

Schenker and Schoenberg on Harmonic Tonality¹

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This essay is an attempt to equate the thought of two musicians whose names are not usually uttered in the same breath: Heinrich Schenker and Arnold Schoenberg. One, the conservative pianist/theorist/pedagogue, the other, the radical, new-thinking composer. Yet perhaps they are not as far apart as one might assume. The thoughts of these men on harmonic tonality may be compared readily, because each penned a theoretical work entitled *Harmonielehre*.² These two books lend themselves so readily to comparison, not only because they were written within five years of each other, but also because they are both principally concerned with the relationship between harmonic tonality and musical coherence. In their approaches, both men attempt to account for tradition, but from

¹Many thanks to Robert Gjerdingen for his assistance. Thanks also to Joseph Auner and Richard Kramer.

²Heinrich Schenker, *Neue musikalische Phantasien und Theorien, erster Band: Harmonielehre* (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta, 1906) and Arnold Schoenberg, *Harmonielehre* (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1911; 3d ed., 1922).

different angles: Schenker seeks origins, the laws that stand behind the works, and Schoenberg seeks in the works of the past an explanation for the present. But despite their disparate approaches, each man's *Harmonielehre* hopes to reveal in harmonic tonality something akin to musical truth.

Rather than merely give general descriptions of the two books, I shall address them from the standpoint of three questions raised by Carl Dahlhaus, in his book *Studies on the Origin of Harmonic Tonality*, first published in 1968.³ The questions, which stand at the center of his investigation, are among those which have preoccupied theorists for centuries. He felt, too, that the questions were of contemporary interest. It is their significance, therefore, that makes them appropriate to serve as benchmarks against which a comparison of the ideas of these two great Viennese musicians may be held. These questions are: (1) Is a natural foundation of harmonic tonality possible?; (2) Are only chordal relationships tonal, or should one also describe as tonal pitch relationships not based on chords?; and (3) Is the centering of relationships on a tonic pitch or triad an essential feature of tonality? The examination of the books will follow the questions in this order.

Schenker's notion of the relationship between Nature and tonality unfolds gradually, much as do triads in his beloved masterworks. Music, he begins, is the exception among the arts, for its "associations of ideas" are not "reflected from Nature and reality."⁴ Nature did not give music its pattern—this had to be discovered and/or invented. That which enables these associations of ideas is, for Schenker, the motif. "Music became art in the real sense of this word only with the discovery of the motif and its use," he writes.⁵ One is a little hard pressed, in the discussion that follows, to determine just what he means

³Carl Dahlhaus, *Studies on the Origin of Harmonic Tonality*, trans. Robert O. Gjerdingen (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 13-14.

⁴Heinrich Schenker, *Harmony*, trans. Elizabeth Mann Borgese, ed. Oswald Jonas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

by motif.⁶ Determination of his specific intention here, however, is not critical, for the concept “motif” is actually a bridge to a pressing concern, one both more important than motif and also more directly tied to his thoughts on tonality. This concern is repetition, the process which makes motifs recognizable.

The connection of motif to repetition enables Schenker to establish a central and continuous metaphor in his *Harmonielehre*: a repetition of tones is itself a reflection of Nature because it “manifests a procreative urge.”⁷ The drive after repetition is, essentially, natural: “We should get accustomed to seeing tones as creatures. We should learn to assume in them biological urges as they characterize living beings.”⁸ In Nature, obviously, procreative urges result in the promulgation of the species. In music, procreative urges result in the motif.

Schenker, it appears, established a center out of which he could venture forth in different directions, secure in the belief that his thought was unified by the fact that it emanated from a central source. Rhythm and form are among the ideas which emerge from his conception of tones as possessors of natural procreative desires. The preeminent outgrowth, as I suggested earlier, is the tonal system, which is intimately bound to the motif: “any exploration of the function of the motif would, at the same time, advance the development of the tonal

⁶Richard Cohn has written an intelligent and provocative essay which deals with this question (“The Autonomy of Motives in Schenkerian Accounts of Tonal Music,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 14 [1992]: 150-70). In it, he explores Schenker’s developing conception of motif, from a relatively conventional view in the *Harmonielehre* (a series of tones that undergoes repetition) to a view which considers motif within the context of the *Ursatz*. In Cohn’s view, the subsumption of motif into the *Ursatz* “played an important role in the ability of the theory to produce interesting analyses”; and he adds that, “the importance of the general topic of motive has become increasingly acknowledged by modern scholars” (p. 154). Probably the most important essay on this topic is Charles Burkhart’s “Schenker’s ‘Motivic Parallelisms,’” *Journal of Music Theory* 22 (1978): 145-75.

