The Quest of the Absolute: Schoenberg, Hauser, and the Twelve-Tone Idea

In 1923 the Austrian composer Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951) had discovered a method of composing with twelve tones related to one another—a method that he called the "twelve-tone row." In fact, the first thirty-six statements of this piece, Monos, op. 19, 1923, provides a single twelve-tone row. Further, Hauser himself performed the piece on the occasion of the Schoenberg Society for Private Musical Performances in Vienna less than its composition.

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John Covach is a professor in the College of Music at the University of North Texas. He has written The Quest of the Absolute: Schoenberg, Hauser, and the Twelve-Tone Idea.
When questions began to arise about who had actually first discovered twelve-tone composition, Schoenberg became very concerned that he might be taken for a "plagiarist." He contacted Hauer, and the two men began a series of letters and conversations about ways in which they might combine their efforts to disseminate the twelve-tone idea. There was discussion of a book, with chapters written by each of them, and even of a school in which Hauer would teach the introductory course and Schoenberg would teach the master class. When Schoenberg left Vienna for Berlin in early 1926, correspondence between him and Hauer appears to have ceased, and nothing ever came of the plans for either a book or a twelve-tone curriculum.

In a comparison of the specifically musical ways in which the two composers manipulated the twelve tones, a number of similarities can be found. Both composers worked from the principle that all twelve pitch classes (the twelve notes that comprise the chromatic scale) must be used before any pitch class is repeated. The music therefore progresses according to twelve-note groups, called "aggregates." This practice of constantly circulating the aggregate was adopted, in part, in an attempt to eliminate the tonal pull of any particular key center in the music (tonality). Thus, twelve-tone music is often characterized as being "atonal," a label that Hauer embraced and Schoenberg rejected.

A more careful comparison of the technical twelve-tone manipulations employed by Hauer and Schoenberg, however, reveals fundamental differences in approach. In his twelve-tone music, Schoenberg continued to compose according to the same principles that had dominated the composition of Western art music for two hundred years before him: thematic transformation, motivic development and variation, the use of traditional forms and genres, and a number of other features often associated with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century music can be found in his twelve-tone music of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s.

Perhaps most importantly, Schoenberg viewed himself as a composer in the traditional sense: a creative artist striving for personal expression in music. Hauer, on the other hand, rejected the artist-as-expressive-genius model, referring to himself merely as an "interpreter" of the twelve tones. By the 1940s and 1950s, Hauer was creating musical pieces he titled simply Zwölfton-


5. Schoenberg's proposal that the two men write a book is contained in his letter of December 1, 1923, to Hauer (Letters, 103), which Szmyly has discussed with regard to the Hauer-Schoenberg relationship. See Josef Matthias Hauer, Eine Studie [Vienna: Verlag Elisabeth Lafite, 1965], 40–50. For Hauer's response, see Bryan Simms, "Who First Composed Twelve-Tone Music, Schoenberg or Hauer?" Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute 10, no. 3 (1987): 109–33.

6. Hauer claims to have been the first composer to use this compositional principle in a conscious way. Webern and Schoenberg had written pieces prior to 1919 that used all twelve notes, as had Hauer, but neither of the others had articulated this practice as a compositional principle. For Webern's recollection of how he came to the twelve-tone idea, see his Path to the New Music, ed. Willi Reich, trans. Leo Black (London: Universal Edition, 1965), 51. For Schoenberg's account, see "Composition with Twelve Tones (a)" in Style and Idea, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 445–9.

7. While this study will not deal primarily with the music-technical aspects of twelve-tone music, readers unfamiliar with the basic axioms of twelve-tone music may wish to consult Joseph N. Straus's Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1990), esp. chap. 5.

8. Hauer understood the term atonality as rejecting or superseding tonality, as will be seen below. Schoenberg, on the other hand, believed all music to be tonal in the sense that relationships between tones are not destroyed by the absence of a tonal center but simply take on new meaning. He preferred the term pantonality. For his discussion of this issue see Schoenberg, Theory of Harmony, 3d ed., trans. Roy E. Carter (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 432–3.


