Theodor W. Adorno

PHILOSOPHY OF NEW MUSIC

Translated, Edited, and with an Introduction
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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA PRESS *Minneapolis • London*

PREFACE

This book brings together two studies written seven years apart, and an introduction. The construction and character of the whole may justify a few words of clarification.

In 1938, in the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, the author published an essay, "On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening."[1] Its intention was to present the change in the function of music today, to demonstrate the inner transformations that musical phenomena as such had sustained as a result of the subsumption of music to commercialized mass production, and at the same time to show how certain anthropological shifts in standardized society reach into the structure of musical listening. At the time, the author had already planned to draw into the dialectical treatment the situation of composing itself, which after all determines the situation of music. For the author the power of the social totality was self-evident even in such seemingly remote regions as that of music. He could not deceive himself that the art in which he himself was schooled, even in its pure and most uncompromising form, was exempt from the ubiquitous rule of reification, but rather he saw that, on the contrary, precisely in the effort to defend its integrity, it produces out of itself characteristics of the same nature that it resists. It became his task to comprehend the objective antinomies in

which an art that genuinely stays true to its own exigencies, without any regard to the consequences, is necessarily ensnarled in the midst of a heteronomous reality; antinomies that cannot otherwise be surmounted than if they are followed through, without any illusion, to their limit. The work on Schoenberg originated on the basis of these reflections and was written in 1940–41. It remained at that time unpublished and, outside the most restricted circle of the Institute for Social Research in New York, was available only to few. Today it appears in its original form, with several additions touching throughout on Schoenberg's late works.

After the war, however, when the author decided to publish the work in Germany, it seemed to him necessary to add to the section on Schoenberg another on Stravinsky. If the book were really to have something to say about new music as a whole, it would be necessary for the work's own method, opposed to generalizations and classifications, to go beyond the treatment of a particular school, even if the latter alone does justice to the contemporary objective possibilities of the musical material and faces up to its difficulties intransigently. Stravinsky's diametrically opposed procedure demanded interpretation not only because of its public prestige and its compositional *niveau*—for the concept of *niveau* cannot be dogmatically presupposed and always remains open to investigation as "taste"—but rather, and above all, to bar the easy way out, one that would conclude that, if the logical progress of music leads to antinomies, there would be something to hope for from the restoration of the past, from the self-conscious abrogation of music's own *ratio*. No critique of progress is legitimate save one that names the reactionary element in the ruling unfreedom and thus unapologetically precludes its misuse in the service of the status quo. The return in positive guise of what has collapsed is revealed as more fundamentally complicitous with the destructive tendencies of the age than what has publicly been branded destructive. A self-proclaimed order is nothing but a mask for chaos. If therefore the study of the radical Schoenberg, himself inspired by expression, is conducted at the level of musical objectivity, while the treatment of the antipsychological Stravinsky poses the question of the damaged subject on which his oeuvre is patterned, then here as well a dialectical motif is at work.

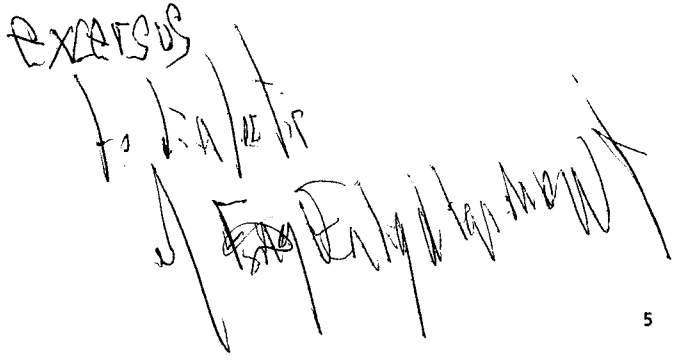
The author has no wish to disguise the provocative features of his study. It must appear cynical after what has happened in Europe, and what continues to threaten, to lavish time and mental energy on the

deciphering of esoteric questions on the technique of modern composition. Moreover, the obstinate artistic disputes of the text often enough appear as if they directly address a reality that is uninterested in them. But perhaps an eccentric undertaking will shed light on a situation still masked solely by its familiar manifestations, and where protest is heard only when the public accord suspects some divergence from it. This is only music; how must a world be made in which even questions of counterpoint bear witness to irreconcilable conflicts? How fundamentally disturbed life is today if its trembling and its rigidity are reflected even where no empirical need reaches, in a sphere that people suppose provides sanctuary from the pressures of the harrowing norm, and that indeed only redeems its promise by refusing what they expect of it.

The introduction presents considerations that pertain to both parts. Although it emphasizes the unity of the whole, the differences between the old part and the new, particularly stylistic differences, have not been concealed.

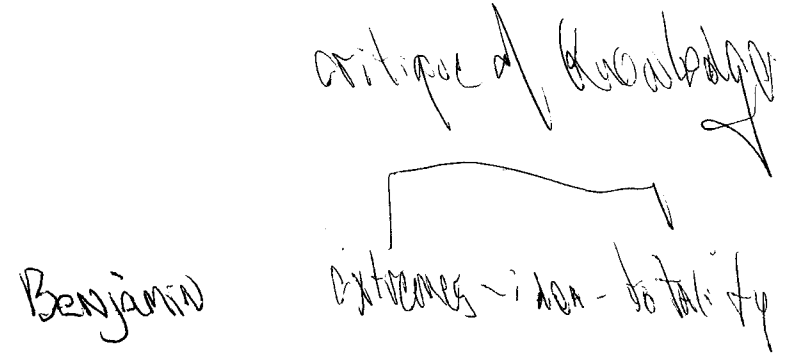
In the period intervening between the two parts, my work with Max Horkheimer, stretching back now over more than twenty years, has developed into a common philosophy. True, the author is solely responsible for what deals with music, but it would not be possible to distinguish to whom one theoretical insight or another belongs. This book should be understood as a detailed excursus to *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. What bears witness in it to steadfastness, to confidence in the helping strength of determinant negation, is thanks to the intellectual and human solidarity of Max Horkheimer.

Los Angeles, California
July 1, 1948



INTRODUCTION

> For in art we have to do not with any agreeable or useful child's play, but . . . with an unfolding of the truth.
>
> G. W. F. HEGEL, *Aesthetics*[1]



"Philosophical history as the research of origin is the form that, in the most remote extremes, in the apparent excesses of development, reveals the configuration of the idea as the configuration of the totality, characterized by the possibility of a meaningful juxtaposition of these extremes."[2] The principle that Walter Benjamin followed in his treatise on the German drama of lamentation, for reasons relating to the critique of knowledge, can be grounded in the object itself in a philosophical analysis of new music that is essentially restricted to its two protagonists, who have no direct relation with each other. For only in the extremes does the essence of this music take shape distinctively; only they permit knowledge of its truth content. "The middle road," according to Schoenberg in his foreword to Three Satires for Mixed Chorus, opus 28, numbers 1–3, "is the only one that does not lead to Rome."[3] For this reason, and not under the illusion of great personalities, these two authors are exclusively considered in detail. If one were to review new music not chronologically but in terms of its quality and in its full amplitude, including all its transitions and all its compromises, inevitably these extremes would be reencountered insofar as one would be content with neither simple descriptions nor the judgments of specialists. This observation does not necessarily imply anything about the value or even about the

representative importance of works located between these extremes. The best works of Béla Bartók, who in many respects sought to reconcile Schoenberg and Stravinsky,[4] are probably superior to Stravinsky's in density and ampleness. And the second neoclassical generation—names such as Paul Hindemith and Darius Milhaud—has adjusted to the general tendency of the age with less scruple and thus, at least to all appearances, reflect it with greater fidelity than does the movement's own leader, with his cloaked and therefore absurdly exaggerated conformism. But the study of this generation would indeed necessarily develop into an examination of the two innovators. This is not, however, because historical priority is their due and the others are derivative of them but because they alone, by virtue of their uncompromising rigor, drove the impulses that inhere in their works so far that these works become legible as ideas of the thing itself. This takes place in the specific constellations of their technical procedures, not in any general outline of compositional styles. While these styles are heralded in loudly resounding cultural catchphrases, precisely in their generality they readily admit those falsifying dilutions that sabotage the rigor of the idea that is itself purely immanent to the object and not programmatic. Indeed, philosophical treatment of art is concerned with the idea, and not with notions of style, however much the idea may touch on the latter. The truth or untruth about Schoenberg or Stravinsky is to be encountered not in mere explication of categories such as atonality, twelve-tone technique, or neoclassicism, but only in the concrete crystallization of such categories in the structure of the music itself. What the preconceived categories of style pay as the price of their accessibility is that they do not themselves show the complexion of the work but instead remain arbitrarily this side of the aesthetic configuration. By contrast, if neoclassicism is examined, for instance, in the context of the questions of what necessity in the compositions themselves urged them to this style or of how the stylistic ideal is related to the material of the work on the one hand and its constructive totality on the other, then the problem of the legitimacy of the style becomes in principle determinable.

New Conformism. What resides between the extremes in fact does not so much today demand an interpretative relation to these extremes as, by its very halfheartedness, make speculation superfluous.

The history of new music as a movement no longer tolerates a "meaningful juxtaposition of extremes." Since the heroic decade, the period around World War I, it has as a whole been a history of decline, of involution to the traditional. Modern painting's aversion to figurative representation, which in art marks the same breach as does atonality in music, was an act of defense against mechanized art merchandise, primarily photography. In its origins, radical music reacted no differently to the commercial debasement of the traditional idiom. It was the antithesis to the spreading of the culture industry into its own domain. It is true that the transition to the calculated manufacture of music as a mass-produced article took longer than did the analogous process in literature or in the plastic arts. Its aconceptual and nonrepresentational aspect, which has since Arthur Schopenhauer recommended it to irrationalistic philosophy, made it refractory to the *ratio* of salability. It was only in the era of the sound film, of radio and publicity set to music, that, precisely on account of its irrationality, it was entirely seized by society's commercial rationality. However, once industrial management of all cultural goods was established as a totality, it also won control over the aesthetically nonconforming. In late industrialism, the superiority of mechanisms of distribution—which stand at the disposal of kitsch and bargain-basement cultural goods—together with the socially manufactured predisposition of the listener, brought radical music into complete isolation. For those composers who want to survive, this isolation becomes a moralistically invoked social pretext for a false peace. This characterizes a musical type who, with undaunted pretensions to modernity and seriousness, conforms with calculated idiocy to mass culture. Hindemith's generation still brought talent and skill to its efforts. Its moderation was evidenced above all in its entirely unprincipled intellectual compliancy, in compositions made to suit whatever the occasion, and finally in the liquidation of its contemptible program along with everything else musically discomforting. They came to their end in a respectably routinized neo-academic style. This reproach cannot be lodged against the following, third generation. The collusion with the listener, disguised as humanity, begins to disintegrate the technical standards that progressive composition achieved. What held good prior to the breach, the constitution of a musical nexus by tonal means, is irretrievably lost. The third generation does not believe in the solicitous triads that they write with a sly wink, nor are the threadbare means at their

disposal themselves adequate for any music other than a vacuous one. These composers prefer to evade the rigor of the new compositional language that in the marketplace rewards the greatest efforts of artistic conscientiousness with utter failure. Yet their effort to escape misfires; the violence of history, its "withering fury,"[5] prohibits aesthetic compromise just as political compromise is no longer an alternative. While these composers seek refuge in the tried-and-true and claim to be weary of what the argot of incomprehension calls "experimentation," they unconsciously deliver themselves up to what they most dread: anarchy. The quest for an age past not only fails to indicate the way home but forfeits all consistency; the arbitrary conservation of the obsolete compromises what it wants to conserve, and with a bad conscience it obdurately opposes whatever is new. Across every frontier, the epigones—themselves sworn enemies of the epigonous—resemble each other in their weak concoctions of adeptness and helplessness. Dmitry Shostakovich—unjustly reprimanded as a cultural Bolshevik by the public authorities of his homeland—the lively pupils of Stravinsky's pedagogical ambassadors, the pretentious meagerness of Benjamin Britten: All of these have in common a taste for bad taste, a simplicity founded in ignorance, immaturity that fancies itself clear minded, and a lack of technical capacity. In Germany, the *Reichsmusikkammer*[6] has left behind a rubbish heap. The universal style, after World War II, is the eclecticism of the shattered.

