’s Poetics of Music,” 
in Schoenberg and the New Music, trans. Derrick Puffett and Alfred Clayton 

13. The influence of Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics on Dahlhaus’s 
approach has been explored in James Hepokoski, “The Dahlhaus Project and Its 
should be noted that to the extent that Dahlhaus attempts to reconstruct how 
Schoenberg might actually have thought about his music, his methodology 
has more in common with the hermeneutics of Friedrich Schleiermacher and Wil-

helm Dilthey than with that of Gadamer. See, for example, Schleiermacher’s 
“The Hermeneutics: Outline of the 1819 Lectures” and Dilthey’s “The Rise of 
Hermeneutics,” both in The Hermeneutic Tradition: From Aist to Ricoeur, ed. 
Gayle L. Ornstein and Alan D. Schrift (Albany: State University of New York 
Press, 1990). For Gadamer’s own discussion of the history of hermeneutics, see 
influence introduction to hermeneutics can be found in Richard E. Palmer, 
Hermeneutics: Interpretive Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and 
Gadamer (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969). Ornstein and Schrift 
also provide a helpful survey in the “Editors’ Introduction” to their volume cited 
above. Dahlhaus discusses hermeneutic thinking in his Grundlagen der 
Musikgeschichte (Cologne, 1977), 97–101, 120–38; translated as Foundations of 
Music History, trans. J. B. Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 

14. Dahlhaus takes up this issue in detail in his “Zum Spitwirk Arnold 
Schönbergs,” in Die Wiener Schule heute, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für 
Neue Musik und Musikerziehung Darmstadt, vol. 24 (Mainz, 1983), 19–32; 
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For recent studies exploring these correspondences, see Andrew Mead, “‘Tonal’ 
Forms in Arnold Schoenberg’s Twelve-Tone Music,” Music Theory Spectrum 9 
Music Theory Spectrum 15/2 (1993): 173–204; and Silvina Milstein, Arnold 
Schoenberg: Notes, Sets, Forms (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 
1990). See especially Milstein’s critique of Dahlhaus on this issue (96–97); but 
see also Severine Neff’s critique of Milstein’s analyses in her review of Arnold 

16. In his interpretation of Schoenberg’s poetics, Dahlhaus maintains that 
the composer’s poetics did change toward the end of his life, but that this 
transformation is not seen to be motivated by the particular musical contexts in a technical 
sense. See “Schoenberg’s Late Works,” in Schoenberg and the New Music, 
156–68.

17. For his discussion of what Dahlhaus takes to be the elements in 
Schoenberg’s poetics, see “Was heisst ‘entwickelnde Variation’?,” Bericht über 
den 2. Kongress der internationalen Schönberg-Gesellschaft 1984 (Vienna, 
1984), 280–84; translated as “What Is ‘Developing Variation’?” in Schoenberg 
and the New Music, 129–33. With regard to his discussion of the musical 
idea, understood in what he takes to be the most immediate sense, Dahlhaus considers 
its possible for a rhythmic motive or even a gestural melodic contour to serve as 
the basic idea of a work. These constitute special cases, however, and Dahlhaus 
adopts that Schoenberg tends to subordinate all other dimensions in the musical 
fabric to the role of projecting pitch-class relationships.

18. It is worth pointing out that while one often encounters developing 
variation, Grundgestalt, and musikalische Gedanke individually (sometimes two 
of the three will arise together in discussion), it is rare to find an account of 
Schoenbergian thinking that includes all three.

19. Josef Rufer, Composition with Twelve Notes Related Only to One 
503: The Unity of Contrasting Themes and Movements,” Music Review 17 
Structure (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1979); and Patricia Carpenter, 
Walter Frisch offers an overview of what he terms the “Schoenberg critical 
tradition” in his Brahms and the Principle of Developing Variation (Berkeley: 
University of California Press, 1984), 1–34. See also Janet Schmalzfeldt, “Berg’s Path 
Perspectives, ed. David Gable and Robert P. Morgan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 
Variation in Atonal Music,” Music Theory Spectrum 14/2 (1992): 125–49; and 
Stephen Collinson, “Grundgestalt, Developing Variation, and Motivic Processes 
in the Music of Arnold Schoenberg: An Analytical Study of the String Quartets” 
(Ph.D. diss., King’s College/University of London, 1994).
20. I have argued elsewhere that it may be possible to recover something of Schoenberg's notion of the musical idea by interpreting his remarks within the context of the intellectual and aesthetic issues of fin-de-siècle Vienna. See my "Schoenberg and the Ocult: Some Reflections on the Musical Idea," Theory and Practice 17 (1994): 103-18; and "The Sources of Schoenberg's 'Aesthetic Theology,'" 19th-Century Music 19/2 (1996): 252-62. Discussion will return to this issue below in the text.