10. It is precisely for these reasons that the young Pierre Boulez rejected Schoenberg's music as the model upon which young composers after World War II might build. See his "Schoenberg Is Dead," Score 6 (1953): 18–22.

11. Though he expressed this view in his books and numerous articles in the early and mid-1930s, Hauer was only partially successful in rejecting the composer role in the period before 1940.
When questions began to arise about who had actually first discovered twelve-tone composition, Schoenberg became very concerned that he might be taken for a "plagiarist." He contacted Hauer, and the two men began a series of letters and conversations about ways in which they might combine their efforts to disseminate the twelve-tone idea. There was discussion of a book, with chapters written by each of them, and even of a school in which Hauer would teach the introductory course and Schoenberg would teach the master class. When Schoenberg left Vienna for Berlin in early 1926, correspondence between him and Hauer appears to have ceased, and nothing ever came of the plans for either a book or a twelve-tone curriculum.

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The contrasting ways in which Schoenberg and Hauer each developed a distinctive method of twelve-tone composition—or noncomposition, as the case may be—are in part a product of the differing aesthetic stances taken by each man. In the attempt to determine who first composed twelve-tone music, one can follow musicologist Bryan Simms in pointing out that the answer depends on what one means by twelve-tone music.13 But if one is willing to take a step back from the specific technical differences, one can consider both composers in terms of what might be called the "twelve-tone idea." This idea can be defined as the constant and systematic circulation, at some level of structure, of the twelve pitch classes that form the aggregate. We can thus trace the discovery and development of this idea in a broad historical way, taking account of similarities in approach among a number of figures. The twelve-tone idea can also be traced in a more specific way, taking account of the particular ways in which each composer employed this idea in his work.

While scholars have established as historical fact that both Schoenberg and Hauer discovered the twelve-tone idea in the period between 1919 and 1923, the question of why each man came to believe that this idea constituted a fruitful foundation upon which to build a wide variety of technical procedures has been less often explored. This study will suggest that both Schoenberg and Hauer were motivated, each in his own way, by something one might call a "quest of the absolute."14 Each man believed that music had the power of providing a glimpse into a spiritual realm beyond the physical one of everyday existence. Both Schoenberg and Hauer were attracted to the twelve-tone idea because it seemed to offer a solution to specific aesthetic problems that occupied each man in the second decade of this century. The "quest" consisted of seeking a music-technical principle that could facilitate the contemplation, through music, of this other realm, the "absolute." This themusico-logical study will explore those aesthetic problems and suggest how the adoption and development of the twelve-tone idea constituted a solution—or more appropriately, a series of solutions—to those aesthetic concerns.

II

Hauer sets forth his aesthetic positions principally in his Deutung des Melos of 1923.15 His music-theoretical ideas are detailed in his Vom Wesen des Musikalisichen of 1920.16 Taken together, these two short books inform one another and provide a good picture of Hauer's musical and aesthetic concerns around the time of his discovery and initial development of the twelve-tone idea.17

Crucial issues in Hauer's writings are the technical and aesthetic bases for atonal music. A fundamental premise in Hauer's many arguments is that music, when perceived or conceived in the proper way, is essentially a mental-spiritual (geistige) occurrence. Thus, there arises a distinction between music in its pure form, which Hauer maintains is its spiritual form, and music as it occurs in the physical world around us, which constitutes its material form. For

12. Oswald Poestinger, a student of Hauer's, has suggested that the true value of the Zwölfzontspil lies in the activity of constructing it. For Poestinger, the Zwölfzontspiel constitutes an "auditive meditation exercise" (auditive Meditationstübungen). See his "Musik und Meditation: Ein Gespräch über das Zwölfzontspiel von Josef Matthias Hauer," Musikziehung, October 1978, 22–4.
14. I am adopting this phrase from the title of Balzac's famous novel not only because Schoenberg greatly admired the French author but also to suggest the unflagging intensity with which Schoenberg and Hauer, paralleling the fictional Balthazar Claes, pursued the twelve-tone idea.
17. Hauer also published two additional books, Zwölfzontechnik (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1925), and Vom Melos zur Pauke (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1925), and many articles on his music and theories in the 1920s.
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Hauer it is essential that in order to raise music to its highest, most spiritual level, the influence of the material world must be suppressed as much as possible.