False Musical Consciousness. Stravinsky also stands at an extreme in the new-music movement insofar as the capitulation of this movement is registered in what befell Stravinsky's music because of its own weight and momentum, work by work. Today, however, an aspect of this capitulation has become evident, an aspect for which Stravinsky cannot be held directly responsible and that is only latently indicated in the transformations of his compositional procedure: the collapse of all those criteria for distinguishing good from bad music that were initially sedimented in the early bourgeois period. For the first time, dilettantes are launched from all corners with the claim to being great composers. The largely centralized economic life exacts their recognition by the public. Twenty years ago Edward Elgar's trumped-up fame seemed to be a local phenomenon, and Jean Sibelius's fame an exceptional instance of critical ignorance. Today phenomena of such *niveau,* even if they are

also sometimes more liberal in the use of dissonance, have become the norm. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, great music has broken away from social functionality of any kind. The logic of its development now stands in conflict with the manipulated and simultaneously self-content needs of the bourgeois public. The numerically small group of connoisseurs was displaced by all those who could afford the price of a ticket and wanted to prove to others they were cultured. Public taste and the quality of works diverged. Quality prevailed only through the composer's strategy—which was itself injurious to the works themselves—or through the enthusiasm of competent musicians and critics. Radical modern music could no longer depend on the latter. Although it is possible to judge the quality of each and every avant-garde work in the same boundaries and as conclusively as for a traditional work—and perhaps even more conclusively, because the dominant language of music no longer relieves the composer of the burden of correctness—the putatively competent mediator has lost the capacity to judge. Ever since the compositional process has come to be measured uniquely on the structure proper to each work and not on generally and tacitly accepted exigencies, it has no longer been possible to "learn" once and for all what is good music and what is bad. Whoever wants to judge must look the unique questions and antagonisms of the individual work straight in the eye without having any general theory of music or any music history to instruct him. Scarcely anyone is capable of this; the exception is the avant-garde composer, to whom, however, discursive thought is usually adverse. The composer can no longer count on there being a mediator between himself and the public. The critics live literally according to the "high discernment" of Gustav Mahler's song:[7] They judge according to what they do and do not understand; the musicians, however, and especially the directors, consistently allow themselves to be guided by the most palpably striking and understandable elements of the work they have to perform. In all this, the opinion that Beethoven is comprehensible and Schoenberg incomprehensible is an objective illusion. Whereas in new music the surface alienates a public that is cut off from the production, its most distinctive phenomena arise from just those social and anthropological conditions that are those of its listeners. The dissonances that frighten them speak of their own situation; for this reason only are those dissonances intolerable to them. Inversely, the content of what is all too familiar is so far removed from what hangs

over people's heads today that their own experience scarcely communicates any longer with that to which traditional music bears witness. When they think they comprehend the music, they only perceive an inert, empty husk of what they treasure as a possession and what was already lost in the moment in which it became a possession: an indifferent showpiece, neutralized and robbed of its own critical substance. In fact, all that the public grasps of traditional music is its crudest aspects: easily remembered themes; ominously beautiful passages, moods, and associations. For the listener trained to the sound of radio, the musical nexus that establishes meaning is no less hidden in an early Beethoven sonata than in a Schoenberg quartet, which at least reminds the listener that he is not in heaven, brought to graze on sweet tones. This is in no way to assert that a work is only to be understood spontaneously in its own age and is otherwise surrendered to depravation or historicism. But the general social tendency—which has scorched from man's consciousness and unconsciousness the humanity that once underlay the now-available musical resources—today only tolerates the arbitrary reiteration of the idea of humanity in the vacuous ceremonial of the concert hall, while the philosophical legacy of great music has devolved exclusively upon what scorns that heritage. The music industry, however, which debases music that is available from the past by extolling and galvanizing its sanctity, merely confirms the given consciousness of the listeners. For them, the harmony that Viennese classicism won, at a heavy price of renunciation, and the eruptive longing of romanticism have become objects of consumption for home decoration. Adequately listening to the same Beethoven works that the fellow in the subway contentedly whistles in fact requires far greater effort than does adequately listening to the most avant-garde music, for in the former it is first necessary to rid it of the lacquered finish of false performance and long-ingrained listening patterns. However, since the culture industry has trained its victims to avoid all effort in the leisure hours allotted them for cultural consumption, they cling all the more obstinately to the appearances that conceal the essence. This attitude is well accommodated today by the prevailing brilliantly polished style of performance even in chamber music. Not only are people's ears so inundated with light music that other music reaches them only as the congealed opposite of the former, as "classical" music, and not only is the capacity to listen so blunted by the omnipresent hit tune that the concentration for serious listening is

unattainable and infused with stupid refrains, but also the sacrosanct traditional music has itself been assimilated to commercial mass production in the character of its performance and as it functions in the life of the listener. The substance of the music has not been left untouched by this. Music participates in what Clement Greenberg called the division of all art into kitsch and avant-garde, and kitsch—the dictatorship of profit over art—has long since subjugated the particular, socially reserved sphere of art.[8] This is why reflections on the development of truth in aesthetic objectivity must be confined uniquely to the avant-garde, which is excluded from official culture. Today a philosophy of music is possible only as a philosophy of new music. What sustains is only what denounces official culture; the latter alone serves the promotion of that barbarism over which it waxes indignant. The cultured listeners almost seem to be the worst: those who promptly respond to Schoenberg's music with "I don't understand that"—a statement whose modesty rationalizes rage as connoisseurship.

"Intellectualism." Among the reproaches that they obstinately repeat, the most prevalent is the charge of intellectualism, the claim that new music springs from the head, not from the heart or the ear; or likewise, that the music is not sonorously imagined but only worked out on paper. The poverty of these clichés is manifest. They are put forward as if the tonal idiom of the past 350 years were itself given by nature and as if it were an attack on nature to go beyond what has been habitually ground in, whereas, on the contrary, what has been ground in bears witness to social pressure. The second nature of the tonal system is an illusion originating in history. It owes its dignity to the closed and exclusive system of a society that is based on exchange, whose own dynamic tends toward totality, and with whose fungibility all the tonal elements stand in profound agreement. The new musical means, however, have arisen out of the immanent movement of the old tonal order, from which they are separated by a qualitative leap. To claim, then, that important new music is more intellectual and less feelingly imagined than traditional music is merely a projection of incomprehension. Where called for, as in the chamber ensemble *Pierrot Lunaire* or in the orchestration of *Lulu,* Schoenberg and Alban Berg surpassed the richly timbered melodiousness of any impressionist revelry. And further, that which musical anti-intellectualism—

the complement of the commercial *ratio*—calls feeling amounts more often than not to self-surrender to the stream of the sonorous flow of sequences. It is absurd that the work of the ever-popular Tchaikovsky, who even portrays despair with hit-tune melodies, is then said to express more emotion than the seismograph of Schoenberg's *Erwartung*.[9] On the other hand, the objective rigor of musical thought itself, which alone confers on great music its dignity, has always demanded alert control by the subjective compositional consciousness. The development of the logic of this rigor at the cost of the passive perception of the sensual sound defines the rank of the composition by its contrast to culinary pleasure. As far as new music in its pure shaping reflects again on the logic of this rigor, it stands in the tradition of the art of the fugue,[10] the tradition of Beethoven and Brahms. If one must speak of intellectualism, it should be to indict that moderate modernism that busies itself with testing the right blend of excitement and banality rather than to accuse the composer who obeys the integral law of the musical construction from the first note right into the design of the form, even if and above all when he consequently hinders the automatic grasp of the individual elements. Yet, still, the reproach of intellectualism is so tenacious that it is more useful to incorporate into our overall understanding the facts on which the reproach is based rather than to contentedly counter dumb arguments with more intelligent ones. Hidden among the conceptually most dubious and inarticulate impulses of everyday consciousness—alongside the lie—is the trace of the negativity of the thing itself with which the determination of the object cannot dispense. Art as a whole, and music in particular, show themselves to have been seized precisely by the process of enlightenment in which art as such participates and with which its own progress coincides. Hegel demands of the artist "the free development of the spirit; in that development all superstition, and all faith which remains restricted to determinate forms of vision and presentation, is degraded into mere aspects and features. These the free spirit has mastered because he sees in them no absolutely sacrosanct conditions."[11] Thus, the indignation over the alleged intellectualism of a mind that is liberated from the self-evident premises of its object, as well as from the absolute truth of the traditional forms, amounts to charging this mind with what occurs objectively and necessarily, as if this were its misfortune or its guilt. "This, however, we must not regard as a mere accidental misfortune suffered by art from without owing to the distress of the

times, the sense for the prosaic, lack of interest, etc.; on the contrary, it is the effect and the progress of art itself which, by bringing before our vision as an object its own indwelling material, at every step along this road makes its own contribution to freeing art from the content represented."[12] The advice that artists would do better not to think too much—whereas precisely this freedom irrevocably commits them to thought—amounts to nothing more than melancholy over the loss of naïveté adapted and exploited by mass culture. In the present age the primordial romantic motif appears in the recommendation to avoid thought and thus submit to precisely those traditionally given themes and categories of form that are outmoded. What is truly being lamented is not a degree of decadence that could be healed through some kind of organization—that is, rationally—but rather the shadow of progress. Its negative element rules so conspicuously over its current phase that an appeal is made to art to oppose it even though art itself stands under the same sign. The fury felt toward the avant-garde is so disproportionate, goes so far beyond its role in late industrial society—and certainly beyond its role in society's cultural ostentations—because a cowed and intimidated consciousness finds in art that the door through which consciousness hoped to flee total enlightenment is bolted; a fury felt because art today, to the extent to which it has any substantiality, intransigently reflects and forces on the mind all that it would like to forget. This relevance is the source from which the irrelevance of advanced art is constructed, an art that would rather give nothing more to society. The compact and unified majority turns to its own purposes what Hegel's daunting sobriety comprehended in the sound of the historical tolling of the hour: "What through art or thinking we have before our physical or spiritual eye as an object has lost all absolute interest for us if it has been put before us so completely that the content is exhausted, that everything is revealed, and nothing obscure or inward is left over any more. For interest is to be found only in the case of lively activity [of mind]."[13] It was exactly this absolute interest that art in the nineteenth century requisitioned after the absolute claim of the philosophical systems had trailed along after the pretensions of religion into Hades: Wagner's vision of Bayreuth is the extreme witness to such hubris born of need. Among its key representatives, modern art has freed itself of this hubris without, however, renouncing that darkness whose lingering was so feared by Hegel, who was in this regard genuinely bourgeois. For the

darkness—ever and again subjugated in renewed attacks by progress—has to this day always been reproduced in a new form by virtue of the pressure that the dominating spirit exercises on human and extrahuman nature. The darkness is not the pure being-in-and-for-itself that it appears as in passages such as those of Hegel's *Aesthetics*. On the contrary, it is necessary to apply to art the doctrine of *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, according to which all immediacy is already mediated in itself; or, in other words, the idea that all immediacy is produced in the first place by domination. If art has lost the immediate certitude of itself in undisputed subject matter and forms, there has accrued to art in a "consciousness of distress," in the boundless suffering that crashes over mankind and in the traces that this suffering has left behind in the subject itself, a darkness that by no means interrupts an achieved enlightenment intermittently but, on the contrary, completely overshadows enlightenment's most recent phase and through its real force almost bars its portrayal in the image. The more the all-powerful culture industry seizes for its own purposes the principle of illumination and corrupts it in the treatment of men for the benefit of a perduring darkness, all the more does art rise against this false luminosity; it opposes configurations of that repressed darkness to the omnipotent neon-light style and helps illuminate only by convicting the brightness of the world of its own darkness.[14] Only for a pacified humanity would art come to an end: Its death, which now threatens, would be exclusively the triumph of bare existence over the consciousness that has the audacity to resist it.

