

Schenker's Theory, Schenkerian Theory: Pure Unity or Constructive Conflict?

Richard Cohn

In his contribution to the symposium on "The Future of Theory," published in Volume 10 of this journal (1989), Nicholas Cook, in the context of a discussion of musical unity, writes the following, in part as a reaction to an unpublished paper of mine:

I want to...suggest that the assumption that Schenkerian analysis is about unity does a disservice to Schenker. Rather, I would maintain that it is predicated on the concept of unity (for Schenker, "structure" is a technical term meaning what in a piece of music can be modelled hierarchically, and so abstracted from context), but *about* tension, conflict, disunity. In a recent paper, Richard Cohn teased out some of the internal contradictions of everyday Schenkerian discourse, showing how Allen Cadwallader's

motivic parallelisms conflict with the principle that true structure comes only from the background, how [David] Beach's reading of Mozart sacrifices hierarchical well-formedness to richness of interpretation.¹ I would argue that, in each case, the contradiction is the central point round which the analysis revolves.... In each case, what is being demonstrated is not some abstract quality of musical unity, but rather the conflict and contradiction that animates the musical experience—"the tension of musical coherence," as Schenker himself expressed it. Maybe it has taken deconstructionism to sensitize us to phrases like this in Schenker's writings....²

This paragraph eloquently articulates a paradigm that has implicitly motivated much recent Schenkerian work. David Beach writes that "motive is an aspect of design, not structure, and though the two can and often do reinforce one another, there are instances where design and structure are not in agreement."³ Carl Schachter

¹Versions of the paper to which Cook refers were presented, under the title "Three Challenges to the Schenkerian View of Motive," at Music Theory Canada (March 1990) and the Society for Music Theory (November 1990). The most recent version of this paper is "The Autonomy of Motives in Schenkerian Accounts of Tonal Music," *Music Theory Spectrum* 14, no. 2 (1992): 150-70. These arguments are presented in an earlier and briefer form in Richard Cohn and Douglas Dempster, "Hierarchical Unity, Plural Unities: Toward a Reconciliation," in *Disciplining Music: Musicology and its Canons*, ed. Philip Bohlman and Katherine Bergeron (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). My approach to the problems confronted in this paper, as elsewhere, is profoundly indebted to extensive conversations and correspondence with Dempster.

²Nicholas Cook, "The Future of Theory," *Indiana Theory Review* 10 (1989): 71-72.

³David Beach, "Repetition in Beethoven's Piano Sonata Opus 110, Part 1: The First Movement," *Intégral* 1 (1987): 27. Beach illustrates this principle in the same article, and also in "A Recurring Pattern in Mozart's Music," *Journal of Music Theory* 27 (1983): 22-28; "Schenker's Theories: A Pedagogical View," in David Beach (ed.), *Aspects of Schenkerian Theory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 24; and

acknowledges potential conflicts between tonal rhythm and durational rhythm, and argues that such conflicts “can be of crucial importance in shaping a musical idea.”⁴ John Rothgeb, referring to the relationship between motive and structure in Brahms, states that “the interplay between these two often conflicting planes of organization is an essential feature of Brahms’s surfaces.”⁵ And William Rothstein argues that when large-scale tonal motion conflicts with “the evident layout of phrases and periods, both aspects must be acknowledged in a full description of the work’s form.”⁶ Each appeals in some form to what we might call a paradigm of Constructive Conflict, whereby some significant compositional feature is incompatible with the “structure” of the composition (as defined by the *Ursatz* and the voice-leading transformations which form the “structural hierarchy”), and the relationship of feature to structure assumes a healthy dialectical demeanor that contributes in some way to the essence or experience of the composition.