Consider, for example, the way in which Hauer characterizes the musical event. For Hauer, each musical interval is considered to constitute a type of "gesture" in music, and the character of each interval is thought of as its "color." Any musical gesture resides first, in its purely spiritual-mental state, in the mind of some musical person, perhaps a composer. In order to share this musical occurrence with some second person, however, this first person must employ the realm of the physical—or some internally imagined physical realm—as a kind of "transmission line." But this physical or material world always alters the pure musical gesture to some extent, distorting it through instrumental noise, poor intonation, and/or other purely physical impediments. It falls then to the receiving mind, in the act of conceptualizing the musical gesture, to improve upon this physical occurrence in an attempt to restore this gesture to its original spiritual state. For Hauer, the importance is placed on the inner hearing of the two persons involved, and the physically sounding music is reduced to a kind of deficient yet necessary mode of transmission.18

For Hauer, the material side of music is to be cast off wherever possible. This leads Hauer to reject, for example, Schoenberg's notion of *Klangfarbenmelodie* (tone-color melody), a technique in which different instruments or instrumental groups of some performing ensemble are juxtaposed in musical succession, forming a kind of melody of instrumental timbres. For Hauer, this focuses the musical attention in precisely the wrong way; by relishing the physical timbres and their differences, the listener gets stuck in the physical transmission line itself and is unable to hear the spiritual content of the music. According to Hauer, tone color in music resides in the character of the internally perceived interval, not in the external "noises" of the material means of conveying that inner occurrence.19

Hauer also downplays the importance of instrumental virtuosity. Here one can again become entrapped in admiration of feats of instrumental prowess and lose sight of the spiritual content of the music.20 According to Hauer, one must always work to suppress the attraction to the material, sensual aspect of the musical experience.

Hauer's criticisms of musical materialism form the foundation for his arguments in favor of the twelve-tone idea. First, Hauer argues for a tempered twelve-note tuning. He begins his discussion by surveying the ways in which one can generate all twelve pitch classes: (1) by starting at C and figuring the remaining eleven notes by ascending "pure" perfect fifths; (2) by starting at C and figuring the remaining eleven notes by ascending pure perfect fourths, and (3) by figuring the other eleven pitch classes as they occur as upper partials of a given pitch class C. Except for the starting pitch C, the collections of pitch classes generated through these three methods are different, and the combined procedures generate at least two and sometimes three different representatives of the other eleven pitch classes. The tempered pitch classes, which are not to be found in nature, offer yet a fourth set of twelve pitch classes. Hauer asserts that the physical realm is imperfect because it produces no usable chromatic scale. Tempered tuning, on the other hand, does offer a suitable chromatic scale. And since this chromatic scale does not occur in nature, the tempered scale constitutes a kind of spiritualization of musical materials.21 Thus, by conceptualizing the physical, the mind improves upon it and takes a step toward the spiritual.22

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22. Hauer compares the fact that the twelve tempered pitch classes do not occur in nature with Goethe's observation, in his *Farbenlehre*, that the complete color spectrum also cannot be observed in nature. Thus, the color circle is a creation of the mind and, like the twelve pitch classes, constitutes an enriching of the physical. See *Vom Wesen des Musikalischen*, 27–8. The importance of Goethe's color theory for Hauer is discussed below.
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Hauer's argument for atonality depends on his argument in favor of equal temperament. Hauer suggests that one can construct a continuum extending from pure rhythm to pure melody. At the rhythmic end, music is without pitch and is therefore entirely material; at the melodic end, music is without rhythm and is therefore entirely spiritual. Most music exists in between these two poles because, for example, simply sounding two notes in succession implies some kind of rhythmic component. From this perspective, Hauer argues that tonality, since it involves ultimately subordinating all other pitches to a single pitch, is therefore to be placed closer to the rhythmic pole than atonality. The constant circulation of the twelve pitch classes suppresses this rhythmic component and creates a kind of music that resides closer to the melodic, spiritual end of the continuum. Thus, Hauer asserts that atonality supersedes tonality, and the twelve-tone idea is used in the service of raising music to the highest spiritual level possible. In 1920, then, Hauer stated his twelve-tone law (Zwölftongesetz) as follows:

But in atonal music, which arises out of the "totality," only the intervals matter. They express musical character, no longer through major or minor or through characteristic instruments (thus through one color), but rather directly through the totality of intervals, which are best and most purely rendered on an equal-tempered instrument. In atonal music there are no more tonics, dominants, subdominants, scale degrees, resolutions, consonances, or dissonances, but rather only the twelve intervals of equal temperament; their "scale" arises out of the twelve, tempered half steps. In atonal music, both the purely physical, material, and the trivial, sentimental, are, as much as possible, shut out and their "law," their "nomos," is that, within a given tone-series, no tone may be permitted to be repeated or left out (the basic law of melody anyway: in order that no tone acquires physical preponderance (taking on an) overriding tonic significance), also so that no scale-degree functions of leading-tone tracks arise. Thus to the player and listener it is solely a matter of the purely musical phenomenon of the interval, in its "spiritualization".  

Up to this point in our discussion, it is not yet clear why the German adjective geistig should be rendered in discussion of Hauer's writing as "spiritual." One might wonder whether "intellectual" does not work just as well. The answer to this question is to be found in Hauer's discussion of the act of hearing music. Hauer believed that Western culture since Plato has been entirely too dependent upon the spoken word. We think in verbal terms and define our world in terms of verbal frames of reference [Sprachenidealismus]. Hauer, for example, rejected the notion that we could come to know things as they really are by reasoning. Propositional thinking leads only to abstractions that are yet further removed from reality than the words that are used to arrive at them. For Hauer, the proper path to knowledge of the world around us—a world that is usually invisible to us—is through intuitive perception. Intuitive perception occurs in the act of hearing music in its spiritual sense. For Hauer, once one understands music in its spiritual essence, one views the world entirely differently. This purely musical source of understanding is called the "Melos." In short, learning to hear music in the proper way causes a fundamental change in worldview. Because of his rejection of propositional thinking with regard to musical understanding, it would clearly be misleading to render, say, geistiges Hören as "intellectual hearing."

Hauer's 1919 discovery of the twelve-tone idea came at a moment when he was desperately searching for some underlying objective principle in his atonal music. Hauer was searching for evidence of such a principle at work not only in his own music but also in the atonal music of Webern and Schoenberg. Hauer was driven by the hope that such a discovery would defend atonality against the attacks of its many critics in Vienna at the time. When he came upon the notion of constantly circulating the aggregate, Hauer therefore believed that he had discovered—or, as he put it, "uncovered"—an

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objective and eternal law of music. Composition would no longer be composition in the traditional sense; composers would no longer strive to express themselves through music; rather, composing would become a matter of interpreting the twelve tones, of setting them in musical contexts that would allow the listener to derive from the music its essential truth. The personality of the composer would no longer be important; instead, the composer would now assume the role of a kind of expert facilitator, serving the listener and himself by exploring the limitless possibilities for interpreting the twelve equal-tempered tones.

In the years following his discovery in 1919, Hauer developed the twelve-tone idea in a number of interesting and quite individual ways. In some cases, his twelve-tone procedures anticipated those of later composers, especially the tonal serialists of the 1950s. But all these developments in twelve-tone technique were motivated by a desire to interpret the twelve tones in ever new ways. Most importantly, interpreting the twelve tones was motivated by a desire to contemplate the spiritual nature of music.

If Hauer believed that the spiritual in music could only be found in atonal music, arrived at through twelve-tone procedures, then Schoenberg held a very different position on how the twelve-tone idea might be employed in the service of experiencing the spiritual dimension of music. For Schoenberg, the "twelve-tone method" constituted only one kind of technical solution, though a very powerful one, to the problem of penetrating the essence of the musical experience.