Radical Music Not Immune. Yet this menace weighs on the few intransigent works of art that are still actually produced. By realizing total enlightenment in themselves, regardless of the cunning naïveté of the culture industry, these works not only become offensive for the sake of their truth, as antitheses to the total control aimed at by the industry, but they also simultaneously make themselves like the internal structure of what they oppose and enter into opposition with their own intentions. The loss of "absolute interest" pertains not only to their external fate in society, which can, after all, spare itself attending to the revolt and with a shrug of the shoulders let itself vegetate on its own as a folly. Indeed, this music shares the fate of political sects that, even if they purport theory in its most advanced form, are forced, by the disproportion

between themselves and these perduring powers, into untruth and service to the powers that be. Even after the achievement of complete autonomy and the rejection of entertainment, the being-in-itself of the work is not indifferent to its reception. Its social isolation, which it is not in art's purview to surmount on its own, becomes a mortal danger to its own success. As a consequence of his rejection of Kant's aesthetics, and perhaps precisely by virtue of his distance from absolute music—whose most important products have always remained esoteric—Hegel cautiously expressed what indeed concerns the life and death of art. The heart of his argument, not altogether free of a certain lack of aesthetic sensibility, indicates a decisive element in music's self-abandonment to its pure immanence, to which it was driven by its own law of development and the loss of its social resonance. In the section on the "System of Individual Arts" of the *Aesthetics* that treats of music, Hegel writes that the composer can "be unconcerned with any such content and make the principal thing the purely musical structure of his work and the ingenuity of such architecture. But in that case the musical production may easily become something utterly devoid of thought and feeling, something needing for its apprehension no previous profound cultivation of mind or heart. On account of this lack of material not only do we see the gift for composition developed at the most tender age but very talented composers frequently remain throughout their life the most ignorant and empty-headed of men. Music is therefore more profound when the composer gives the same attention even in instrumental music to both sides, to the expression of a content (true, a rather vague one) and to the musical structure, and in that case he is free to give the preference now to melody, now to the depth and difficulty of harmony, now to characterization, or to interweave all these elements."[15] What is true here requires the caveat that this censured lack "of thought and feeling" is not to be mastered voluntarily through tact and substantial abundance: In the course of history it has been intensified by virtue of the objective disintegration of the idea of expression to the point that music has been internally eroded. Hegel is right in spite of himself: The historical constraint goes far beyond what his *Aesthetics* supposes. In the present state of things, the artist is incomparably less free than Hegel could have imagined at the beginning of the liberal era. The dissolution of everything preestablished has not resulted in the possibility of disposing freely over all material and technique—that could only be fancied by a

feeble syncretism, and even magnificent conceptions such as that of Mahler's Eighth Symphony have foundered on the illusion of such a possibility; rather, the artist has become the mere executor of his own intentions, which confront him in the work as something foreign, and even as inexorable exigencies on which he labors.[16] The sort of freedom that Hegel attributed to the composer—which found its most extreme realization in Beethoven, whom Hegel completely ignored—necessarily pertains to a preexisting situation in whose context an abundance of possibilities lay open. By contrast, what exists merely from its own substance and for itself cannot be other than as it already is and bars the reconciling acts that Hegel pledged as the benefit of instrumental music. The elimination of everything predetermined, the effective reduction of music to the absolute monad, hardens the work and affects its inner content. As an autarchic domain, it concedes the legitimacy of a society organized through division into separate branches and affirms the rigid domination of partial interests that are recognizable behind the disinterested manifestation of the monad.

Antinomy of New Music. That music altogether, and especially polyphony—the indispensable medium of new music—arose out of the collective practices of dance and cult is not simply left behind as a mere "point of departure" through music's development toward freedom. Rather, the historical origin remains palpably implied long after music has broken from any collective practice. Polyphonic music says "we" even when it lives uniquely in the imagination of the composer without ever reaching another living person. But the ideal collectivity that music still carries in itself, though separated from the empirical collectivity, enters into conflict with music's inevitable social isolation and with the expressive character that is imposed on it by this isolation. The quality of "being heard by many" underlies music's objectivation, and when music's being heard is obstructed, the objectivation is necessarily degraded almost to something feigned, to the arrogance of the aesthetic subject who says "we" whereas it is still only an "I" and is indeed actually unable to say anything at all without also positing a "we." The incongruity of the idea of a solipsistic composition for a large orchestra not only appears in the disproportion between the numerical mass assembled onstage and the empty rows in front of which they play, but

it also bears witness to the fact that the form as such necessarily goes beyond the "I," the standpoint from which the form is essayed. Yet the music that simultaneously originates from this standpoint and portrays it is unable to positively go beyond this standpoint. This antinomy gnaws at the powers of new music, whose rigidity is the anxiety of the work vis-à-vis the despair of its untruth. Great absolute music today, that of Schoenberg's school, is certainly the opposite of that lack "of thought and feeling" that Hegel feared, with a sideways glance at the instrumental virtuosity that was first unleashed in his own epoch. But in return a kind of second-order vacuity is announced, not dissimilar to Hegel's "unhappy consciousness": "But this self has freed content by means of its emptiness."[17] The transformation of music's expressive elements into material, a process that according to Schoenberg has transpired unremittingly throughout music's entire history, has now become so radical that it puts in question the very possibility of expression. The rigor of its own logic causes the musical phenomena progressively to petrify, leaving behind in place of its meaning a factually existing entity that is opaque to itself. No music today could utter the cadence of *Dir werde Lohn.*[18] The idea of humanity, and with it the idea of a better world, has not just forfeited that power over men from which this Beethovian image lives. Rather, the stringency of the structure, through which music is exclusively able to assert itself against the ubiquity of commercial enterprise, has so hardened the music that it is no longer reached by that actual, external reality that once brought to music the content out of which absolute music truly became absolute. Efforts to win back this content for music through a coup de main, because the musical structure as such is sealed against them, almost always have recourse to the most external and most superficial subject matter. Only Schoenberg's late works, which fully construct types of expression and reorganize the rows into gestalts according to those types of expression, pose anew and in a substantial way the problem of the "content" without, however, claiming its organic unity with purely musical processes. Avant-garde music has no other alternative than to insist on its own rigidification without concession to that "human factor" that it sees through, whatever attraction its allure still casts, as a mask for inhumanity. The truth of this music appears to reside in the organized absence of any meaning, by which it repudiates any meaning of organized society—of which it wants to know nothing—rather than in being capable on its own of any

positive meaning. Under present conditions, music is constrained to determinate negation.

Loss of Differentiation. Music today, like all expressions of objective spirit, must pay the immemorial debt it incurred in the separation of spirit from *physis*, the separation of the labor of the mind from that of the hands: the guilt of privilege. Hegel's dialectic of master and slave ultimately encroaches on the overlord, the mind that dominates nature. The more this mind advances toward autonomy, the more it distances itself from a concrete relationship to all it dominates, men and materials alike. Once isolated within its own-most circumference—that of free artistic production—having entirely mastered the last heteronomous element, its subject matter, it finds itself trapped and begins to circle in on itself, detached from anything opposing it, from the penetration from which it exclusively receives its meaning. The consummation of freedom of mind coincides with the emasculation of mind. Its fetish character, its hypostatization as a mere form of reflection, becomes manifest when it is free of the last dependency on what is not itself mind but what, as the implicit content of all forms of mind, alone imparts to them their substantiality. Nonconforming music is not shielded from this loss of differentiation of mind, that of means without purpose. Indeed, music protects its social truth by virtue of its antithesis to society, by virtue of isolation, yet by the same measure this isolation lets music wither. It is as if its stimulus to production, indeed its raison d'être, had been withdrawn. For even the loneliest oration of the artist lives from the paradox that precisely by becoming isolated, by renouncing everyday communication, it speaks to all. Otherwise a paralyzing, destructive element enters the production, however courageous the disposition of the artist may be. Among the symptoms of this paralysis, the strangest may be that avant-garde music—which precisely through its autonomy thrusts from itself a broad democratic public that the autonomy of music had previously won for itself—has revived the institution of commissioning musical composition that belongs to the age prior to the bourgeois revolution and that essentially excludes the autonomy of music. The new practice dates back to Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, and what Stravinsky wrote for Sergey Diaghilev is related to it. Almost all daring works that are ever finished at all are commercially unsalable but, instead, are paid

for by patrons or institutions.[19] The conflict between commission and autonomy is manifest in reluctant, halting production. For today, much more than in the era of absolutism, patron and artist, who always had a precarious relation, are mutually estranged. The patron has no relation whatsoever to the work but commissions it as an exception, as an instance of that "cultural obligation" that itself proclaims the neutralization of culture; for the artist, however, the fixing of deadlines and specific occasions suffices to extinguish the spontaneity required by the emancipated capacity for expression. A preestablished historical harmony prevails between the material constraints of commissioned composition, due to the unsalability of the work, and a dwindling of inner tension. This dwindling of tension indeed makes the composer capable of fulfilling the heteronomous tasks with the technique of the autonomous work—a technique itself achieved with indescribable exertion—but at the price of deflecting the composer from autonomous work. The tension itself, however, that is resolved in the artwork is that between subject and object, between interior and exterior. But today, under the pressure of total economic organization, subject and object have been integrated in a false identity, and with the acquiescence of the masses to the apparatus of domination, this tension between subject and object has dissolved, and along with it the productive force of the composer and the inherent gravity of the work that once accrued easily to every composer, who is now no longer assisted by history's own dynamic. The fully achieved enlightenment has purified the work of the "idea," which appears merely as one ideological ingredient among the many musical facts, as the private worldview of the composer. The work, then, by virtue of its absolute spiritualization, becomes something that exists blindly, in stark conflict with the ineluctable determination of every artwork as spirit. What continues to exist simply by virtue of heroic effort could just as well no longer exist. There is validity in the suspicion, once expressed by Eduard Steuermann,[20] that the concept of great music—now passed to that of radical music—itself belongs to a moment in time, that humanity in the age of omnipresent radios and gramophones has actually forgotten the experience of music. Purified as an end in itself, music suffers from its purposelessness no less than commodity goods suffer from their narrow purposefulness. When the concern is not with socially useful labor but with the production of the best—where the aim of utility is defied and challenged—the social division of labor[21]

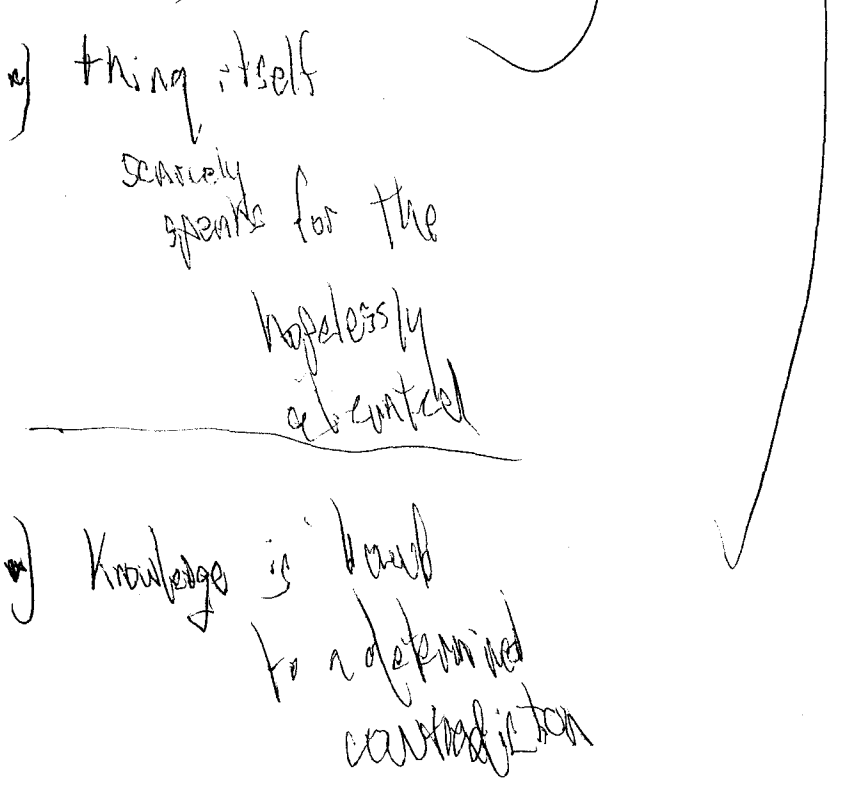
shows traces of a dubious irrationality. This irrationality is the immediate consequence of the separation not only from being heard but from all interior communication with the ideas or—one could almost say—from any communication with philosophy. Such irrationality becomes unmistakable the moment new music becomes engaged with mind, with philosophical and social subjects. For then not only does it show itself to be hopelessly disoriented, but it also ideologically repudiates the countervailing strivings that it carries within itself. The literary quality of Wagner's *Ring* was dubious as a crudely tacked-together allegory of Schopenhauer's thesis of the negation of the will to live. However, there is no doubt that the libretto of the *Ring*—whose music in its own age was indeed already considered esoteric—treats the central concerns of the impending bourgeois decadence; nor is there any doubt that it is the most fruitful relation between the musical gestalt and the nature of the ideas that objectively determine this gestalt. The musical substance of Schoenberg may well one day prove superior to Wagner's. But in comparison with Wagner's texts, which in both their success and failure take aim at the whole, Schoenberg's not only are arbitrarily private but also diverge stylistically from the music and, perhaps out of defiance, promulgate watchwords—such as, for example, the triumph of love over fashion—whose naïveté is negated by each and every musical phrase. Musical quality was never immune from the quality of the subject matter; works like Mozart's *Cosi fan tutte* and Carl Maria von Weber's *Euryanthe* also suffer musically from their libretti, which cannot be salvaged by any literary or scenic remedy. It is not to be expected that dramatic works in which the contradiction between the most extreme musical spiritualization and the crudity of the subject matter has accrued beyond measure, and thus and only thus to the point of reconciliation, would succeed better than *Cosi fan tutte*. Even the best contemporary music may vanish without—by such absolute refusal of spurious success—necessarily justifying itself completely.