⁷Schenker, *Harmony*, 6.

⁸ Ibid.

system, and, vice versa, any further development of the system would result in new openings for motivic association.”⁹

Now that the link to Nature is firmly fixed, Schenker never abandons it. Two-thirds of the book (Part I, “Theoretical Application”) may be said to result directly from Schenker’s formulation that Nature is the source of music. In this section, Nature, if not always invoked, nevertheless makes its presence felt on every page.

The tonal system was not given over directly to musicians, hence Schenker exhorts us to have the utmost respect for those great artists who, with their intuitive power, were able to divine Nature. For Nature gave us only a hint to its discovery. This hint is the overtone series, “Nature’s only source for Music to draw upon,”¹⁰ and the fount of the major tonal system.

Schenker is able to derive the major triad from the overtone series by asserting that only the second, third, fourth, and fifth partials of any given pitch are perceptible by the human ear. The other partials, he claims, “are too complicated to be perceived by our ear,”¹¹ and thus exert no influence upon the major tonal system. The major triad is, in its essence, “a conceptual abbreviation of Nature.”¹² Further, the fifth relationship is given by Nature because it is the most potent overtone emanating from a given fundamental.

The potency of this overtone spurs Schenker to the idea that all tones possess egos, and therefore assert a right to procreate descendant generations. This is, of course, problematical, because tonality is a hierarchical system in which not every constituent part may fully exercise its ego, so to speak. Schenker resolves this apparent dilemma by once again invoking Nature. The result is a fifth relation in inverse direction--what he calls “an artistic counterpart to Nature’s

⁹Ibid., 20.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 25.

¹² Ibid., 28.

proposition’’¹³--whereby the ear understands a falling fifth as still having emanated from the fundamental. One should still be able to perceive the original rising fifth relationship, he feels. This idea leads to a discussion of what he calls melodic and harmonic inversion, by which he means that a composition may begin with a pitch or triad other than the tonic and only gradually move to the tonic or suggest it. Inferring a fundamental from a “sounding” overtone, suggesting or unfolding a tonic from the outside in, as it were--both are activities dependant upon Nature. Dependant thereupon as well is the related action a single tone undertakes for the common good of a group of tones: “the common interest of the community that was to arise from the mutual relations of these tones demanded sacrifices, especially with regard to the descendant generations.”¹⁴ The astute composer was one who recognized these natural tendencies and tamed them.

This is Schenker’s introduction to the “natural tonal system.” What follows is his juxtaposition of the “artificial tonal system,” namely minor, a system for which, in his view, Nature takes no responsibility. He writes, “the minor mode springs from the originality of the artist, whereas the sources, at least, of the major mode flow, so to speak, spontaneously.”¹⁵ Because the minor mode is, in a sense, unnatural, the major mode is superior to it; in fact, he calls the major mode “the real and most solemn truth of Nature.”¹⁶ This begs the question, not addressed by Schenker, “Why have composers throughout history written so many minor mode works?” I do not mean for this to be as naive as it sounds, for an account as laden with value judgments as this demands some kind of reconciliation with actual practice. The modal ancestry of minor, the most prominent of Schenker’s justifications of this mode, is not an adequate account.

Rather than provide a detailed commentary on the remainder of

¹³ Ibid., 31.

¹⁴ Ibid., 30.

¹⁵ Ibid., 52.

¹⁶ Ibid., 53.

the first part of the book, I give here a few additional quotations to stand for Schenker's tremendous reliance upon Nature as the source for answers to questions on the tonal system.

(1) On the falling away of the church modes: "Nature's secret hints, reinforced by experiences, ever growing in scope and meaning, pleaded with the artist in favor of major and minor to the exclusion of the other modes."¹⁷

(2) On a tone's ability to co-exist with other tones: "The tone lives a more abundant life, it satisfies its vital urges more fully, if the relationships in which it can express itself are more numerous."¹⁸ (He makes an analogy to the vitality of human relationships.)