That the Constructive Conflict paradigm can lead to compelling analytic insights is clear. That it occupies an epistemologically higher ground than the Pure Unity paradigm, which is easily flooded by the most minor tributaries of the raging river that is contemporary humanistic scholarship, is beyond doubt. What demands further consideration is the attribution of such a paradigm to Schenker himself. This paper suggests some reasons to proceed cautiously here, and offers the possibility that the acceptability of conflicts in Schenkerian theory results from the evolutionary process that Rothstein has dubbed the

“Motive and Structure in the Andante Movement of Mozart’s Piano Sonata K. 545,” *Music Analysis* 3 (1984): 230-31. See also *idem.*, “The Current State of Schenkerian Research,” *Acta Musicologica* 17 (1985): 286.

⁴Carl Schachter, “Rhythm and Linear Analysis: A Preliminary Study,” *Music Forum* 4 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 313, 330.

⁵John Rothgeb, Review of Walter Frisch, *Brahms and the Principle of Developing Variation*, *Music Theory Spectrum* 9 (1987): 209.

⁶William Rothstein, *Phrase Rhythm in Tonal Music* (New York: Schirmer, 1989), 103.

Americanization of Heinrich Schenker.”⁷

Cook’s citation of Schenker’s “tension of musical coherence” provides a handy point of access. This phrase is excerpted from the following sentence in *Free Composition*:

Das Erfassen der Zusammenhänge in den Meisterwerken überschreitet die geistige Kraft zumal der heutigen Menschen, die ohne Zusammenhang in sich selbst *die Spannung eines Zusammenhanges* überhaupt nicht mehr vertragen.⁸

The standard Oster translation condenses the sentence somewhat. Here is William Pastille’s translation:

Perceiving the coherence in the masterworks exceeds the spiritual power of contemporary men especially, who, without coherence in themselves, can no longer endure the tension of any kind of coherence.⁹

What can Schenker mean by *die Spannung eines Zusammenhanges* in this context? *Spannung* primarily denotes a physical property: stretching, tightening, or, most specifically, the spanning of an arch. Inherent in this physical meaning is linearity, the connection of two points. Thus *Spannung* is closely related to *Zug*, which “connotes primarily stretching, pulling, tensing, and

⁷William Rothstein, “The Americanization of Heinrich Schenker,” *In Theory Only* 9/1 (1986): 5-17; reprinted in Hedi Siegel (ed.), *Schenker Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 193-203.

⁸Heinrich Schenker, *Der freie Satz*, 2nd ed. (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1956), 32. Emphasis added.

⁹William A. Pastille, “*Ursatz*: The Musical Philosophy of Heinrich Schenker” (Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1985), 35.

spanning—the notion of connecting over distances.”¹⁰ Transferred into the psychological domain, *Spannung* retains this linear quality: anticipation, suspense, eager expectation. Some anonymous personified entity is placed in the position of a positive, protagonizing force, striving toward a desired goal, but obstructed by a negative, antagonizing force which substitutes for gravity. At the same time, *Spannung* acquires a meaning that is somewhat further displaced from the metaphorical source: the tension between plural autonomous entities, as in conflict, discord, or strained relations, e.g. the tension between the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis. Here, conflicting forces are neither personified nor assigned value. The observer of such conflicts may well be neutral with respect to them, and simply appreciate the rich complexity of their interaction.

The passage in question does not easily resolve itself into a determinate reading of *Spannung*, either on its own or in its local context. But parallel passages from elsewhere in Schenker's late writings provide important clues. The essay “Resumption of Urlinie Considerations,” from Book 2 of *Das Meisterwerk in der Musik*, begins as follows:

The mentally perceived unit of an auskomponierung span constitutes a mentally perceived tension (bedeutet eine geistige Spannung) between the beginning and end of the auskomponierung span because the initiating tone of the auskomponierung span must continue in our minds until the final tone appears. This tension span (Diese Spannung) alone creates musical coherence, i.e.: *the auskomponierung span* (Auskomponierungszug) is *the only conveyor of connection and synthesis*.¹¹

¹⁰Ibid., 68.