A key component in Schoenberg's musical thought is the notion of the musikalische Gedanke. As musicologist Carl Dahlhaus has pointed out, Schoenberg's attempts to define this term suffer from two problems: sometimes he used different terms to express the same thing, and at other times he used the same term to express different things. This situation has given rise to various interpretations of the Gedanke. But Schoenberg's inability to bring this criti-

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\(26\) Hauer uses the word *entdeckt* in his open letter to Eimert (see n. 3). The period around Hauer’s discovery of the twelve-tone law is discussed at length by Jorgen Jensen, “Ferdinand Ehner and Josef Matthias Hauer,” in Untersuchungen zum “Brenner”: Festgabe für Ignaz Zangerle zum 75. Geburtstag, ed. Walter Methalg, Eberhard Sauermann, and Sigurd Paul Scheichl (Salzburg: Otto Müller Verlag, 1981), 242–73. An analytical discussion of the works from that same period can be found in Covach’s “Music and Theories,” 114–52. Hauer’s moment of discovery has been fictionalized by Otto Stoessl in his 1923 novel Sonnenmelodie (Graz: Verlag Styria, 1977). Martin Vogel discusses Stoessl’s portrayal of Hauer, as well as the Stoessl-Hauer relationship, in his Schönberg und die Folgen: Die Irwege der neuen Musik, Orpheus-Schriftenreihe zu Grundfragen der Musik, no. 35 (Bonn: Verlag für Systematische Musikwissenschaft, 1984), 73–4. Hauer’s emphasis on the objective status of the twelve-tone law is considered below in the context of his relationship to the philosophy of Ferdinand Ehner.


cal component of his thought to precise verbal formulation does not necessarily lead to contradiction or ambiguity. Instead, it may be argued that one reason that the nature of the Gedanke was so difficult for Schoenberg to express in words is that the Gedanke is essentially a mystical concept.

For Schoenberg, the essence of any piece of music is its Gedanke. The composer must use music-technical means to bring the Gedanke to expression, and the music analyst is charged with attempting to discover, or at least glimpse, the Gedanke of a particular work by investigating the resultant musical structure. The musical structure of a piece is therefore not an end in itself, but rather a means of projecting the far more essential musikalische Gedanke. Thus, in his 1946 essay “New Music, Outmoded Music, Style and Idea,” Schoenberg states his position as follows: “I myself consider the totality of a piece as the idea (Gedanke): the idea which its creator wanted to present.”

In his famous 1941 lecture “Composition with Twelve Tones,” Schoenberg speaks of the composer having a “vision” of the piece, but states: “Alas, it is one thing to envision in a creative instant of inspiration and it is another thing to organize this form so that it becomes a comprehensible message ‘to whom it may concern.’”

These and many other remarks suggest that there is a crucial difference between the vision that the composer experiences and the actual working out of that vision in real notes and rhythms. If in this moment of vision the composer “sees” or comes to understand the Gedanke of a piece, then the greatest challenge is to communicate that vision in physical time and space. Schoenberg suggests that music demands an “absolute and unitary perception of musical space.”

By this he means that events which occur in time can be reversed and maintain their identity, that events which occur in space can be inverted, and, further, that events which occur in space can occur in time (and vice versa). Thus, musical identity is seen as independent of time and space, with temporal and spatial dispositions of musical material seen as alternative but equivalent manifestations.

It seems fair to conclude that the Gedanke must exist in a realm where time and space are unified. But ultimately this is not the realm of rational thought: Schoenberg posits that the composer’s vision is perceived intuitively. Thus, like Hauer, Schoenberg appeals to the notion that the essence of some musical piece exists in a location outside of the physical world; and again like Hauer, this is not a world of rational mental constructs but instead one open only to intuitive perception. Unlike Hauer, though, the other world that Schoenberg seems to have in mind is not some kind of “twelve-tone universe.” Instead, the twelve-tone system is valuable precisely because it facilitates the compositional articulation of the Gedanke, but it does not necessarily supersede tonality or free atonality. Rather, the twelve-tone system, tonality, and free atonality are viewed as alternative musical contexts in which the composer can unfold the musikalische Gedanke.

Dahlhaus has suggested that Schoenberg’s oeuvre, a collection of tonal, freely atonal, and twelve-tone works, can be unified according to what he terms Schoenberg’s “poetics of music.” By this Dahlhaus means that Schoenberg has a particular way of composing that is independent of a specific musical context. Whether the piece is twelve-tone or tonal, Schoenberg has a way of organizing musical events according to the same general pattern, though by offering this observation there is no intention on Dahlhaus’s part to imply that Schoenberg in some sense repeatedly “wrote the same piece.” Rather, Dahlhaus draws our attention to a procedural consistency across a body of musical works that are on the surface very different from one another.