(3) On melodic harmony: "Nature as well as art is satisfied if the course of a melody offers to our ear the possibility of connecting with a certain tone its fifth and third, which may make their appearance in the melody by and by."¹⁹

(4) On the seventh chord: "I need not repeat here that the seventh chord outpasses the directions given by Nature and therefore must be considered entirely as a product of art. The artist obviously found it challenging to obfuscate temporarily the pure, natural effect of the triad, to generate thereby a certain tension, and to render the more effective the return of the pure triad, confirming, as it were, Nature as the authoritatively recognized godmother of the triad."²⁰

I have dwelled for so long on Schenker's belief in a natural foundation for harmonic tonality because it is the cornerstone of his thought and a first step in the development of his later theories. At this point, I would like to turn to Schoenberg's *Harmonielehre* to describe his beliefs about a natural foundation for harmonic tonality.

On the whole, Schoenberg is more interested in understanding everything associated with harmonic functions than he is in establishing

¹⁷Ibid., 76.

¹⁸ Ibid., 85.

¹⁹Ibid., 133.

²⁰Ibid., 188.

a strong account of the foundations of harmonic tonality. Yet remarks concerning tonality as a natural system do occur. Even if we take Schoenberg at his word regarding his knowledge of Schenker's book ("I have not read his book; I have merely browsed in it"²¹), it seems likely that Schenker's reliance upon Nature could not have escaped Schoenberg's eye.²² His thought on the question of nature and tonality is best summarized in this passage, which I must quote at length:

Tonality is a formal possibility that emerges from the nature of the tonal material, a possibility of attaining a certain completeness or closure by means of a certain uniformity. To realize this possibility it is necessary to use in the course of a piece only those sounds and successions of sounds, and these only in a suitable arrangement, whose relations to the fundamental tone of the key, to the tonic of the piece, can be grasped without difficulty. Subsequently, I shall be compelled to take issue with various aspects of tonality and can therefore confine my remarks here to just two points: (1) I do not, as apparently all theorists before me have done, consider tonality an eternal law, a natural law of music, even though this law is consistent with the simplest conditions of the natural law, that is, of the tone and the fundamental chord; all the same, however, (2) it is essential that the pupil learn thoroughly the basis of this effect [tonality] and how to attain it.²³

²¹Arnold Schoenberg, *Theory of Harmony*, trans. Roy E. Carter (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 318.

²²On the personal relationship between Schenker and Schoenberg, see Charlotte E. Erwin and Bryan R. Simms, "Schoenberg's Correspondence with Heinrich Schenker," *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 5 (1981), 23-43; Bryan Simms, "New Documents in the Schoenberg-Schenker Polemic," *Perspectives of New Music* 16 (1977), 110-24; and Jonathan Dunsby, "Schoenberg and the Writings of Schenker," *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 2 (1977), 26-33.

²³ *Ibid.*, 27.

Perhaps Schoenberg's statement on nature and tonality stems not so much from deep-seated and unshakable beliefs, but from a desire to repudiate the overwhelming authority of the tonal tradition established by Schenker's argument that tonality is the sole law of Nature. One cannot be certain to what extent remarks like these were aimed directly at Schenker. Schoenberg does, however, make repeated reference to the notion that tonality cannot be considered the only "natural" system. For example, he writes, "still other systems could surely be inferred from nature just as naturally as ours. But also just as unnaturally!... We are not teaching him [the student] eternal laws, laws handed down by nature as the only laws, the immutable laws of art!";²⁴ or, "I do not hold tonality to be a natural law nor a necessary prerequisite of artistic effectiveness. The laws by which tonality itself comes about are then still less necessary, far less; they are merely the simple exploitation of the most evident natural characteristics."²⁵

Schoenberg is, of course, in no position to deny the existence of the overtone series. But his view contrasts with Schenker's in that he holds *all* the partials to be perceptible, some more directly, others less:

In the overtone series, which is one of the most remarkable properties of the tone, there appear after some stronger-sounding overtones a number of weaker-sounding ones. Without a doubt the former are more familiar to the ear, while the latter, hardly perceptible, are rather strange... But it is quite certain that they all do contribute more or less, that of the acoustical emanations of the tone nothing is lost.²⁶

Later in the book he directly refutes Schenker's idea that only the first five partials are audible: "He [Schenker] wants the number five to remain mysterious. Holding to this aim, he is not only blinded to

²⁴ Ibid., 93.

²⁵ Ibid., 127.

²⁶ Ibid., 20.

reality, but also lets pass false and inexact observations; for otherwise this 'mysteriousness' cannot be maintained. The number five is of course, in itself, no less mysterious than all other numbers, nor is it any more mysterious. And, after all, such secrets as we uncover are either not secrets, or we have not uncovered them. Whatever nature wants to hide from us, she conceals better than that.''²⁷

Apart from in the passages I have cited, Schoenberg seldom invokes nature, least of all as an all-embracing explanation of the tonal system. His view is quite to the contrary, as might be guessed: tonality is an invention, a powerful one to be sure, but one that was gradual in its development and which also, by itself, guarantees neither greatness nor coherence.