¹¹*Das Meisterwerk in der Musik*, Yearbook 2 (Vienna: Drei Masken Verlag, 1926), 11; trans. Sylvan Kalib, “Thirteen Essays from the Three Yearbooks ‘Das Meisterwerk in der Musik’ by Heinrich Schenker: An Annotated Translation” (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1973), ii, 164. Italics are Schenker's.

Comparing musical spans to linguistic spans, Schenker laments the incapacities of listeners to comprehend long sentences. He then writes: “Naturally, people find the musical tensions (musikalischen Spannungen) of auskomponierung spans to be even more difficult.”¹² The sentiment expressed here is very close to the passage from *Free Composition*, but the context is a more fully developed one. It is clear here that the psychological *Spannung* of the listener hugs tightly to the physical *Spannung* of connecting two points. This association becomes yet more palpable later in the same essay when Schenker refers to the dissonant passing tone as a melodic bridge (Melodiebruck) between two consonances, creating “die Spannung des Terzzug,” and declares that this passing tone forms no vertical relationship with the sustained cantus firmus tone, “as if a vacuum (lustleerer Raum) existed between [them].”¹³

In *Free Composition*, *Spannung* occurs in similar contexts. For example, in the section just preceding the one cited by Cook, Schenker writes that “the fundamental line signifies motion, striving toward a goal (*Spannung zu einem Ziele*), and ultimately the completion of this course.”¹⁴ And in the following chapter we find the following detailed description of tension and resolution at the highest level:

To man is given the experience of ending, the cessation of all tensions and efforts (*Spannungen und Ziele*). In this sense, we feel by nature that the fundamental line must lead downward until it reaches $\hat{1}$, and that the bass must fall back to the fundamental. With [$\hat{1}$ graphically above I] all tensions (*Spannungen*) in a musical work must cease....

A sequence of tones cannot live in the foreground unless the total tension (*Gesamtspannung*) of the

¹²*Meisterwerk*, ii, 11; Kalib, ii, 164-65.

¹³*Meisterwerk*, ii, 24-25; Kalib, ii, 188-89.

¹⁴Schenker, *Free Composition*, trans. Ernst Oster (New York: Longman, 1979), 4.

fundamental linear progression provides it with breath.¹⁵

In none of these passages is the conflict of *Spannung* between robust autonomous forces healthily tugging the listener in contradictory directions. The conflict is between, on the one hand, the salutary discipline of linear coherence, of focusing on a (perhaps distant) goal, and on the other hand, the decadent allure of the “eternally disordered foreground”¹⁶ which, like gravity, perpetually pulls the listener downward, derails him from achieving true comprehension. Schenker is encouraging musicians to stop being such couch potatoes and to learn how to become musical Michael Jordans: to maintain the momentum of trajectory, to traverse ever more distant spans without succumbing to the temptations of the momentary, to “create a purely musical coherence even, as it were, in flight.”¹⁷ The “tension of coherence,” insofar as it resides in the listener or performer, is the energy necessary to attain coherence. Once achieved, the tension inhabits the coherent structure itself, as in an elastic cord or a violin string stretched taut and secured at both terminals. Schenker’s mature theory is not a celebration of conflict and contradiction, but rather of overcoming them.

Pastille’s dissertation places this analysis in a broader perspective. Pastille finds that Schenker’s ontology, closely related to Goethe’s morphology, consists of two primary forces: centripetal, binding unity and centrifugal, developmental growth. The interaction of these forces creates “the energizing polarity in Schenker’s system,”¹⁸ which is manifested in the *Zug*, “an energized, but stable, structure that retains the growth energy used to stretch apart the original simultaneity.”¹⁹ The stability results from the unity of the background, which “pulls

¹⁵Ibid., 13.

¹⁶*Free Composition*, 3.

¹⁷Ibid., 7.

¹⁸Pastille, “Ursatz,” 71.