21. For a comprehensive survey and insightful critique of the various approaches to developing variation in the English-language Schoenberg scholarship, see Collisson, "Grundgestalt: Developing Variation, and Motivic Processes," 8-39. Collisson also provides a number of the now-standard quotations of Schoenberg on developing variation. A helpful collection of these remarks can also be found in Appendix A of Epstein's Beyond Orpheus, 207-10.


23. Severine Neff has pointed out that Schoenberg's understanding of musical development in a piece should not be thought of in terms of cause and effect in a scientific sense; earlier events do not cause later ones in any strict sense, but rather an effect of teleological inevitability is created by purely artistic means, and Neff stresses the importance of an organic model in Schoenberg's thinking. See her Introduction in Arnold Schoenberg, Coherence, Counterpoint, Instrumentation, Instruction in Form, ed. Severine Neff, trans. Charlotte M. Cross and Severine Neff (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), lxxi-lxxiv.


25. The notion that particular Schoenberg twelve-tone works can be seen to develop dynamically from their initial measures and against a background created by the particular row class employed and the constraints of the twelve-tone method is also taken up by Stephen Peles in his "Continuity, Reference, and Implication: Remarks on Schoenberg's Proverbial 'Difficulty,'" Theory and Practice 17 (1992): 35-57. Peles takes two observations made by Milton Babbitt about Schoenberg's twelve-tone music as his point of departure, paying no attention to Schoenberg's own writing on Grundgestalt, developing variation, or the musical idea. His discussion of Schoenberg's music nevertheless ends up offering a good deal of support for Schoenberg's remarks on these topics, and his careful technical discussions complement Dahlhaus's more philosophical ones nicely. The attentive reader need not read too deeply between the lines to note that I find Schoenberg's own remarks in this and many other similar passages by other American theorists conspicuous in their absence. It is, in fact, generally the case that those theorists who employ a Schoenbergian approach are not the same scholars who write on his twelve-tone music; thus, Carpenter, Frisch, Neff, and Epstein tend to analyze tonal music while the followers of Babbitt mostly ignore Schoenberg's "Poetics of Music."
Theoretical, Aesthetic, and Ethical Issues

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26. See Gadamer, Truth and Method, and Palme, Hermeneutics, for a fuller explication of this position.

27. Much of the twelve-tone dialectic to be discussed in the next section can be seen to be implicit in some relatively recent analytical work, especially that of Stephen Peles (discussed briefly earlier) and Andrew Mead. Mead's work on long-range strategy in Schoenberg's twelve-tone music tends to privilege the static aspect of structure, while Peles has tended to privilege the dynamic aspect. But implicit in the writing of both analysts is the possibility of reading the passages in each case in terms of the static-dynamic dialectic discussed at greater length later on. The approach forwarded in this essay advocates a crucial shift of analytical emphasis as well as a return to Schoenbergian terms. Nonetheless, I attempt to incorporate and at points synthesize some of the many often brilliant insights provided by these writers, as well as the others cited throughout the various discussions. See Peles, "Continuity, Reference, and Implication"; Mead, "Tonal Forms"; and "Large-Scale Strategy in Arnold Schoenberg's Twelve-Tone Music," Perspectives of New Music 24/1 (1985): 120–57.


31. Throughout the following analysis prime and inversion forms are labeled with "P" and "I" respectively, and pitch class ("pc") 0 = C; the letters "p" and "e" are used to designate pcs 10 and 11 respectively. Retrograde is identified as an operation upon P and I forms, and thus the subscripted pc integer remains the same for a row and its retrograde (i.e., RP_p constitutes the retrograde of P_p).