On Method. It is tempting to deduce all this in social terms directly from the decline of the bourgeoisie, whose most characteristic artistic medium is music. But this procedure is compromised by the practice of misjudging and devaluating the detail through an all-too-rapid reference to the totality in which that detail inheres, a totality that

first defines and then in turn disintegrates the detail. This procedure is enmeshed with the inclination to take sides with the whole, the overarching tendency, and to condemn what does not fit in. Art thus becomes a mere exponent of society rather than ferment for its transformation. As such, art approves the development of precisely that bourgeois consciousness that depreciates all cultural works to a simple function, to something that exists only to serve something else, and ultimately to an article of consumption. While the deduction of the artwork from society, which its immanent logic repudiates, seeks to burst the fetishism of the work, the ideology of its being-in-itself, and to a certain extent actually succeeds in doing so, this deduction in return tacitly accepts the reification of all spirit in commodity culture by accepting the article of consumption as the measure of art's right to exist as if this measure were the critical measure of social truth altogether. Thus, unaware, this deduction labors on behalf of conformism and inverts the meaning of the theory that warns against applying it as if it were the genus to its species. In bourgeois society, now fully organized and driven to subsume everything as totality, the spiritual potential of another society is to be found only in what does not resemble it. The reduction of avant-garde music to its social origin and its social function scarcely goes beyond the hostile undifferentiating definition that it is a bourgeois and decadent luxury. That is the language of benausic administrative oppression. The more sovereign its taxonomy, the more helplessly it rebounds from their external surface. The dialectical method, and precisely the one turned from its head onto its feet, cannot consist of treating particular phenomena as illustrations or examples of something preexisting and exempt from the movement of the concept; thus the dialectic degenerates to a state religion. On the contrary, it is necessary to transform the strength of the universal concept into the self-unfolding of the concrete object and to resolve the social puzzle of its image by the powers of its own individuation. In this, the aim is to provide not social justification but a theory of society by virtue of the explication of what is aesthetically right and wrong at the heart of the objects. The concept must immerse itself in the monad to the point that the social essence emerges of its own dynamic, not classify it as a special case of the macrocosm, or—as Husserl would put it—dispose of it "from on high." A philosophical analysis of the extremes of new music that takes account of its historical situation as well as of its chemism distinguishes itself in terms of its

intention from sociological classification just as fundamentally as from an aesthetics arbitrarily imported from preordained philosophical doctrines. By no means the least of the obligations of an advanced dialectical method is that "we are not required to bring standards with us, nor to apply *our* fancies and thoughts in the inquiry; and just by our leaving these aside we are enabled to treat and discuss the subject as it actually is in itself and for itself, as it is in its complete reality."[22] At the same time, however, the method is also distinguished from those activities to which the object is traditionally reserved, "as it actually is in itself and for itself." This would be the undertakings of descriptive technical analysis, apologetic commentary, and critique. Technical analysis is at every point presupposed and often presented, but it requires in addition the interpretation of the most minute detail if it is to go beyond the characteristic cultural inventorying of the humanities and express the relation of the object to truth. Apologetics of new music, more salutary than ever in opposition to the culture industry, nevertheless come up short as admiration for the positive. Critique, finally, limits itself to the task of deciding the worth or worthlessness of works. Its findings enter philosophical treatment only sporadically, as a means by which theory traverses the negativity, the aesthetic failure of the work understood in its necessity. The idea of artworks and their nexus is to be philosophically constructed even if this sometimes goes beyond what the work has immediately achieved. In the examination of particular elements, the method reveals the reciprocal implications between technical procedures and works.[23] Thus, it seeks to determine the idea of both groups of musical phenomena respectively and to pursue them to the point that the rigor of the objects themselves reverses into their critique. The process is immanent: The internal consistency of a phenomenon—in a sense that is to be developed only in this phenomenon itself—becomes the guarantee of its truth and the ferment of its untruth. Contradiction, as the guiding category, itself has a double nature: The works themselves are successful to the extent that they shape the contradiction and in this shaping allow the contradiction to reappear in the marks of their own imperfection, while at the same time the force of the contradiction defies the forming process and destroys the works. An immanent method of this sort presupposes—as its admittedly omnipresent contrary—philosophical knowledge that transcends its object. It cannot depend, as could Hegel, on that "pure looking on" that promises the truth exclusively

because the conception of the identity of subject and object underlies the whole so that the observing consciousness is all the surer of itself the more completely it extinguishes itself in the object. At a historical hour, when the reconciliation of subject and object has been perverted to a satanic parody, to the liquidation of the subject in the objective order, the only philosophy that still serves reconciliation is one that scorns the illusion of reconciliation and asserts against universal self-alienation the reality of the hopelessly alienated for which the "thing-itself" scarcely speaks any longer. This is the far limit of its immanent method, which, indeed, can no more undergird itself dogmatically by a claim to positive transcendence than could Hegel's method in its own time. Like its object, knowledge remains bound to determinate contradiction.



SCHOENBERG AND PROGRESS

Pure insight, however, is in the first instance without any content; it is rather the sheer disappearance of content; but by its negative attitude toward what it excludes it will make itself real and give itself a content.

G. W. F. HEGEL, *Phenomenology of Mind*[1]

Jolting of the "Work." The transformations that music has undergone during the past thirty years have scarcely been recognized to their full extent. It is not a matter of the much-invoked crisis, a chaotic fermentation whose end could be anticipated and that would bring order after the disorder. The thought of a future renewal, whether in the form of great and consummate artworks or of the blessed accord of music and society, simply denies what has happened and can be suppressed but not undone. Under the constraint of its own objective logic, music critically canceled the idea of the consummate artwork and severed its tie with the public. Indeed, whether economic or cultural, neither crisis—whose concept already implies administrative reconstruction—has been able to put a stop to the official life of music. Even in music the monopoly of the efficient survives. However, when confronted with utterly unleashed sound that defies the net of organized culture, such culture is revealed as a fraud. Busyness itself explains the fact that the daily bustle suppresses anything else from emerging by laying the blame on a paucity of "achievement." Outsiders to the bustle are said to be pathfinders, trailblazers, and above all tragic figures; those who come after them will have it better; if they are ready to toe the line, they will gradually be admitted. Yet those on the outside are in no sense pathbreakers for

future "works." They challenge the concept of achievement and work. The apologist for truly radical music who would cite all that the Schoenberg school has already produced would have already disavowed what he means to defend. Today, the only works that count are those that are no longer works. This can be recognized in the relation between the school's recent results and the evidence of its early period. From the monodrama *Erwartung,* which unfolds the eternity of a single instant in four hundred measures; from the suddenly shifting images of *Die Glückliche Hand,* which wipe out a life even before it has been established in time—from these came Berg's great opera *Wozzeck.* Indeed, exactly that: a great opera. It resembles *Erwartung* in its detail as well as in its conception as a presentation of anxiety; it resembles *Die Glückliche Hand* in the insatiable piling-up of harmonic complexes, an allegory of the intricately layered psychological subject. But Berg would not have appreciated the idea that in *Wozzeck* he had fulfilled what had remained a mere possibility in Schoenberg's expressionist pieces. This tragedy set to music must pay the price for its broad amplitude and the contemplative wisdom of its architecture. The unmediated notations of Schoenberg the expressionist are mediated in such a fashion that they become new images of emotions. The sureness of the form proves to be a medium for the absorption of shock. The suffering of the helpless soldier caught in the machinery of injustice levels out into a style; it is embraced and reassured. The erupting anxiety is made presentable as a musical drama, and the music that reflects the anxiety finds its way, willingly resigned, back into the scheme of transfiguration.[2] *Wozzeck* is a masterpiece, a work of traditional art. That startled thirty-second-note motif, so reminiscent of *Erwartung,* becomes a leitmotif, repeatable and repeated. The more it is integrated directly into the course of the music, the more willingly it renounces being taken literally, the more it becomes sedimented as a bearer of expression and dulled by repetition. Little do those who prize *Wozzeck* as one of the first enduring results of new music know how much their praise compromises a piece that suffers from distillation. With experimental audacity and prior to any of the others, Berg assayed the new means in large temporal sections. The rich variety of musical characters is inexhaustible and is matched by the amplitude of the architectural disposition. A brave defeatism holds watch in the abstemious compassion of the sound. Nonetheless, *Wozzeck* revokes its own starting position precisely in those elements in which it developed it. The impulses

of the work, alive in its musical atoms, rebel against the work that they produce. They tolerate no result. Not only is the dream of permanent artistic possession disrupted from without by the threatening social situation; it is rejected by the historical tendency of the compositional means themselves. The comportment of new music makes problematic what many progressives expect from it: finished structures that can be gazed on now and forever in the museums of the opera and concert hall.

Tendency of the Material. The presumption that the musical means themselves have a historical tendency contradicts the traditional interpretation of the material of music. It is defined physicalistically—in any event, in terms of a psychology of sound—as the sum total of sounds at the disposal of the composer. From this, however, the compositional material is as different as is speech from the inventory of its sounds. Not only does it contract and expand in the course of history. All of its specific traits are marks of the historical process. The more they bear historical necessity in themselves, the less they are immediately legible as historical traits. In the moment when the historical expression of a chord can no longer be discerned, the chord demands that the sounds surrounding it do justice to its historical implications. These implications have become its nature. The meaning of musical means is not identical with their genesis, although it is not to be separated from this genesis. Music knows no natural law, and this fact accounts for the dubiousness of all psychology of music. In seeking to make the music of all ages invariably "understandable," the psychology of music presupposes an unchanging musical subject. This assumption is more closely related to that of the constancy of a natural material than the actual psychological differentiation would allow. What this differentiation inadequately and arbitrarily describes is to be sought in knowledge of the material's laws of movement. According to these laws, not everything is possible in every age. Indeed, an ontological law is on no account to be attributed to the tonal material in itself, or to what has been filtered through the system of temperament. However, this is precisely what occurs in arguments that want to conclude, for instance—whether on the basis of the physiology of the ear or the relation of overtones—that the triad is the necessary and universal condition for any possible musical understanding and therefore that all music must be committed to it.