¹⁹Ibid., 67.

the parts of the organism inward, holds them together, restrains them from unchecked, erratic growth, and prevents them from tearing the whole asunder.”²⁰ Thus, despite the pluralism implicit in this dialectic, Schenker is ultimately a monist:

Just as the background’s reality is opposed by the foreground’s appearance, so the unity of the background is opposed by the diversity of the foreground. The wealth of activity in the foreground, the multiplicity of different motions, the variety of textures, the independent motives—all resolve into a single, simple, unified reality in the background. This is the kernel of Schenker’s monistic idealism.²¹

Cook is right, then, to assign a role to tension, conflict, and disunity in Schenker’s conceptual universe. I am less prepared to agree with him, however, when he substitutes “contradiction” for “conflict.” Contradiction occurs only when unity fails to resolve the multiplicity, when growth is unchecked, and the fabric is torn asunder. When Cook writes that “for Schenker, ‘structure’ is a technical term meaning what in a piece of music can be modelled hierarchically, and so abstracted from context,” he ignores copious and emphatic claims by Schenker to the contrary. Over and over again, in both *Meisterwerk* and *Free Composition*, Schenker emphasized the distinction between tone-sequences that are derivable from the Ursatz via voice-leading transformations, and those that are not. The following quote, from the first volume of *Meisterwerk*, is typical:

By picking out a pair of distantly related tones from the upper voice—by this alone, nothing has as yet been proven; the tones must withstand the structural test (der Satzprobe)! Only that which is capable of being proven by

²⁰Ibid., 70.

²¹Ibid., 33.

voice-leading transformations is valid.²²

Restated: only that which can be modelled hierarchically, and so abstracted from context, is valid. Cook implies that the penalty for failing the Satzprobe is placement in a box marked “not structural, but interesting anyway.” But Schenker marked the boxes differently: to pass the Satzprobe is to be real, genuine, true; to fail is to be illusory, apparent, false, and even nonexistent. And the categories demarcated by these terms are hardly valueless: Schenker exhorted the “rejection of mere appearance.”²³ He began the final sentence of the quote translated above as follows: “Es gilt eben nur...,” implying that to fail the Satzprobe is to be worthless. In *Free Composition*, Schenker wrote: “The fundamental structure represents the totality. It is the mark of unity and, since it is the only vantage point from which to view that unity, prevents all false and distorted concepts (falsche, schielenden Betrachtung).”²⁴ To be false is to be distorted, or perhaps, in a translation that catches the idiomatic pungency of *schielenden*—to be cockeyed. Later, we are reminded that “a sequence of tones cannot live in the foreground unless the total tension of the fundamental linear progression provides it with breath; no life can be breathed into it from the foreground.”²⁵ Here, to fail the Satzprobe is to be denied any ontological status whatsoever.

Further evidence of the monolithic status that Schenker assigned to the Ursatz is found in his wild attempts to subsume all compositional features to its complete control. In *Meisterwerk 1* he claimed that “it will be systematically shown for the first time that dynamics, like voice leading and diminution, are organized according

²²Kalib, ii, 140-41.

²³Paul Mast, “Brahms’s Study, Octaven u. Quinten u. A., with Schenker’s Commentary Translated,” in Felix Salzer (ed.), *Music Forum 5* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 151.

²⁴*Free Composition*, 5.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 13.

to structural levels, genealogically, as it were. For each level of voice leading, background or foreground, and for each diminutional level, there is a corresponding dynamic level of the first order, second order, and so forth."²⁶ In *Free Composition*, Schenker claimed that orchestral colors are "subject to the laws of the whole,"²⁷ that "all rhythm in music comes from counterpoint and only from counterpoint,"²⁸ and that all forms "receive their coherence only from the fundamental structure."²⁹ These claims, which are never securely demonstrated, can only be seen as a desperate effort to fulfill the destiny of the *Ursatz* as generator not only of "the structure" (i.e., harmony and counterpoint), but of all recognizable features of a composition. Had Schenker truly entertained a Constructive Conflict paradigm, he would never have so completely lost sight of elementary logic as to convince himself that "pitch structure can have a strong impact on rhythm/dynamics/orchestration/form" necessarily entails "rhythm/dynamics/orchestration/form are entirely governed by pitch structure and by nothing else," a fallacy that has seen manifold regenerations in the work of recent scholars.