For those unfamiliar with music-analytical terminology, a “trichord” is a group of three different notes, while a “hexachord” is a group of six different notes. A twelve-tone row can be thought of as consisting of two hexachords which taken together use all twelve possible chromatic notes. When two rows can be combined such that the first hexachords of each exhaust all twelve notes when taken together, these rows can be called “combinatorial.” Note that in Figure 10.1, if the first six elements of P, (1, 4, 6, 3, 5, 9) are combined with the first six elements of I, (7, 1, e, 2, 0, 8), all twelve notes are employed. The same is always true for the second hexachord as well under such circumstances. One of the many benefits of using integers to represent notes is that they make such comparisons very easy: starting from 0, one only has to be sure that all the numbers are there up to 11 (or “e” as it appears in this chapter). For a more complete introduction to twelve-tone analysis, see Joseph N. Straus, Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1990), 118–79.

32. An “order-number position” is the specific row in which a note occurs. In the case of 0, 1, 7, and 8, this refers to the notes that reside in the first, second, eighth, and ninth spots in the rows concerned. My organization of the rows in this instance is influenced by Andrew Mead’s work on ordernumber-pc-number mosaics, and row-family A could certainly be represented by a Mead-style mosaic. See Andrew Mead, “Some Implications of the Pitch Class/Order Number Isomorphism Inherent in the Twelve-Tone System: Part One,” Perspectives of New Music 26/2 (1988): 96–163. For work that expands upon a number of Mead’s ideas, see Richard Kurch, “Mosaic Polypolyphony: Formal Balance, Imbalance, and Phrase Formation in the Prelude of Schoenberg’s Suite, Op. 25,” Music Theory Spectrum 14/2 (1992): 188–208.

33. Analogous to the terms “trichord” and “hexachord,” “tetrachord” refers to a group of four different notes. Among Schoenberg’s sketches for the variations there is a row chart in which Schoenberg lays out row-family A in a similar manner to my Figure 10.2. He groups the four rows which begin with b and e together. Below these are the four rows which begin with g and c#. In each group of four rows, Schoenberg has drawn a box around the tritones as they return in order-positions 7 and 8. Schoenberg then appears to have begun to list the other rows that are members of row families B and C, beginning with the four rows that begin with e and # and breaking off his work before completing the four rows that begin on a and c, which would have comprised my row-family C.

34. The notion of expanding the technique of developing variation to include the development of relationships further extends the work of Haimo; see his Schoenberg’s Serial Odyssey, n. 8, 73–74. See also Milstein’s critique of Haimo’s view of developing variation in her review of Haimo’s book (Music and Letters 73 [1992]: 62–74).

35. Ethan Haimo refers to P_1, I_1, and their retrogrades as the “referential group of set forms” for the piece. These four row forms could also be thought of as a “twelve-tone area,” following David Lewin. The sixteen row forms that constitute row-family A here could be thought of as a larger “area” formed by the collecting together of these smaller four-groups. See Haimo, Schoenberg’s Serial Odyssey 169; and David Lewin, “A Study of Hexachord Levels in Schoenberg’s Violàt Fantasy,” Perspectives in New Music 6/1 (1967): 18–32.

36. I refer to non-row-family A row forms here because despite the fact that B and C forms as discrete entities exist, there is no evidence that Schoenberg exploits the two subsidiary row families as separate structural components. He employs rather only one large group of non-A forms: the B and C row forms.


39. See Dahlhaus, “What is ‘Developing Variation?’” 132–33. In a discussion of musical organicism contained in his 1895 essay, “The Spirit of Musical Technique” (trans. William Pastille, Theoria 3 [1988]: 86–104), Heinrich Schenker addresses this issue in the following manner:

In reality, musical content is never organic, for it lacks any principle of causation. An invented melody never has a determination so resolute that it can say, “Only that particular melody may follow me, none other.” Rather, as part of the labor of building content, the composer draws from his imagination various similarities and contrasts, from which he eventually makes the best choice. (99)

In this early essay, Schenker goes on to argue that logic in musical development is relative, depending on a shared sense of propriety between the composer and listener, but nonetheless possible. It is in this contextually based and relative sense that I refer to “logical” development in my discussion. Writing some forty-one years later in the Gedanke manuscript, Schoenberg takes a strikingly similar position to that of Schenker:
31, "Theory and Practice" 19 (forthcoming); and Dave Headlam, "The Limitations of a Row-Class: Schoenberg's Variations for Orchestra, Op. 31," unpublished paper (1988). I would like to thank Dave Headlam and Tiina Koivistio for making their work available to me. Since I have been focusing so much attention on Dahlhaus's own analyses of Schoenberg's poetics, it seems only fair to acknowledge that Dahlhaus's analyses of Schoenberg's works do not go far very far toward illuminating the effect of the composer's poetics on the structure of his twelve-tone works.