This argumentation, which even Hindemith adopted, is nothing but a superstructure for reactionary compositional propensities. It is given the lie by the observation that the developed ear can grasp the most complicated overtone relations harmonically with just as much precision as it can the simpler relations. In this the ear senses no necessity to resolve the presumed dissonances; rather, it all the more rebels against these resolutions as a relapse into a more primitive manner of listening, much as in the era of the thoroughbass the progression by fifths was criticized as a kind of archaic regression. The exigencies of the material imposed on the subject arise, rather, from the fact that the "material" is itself sedimented spirit, preformed socially by human consciousness. This objective spirit of the material, as erstwhile and self-forgotten subjectivity, has its own laws of movement. Of the same origin as the social process and ever and again laced through by its traces, what seems to be strictly the motion of the material itself moves in the same direction as does real society even where neither knows anything of the other and where each combats the other. Therefore the composer's struggle with the material is a struggle with society precisely to the extent that society has migrated into the work, and as such it is not pitted against the production as something purely external and heteronomous, as against a consumer or an opponent. In immanent reciprocation, directives are constituted that the material imposes on the composer and that the composer transforms by adhering to them. It is understandable that in the early stages of a technique it is not possible to anticipate its later developments other than merely rhapsodically. The reverse is indeed also true. By no means do all tonal combinations ever employed stand indifferently at the disposal of the composer today. Even the duller ear perceives the shabbiness and tiredness of the diminished seventh chord or of certain chromatic passing notes in the salon music of the nineteenth century. For the technically experienced ear, vague discontent of this kind is transformed into a canon of prohibitions. If all is not deception, this canon now debars the means of tonality, which is to say, the whole of traditional music. Not only are these sounds obsolete and unfashionable. They are false. They no longer fulfill their function. The most advanced level of technical procedures prescribes tasks compared to which the traditional sounds prove to be powerless clichés. There are modern compositions that occasionally intersperse tonal sounds in their own nexus. In these instances it is the triads that are cacophonous, not the dissonances. As

proxy for the dissonances these triads may sometimes be justified. But it is not merely the stylistic impurity that is responsible for their falsity. Rather, today, the technical horizon against which the tonal sounds detestably obtrude encompasses the whole of music. When a contemporary composer, such as Jean Sibelius, makes do entirely with tonal resources, they sound just as false as do the tonal enclaves in atonal music. Admittedly, reservations are required here. What is decisive in the truth and falsity of chords is not their isolated occurrence. It is measurable exclusively by the total level of technique. The diminished seventh chord, which sounds false in salon music, is correct and filled with expression at the beginning of Beethoven's Sonata opus 111.[3] Not only is the chord not patched in here, not only does it emerge from the constructive layout of the phrase, but the *niveau* of Beethoven's technique as a whole, the tension between the most extreme dissonance that was possible for him and the consonance, the harmonic perspective assimilating all melodic events, the dynamic conception of tonality as a whole, all confer on this chord its specific weight. However, the historical process through which this chord has lost its weight is irreversible.[4] The defunct diminished seventh chord itself represents a state of technique that as a whole contradicts that of today. However much the truth or falsity of all musical detail depends on the total state of technique, this state is decipherable only in the particular constellations of compositional tasks. No chord is simply "in itself" false, because no chord exists in itself and because each chord bears in itself the whole, indeed the whole of history. Precisely for this reason, the ear's knowledge of what is right or wrong is in turn necessarily bound up with this one specific chord and not with abstract reflection on the *niveau* of the technique as a whole. But thus the image of the composer is at the same time transformed. He loses that grand-scale freedom that idealist aesthetics habitually attributes to the artist. He is no creator. Society and the era in which he lives constrain him not externally but in the rigorous demand for correctness made on him by the composition. The state of technique presents itself to him as a problem in every measure that he dares to think: In every measure technique as a whole demands of him that he do it justice and give the one right answer that technique in that moment permits. Compositions are nothing but such answers, nothing but the solution of technical puzzles, and the composer is the only one who knows how to decipher them and understand his own music. What he does is located in the infinitely

small. It is accomplished in the execution of what his music objectively demands from him. But for such obedience the composer requires all possible disobedience, all independence and spontaneity: The movement of the musical material is just that dialectical.

Schoenberg's Criticism of Semblance and Play. Today, however, this movement has turned against the closed work and everything that it implies. The sickness that has befallen the idea of the work may stem from a social condition that does not offer what would be binding and confirming enough to guarantee the harmony of the self-sufficient work. The prohibitive difficulties of the work, however, are revealed not in reflection on them but in the dark interior of the work itself. If one thinks of the most conspicuous symptom, the contraction of temporal extension—and time only constitutes works insofar as it is extensive—it is least of all individual powerlessness, an incapacity for formal construction, that is to be held responsible. No works could demonstrate greater density and consistency in their formal structure than do Schoenberg's and Anton von Webern's briefest movements. Their brevity originates precisely from the need for the highest level of consistency. This prohibits the superfluous and turns against that temporal extension that has been the basis of the conception of the musical work since the eighteenth century, certainly since Beethoven. A single blow strikes the work, time, and semblance. The critique of the temporally extensive schema is bound up with that of the content: phrase and ideology. Music, contracted to a moment, is true as an eruption of negative experience. It touches on real suffering.[5] In this spirit, new music demolishes the ornament and, with it, symmetrical-extensive works. Among the arguments that would consign the incommodious Schoenberg to the past of romanticism and individualism—in order to be able to serve with a better conscience the enterprise of older and newer collectives—the most disseminated brands him an "*espressivo* musician" and his music an "exaggeration" of a lapsed principle of expression. There is no need to deny his origin in Wagnerian *espressivo* or to overlook the traditional *espressivo* elements of his earlier works. They always proved themselves a match for that barren vacuousness. Yet since the breach, at least since the Six Little Piano Pieces, opus 19, and the songs based on Stefan George's

Book of the Hanging Garden, opus 15, if not right from the start, the *espressivo* Schoenberg is qualitatively different from romanticism precisely through the "exaggeration" that thinks this *espressivo* through to its conclusion. Since the beginning of the seventeenth century, Western expressive music became expression conferred by the composer on his works—and not only on dramatic works, as would a dramatist—without the expressed emotions claiming to be immediately present and actual in the work. From Claudio Monteverdi to Giuseppe Verdi, dramatic music—as the true *musica ficta*—presented expression as stylized and mediated, as a semblance of the passions. Whenever music exceeded this and laid claim to a substantiality beyond the semblance of expressed feelings, this claim had nothing to do with individual musical impulses that were supposed to reflect those of the soul. This claim was authenticated only by the totality of the form, which ruled over the musical characters and their nexus. In Schoenberg this is altogether different. The genuinely revolutionary element in his music is the transformation of the function of expression. Passions are no longer faked; on the contrary, undisguised, corporeal impulses of the unconscious, shocks, and traumas are registered in the medium of music. They attack the taboos of the form because these taboos submit the impulses to their censorship, rationalize them, and transpose them into images. Schoenberg's formal innovations were closely related to the change in the emotional content. They serve the breakthrough of its reality. The first atonal works are depositions, in the sense of psychoanalytic dream depositions.[6] In the earliest book published on Schoenberg, Wassily Kandinsky called the composer's paintings "studies of the mind laid bare."[7] The scars of this revolution in expression, however, are the disfiguring stains that have become as deeply fixed in the paintings as in the music—in opposition to the compositional will—as emissaries of the id, distressing the surface and as little to be wiped away by subsequent correction as are the traces of blood in fairy tale.[8] Real suffering has left them behind in the artwork as a sign that it no longer recognizes its autonomy; their heteronomy defies the self-sufficient semblance of the music. In all traditional music this semblance of self-sufficiency, however, consists in formulaic, sedimented elements being employed as if by the inescapable necessity of the particular musical instance; or it consists in this particular instance's appearing as if it were identical with the preestablished

language of form. Since the beginning of the bourgeois era, all great music has been satisfied with feigning this unity, as if it were seamlessly achieved and as if the conventional lawfulness to which it is subsumed were to be justified by the music's own individuation. New music resists this. The critiques of ornament, of convention, and of the abstract universality of musical language are inseparable. If of all the arts, music is privileged by the absence of semblance since it makes no image, in fact it has to the best of its ability participated in the semblance characteristic of bourgeois artwork through tireless conciliation of its own specific task and the domination of convention. In this, Schoenberg broke ranks precisely by taking expression itself seriously and by refusing its subsumption to the conciliating universal, which is the innermost principle of musical semblance. His music repudiates the claim that the universal and the particular are reconciled. However much this music owes its origin to an effectively vegetal urge, however much its irregularities in fact resemble organic forms, it is never and nowhere totality. Even Nietzsche, in an aside, said of the essence of a great artwork that it must be able in each of its elements also to be other than it is. This definition of the artwork on the basis of its freedom presupposes that conventions are validly binding. Only where conventions guarantee the totality beyond any question or doubt could everything just as well be different, and precisely because in that case nothing would be different. Most of Mozart's movements would have offered the composer ample alternatives without suffering any loss. Logically, Nietzsche affirmed aesthetic conventions, and his *ultima ratio*[9] was ironic play with forms whose substantiality had vanished. What refused such play was to him suspect as plebeian and protestant: Much of his polemic against Wagner was shaped by this perception. But only with Schoenberg did music accept Nietzsche's challenge.[10] Schoenberg's compositions are the first in which nothing can actually be different from what it is: They are at once deposition and construction. In them there is no remainder of convention, which guarantees the freedom of play. Schoenberg's stance is as polemical toward play as toward semblance. He turns as sharply against the musicasters[11] of the Neue Sachlichkeit[12] and its like-minded collective as against the romantic ornament. In epigrammatic formulation of both he has written: "Music should not decorate, it should be true," and "art originates not in 'can,' but in 'must.'"[13] With the negation of semblance and play, music tends toward knowledge.

Dialectic of Loneliness. This knowledge, however, is founded on the expressive content of music itself. What radical music knows is the untransfigured suffering of men whose powerlessness has so increased that it no longer permits semblance and play. The instinctual conflicts—about whose sexual genesis Schoenberg's music leaves no doubt—have acquired a force in depositional music that prohibits it from mollifying them comfortingly. In the expression of anxiety as "forebodings," the music of Schoenberg's expressionist phase bears witness to this powerlessness. The monodrama *Erwartung* has as its heroine a woman who, at night and at the mercy of all night's terrors, searches for her lover, only to find him murdered. She is consigned to the music as an analytical patient to the couch. The avowal of hatred and desire, of jealousy and forgiveness and beyond that is the whole symbolism of the unconscious, is wrung from her; and only in the moment of her insanity does the music recall its right to console. Yet the seismographic record of traumatic shock at the same time becomes the technical law of music's form. It forbids continuity and development. The musical language is polarized into its extremes: on the one hand, into gestures of shock—almost bodily convulsions—and on the other, into the brittle immobility of a person paralyzed by anxiety. The entire world of the mature Schoenberg's form, as well as that of Webern, derives from this polarization. The musical "mediation," which their school had previously intensified to an undreamt-of degree, is destroyed by this polarization, and its destruction has taken with it the distinction of theme and development, the steadiness of the harmonic flow, and the unbroken melodic line as well. Without exception, every one of Schoenberg's technical innovations can be followed back to this polarization of expression and preserves its trace beyond the enchanted circle of expression. In this fact, it might be possible to gain insight into the entwining of form and content in all music. It is above all foolish to proscribe far-reaching technical articulation as formalistic. All forms of music, not just those of expressionism, are sedimented contents. In them survives what is otherwise forgotten and is no longer capable of speaking directly. What once sought refuge in form subsists anonymously in form's persistence. The forms of art register the history of humanity with more justice than do historical documents. There is no hardening of form that is not to be read as the negation of the hardness of life. That the anxiety of the lonely becomes a canon of the aesthetic language of form betrays something of

the secret of loneliness. The protest against the individualism of modern art is so petty just because it fails to recognize its social nature. "Lonely speech" says more of society's own tendency than does communicative discourse. Schoenberg hit upon the social character of loneliness by cleaving to it unconditionally. *Die Glückliche Hand*—the "drama with music"—is musically perhaps the most important of his achievements: Just because it was never completed in the form of a whole symphony, it all the more integrally fulfills the dream of what is whole. The text, however inadequate an expedient, is even so not to be torn from the music; its crude truncations are what dictate the music's compressed form and, with that, the force it bears and its density.