I have tried to show so far why we should be careful about asserting that Schenker was sympathetic to a Constructive Conflict paradigm in his later writings.³⁰ Now I would like to suggest why this point has more than parochial significance. Beach, Rothgeb, and

²⁶Heinrich Schenker, "The Largo of J.S. Bach's Sonata No. 3 for Unaccompanied Violin [BWV 1005]," trans. John Rothgeb in Felix Salzer (ed.), *The Music Forum 4* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 156-57.

²⁷*Free Composition*, 7-8.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 15.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 16.

³⁰Certain fleeting references in his *Harmony* suggest that Schenker held a Constructive Conflict paradigm in his earlier writings, prior to his *Ursatz* epiphany (trans. Oswald Jonas, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1973). See, for example, his discussion of fugue subjects in minor (50) or the motivic origins of the Phrygian II chord (110). Such conflicts are still present in Vol. 1 of *Counterpoint*. See Carl Schachter, "Schenker's Counterpoint," *The Musical Times* 129 (1988): 525.

Schachter, to the extent that they have endorsed a Constructive Conflict paradigm, or at least acknowledged its acceptability in principle, have been mute on the question of whether or not they consider this paradigm to be the one ultimately held by Schenker. This muteness is particularly striking in light of the fact that these same leading scholars have been identified with Schenkerian theory for many years, not only in their analytic work, but also in their encomiums to Schenker, their impassioned defenses of his theory under attack, and in some cases their resistance to proposals for selective modification of that theory. One would expect that any distancing from Schenker in as vital a matter as its theoretical underpinnings would be accompanied by open acknowledgements (if not scrupulous justifications), and would provoke healthy debate with (if not vigorous dissent from) other members of the Schenkerian community. It seems reasonable to induce, from the absence of any such signs, that Beach, Rothgeb, Schachter, et al., find that constructive conflicts are worthy of consideration not only because they are interesting, insightful, or productive, but also because they fall properly from Schenker's own work. Yet I have shown reason to doubt such a proposition.

Although the history of Schenkerian theory in America has yet to be written, William Rothstein has noted some ways that the forces of American academic culture, circa 1985, have come to shape ideas originally conceived in Vienna, circa 1925.³¹ Although a convincing account of the attempt to retrofit Schenkerian theory to a Constructive Conflict paradigm can only be undertaken in the context of a more comprehensive study, it is worth making some preliminary observations. Two themes of Rothstein's study, pragmatism and eclecticism, are particularly relevant here. A consequence of American pragmatism is a less idealized, more empirically based outlook, an orientation toward achieving results. Responses by tonal theorists to quotidian analytic problems have undoubtedly contributed to the cultivation of an increased flexibility of approach. In the case of conservative Schenkerian theorists, this flexibility led to a tension between theory and practice that stirred polemical rumblings in the

³¹Rothstein, "Americanization."

1950s.³² In the case of the neo-Schenkerians, this flexibility led to a detachment from certain Schenkerian ideals to which they had no *a priori* commitment.

Eclecticism, the tendency for diverse, perhaps incompatible traditions to freely mingle in the intellectual marketplace, led the neo-Schenkerians to unite Schenkerian theory with a meta-theory borrowed from systems science. Although this marriage was difficult for conservative Schenkerians to accept, it may have affected them tacitly nonetheless. (Consider, for example, the infiltration of the concept of *hierarchy* into the discourse of conservative Schenkerians.)³³ More recently, Schenkerians have been exposed to the work of non-Schenkerian scholars, such as Meyer, Berry, Narmour, Epstein, and Lerdahl & Jackendoff, which (to generalize much too coarsely) share a recognition of the complex reciprocal influence of multiple non-reducible parameters.³⁴ To the extent that Schenkerians have reacted to this work, their response has, for the most part, not been sympathetic; nonetheless, I am suggesting that this work has had an impact on the development of Schenkerian theory in recent years.