31. Throughout the following analysis prime and inversion forms are labeled with "P" and "I" respectively, and pitch class ('pc') 0 = C; the letters "t" and "e" are used to designate pcs 10 and 11 respectively. Retrograde is identified as an operation upon P and I forms, and thus the subscripted pc integer remains the same for a row and its retrograde (i.e., RP, constitutes the retrograde of P).

For those unfamiliar with music-analytical terminology, a "trichord" is a group of three different notes, while a "hexachord" is a group of six different notes. A twelve-tone row can be thought of as consisting of two hexachords which taken together use all twelve possible chromatic notes. When two rows can be combined such that the first hexachords of each exhaust all twelve notes when taken together, these rows can be called "combinatorial." Note that in Figure 10.1, if the first six elements of P (4, 1, 6, 3, 5, 9) are combined with the first six elements of I (7, 1, e, 2, 0, 8), all twelve notes are employed. The same is always true for the second hexachords as well under such circumstances. One of the many benefits of using integers to represent notes is that they make such comparisons very easy: starting from 0, one only has to be sure that all the numbers are there up to 11 (or "e" as it appears in this chapter). For a more complete introduction to twelve-tone analysis, see Joseph N. Straus, Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1990), 118-79.

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34. The notion of expanding the technique of developing variation to include the development of relationships further extends the work of Haimo; see his Schoenberg's Serial Odyssey, n. 8, 73-74. See also Milstein's critique of Haimo's view of developing variation in her review of Haimo's book (Music and Letters 73 [1992]: 62-74).

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An attempt to recognize and define the musical idea stands in clear contradiction to the sentimental poetizing notion that a composition might arise from the motive as germ of the whole, as a plant grows from a seed. . . . As always: what an author may have produced from a germ would be human activity—even if that germ were to grow by and of itself. Every human activity, insofar as it is not exclusively instinctive, proceeds according to a plan.


40. See “Schoenberg’s Poetics of Music,” 73–75, for Dahlhaus’s discussion of Schoenberg’s conception of the relationship between theories of music, history, and nature.

41. Dahlhaus takes the first movement of Haydn’s String Quartet, op. 33, no. 1 as an example of a piece that operates by reconciling contrasting material. See Dahlhaus, “What Is ‘Developing Variation’?” 133.


44. Dahlhaus, Arnold Schönberg, 21. See also Haimo, Schoenberg’s Serial Odyssey, 168.

45. There is one other partition pattern that exhaustively extracts half-steps from the row class but is, however, conspicuous by its absence. Of course, if one is not concerned with extracting the aggregate, isolated half-steps can be extracted from any row class in a number of ways.

46. The partitioning of a single row out of multiple row statements is referred to by Haimo (Schoenberg’s Serial Odyssey, 37–41) as “multidimensional set presentation.”


48. These aggregates occur in mm. 187 and 198 and are marked by an asterisk. Aggregates where the partitioning is executed with some mixing of prime and retrograde forms are labeled with a slash (R/I, in m. 182, for instance).

49. In mm. 324–33 the B-A-C-H motive does not appear; here, we have an interlude made up exclusively of row-family A forms, another reference to the introduction.

50. Schoenberg, “The Orchestral Variations,” 28. See also “Criteria for the Evaluation of Music” (1946), where Schoenberg writes: “Yes, the role of memory in music evaluation is more important than most people realize. It is perhaps true that one starts to understand a piece only when one can remember it at least partially” (Style and Idea, 127). While Schoenberg’s concern for coherence [Zusammenhang] and comprehensibility [Fasslichkeit] runs throughout his work, it should be acknowledged that Schoenberg’s remarks regarding memory-and comprehensibility usually address issues that arise from accounting for music developing dynamically. For Schoenberg, repetition enhances comprehensibility but runs the risk of boring the advanced listener. In “Brahms’s Progressive” (in Style and Idea, 399–400), for instance, Johann Strauss’s “Blue Danube Waltz” is cited as an example of a popular piece that repeats material, and Schoenberg tends to attribute the misunderstanding of his own work to his unwillingness to repeat material, which makes it less easily comprehended. See also Schoenberg, Coherence, ivii–lxxii, and The Musical Idea, 23–25.