Thus it is precisely the critique of this crudeness of the text that leads to the historical center of expressionist music. The protagonist is the Strindbergian solitary, who in his erotic life experiences the same failures as in his work. Schoenberg scorns any "sociopsychological" explanation of the man as a product of industrial society. But he has noted how individuals and industrial society stand in a relation of perennial conflict and communicate through anxiety. The third scene of the drama takes place in a workshop. One sees "several workers at their jobs in realistic dress. One is filing, another sits at the machine, a third is hammering."[14] The hero enters the workshop. At the words "That can be done more simply"—the symbolic critique of the superfluous—he transforms, with one magic blow, a piece of gold into a piece of jewelry for whose manufacture the realistic workers would have been obliged to carry out complicated processes based on the division of labor. "Before he raises his hammer to strike, the workers jump up, preparing to attack him. In the meantime he observes his raised left hand, without noticing the threat. . . . As the hammer falls, the faces of the workers freeze in astonishment: The anvil splits in the middle and the gold falls into the resulting crevice. The man bends over and picks it up with his left hand. Slowly he raises it up. It is a diadem, richly decorated with precious jewels." The man sings "simply, without emotion": "That's how jewelry is made." "The faces of the workers become threatening, then contemptuous. They start talking with each other and seem to be planning a new attack on the man. With a laugh the man throws them the jewelry. They are about to attack him. He has turned away and does not see them." At that the scene changes. The objective naïveté of these events is none other than that of the man who "does not see" the workers. He is alienated

from the actual process of production in society and can no longer recognize the relationship between labor and economy. To him the phenomenon of labor appears absolute. That the workers act realistically in a stylized drama corresponds to the anxiety felt vis-à-vis production by those separated from it. It is the anxiety of being compelled to awaken, which throughout dominated the expressionist conflict between the staged dream world and reality. Because it is beneath the dream-captivated hero to see the workers, he thinks the threat comes from them and not from that whole social order that has torn him and the workers apart. The chaotic anarchy in the labor relations among the men, caused by the system, is expressed by the displacement of guilt onto the victim. Yet the workers' threat is in truth not their willful misdeed but their answer to a universal injustice that with each new invention threatens their existence. The delusive web that will not let the subject "see" is, however, itself of an objective kind: class ideology. To this extent the chaotic aspect of *Die Glückliche Hand,* which leaves the unilluminated unilluminated, preserves that intellectual probity that Schoenberg defends against semblance and play. But the reality of chaos is not the whole of reality. In it the law's form is determined according to which exchange society is reproduced above the heads of men. Inherent to this law is the constantly growing power of those who dispose over the rest. For the victims of the law of value and economic concentration, the world is indeed chaotic. But it is not chaotic "in itself." It is taken for such only by the individual oppressed by the world's inexorable principle. The powers that for him make his world chaotic, ultimately take in hand the reorganization of the chaos, because it is their world. The chaos is the function of the cosmos, *le désordre avant l'ordre.*[15] Chaos and system are of a piece, in society as in philosophy. The world of values conceived in the midst of expressionist chaos bears the lineaments of the new domination as it closes in. The man in *Die Glückliche Hand* sees his beloved as little as he sees the workers. He exalts in self-pity as a secret kingdom of the spirit. He is a *Führer.* His power is at work in the music, his feebleness in the text. The critique of reification, which he represents, is reactionary, as was Wagner's. It is turned not against the social relations of production but against the division of labor. Schoenberg's own praxis suffers from this confusion. It is burdened by the poetic efforts with which he complements the highest measure of specialized skill in music. Here again a Wagnerian tendency is reversed. What in the *Gesamtkunstwerk*

still cohered through the rational organization of artistic processes of production and had a progressive aspect in Schoenberg breaks disparately asunder. He remains true to the existing order as a competitor. "That can be done more simply" than the others do it. Schoenberg's protagonist has "a rope around his waist as a belt upon which two Turksheads hang," and he holds "an unsheathed bloody sword in his hand." However poorly he fares in the world, he is even so the man of power. The mythical beast of anxiety, its teeth dug in his neck, bends him to obedience. A powerless man resigns himself to his powerlessness and does to others the injustice done to him. Nothing could touch more exactly upon his historical ambiguity than the stage direction stipulating that the setting "present a compromise between a mechanic's shop and a goldsmith's studio." The hero, a prophet of the Neue Sachlichkeit, is, like an artisan, to rescue the magic of the old mode of production. His straightforward gesture against the superfluous serves equally to produce a diadem. Siegfried, his exemplar, did at least forge his own sword. "Music should not decorate, it should be true."[16] But the artwork only has art as its object. It cannot escape the delusive web to which it belongs socially. In its blindness, the radically alienated, absolute artwork tautologically refers exclusively to itself. Its symbolic center is art. Thus it is hollowed out. Already at the height of expressionism, this center is taken possession of by the emptiness that will be manifest in the Neue Sachlichkeit. What expressionism anticipates of Neue Sachlichkeit, it shares with the *Jugendstil* and domestic aesthetics[17] that preceded it. To them, *Die Glückliche Hand* is indebted in elements such as its color symbolism. The reversion to semblance becomes so easy for the expressionist protest because the movement originated in semblance, that of individuality itself. Expressionism remains, in spite of itself, what art openly professed in the years around 1900: loneliness as style.

Loneliness as Style. Toward the end, at one of its most daring moments, *Erwartung* contains a musical quotation that accompanies the words "thousands of people march past."[18] Schoenberg borrowed the phrase from an earlier tonal song whose theme and counterpoint are embedded with the greatest artistry in the freely moving vocal texture without breaching the atonality. The song, "Am Wegrand," is one of the Acht Lieder (Eight Songs), opus 6, all of which are based on *Jugendstil*

poetry. The words are by Max Stirner's biographer, John Henry Mackay.[19] They define the intersection of *Jugendstil* and expressionism, just as the music—in spite of its Brahmsian pianism—convulses tonality by the autonomous chromatic auxiliary tones and contrapuntal collisions. The poem reads:

> Thousands of people march past,
> The one for whom I long, He is not among them!
> Restless glances fly past
> And ask the one in haste,
> Whether it is he . . .
> But they ask and ask in vain.
> No one answers:
> "Here I am. Be still."
> Longing fills the realms of life,
> Left empty by fulfillment,
> And so I stand at the edge of the road,
> While the crowd flows past,
> Until—blinded by the burning sun—
> My tired eyes close.

Here, then, is the formula of loneliness as a style: It is a collective loneliness, that of city dwellers who know nothing of one another. The gesture of the lonely individual finds common measure. Thus it can be quoted, for the expressionist exposes loneliness as universal.[20] He quotes even where nothing is literally quoted: The passage "Beloved, beloved, morning is coming"[21] does not deny the "Hark, beloved" of the second act of *Tristan.* Just as it does in research, the quotation presents authority. The anxiety of the lonely man, who quotes, seeks to gain a footing with the established powers. In expressionist depositions, anxiety has been emancipated from the bourgeois taboo on expression. And once emancipated, nothing prevents it from devoting itself to the stronger party. The position of the absolute monad in art is both resistance to spurious socialization and a willingness to endure even worse.

Expressionism as Objectivity [*Sachlichkeit*]. The reversal must occur. It arises precisely from the fact that the content of expressionism, the absolute subject, is not absolute. In the subject's isolation, society appears. Of this, the last of Schoenberg's Six Pieces for Male Chorus,

opus 35, renders a brief account: "Deny that you also belong to this!—that you do not remain alone." Such a "solidarity," however, reveals that pure expressions, in their isolation, liberate elements of intrasubjectivity and thus elements of aesthetic objectivity. That expressionist rigor, which challenges the traditional category of the work, makes new demands for the exactitude of being-thus-and-not-being-able-to-be-otherwise, and thus of organization. While expression polarizes the musical nexus into its extremes, the succession of extremes reconstitutes a nexus. As a law of form, contrast is no less binding than the technique of transition in traditional music. The later twelve-tone technique could well be defined as a system of contrasts, as the integration of the disparate. As long as art holds its distance from immediate life, it is unable to spring beyond the shadow of its own autonomy and immanence of form. Expressionism, hostile to the "work" as such, is, in spite of this hostility, able to spring beyond itself even less, exactly because in its rejection of communication it insists upon an autonomy that can only be made good by the consistency of "works of art." It is this ineluctable contradiction that prohibits persevering at the expressionist summit. While the aesthetic object is to be determined deictically, purely as that-thing-there, it goes beyond the pure this-thing-here precisely by virtue of this negative determination, by refusing anything that would encroach on it or to which it is submitted as if to its law. The absolute liberation of the particular from any universality makes it a universal through the polemical and fundamental relation to universality. By virtue of its being cast as what it is, the determinate is more than the mere singularity as which it has been cast. Even the gestures of shock in *Erwartung* become formulaic as soon as they are even once repeated, and thus they invoke the form that surrounds them: The last song is indeed a finale. If the compulsion toward binding construction is called objectivity [*Sachlichkeit*], objectivity [*Sachlichkeit*] is no simple countermovement to expressionism. It is expressionism in its otherness. Expressionist music extracted the principle of expression from traditional romanticism so faithfully that expression acquired a depositional character. And thus expression reversed into its opposite. Music as depositional expression is no longer "expressive." No longer does the expressed hover above the composition, indeterminately remote, bestowing the reflected splendor of the infinite. Once music has precisely and unequivocally fixated the expressed, its subjective content petrifies under its gaze into precisely that factuality

whose existence disavows its character of being purely expressive. In the depositional attitude toward its object, music itself becomes "objective" [*sachlich*]. With its eruptions, the dream of subjectivity explodes, just as do the conventions. The depositional chords shatter the semblance of subjectivity and thus ultimately cancel their own expressive function. What they portray, however precisely, becomes a matter of indifference: For it is indeed that subjectivity whose enchantment decays under the exactitude of the gaze fixed on it by the work. As a result the depositional chords become the material of construction. This transpires in *Die Glückliche Hand.* It is at once orthodox expressionism and work. It avows itself architecture in the reprise, in the ostinato, in the extended harmonies and in the guiding, lapidary motif of the trombones[22] in the last scene. Such an architecture negates the musical psychologism that is all the same consummated in it. In this, music not only falls behind expressionism in its level of cognition—as does the text—but simultaneously strides beyond it. The category of a "work" as univocally whole and gapless in itself is not indistinguishably fused with that semblance belied by expressionism. The work itself has a double character. If it reveals itself to the isolated and utterly alienated subject as the fraud of harmony, of reconciliation in itself and with others, it is also the authority that consigns a spurious individuality—requisite to a spurious society—to its rightful place. However critical the stance of individuality to the work, the work stands critical of it. Just as the contingency of individuality protests against the infamous law of society, in which it itself originates, the work drafts schemata to overcome this contingency. It represents the truth of society against an individual that knows its untruth and is itself this untruth. Only in such works is there present that which equally surmounts the narrowness of both subject and object. As illusory reconciliation, they are the reflection of real reconciliation. In its expressionist phase, music annulled the claim to totality. But expressionist music remained "organic";[23] as language, it remained both subjective and psychological. This once again compelled music to seek totality. If expressionism was not radical enough in its opposition to the superstition of the organic, its liquidation once again crystallized the idea of the work; the heritage of expressionism accrued necessarily to works.