The citation of Narmour in this context will strike some as particularly ironic, in light of the Schenkerian rejection of his work as a “thoroughly negative contribution.”³⁵ To say that Schenkerians

³²See Jonas’s Introduction to Schenker’s *Harmony*, viii (note 2); Ernst Oster, “Re.: A New Concept of Tonality (?)” *Journal of Music Theory* 4 (1960): 85-98.

³³See Milton Babbitt, Review of *Structural Hearing*, by Felix Salzer, *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 5 (1952): 262-63; Oswald Jonas, Introduction to Schenker, *Harmony*, xx-xxi; Allen Forte, *Contemporary Tone-Structures* (New York: Teacher’s College of Columbia University, 1955).

³⁴Leonard B. Meyer, *Explaining Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973); Wallace Berry, *Structural Functions of Music* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1976); Eugene Narmour, *Beyond Schenkerism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977); David Epstein, *Beyond Orpheus* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1979; Oxford University Press, 1987); Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff, *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983).

³⁵David Beach, “On Analysis, Beethoven, and Extravagance: A Response to Charles J. Smith,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 9 (1988): 174.

have in part appropriated Narmour's metatheory is not to say that they have accepted the shape of Narmour's theory of tonal music, which (perhaps it goes without saying) reflects a fundamentally different vision. The irony is that Schenkerians have attacked not only Narmour's theory, but also those metatheoretical premises which I am suggesting that they have come to share with him.

To illustrate this point, consider a passage from Beethoven's Wind Quintet (Example 1), for which Narmour provides two readings. In Schenkerian terms, the first reading, at (a), treats the D-flat at m. 3 as a lower neighbor which immediately resolves to the E-flat at m. 4. The second reading, at (b), considers D-flat as part of a linear progression continuing to C at measure 5, and treats the E-flat at m. 4 as a subordinate escape tone. Narmour argues "not only that the two 'readings'... are possible or that two different hearings are equally plausible, but rather that *both* the axial and the descending linear structures are heard *simultaneously*."³⁶ In essence, he is claiming that, in one sense, the E-flat in m. 4 is structurally subordinate to the D-flat in m. 3, but in another sense, the D-flat is subordinate to the E-flat.

The analysis at (a) is vulnerable on the specifically music-theoretic grounds that it pays insufficient attention to the tendency of the unstable fourth degree to resolve downward, or to the parallelism between the two-measure segments. But Rothgeb chooses to attack it on a more fundamental level:

One of the more curious of Narmour's ideas is his belief that two or more mutually contradictory (that is, strictly speaking, incompatible) interpretations of a musical event may all be correct and of equal validity.... The question of whether (a) or (b) in [Example 1] is correct is a music theoretic question, but the question of whether or not both (a) *and* (b) are correct is no more a music theoretic question than is the question, implicitly contained in it, of whether the note d-flat² in bar 3 *both goes to and does not*

³⁶Narmour, 23.

go to the c2 in bar 5 [at this point we are referred to a footnote:].... the “axial” and the linear interpretations cannot be reconciled.³⁷

Example 1. From Narmour, *Beyond Schenkerism*, 23. Beethoven, Quintet, Op. 4, Trio II, mm. 1-15.

The image displays a musical score for Example 1, consisting of two systems of staves. The top system covers measures 1 through 7, and the bottom system covers measures 9 through 15. The original notation is in the top staff of each system, with the instruction "sempre dolce e piano" below it. The first system includes bar numbers 1, 3, 5, and 7. The second system includes bar numbers 9, 11, 13, 15, and a trill (tr) in measure 15. Two alternative interpretations are shown below the original notation: (a) "axial" and (b) "linear". Interpretation (a) uses a box to group notes across measures, while interpretation (b) uses a box to group notes differently, illustrating the "axial" vs. "linear" debate.