I now turn to the second of Dahlhaus's questions, that is, whether only chordal relationships, or also pitch relationships not based on chordal associations, should be termed tonal. This question really has to do with terminology, an attempt to understand the thought behind the labelling of a compositional procedure. In Dahlhaus's study it concerns an opposition of the thought of Fétis and Riemann and leads him to the distinction "melodic tonality" versus "harmonic tonality." The emergence of the latter is, of course, the principle subject of Dahlhaus's book. The different stages of historical development of the various structures of melodic tonality is a story that has yet to be written, as he claims in his article on tonality in the *New Grove*.²⁸ This question occupied neither Schenker nor Schoenberg. Schenker discusses melodic features of chant to demonstrate medieval insensitivity to a tone's inherent urge toward the fifth and the third. He writes, "Plain chant, therefore, is particularly instructive if we want to demonstrate how musical instinct, to begin with, was totally inartistic and only very gradually condensed and rose from a chaos of fog to a principle of art."'²⁹ This matter cannot be fully discussed here. It is essential to

²⁷ Ibid., 318.

²⁸ Stanley Sadie, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 1980), s.v. "Tonality," by Carl Dahlhaus.

²⁹ *Harmony*, 134.

point out, however, how important it was for Schenker's teleological presentation of tonality that he began with the first written records of Western music.

Both Schenker and Schoenberg, though, devote long chapters to mode, but for different reasons. Schenker wants to show not only how all other pitch systems gravitate towards major and minor, but also how the appearance of remnants of these systems in the music of the great tonal masters demonstrates a historical continuity—an increasing ability to get it right, so to speak. Composers were able, eventually, to master intractable material. Schenker discusses the “*Heiliger Dankgesang*” from Beethoven's Op. 132, in order to demonstrate how the greatest masters could not, even through volition, move away from the power of the major/minor system. He writes,

In order to banish F major once and for all from our perception, he carefully avoided any B-flat, which would have led the composition into the sphere of F major. He had no idea that behind his back there stood that higher force of Nature and led his pen, forcing his composition into F major while he himself was sure he was composing in the Lydian mode, merely because that was his conscious will and intention. Is that not marvelous? And yet it is so.³⁰

His point that remnants of earlier tonal systems in later music demonstrate a historical continuity is illustrated by a series of examples from the literature which show how distant tonal relations may still be construed as having a solid foundation in diatonic harmony.

Schoenberg sees secondary dominants and other nondiatonic chords as derived from the church modes. In spirit, then, his thinking is closer to Schenker's notion of historical continuity, though without its teleological aspect. Schoenberg holds a view, however, which is not so distant from a similar notion of progress: “By proceeding this way we follow the historical evolution, which made a detour when it

³⁰ Ibid., 60.

reached the church modes.”³¹ What follows in this chapter (Chapter 10) are dozens of chord progressions meant to demonstrate how to achieve fluency of manipulation. As is typical of the book in general, meditations on ideas give way to *praxis*.

Aspects of Schenker’s later thought, particularly the concept of *Ausfaltung*, or the unfolding of a triadic-based harmonic structure, can be found in his book in an embryonic stage. *Ausfaltung* is not the same thing as Dahlhaus’s melodic tonality, though the two concepts appear somewhat analogous. *Ausfaltung* is a topic properly addressed within the concept of centering, to which I now turn.

This third question is, then, “Should the centering of tonal relationships on a tonic pitch or triad be considered an essential or incidental feature of tonality?” Dahlhaus holds to the view that centering on a triad is essential to the conception of harmonic tonality. Schenker and Schoenberg both hold to this view as well. Yet the manner in which they maintain their positions and those features of harmonic tonality which each man chooses to highlight are different. Their thought (as far as one is able to equate a notion of unfolding) can almost be summarized this simply: Schenker stands for the unfolded triad and Schoenberg stands for the unfolded tone. Despite this difference, both men seem to have a common ancestor in the theory of fundamental progressions.