Total Organization of the Elements. What subsequently might have been possible would appear to be limitless. All restricting principles

of selection had fallen. Traditional music was obliged to make do with a strictly limited number of tonal combinations, especially in the vertical dimension. Music had to resign itself ever and again to hitting upon the specific via constellations of the general that present it, paradoxically, as if it were identical with the unique. Beethoven's entire work is an exegesis of this paradox. By contrast, chords today are fitted to the unexchangeable demands of their concrete use. Nothing preestablished bars the composer from the sound that he needs here, and only here. Nothing preestablished compels him to submit to the traditionally universal. The possibility of technical control of the material developed together with its emancipation. It is as if music had wrested itself free of any purported natural constraint imposed by its matter and was able to dispose over it freely, consciously, and lucidly. The composer emancipated himself along with the sounds. The several dimensions of tonal occidental music—melody, harmony, counterpoint, form, and instrumentation—developed historically in relative independence from each other, unplanned, and to this extent as "rank natural growth." Even when one became a function of the other—as, for instance, when melody became a function of harmony during the romantic period—one did not actually emerge from the other; rather, they simply conformed to each other. It could be said that melody paraphrased the harmonic function; harmony differentiated itself in the service of melodic values. But even the liberation of melody from its traditional triadic character, an achievement of the romantic *Lied,* remains within the framework of given harmonic structures. The blindness with which musical productive powers developed, most of all since Beethoven, resulted in incongruities. Whenever material, in its own isolated domain, has developed in the movement of history, other domains of material have been retarded and, in the unity of the work, belied the most advanced domains. This was especially the case during the romantic era for counterpoint, which became a kind of bonus in homophonic composition. There, counterpoint is restricted either to the external combination of homophonically conceived themes or to the merely decorative embellishment of harmonic "chorales" with trumped-up voices. In this regard Wagner, Richard Strauss, and Max Reger are of a kind. At the same time, however, by its own definition, all counterpoint demands the simultaneity of independent voices, in lieu of which it simply becomes bad counterpoint. Striking examples of this are the "all-too-good" contrapuntal works of

late romanticism. They are melodically-harmonically conceived. These voices act like leading voices even where they could just as well act as simple figures in the vocal structure. Thus, they make the progression of voices murky and disavow the construction through intrusively melodious affectations. Such incongruities, however, are not confined to technical details. They become historical powers of the whole. For the more the particular domains of the musical material develop, the more many of them—as for instance instrumental and harmonic sonority in romanticism—become conflated and, in return, the idea of a fully rational organization of all the domains of the musical materials that would eliminate their incongruities emerges all the more distinctly. This idea had already played a part in Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk;* it came to fruition in Schoenberg's. In his music, not only are all dimensions equally developed, but they are also produced so much from each other that they converge. In his expressionist phase, Schoenberg had already conceived vaguely of such a convergence, as in the concept of a *tone-color melody.*[24] This concept is that the simple timbral alternation of identical instrumental sounds can acquire melodic force without anything melodic in the traditional sense occurring. Later a common denominator for all musical dimensions is sought. This is the origin of twelve-tone technique. It culminates in the will to abolish the fundamental contradiction in occidental music, that between the polyphonic fugue and the homophonic sonata. Thus Webern formulated the problem with reference to his last string quartet, opus 28.[25] Schoenberg was once understood as a synthesis of Brahms and Wagner. In their latest works, music reaches still higher. Its alchemy would like to wed Bach and Beethoven in its innermost principle. This is the direction sought in the restitution of counterpoint. But it founders again in the utopia of that synthesis. What is specific to counterpoint, the relation to an antecedent cantus firmus, is vitiated. Webern's late chamber music, at any rate, no longer knows counterpoint as such: Its sparse tones are precisely the remnants left behind by the fusion of the vertical and horizontal dimensions, monuments effectively of a music fallen mute in the "indifference" of its lack of difference.[26]

Total Development. It is the opposition to the idea of the rational organization of the work, to the "indifference" of its material

dimensions to each other, that marks compositional procedures such as those of Stravinsky and Hindemith as reactionary. And without initially considering their position in society, the procedures themselves are indeed technically reactionary. Being a *music maker*[27] is a way of cleverly maneuvering within a separated musical domain, in place of carrying out a constructive consequential procedure that subordinates all levels of the material to the same law. Today, the hardheaded naïveté of this cleverness has turned aggressive. Opposed to it, the integral organization of the artwork—today its only possible objectivity—is exactly the product of that subjectivity denounced by the music makers for what they call its haphazardness. Undoubtedly, the now-demolished conventions were not always so external to music. Just as vital experiences were once sedimented in them, they in their way fulfilled a function. This function was organizational. Precisely this function, however, was taken over from them by an autonomous aesthetic subjectivity that aspired to organize the artwork in freedom, on its own terms. Musical organization is passed to autonomous subjectivity by virtue of the technical principle of development. At the start, in the eighteenth century, development was a small part of the sonata. Once themes were stated and adequately established in the music, they were modified by subjective illumination and dynamism. In Beethoven, however, development, the subjective reflection of the theme that decides its fate, becomes the center of the form altogether. It justifies the form, even when it is conventionally predetermined, by producing it anew, spontaneously. Of aid here is an older—as it were, vestigial—compositional means that only in a later phase disclosed its latent potential. Often in music, remnants of the past surpass the achieved level of technique. Development is reminiscent of variation. In music before Beethoven, with hardly an exception, variation was counted among the most superficial of technical procedures, a mere masking of identically preserved thematic material. Now, however, conjoined with development, variation serves the production of universal, concrete, nonschematic relationships. Variation has been rendered dynamic. It undoubtedly continues to cling to its initial material, which Schoenberg called the "model"; all is identical, "the same." But the meaning of this identity is reflected as nonidentity. The initial material is fashioned so that holding it fast means at the same time transforming it. Being nothing in itself, it *is* only in relation to the possibility of the whole.[28] Fidelity to the demands of the theme requires its radical transformation

in all its elements. By virtue of this nonidentity of identity, music achieves an absolutely new relationship to the time within which each work transpires. Music is no longer indifferent to time, for in time it is no longer arbitrarily repeated; rather, it is transformed. Yet music does not thereby fall prey to mere time, for in this transformation it indeed persists as identical to itself. The concept of the classical in music is defined by this paradoxical relationship to time. This relation, however, simultaneously involves the circumscription of the principle of development. Music is only able to ward off the empty dominion of time as long as development is not total, only as long as something not altogether subjected to development, a—Kantian, as it were—musical thing-in-itself, is given a priori. For this reason, the intervening variation in the most authoritative works of Beethoven's so-called classicism, such as the *Eroica,* contents itself with the development of the sonata as with a "part" and respectfully prescinds from the exposition and the reprise. For later music, however, the empty course of time becomes ever more threatening precisely by virtue of those dynamic powers of subjective expression that demolish all conventional residues. The subjective moments of expression detach themselves from the temporal continuum. They can no longer be mastered. To counteract this, the development—based on variation—unfurls across the entire sonata. Development, universalized, is to reconstruct the sonata's problematic totality. In Brahms, development, as thematic labor, had already utterly seized possession of the sonata. Subjectivization and objectivation intertwine. Brahms's technique unites both tendencies just as it forces together lyrical intermezzo and academic composition. Within the framework of tonality he broadly rejects the conventional formulae and rudiments, and at every moment—so to speak—he produces the unity of the work anew, in freedom. In this he is, however, simultaneously the advocate of a universally encompassing economy that quashes all contingent moments of music and still develops the greatest diversity—indeed, precisely this diversity—out of identically maintained materials. Nothing unthematic remains, nothing that is not to be understood as having derived from what is identical in however latent a fashion. By assimilating the direction of music from Beethoven to Brahms, Schoenberg's music can lay claim to the legacy of classical bourgeois music much as the materialist dialectic relates back to Hegel. The cognitive power of new music, however, is legitimate only in that it does not hark back with adulation to the "prodigious bourgeois

past," to the heroic classicism of the revolutionary period, but transcends—both annuls and saves—romantic differentiation on a technical level and thus according to its substantiality. The subject of new music, what its deposition transcribes, is the real, emancipated, isolated subject of the late bourgeois period. This real subjectivity, and the radical material that it has integrally structured, provides Schoenberg with a canon of aesthetic objectivation. It is the measure of the depth of his work. In Beethoven and throughout Brahms, the unity of the motivic-thematic work was achieved through a kind of balance between a subjective dynamic and a traditional—"tonal"—language. Subjective disposition over the material compels conventional language to speak anew, but without fundamentally transforming it as language. The transformation of language was achieved along the lines of the Wagernian romantic tradition, to the detriment of the objectivity and bindingness of music itself. It broke up the motivic-thematic unity of the art song and surrogated leitmotif and programmatics. Schoenberg was the first to detect the principles of universal unity and economy in the new, subjective, emancipated Wagnerian material. His works adduce the evidence that the more rigorously the nominalism of musical language—inaugurated by Wagner—is pursued, the more completely this language allows itself to be rationally dominated, indeed, to be dominated by virtue of the tendencies that are inherent in it, and not by the ability of tact and taste to smooth things over. This is seen best in the relation between harmony and polyphony. Polyphony is the appropriate means for the organization of emancipated music. In the era of homophony, organization was achieved by means of harmonic conventions.[29] Once these—along with tonality—no longer apply, every tone that serves merely to build chords remains arbitrary so long as it is not legitimated by the process of voice leading, in other words, polyphonically. To compensate for the fact that tonality had forfeited its power to constitute form and had congealed formulaically, even the late Beethoven and Brahms—and in a certain sense Wagner too—appealed to polyphony. Schoenberg finally asserted the principle of polyphony as no longer heteronomous to an emancipated harmony but as, instead, a principle at every point awaiting reconciliation with it. He revealed polyphony as the essence of harmony itself. The individual chord, which in the classical-romantic tradition—as a bearer of subjective expression—represents the antipode to polyphonic objectivity, is understood in its own polyphony. The means for this is

none other than the extreme of romantic subjectivization: dissonance. The more a chord is dissonant, the more it comprises in itself tones differentiated from each other and potent in their differentiatedness, the more it is "polyphonic," the more—as Erwin Stein once showed—each individual tone acquires in its harmonic simultaneity the character of a "voice." The ascendancy of dissonance seems to destroy the rational, "logical" connections within tonality, the simple triadic relations. Yet dissonance is more rational than consonance insofar as it articulates the relationship of sounds, however complex, contained in it instead of buying their unity at the price of the annihilation of the partial elements contained in it, that is, through a "homogeneous" resonance. Dissonance, and its related categories of melodic composition based on "dissonant" intervals, are the veritable bearers of depositional expression. Thus, the subjective urge and longing for illusionless self-declaration become the technical *organon* of the objective work. Inversely, it is this rationality and unification of the material that make the initially subordinated material entirely compliant to subjectivity. In a music in which every single tone is transparently determined by the construction of the whole, the difference between the essential and the accidental vanishes. In all its elements, such a music is equally near the midpoint. Thus, the conventions of form—which formerly governed proximity and distance to the midpoint—lose their meaning. There is no longer any inessential transition between essential elements, the "themes"; consequently, there are no longer any themes at all or, in the strictest sense, any "development." This has already been remarked upon—by Egon Wellesz—for works of unshackled atonality: "In the instrumental music of the nineteenth century, one may trace everywhere a tendency to construct the form of the music out of the means afforded by the symphony. Beethoven, as one of the pioneers, knew how to rise with the help of small motifs to a powerful climax that grew out of one germ-motif, the stimulus of the idea. The principle of contrast, which is dominant in all art, first comes into its own when the effect of the idea of the germ-motif has ceased. The period before Beethoven knew nothing of such construction in the symphony. The themes of Mozart, for example, often contained within themselves the principle of contrast; they are compact first sections followed by freer second sections. This principle of a direct effect of contrast, and of a juxtaposition of contrasting figures in the course of the theme, is revived by Schoenberg in the works of his later

style."[30] This process of thematic construction originated in the depositional character of music. The elements of the course of the music are, like psychological impulses, juxtaposed sequentially, first as shocks and then as contrasting figures. The continuum of subjective experiential time is no longer believed to have the power to integrate musical events and, as their unity, to give them meaning. Such discontinuity, however, kills the musical dynamic to which music owes its own existence. Once again music masters time—but no longer by guaranteeing its fulfillment, but rather by negating time through the suspension of all musical elements as a result of omnipresent construction. Nowhere else is the secret agreement of light and progressive music more succinctly proven true than here. Late Schoenberg shares with jazz—and, incidentally, also with Stravinsky—the dissociation of musical time.[31] Music drafts the image of a world that—for better or for worse—no longer knows history.