Yet Narmour’s “curious” view is exactly the one that underlies many of David Beach’s analyses. For example, Beach’s two different graphs of a passage from the slow movement of Mozart’s Sonata, K. 545 (Example 2) replicate the situation of Example 1, but in inversion. Beach writes as follows:

³⁷John Rothgeb, Review of *Beyond Schenkerism*, *Theory and Practice* 3/2 (1978): 31. See also Rothgeb’s review of Helmut Federhofer, *Akkord und Stimmführung*, *Music Theory Spectrum* 4 (1982): 134.

It is possible and perfectly reasonable to view the first four bars of this phrase at two different levels, first as a closed unit and secondly in relation to the remainder of the phrase.... We hear the E2 of bar 19 not just as a neighbor note returning to D2 in the next bar, but also, on a higher level, as a passing tone connecting the D of bar 17 to the F# in bar 21.³⁸

Example 2. From Beach, "Motive and Structure," 230.

The image displays three levels of musical analysis for a phrase from Beach's "Motive and Structure," starting at bar 17. Level (a) shows a close-up of the first four bars with a bracket indicating a closed unit. Level (b) shows the first four bars with a bracket and a dashed line labeled 'N' indicating a neighbor note relationship between the E in bar 19 and the D in bar 20. Level (c) shows the first four bars with a bracket and a dashed line labeled 'P' indicating a passing tone relationship between the D in bar 17 and the F# in bar 21. The score includes treble and bass staves, chord symbols (G, D, F#), and Roman numerals (I, V, ii, V, I1) indicating harmonic structure.

Essentially, Beach is claiming that E both goes to and does not go to F-sharp, and that the second D is both structurally superior to and inferior to the preceding E. To justify this position, he cites an analogous passage from Mozart's Fantasy in D Minor. But this appeal merely reminds us that Narmour has already exposed an identical

³⁸Beach, "Motive and Structure," 230-231.

problem in the latter piece;³⁹ it does not constitute a solution. More recently, Edward Laufer has used the Schenkerian concept of *Übergreifen* to show that the fragment from the Fantasy can admit both solutions simultaneously,⁴⁰ and there is no reason that this same strategy could not be applied to Example 2 as well.⁴¹ But this strategy simply takes advantage of a gigantic semantic indeterminacy regarding the expression “x goes to y,” and this loophole is the exact one traversed by Narmour. In any case, it is the shape of Beach’s argumentation, vis-à-vis Rothgeb’s critique of Narmour, that is most significant, not the solution of the particular music-theoretic problem at hand.

One of the arguments presented in the papers cited in note 1 is that the general problem that arises in Examples 1 and 2 is replicated whenever an analyst posits motivic entities that are not diminutional entities. Such situations often reduce to a set of four events, which can

be represented as $\boxed{1\ 2\ 3\ 4}$, which are divided into two sub-gestures, $\boxed{1\ 2\ 3}$ and $\boxed{2\ 3\ 4}$, one of which is asserted to be prolongational, the other of which asserts a motivic connection. The first sub-gesture asserts that $\boxed{2}$ is in one sense inferior to $\boxed{3}$, while the second sub-gesture asserts that, in another sense, just the opposite is true. The first sub-gesture suggests that, in one sense, $\boxed{2}$ goes to

³⁹Narmour, 89-95.

⁴⁰Edward Laufer, “On the Fantasy,” *Intégral 2* (1988): 101-102.

⁴¹In this case, one could not speak of the simultaneous motions to D and F-sharp occurring on different “levels,” as Beach does, since rhythmic normalization would insure that both resolutions occur simultaneously.

[3]; the second sub-gesture suggests that, in another sense, [2] goes through [3] on its way to [4].

This four-event scheme underlies many of Beach's analyses (see note 3 above). Example 3 shows one of these examples, a graph of a passage from Beethoven's Waldstein Sonata, with a four-event gesture A - B - A - G-sharp.⁴² A similar example, cited by Keiler and discussed elsewhere in my own work, is Rothgeb's analysis of a passage from C.P.E. Bach Sonata, with a four-event gesture A-flat - B-flat - A-flat - G.⁴³

Example 3. From Beach, "Schenker's Theories: A Pedagogical View," 24. Beethoven, Piano Sonata in C Major, Op. 53, Mvt. 1, mm. 1-35.