32. Schoenberg, Style and Idea, 123. The original German version of this essay dates back to 1933.
33. Ibid., 215.
34. Schoenberg, “Composition with Twelve Tones [I],” in Style and Idea, 223. The influence of Emanuel Swedenborg on Schoenberg’s notions of this unitary perception of musical time and space are discussed below.

35. Schoenberg’s discussions of intuitive perception can be traced to his 1912 essay “The Relationship to the Text” [Style and Idea, 147–5], in which he extols the virtues of the intuitive approach to composition. The original German version of this essay appeared in Der blaue Reiter, ed. Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc [Munich: R. Piper, 1912].
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Dahlhaus's notion of a Schoenbergian poetics sheds light on remarks Schoenberg made with regard to his first use of the twelve-tone method. In his letter of December 1, 1923, to Hauer, Schoenberg describes his situation as follows:

We are perhaps both in search of the same thing and have probably found related things. My point of departure was the attempt to replace the no longer applicable principle of tonality by a new principle relevant to the changed conditions: that is, in theory, I am definitely concerned with no other theories but methods of "twelve-note composition," as—after many errors and deviations—I now (and I hope definitively) call it. I believe—for the first time again for fifteen years—that I have found a key. . . . In this way I find myself positively enabled to compose as freely and fantastically as one otherwise does only in one's youth, and am nevertheless subject to a precisely definable aesthetic discipline.

In these remarks Schoenberg seems to confirm Dahlhaus's suggestion that Schoenberg continued to compose using the twelve-tone method in a way very much like the one he employed when composing tonally. Thus, though the musical context may change from tonal to twelve-tone, the poetics remain relatively unchanged.

Schoenberg adopted the twelve-tone method and subsequently developed it because it solved a compositional problem that he faced after 1914: how to structure a large-scale instrumental work in the absence of tonality and without using a text. The twelve-tone method provided not just a musical context in which to construct large instrumental works but a means of projecting the musikalische Gedanke of a work in a new and innovative way. While Schoenberg continued to think of his role as a composer in much the same terms as his nineteenth-century predecessors did, his ultimate goal was to create musical works that opened a window onto the spiritual realm of the musikalische Gedanke.

IV

The above theoretical discussion suggests that deep similarities arise when comparing Hauer's notion of a kind of "twelve-tone universe" with Schoenberg's notion of the musikalische Gedanke. Though significant differences can be identified in the ways in which each composer approached and utilized the twelve-tone idea, the basic motivation for adopting and developing it ultimately comes down to an aesthetic desire to access some realm beyond the physical or intellectual ones. Both advocate intuitive perception as the only mode available for penetrating into this realm beyond, and both see this spiritual aspect of music as the highest and therefore most important part of the musical experience.

It is important to note that it is the music itself that offers the possibility of spiritual contemplation. Though both Schoenberg and Hauer composed works with texts after turning to twelve-tone composition, the ability to transcend the physical and intellectual realms is offered by the notes themselves: the accompanying texts may concern issues of spirituality, but the music alone creates the possibility of glimpsing the "other side." Thus, the aesthetic perspectives offered by both Hauer and Schoenberg can be thought of as concerning absolute music—music that depends on purely musical ways of creating meaning, with no dependence on verbal texts or programs.

In tracing the history of the "idea of absolute music," Dahlhaus suggests that contemplating the autonomous, self-sufficient musical work has always had associations with spiritual contemplation. Looking back to the emergence of this idea in the work of German music critics around 1800, Dahlhaus notes that the symphony was described in terms of "hieroglyphics" as "mysterious Sanskrit" or as the "language of the spirit world." Thus, by the time Schoenberg

37. Schoenberg, Letters, 104. Though Schoenberg rejects tonality in this 1923 letter, one must bear in mind that he soon returned to tonality and wrote both tonal and twelve-tone works until the end of his life. In fact, Schoenberg had relatively recently completed extensive revisions for the third edition of his Harmonielehre, which appeared in 1923. For Schoenberg's reflections on his return to tonal composition, see "On Revient Toujours," in Style and Idea, 108–10.