51. A number of other developmental paths could be traced through this work—and many other of Schoenberg’s twelve-tone works—quite readily, but limitations of space permit only those considered above.

52. Schoenberg, The Musical Idea, 377. This excerpt is from a manuscript probably dating from 1929. Translated by Charlotte M. Cross.


54. For a discussion of the various ways in which Schoenberg used this term throughout his writing, see Charlotte M. Cross, “Three Levels of Idea in Schoenberg’s Thought and Writings,” Current Musicology 30 (1980): 24–36.


An attempt to recognize and define the musical idea stands in clear contradiction to the sentimental poetizing notion that a composition might arise from the motive as germ of the whole, as a plant grows from a seed. As always: what an author may have produced from a germ would be human activity—even if that germ were to grow by and of itself. Every human activity, insofar as it is not exclusively instinctive, proceeds according to a plan.


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47. For the classic discussion of splicing techniques in Stravinsky's music, see Edward T. Cone, "Stravinsky: The Progress of a Method," _Perspectives of New Music_ 1/1 (1962): 18–26.

48. These aggregates occur in mm. 187 and 198 and are marked by an asterisk. Aggregates where the partitioning is executed with some mixing of prime and retrograde forms are labeled with a slash (R/I, in m. 182, for instance).

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59. The blending of "legitimate" German philosophy with the occult philosophies of Steiner and Swedenborg is discussed in my "The Sources of Schoenberg's Aesthetic Theology."

60. It should be pointed out that Dahlhaus himself does not extend his consideration of Schoenberg's poetics to Schoenberg's mysticism and its relation to the Gedanke.

61. The poetic model as discussed in this study might also be applied to Schoenberg's earlier music; in fact, to explore the full extent of Dahlhaus's claims concerning Schoenberg's poetics of music such analysis would be crucial. Walter Frisch, for instance, offers a wealth of detailed analysis of Schoenberg's tonal music in his magisterial volume, The Early Works of Arnold Schoenberg, 1893-1908 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), and one might well explore to what extent the poetics apply to that repertory (even if Schoenberg did not attempt to fully articulate his poetics until after the First World War).


63. Dahlhaus, The Idea of Absolute Music; see also his summary of this position in "Schoenberg's Aesthetic Theology," 86-87.

64. See my "Schoenberg and the Occult" and "The Sources of Schoenberg's Aesthetic Theology" for a fuller discussion of this interpretation.

CHAPTER 11
Modernism and Words
Schoenberg, Adorno, Moses
MURRAY DINEEN

He who stands aloof runs the risk of believing himself better than others and misusing his critique of society as an ideology for his private interest. . . . The only responsible course is to deny oneself the ideological misuse of one's own existence, and for the rest to conduct oneself in private as modestly, unobtrusively and unpretentiously as is required, no longer by good upbringing, but by the shame of still having air to breathe, in hell.

THEODOR ADORNO, MINIMA MORALIA

Theodor Adorno— that ever trenchant devotee of Schoenberg and his freely dissonant oeuvre— presents us in the epigraph above with an ethical conundrum typical of modernist thought. He says elsewhere that the conventions of the collective and the past— our "good upbringing"— are no longer sufficient to guide our actions, for in the ideological excess implicit in collective wisdom lies an uncritical certainty that leads to tyranny. Neither must one stand "aloof," above action, for therein lies solipsism and another kind of uncritical certainty that leads likewise to tyranny. The only responsible path is to balance action with inaction: to refrain from action whenever possible, but when driven to action out of necessity, to do so "as modestly, unobtrusively and unpretentiously" as possible. Adorno's is the modern condition par excellence: a state of ethical uncertainty, a tightrope to either side of which lie twin chasms of tyranny.

In this essay, we shall consider Adorno's modernist condition as it might apply to two eminent moderns: Schoenberg the composer as seen by Adorno, and Moses of Schoenberg's opera Moses und Aron. In essence, both must strive to avoid twin excesses: for Adorno, Schoenberg must strike an uncomfortable balance between a dangerously solipsistic approach to composition based entirely on intuition and vision embodied in the atonal works from circa 1905 onward, of which his op. 19