In each case, the four events are analyzed into two conflicting sub-gestures, the first of which is prolongationally motivated ([1] to [3]), with [2] acting as an upper neighbor to [3], the second of which is

⁴²Beach, "Schenker's Theories: A Pedagogic View," 24.

⁴³The analysis is from John Rothgeb, "Thematic Content: A Schenkerian View," in Beach (ed.), *Aspects*, 47. See Allan Keiler's review of the Beach anthology, *Music Analysis* 3/3 (1984): 282-83; Cohn, "Three Challenges."

motivically motivated ($\boxed{2}$ to $\boxed{4}$), with $\boxed{3}$ acting as a passing tone from $\boxed{2}$.

In all cases that fit the four-event scheme, whether posited by Rothgeb, Beach, Narmour, or Schenker himself,⁴⁴ the balance between growth and unity, between energy and stability, is ruptured. The extra-hierarchical entity, whether its significance is motivic, rhythmic, or “formal,” signals the failure of unity: the whole is “torn asunder.” To the extent that analysts wish to recognize the significance of these entities, they must come to terms not only with conflict, but with contradiction. And indeed, as Cook has suggested openly, and others more tacitly, the contradiction may indeed be “the central point round which the analysis revolves.” If so, then the great challenge for music analysis is to find a way to chart the processes of contradiction between plural autonomous entities in individual compositions, and the great challenge for music theory is to map the terrain on which the plural unities engage one another. How many dimensions will this map have? What are the mechanisms by which contradictions are resolved, absorbed, perpetuated, transformed, and how are we, as inner listeners, outer listeners, and performers, to live these processes? What I have suggested in this paper is that we are not likely to find answers to questions of this type, or even specific exemplars upon which general answers might be based, in the late work of Heinrich Schenker.

The extent to which tonal theorists are now explicitly or implicitly engaged by questions of this type is exactly the extent to which Schenkerian theory has given way to post-Schenkerian theory. The twentieth century has witnessed the critiquing, transcending, and absorption of the ideas of all of its most brilliant thinkers, from

⁴⁴For examples where Schenker violates his own Satzprobe, see Edward Laufer, review of *Free Composition*, *Music Theory Spectrum* 3 (1981): 164-84; Schenker, “The Largo,” 153 (note 20); Allan Keiler, “Some Properties of Schenker’s Pitch Derivations,” *Music Perception* 1 (1984): 211-215; Beach, “A Recurring Pattern,” 21, 29 (note 8).

Saussure to Chomsky to Freud. Is there any reason why music theory and Heinrich Schenker should be different? I submit that tonal theory cannot proceed in good health if it continues to be executed under the watchful eye of Schenker's ghost.

One of Schenker's most graphic images for the all-generative power of the *Ursatz* was the *Mutterschoß*—the maternal womb.⁴⁵ The scope of this metaphor may be broader than Schenker intended. Although living creatures have unitary origins in maternal wombs, they grow into independent agents, and enter into relations independent of those origins. So too, it seems, for musical events issued from the *Mutterschoß* of the *Ursatz*. And, to swap metaphier and metaphrand in Schenker's sociology of tones: so, too, for music theory as a discipline. Even if we think of Schenker as the unitary center from which we all grew, are we forever bound to that center? Must the impulses of growth away from that center be forever reigned in? It seems not: the moment when the unitary bonds of the *Ursatz* are torn asunder is exactly the moment when the unitary bonds of Schenker's vision lose their monolithic power as well. Catapulted outward by powerful loins, perhaps we look anxiously back, searching for the cord that ties us to that origin. We may feel that the cord is actually there, ready to reel us in. But this perception may be a product of naught but our nostalgic desires.

⁴⁵Schenker, *Meisterwerk* II, 41.