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and Hauer began exploring the spiritual potential of the twelve-tone idea in the 1920s, there was already a mystical-spiritual component in German musical thought that reached back over more than a century.

According to Dahlhaus, absolute music creates a world unto itself, a kind of other world fashioned by the composer. Thus, the composed world as found in the musical work need not mirror aspects of the real one; in fact, Dahlhaus considers the rejection of musical realism to be a defining feature of absolute music.40 But the positions taken by Hauer and Schoenberg outlined above differ in a crucial way from the position described by Dahlhaus. For Schoenberg and Hauer, music does not create a spiritual world of its own, a kind of utopia cut off from the material world, but offers access to the actual spiritual dimension of existence: music opens a window onto the absolute.

Hauer’s relationship to Austrian philosopher Ferdinand Ebner (1882–1931) sheds considerable light on his position with regard to absolute music. At about the same time that Hauer was searching for some objective principle upon which to base his musical composition, he was also assisting his friend Ebner in the preparation of Ebner’s book, Das Wort und die geistigen Realitäten.41 In this work Ebner addresses the relationship of the artist to the art. Working from a philosophical perspective that is now more often associated with the writings of Martin Buber, Ebner maintains that the artist as “I” (Ich) attempts through the artwork to create a “Thou” (Du).42 But, Ebner maintains, this I-Thou relationship is ultimately only an I-I relationship (Ich- seinsamkeit), because the artist merely interacts with a reflection of himself or herself. Thus, for Ebner, art will always lead to a dead end in its quest for the reality of the spirit, which for Ebner can occur only when a true I-Thou relationship is established through the medium of the word.

In the context of Ebner’s position on art, one can more readily understand the importance that Hauer’s discovery of the twelve-tone idea had for the composer. Hauer believed that his twelve-tone law was an objective musical fact; it could therefore serve as the basis for an interaction of the artist with something outside of himself or herself and in this manner avoid the spiritual cul-de-sac of the I-I relationship that Ebner describes. Thus, for Hauer it was crucial that his music not create a world of its own, because this would merely constitute a reflection of himself. Instead, his rejection of the artist-as-creative-genius model of musical composition is motivated by a desire to reduce the subjective aspect in musical composition. The composer does not seek self-expression but instead interprets the “melos” of the twelve-tone universe.

Schoenberg, on the other hand, can be seen to come to a similar position on absolute music partly through the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860). Schoenberg is known to have studied Schopenhauer’s work carefully, and it is especially Schopenhauer’s aesthetics of music that bear upon the present discussion.43 It is well

40. Dahlhaus traces this aspect of absolute music in “Schoenberg’s Aesthetic Theology” in Schoenberg and the New Music, 85–7.
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Schopenhauer's aesthetics of music do not support the idea that a musical work creates a world of its own but rather suggest that music offers a kind of best-possible access to the real thing-in-itself, the will. Thus, Schoenberg, to the extent that he was influenced by Schopenhauer's aesthetics, could not have subscribed to the earlier notion of absolute music that Dahlhaus describes; instead, he saw the musikalische Gedanke as residing in an objective realm where time and space are unified—a realm penetrated only through intuitive contemplation, not by rational thought. While the composer may create the musical work, he or she does not create the Gedanke that it expresses.

If the realm that music opens up to the subject is somehow beyond the material but is also not the intellectual, it still remains to be asked why it should be spiritual. In the case of Hauer's thought, the fact that he developed his ideas with the help of a Catholic theologian already gives some indication that his perspective is not entirely secular. But the ideas about the spiritual nature of music that emerge in Hauer's writing are not under the influence of the Judeo-Christian tradition as much as they are influenced by late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century occultism in Germany and Austria.