I have already quoted from the passage in Schenker’s work in which he refers to the triad as the conceptual abbreviation of Nature. But musical works do not consist, obviously, of mere strings of triads. Schenker must, therefore, account for the manner in which harmonic events move. His solution is a kind of recourse to *Stufentheorie*. I say a kind of recourse because the power of the scale is not invoked. He is not concerned with demonstrating how a given key’s scale forms the chords used in composition. What he *is* interested in is accounting for a kind of large scale motion in composition--the unfolding of content, as it were. In its simplest formulation, one might think of his conception of the motion of harmonic events in terms of an undergraduate theory class assignment: one is asked to make a three-

³¹Schoenberg, 176.

voice reduction of a movement from a Bach cello suite, for example. The procedure involves having to make decisions about what constitutes progression. In Schenker's *Harmonielehre*, the relationship of scale-step, and hence content, to the tonic triad constitutes the second large part of the book, called *Practical Application*. The highest value that a scale-step may attain is tonic, and its greatest aspiration is to stand for the tonic triad.

The preferred mode of musical discourse is achieved, therefore, through the unfolding of tonality; suggesting or gradually exposing a tonality is superior to direct statement. The overabundance of vertical sonority had to give way to the horizontal line, although the relationship of the line to the guiding triad is always primary. Schenker writes:

The idea of the triad comprises a longer series of tones; its own unity bestows on them, despite their length, a unity easy to grasp; boundlessly ever new conceptual material may be accumulated; for the harmonies will always articulate the horizontal line as well into smaller units, and thus any danger of chaos will be obviated.³²

As one quickly turns the pages of Schoenberg's *Harmonielehre*, one is struck immediately by the ubiquitous passages of chord progressions, presented either as illustrations of concepts or as exercises for the pupil, to be practiced in all keys. Harmonic tonality is a progression of triadic harmony, and one senses the spirit of Sechter here throughout. Sometimes Sechter is actually present, for example when Schoenberg describes the deceptive cadence, V-VI: "In connecting V with VI (Example 84) we can again imagine that we are connecting the ninth chord of a root a third lower, III, with VI."³³

Despite the profusion of triadic fundamental progressions, the text itself speaks frequently of the derivation of tonality from the *tone*. Here

³²Schenker, 173.

³³Schoenberg, 137.

are some isolated examples:

Once again: the tone is the material of music.³⁴

We can assume that tonality is a function of the fundamental tone: that is, everything that makes up tonality emanates from that tone and refers back to it.³⁵

A piece of music will always have to be tonal, at least in so far as a relation has to exist from tone to tone by virtue of which the tones, placed next to or above one another, yield a perceptible continuity.³⁶

I shall address in the closing section of this paper possible motivations for Schoenberg's emphasis on the tone. But for now, I would like to note that, in terms of examples and exercises, Schoenberg's is a thorough but rather conservative presentation, a fact somewhat ironical in consideration of his own compositions during the years 1908-1911 (Second String Quartet, *Erwartung*, Book of the Hanging Gardens, Op. 11 piano pieces, etc.). He comments on this fact himself, in his essay from 1937, "How One Becomes Lonely": "And perhaps the greatest surprise may have been the fact that my *Harmonielehre* did not speak very much about 'atonality' and other prohibited subjects but almost exclusively about the technique and harmony of our predecessors, wherein I happened to appear even stricter and more conservative than other contemporary theorists."³⁷ This irony is, of course, entirely harmonious with his view of his own position in the history of composition. In his essay, "Brahms the Progressive," he portrays Brahms, the ostensibly conservative composer, as a forward-looking man of innovation. Schoenberg thereby inverts his own seeming-

³⁴ Ibid., 20.

³⁵ Ibid., 150.

³⁶ Ibid., 432.

³⁷ Arnold Schoenberg, "How One Becomes Lonely," in *Style and Idea*, trans. Leo Black, ed. Leonard Stein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 50.

radicalism so that he may be seen as the next forward-looking traditionalist. It starts to bend the mind.

The two books are, *in toto*, gulfs apart. Schenker's is more a theory than Schoenberg's, in that it attempts to account for a triadic system that finds life in, but yet still conflicts somewhat with, a linear, motivic *Fortspinnung*. To my knowledge, this was new. Schoenberg's work—comprehensive, brilliant, and challenging—is tuned more towards craft. I believe the natural response of someone who had carefully and methodically worked his or her way through Schoenberg's book would be to go out there and compose.³⁸ The taste of the person who studies Schenker probably runs more toward analysis. Despite their differences, however, both books seem to exhibit a decidedly Viennese stance, particularly in their interest in fundamental bass and *Stufentheorie*, and their avoidance of Riemann's ideas of chordal identity. For both men tonal harmony is a functional system of associations with a tonic chord. But here the similarities end.