Hauer's Vom Wesen des Musikalischen, for example, contains many quotations drawn from Goethe's Farbenlehre. Hauer uses these quotations to support many of his most fundamental ideas. The manner in which he uses them suggests that Hauer was familiar with the interpretations of Goethean science forwarded in the 1880s and 1890s by Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925). 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. Steiner believed that there exist finer realms than our coarse physical one and that through intuitive perception one can gain access to these finer and higher spiritual realms. Thus, if Hauer's


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46. Hauer claims that by the time he came upon Goethe's Farbenlehre, his ideas about tone color were already set or, as he says, „fix und fertig.” See “Goethes Farbenlehre,” in Deutung des Melos, 50–x.

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Hauer's \textit{Vom Wesen des Musikalischen}, for example, contains many quotations drawn from Goethe's \textit{Farbenlehre}. Hauer uses these quotations to support many of his most fundamental ideas.\textsuperscript{46} The manner in which he uses them suggests that Hauer was familiar with the interpretations of Goethean science forwarded in the 1880s and 1890s by Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925). 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.\textsuperscript{47} Steiner always maintained that his later occult philosophy was founded in German idealism and especially in the writings of Goethe. Steiner believed that there exist finer realms than our coarse physical one and that through intuitive perception one can gain access to these finer and higher spiritual realms. Thus, if Hauer's


\textsuperscript{45} The influence of Schopenhauer's thought can be seen in the following remarks Schoenberg makes in his 1912 essay "The Relationship to the Text": "Even Schopenhauer, who at first says something really exhaustive about the essence of music in his wonderful thought, 'The composer reveals the inmost essence of the world and utters the most profound wisdom in a language that his reason does not understand, just as a magnetic somnambulist gives disclosures about things which she has no idea of when awake'—even he loses himself later when he tries to translate details of this language \textit{which the reason does not understand} into our terms" [\textit{Style and Idea}, 141–2].

\textsuperscript{46} Hauer claims that by the time he came upon Goethe's \textit{Farbenlehre}, his ideas about tone color were already set or, as he says, "fix und fertig." See "Goethes Farbenlehre," in \textit{Deutung des Melos}, 50–1.

understanding of Goethean science was influenced by Steiner or his followers (and Steiner had plenty of followers in Vienna at the turn of the century), then his use of Goethe’s remarks at crucial points in his writing suggests that for Hauer the twelve-tone universe constituted an object for spiritual contemplation.

Schoenberg was also drawn to the notion that higher spiritual realms exist beyond the coarse physical one. While Schoenberg, like Hauer, was influenced by Goethean science, he was also influenced by the description of the spiritual world as it occurs in the writings of the Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772). The evidence suggests, however, that Schoenberg did not get his knowledge of Swedenborg’s ideas from reading the texts directly, but gleaned it from the philosophical novels of Balzac. In his famous “Twelve-Tone Composition” essay Schoenberg mentions Balzac’s account of Swedenborg’s vision of heaven as it occurs in Balzac’s Seraphita.

Schoenberg likens his notion of the unitary perception of musical time and space to Swedenborg’s heaven, where time and space in the physical sense are absent. Thus, the musikalische Gedanke exists in a realm where time and space are unified, and the parallels that Schoenberg draws to Swedenborg’s ideas suggest that this realm is not only a finer one but a spiritual one as well.

Hauer and Schoenberg were both convinced that music offered the composer and the listener a window to a higher realm. Contemplation of the musical artwork—or nonartwork, in Hauer’s case—induces a higher state of consciousness than what one experiences in ordinary life. For both men, music was a means to this spiritual experience, and each pursued technical innovation in his music in order to more faithfully capture the essence of this aesthetic moment. The ways in which they thought about the twelve-tone system, however, were different. For Schoenberg, the twelve-tone method constituted one of many possible musical contexts in which one could project the musikalische Gedanke. The Gedanke exists outside of any specific musical context, and the twelve-tone method offers one possible means, though a very powerful one, of projecting the Gedanke. For Hauer, on the other hand, the twelve-tone system was the underlying order of the cosmos; musical contemplation of the twelve-tone universe was contemplation of the very essence of existence. Accordingly, twelve-tone music offered the most powerful means of achieving spiritual insight. Thus, Hauer and Schoenberg adopted and developed the twelve-tone idea according to contrasting aesthetic and technical perspectives. But for each, the twelve-tone idea played a key role in the quest of the absolute.


49. See Schoenberg, Style and Idea, 233.
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