Schenker's book, despite many exciting insights and much innovation, positively drips with nostalgia. Malcolm Chase and Christopher Shaw, in their essay, "The Dimensions of Nostalgia,"³⁹ from *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia*, outline what they consider to be three primary contributors to nostalgia: (1) a linear view of time which embraces the notion of improvement; (2) some sense that the present is deficient; and (3) exposure to or a trade in past relics. Schenker's view of music, if indeed not his entire life itself, possessed these requirements in abundance. He had a strongly progressive, teleological view of time and a strongly Hegelian view of history; he deplored the course of contemporary music; and he spent his life with musical texts (not to mention his work with composers' autograph manuscripts, and the sheer fact of living in Vienna, where virtually

³⁸Rosemary Hilmar, in her article "Alban Berg's Studies with Schoenberg," states that Berg's extant exercises and notes follow the pattern of Schoenberg's *Harmonielehre* exactly. *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 8 (1984): 7-29.

³⁹Malcolm Chase and Christopher Shaw, "The Dimensions of Nostalgia," in *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia*, ed. Christopher Shaw and Malcolm Chase (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 2-4.

every step one takes within the city conjures up the question, Did Beethoven walk here?). The result is a nostalgia for tonality.

Schoenberg, on the other hand, might be accused of a certain propagandist view. This seems documented by the fact that every time I came across a remark or statement that contained the word *tone*, I would have read triad. There seems to me to be a not entirely sublimated agenda behind stressing the equality of tones. Does this not bring to mind the method of composing with twelve tones which are related only to one another? Joseph Straus, in his book *Remaking the Past*, sees in a passage from the *Harmonielehre* an example of Harold Bloom's notion of *misreading*, which is a willful misinterpretation.⁴⁰ In Schoenberg's case, the misreading is self-justifying. Schoenberg calls attention to two occurrences in Mozart's G minor symphony of a chord-type unclassifiable by traditional labels. Straus writes, "Schoenberg suggests that there is a direct sonic connection between these two occurrences, a connection not mediated by functional harmony. Schoenberg thus "discovers" in Mozart one of his own characteristic harmonies used in his own characteristic way. This is the mark of a strong misreading: Schoenberg makes Mozart look like Schoenberg."⁴¹

In his essay, "Schoenberg and Schenker," Carl Dahlhaus, too, detects a certain agenda in the *Harmonielehre*. At issue are the two men's deeply divided views of chordal and non-chordal dissonances, a topic I have not discussed in this paper. Schoenberg's words on non-harmonic tones in the *Harmonielehre* must be legend: "There are no non-harmonic tones, for harmony means tones sounding together. Non-harmonic tones are merely those that the theorists could not fit into

⁴⁰For the reader interested in Bloom's work on this matter, see these books of his: *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973); *Kabbalah and Criticism*, (New York: Seabury Press, 1975); *A Map of Misreading* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975); and *Poetry and Repression: Revisionism from Blake to Stevens* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976).

⁴¹Joseph Straus, *Remaking the Past: Musical Modernism and the Influence of the Tonal Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1990), 36.

their system of harmony.’’⁴² Dahlhaus remarks,

What he was attempting to find--without knowing whether he would succeed--was the possibility of demonstrating, and not merely feeling, the harmonic importance of non-chordal notes. And when he speaks of the non-chordal notes of traditional theory he is also referring to the emancipated dissonance of his own atonal compositional practice—otherwise the emphasis of his argument is inexplicable... The concept of the non-chordal note in Schoenberg’s argument is consequently a cover name for that of emancipated dissonance.⁴³

To Dahlhaus, Schoenberg’s strong contention that there are no non-harmonic tones represented a nagging problem: the emancipated dissonance held no significance for harmonic coherence if a non-chordal note were taken to be something which did not impinge on harmonic development. This formulation had to reject a notion that there were notes which simply did not “belong.”

If Schenker’s book sometimes seems like a nostalgic lamentation, then Schoenberg’s reads like an apology. But to negatively characterize them would be to miss their significance as historical texts. For they are closer to the traditions they are describing than we are. Schenker’s motivation to write rests to some degree in a need to express his respect for the great tonal masterworks. Schoenberg, equally respectful, writes to show that his conception of composition flows directly from the same tradition of tonal works, that even so-called atonality may be seen as the logical descendent of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Without question, both men revere the great works of the tonal tradition. But because of their different views of their present, they give us different views of the past.

⁴²*Theory of Harmony*, 318.

⁴³Carl Dahlhaus, “Schoenberg and Schenker,” *Proceedings of the Royal Music Society* 100 (1974): 213-14.