The Idea of Twelve-Tone Technique. The reversal of the musical dynamic into a static-dynamic of the musical structure (and not the mere alternation of the level of intensity, which of course continues to involve crescendo and decrescendo) clarifies the peculiarly rigid systematic character that Schoenberg's composition acquired in its late phase. Variation, the instrument of compositional dynamism, becomes total, and is as a result annulled. The music no longer presents itself as being in a process of development. Thematic labor becomes merely part of the composer's preliminary labor. Variation as such no longer appears at all. Everything and nothing is variation; the process of variation is itself relegated to the material and preforms it before the composition properly begins. Schoenberg alludes to this when he calls the twelve-tone structure of his late works his own "private affair." The music becomes a result of the processes to which the material is subjected and which the music itself keeps from being unveiled. Accordingly, the music becomes static.[32] Twelve-tone technique is not to be understood as a "technique of composition," such as that of impressionism. All efforts to use it in this way result in absurdities. It is more to be compared to the arrangement of colors on the palette than to the painting of a picture. In truth the composition begins when the disposition of the tones is finished. This is why Schoenberg's procedure has indeed made composition more difficult, not easier. It demands that every piece—whether it be a single

movement or an entire work of many movements—be derived from a *basic shape,*[33] or *row.* By this is understood a specific arrangement of the twelve available tones of the tempered half-tone system, for instance, that of the first twelve-tone composition published by Schoenberg: C-sharp – A – B – G – A-flat – F-sharp – B-flat – D – E – E-flat – C – F.[34] Each tone of the entire composition is determined by this "row": There is no longer any "free" note. This means, however, that only in few, very elementary, instances—as occurred at the outset of the technique's use—is the row employed throughout the entire piece in precisely the same order and merely situated differently and rearranged rhythmically. Just such a method was developed independently of Schoenberg by the Austrian composer Josef Mattias Hauer,[35] and the results are tediously meager.[36] By contrast, Schoenberg radically integrates the classical and, even more, the archaic techniques of variation into twelve-tone material. For the most part, he utilizes the rows in four transformations: as the basic row; as its inversion, that is to say, by replacing each interval of the row with the interval in the contrary direction (on the pattern of the "inverted fugue," as for example in the G-major Fugue from the first volume of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*); as its retrograde—or "crab"—in the manner of the ancient contrapuntal practice, so that the row begins with the last tone and concludes with the first; and as the retrograde of the inversion. These four modes can, for their part, be transposed starting with the twelve initial tones of the chromatic scale, so that for one composition the row can be disposed in forty different modes. In addition, through the symmetrical grouping of certain tones, it is possible to build "derivations" that provide new, independent rows that are nevertheless related to the basic row. Berg made full use of this procedure in *Lulu.* Conversely, to make the relations of the tones denser, the rows can be divided into segments[37] that are internally related to each other. Finally, a composition, instead of being based on a single row, can utilize two or more rows as initial material in analogy with the double and triple fugue, of which Schoenberg's Third String Quartet, opus 30, is an example. The row is by no means presented only horizontally, for it also appears vertically, and each tone of the composition, without exception, has significance in the row or in one of the row's derivatives. This guarantees the "indifference" of harmony and melody. In simple cases the row is distributed horizontally and vertically, and once the twelve tones are complete, each is repeated or replaced by one of its derivatives; in

more complicated cases, the row itself is "contrapuntally" employed, that is, used simultaneously in diverse modes or transpositions. As a rule, in Schoenberg, compositions in the simpler style—such as the *Accompaniment to a Cinematographic Scene*—are also more simple than complex in regard to twelve-tone technique. Thus, the Variations for Orchestra are inexhaustible in their serial combinations also. In twelve-tone technique, pitch location on the register is "free": Whether the A, the second note of the basic row[38] of the waltz Five Pieces, no. 5, is a minor sixth above or a major third below the first tone, C-sharp, is decided according to the demands of the composition. In principle, the rhythmical figuration is also unrestricted, from the individual motif to the large form. The rules are not conceived arbitrarily. They are configurations of historical constraint in the material. They are at the same time schemata of adaptation to this constraint. In them, consciousness undertakes to purify music of the residues of a lapsed organicity. Cruelly, they combat musical semblance. But even the most daring twelve-tone manipulations are auscultations of the technical level of the material. This holds true not only for the integral principle of the variation of the whole but also for the microcosmic twelve-tone subject matter itself, the row. It rationalizes what is familiar to every conscientious composer: intolerance of any premature repetition of the same tone, its immediate repetition excepted. The contrapuntal prohibition on a double climax and a feeling of weakness in the harmonic phrase when the bass voice leading returns too swiftly to the same note confirm this experience. Its urgency intensifies, however, once the schema of tonality—which legitimated the preponderance of individual tones—is canceled. Whoever has dealt closely with free atonality knows the distracting power of a melodic or bass tone that occurs for a second time before all the other tones have preceded it. It threatens to suspend the melodic-harmonic tension. The static twelve-tone technique puts into practice the intolerance of the musical dynamic vis-à-vis the impotent return of the same. It makes the intolerance sacrosanct. The tone that recurs too soon, as well as the tone that is "free"—fortuitous vis-à-vis the whole—becomes taboo.

Musical Domination of Nature. A system of the domination of nature in music results. It answers to a longing arising out of the primordial age of the bourgeoisie: to seize all that sounds in a regulatory

grasp and dissolve the magic of music in human reason. Thus Martin Luther names Josquin des Prez, who died in 1521, "the Master of Notes: They had to do as he wanted; the other masters had to want what the notes would do."[39] Conscious disposal over the musical material is both the emancipation of the human being from the constraint of nature in music and the subordination of nature to human purposes. In Oswald Spengler's philosophy of history, at the end of the bourgeois era, the principle of domination inaugurated by the bourgeoisie breaks through uncloaked. Spengler, by an elective affinity, had a feeling for the violence of mastery and the nexus of the aesthetic and political right of disposal: "The means of the present are, and will be for many years, parliamentary—elections and the press. One may think what one pleases about them, one may respect them or despise them, but one *must command them.* Bach and Mozart *commanded* the musical means of their times. This is the hallmark of mastery in any and every field, and statecraft is no exception."[40] Spengler prognosticated that late occidental science "would bear all the lineaments of the great art of counterpoint," and he called the "infinitesimal music of the boundless world-space" a "profound longing" of occidental culture;[41] twelve-tone technique—retrograde in itself and infinite in its ahistorical stasis—is closer to that ideal than Spengler, or indeed Schoenberg, would have allowed himself to consider.[42] At the same time, however, twelve-tone technique approaches the ideal of mastery as domination, whose boundlessness consists in the exclusion of whatever is heteronomous, of whatever is not integrated into the continuum of this technique. Boundlessness—infinity—is pure identity. But the domination of nature is consummated in the name of the repressive element of the domination of nature, the element that itself turns against subjective autonomy and freedom. The arithmetical play of twelve-tone technique and the constraint that it exercises is reminiscent of astrology, and it is no mere fad that many of its adepts fall prey to it.[43] As a system closed in itself and at the same time self-opaque, twelve-tone rationality—in which the constellation of means is immediately hypostatized as goal and law—verges on superstition. The legality in which it is executed is at the same time simply inflicted on the material that it determines without, however, this determination serving any meaning. Exactitude, as mathematical calculation, is substituted for what traditional art knew as *idea,* which in late romanticism itself unquestionably degenerated into ideology as the affirmation of a metaphysical

substantiality through music's crude preoccupation with ultimate reality, without these ultimate realities being present in the pure form of the work. Schoenberg—whose music secretly admixes an element of that positivism that constitutes the essence of Stravinsky—has extirpated meaning as a consequence of making music available to depositional expression insofar as he insists, in the tradition of Viennese classicism, that meaning should reside exclusively in the nexus of the facture. The facture as such should be exact instead of meaningful. The question that twelve-tone composition poses to the composer is not how musical meaning can be organized but rather how organization can become meaningful. What Schoenberg has produced over the past twenty-five years are progressive attempts at an answer to this question. Ultimately, the intention is inserted—with the almost-fragmentary violence of allegory—into what is, to its innermost cell, empty. What is domineering in these late gestures, however, responds to what is tyrannical in the origin of the system itself. Twelve-tone exactitude, which banishes all meaning as if it were an illusion claiming to exist in itself in the musical object, treats music according to the schema of fate. But the domination of nature and fate are inseparable. The concept of fate may itself be modeled on the experience of domination, arising from the superiority of nature over mankind. What is, is stronger. In coming to grief on this, men have themselves learned to be stronger and to dominate nature, and in precisely this process fate has reproduced itself. It inevitably develops tit for tat—inevitably, because every step man takes is enjoined on him by the ancient superiority of nature. Fate is domination taken to the point of pure abstraction; the measure of destruction equals the degree of domination; fate is the calamity.

Reversal into Unfreedom. Music, in thrall to the historical dialectic, participates in this dialectic. Twelve-tone technique is truly its fate. It subjugates music by setting it free. The subject rules over the music by means of a rational system in order to succumb to this rational system itself. Just as in twelve-tone technique—in the composition proper—the productivity of the variation is forced back into the material, so it turns out for the freedom of the composer in general. Whereas this freedom is achieved in its disposal over the material, it becomes a determination of the material, a determination that confronts the subject as

something alien and in turn subordinates the subject to its constraint. The composer's fantasy made the material entirely malleable to his own constructive will, but the constructive material hamstrings fantasy itself. All that is left of the expressionist subject is the subservience of Neue Sachlichkeit to technique. The subject disclaims its own spontaneity by projecting onto the historical subject matter the rational experiences that it had in its confrontation with it. The operations that broke the blind domination of the sonorous material become—through a system of rules—a blind second nature. To this the subject subordinates itself in search of protection and security, despairing of being able to fulfill the music on its own. Wagner's precept of establishing rules for oneself and then following them reveals its fateful aspect. No rule is more repressive than one that is self-promulgated. It is precisely its origin in subjectivity that becomes the contingency of arbitrary pronouncement as soon as the rule stands in the way of the subject, positively, as a regulative system. The violence that mass music inflicts on men lives on at its antipode, in music that withdraws from men. To be sure, among the rules of twelve-tone music, there is none that does not arise necessarily out of compositional experience, out of the progressive elucidation of the natural material of music. But this experience has a defensive character by virtue of its subjective sensibility: the sense that no tone is to recur before the music has exhausted all the others; that no note is to sound that does not fulfill its motivic function in the construction of the whole; that no harmony is to be employed that does not explicitly demonstrate itself. The truth of all these desiderata depends on their constant confrontation with the concrete form of the music to which they are applied. They indicate what must be guarded against, but not how to do so. Disaster ensues as soon as they are established as norms and are exempted from that confrontation. The content of the norm is identical with the content of spontaneous experience. By virtue of its objectification, however, it becomes nonsense. What once the attentive ear discovered is distorted into a trumped-up system in which the criteria of compositional right and wrong are to be abstractly verified. This explains the readiness of so many young musicians—specifically in the United States, where the sustaining experiences of twelve-tone technique are wanting—to write in the "twelve-tone system" and their elation at the invention of a surrogate for tonality, as if freedom were aesthetically intolerable and needed to be furtively replaced by a new compliancy. The total rationality

of music is its total organization. Emancipated music would like to restore, through organization, a lost wholeness, the lost power and necessity of Beethoven. This is only successful at the price of its own freedom, and thus it fails. Beethoven reproduced the meaning of tonality out of subjective freedom itself. The new order, twelve-tone technique, virtually extinguishes the subject. What is great in the late Schoenberg was won as much in opposition to twelve-tone technique as through it. Through twelve-tone technique because through it, music becomes capable of comporting itself with the coldness and implacability that rightly befit it in the wake of ruin. In opposition to twelve-tone technique because the spirit that conceived it remains enough in command of itself ever and again to traverse the structure of its rods, pulleys, and gears and make them flash up as if wanting to destroy catastrophically the technical work of art. The miscarriage of technical artwork, however, is not simply a failure with regard to its aesthetic ideal; rather, it is a failure in the technique itself. The radicalism with which technical artwork destroys aesthetic semblance ultimately consigns technical artwork to semblance. Twelve-tone music has a *streamlined* aspect. In reality, the technique should serve goals that lie beyond its own nexus. Here, where such goals are lacking, technique becomes an end in itself and substitutes for the substantial unity of the artwork an exactitude of calculation. It is owing to this displacement of the center of gravity that the fetish character of mass music has also directly seized hold of advanced and "critical" musical production. In spite of a procedure that does justice to the material, there is no mistaking a distant affinity with those theatrical stagings that ceaselessly summon up machines, that indeed themselves approximate a machine that fulfills no function: It simply stands there, an allegory of the "technical age." All Neue Sachlichkeit secretly threatens to fall prey to what it so fiercely combats: the ornament. The streamlined club chairs of the interior design charlatans avow in the shopwindow what the loneliness of the constructivist painting and twelve-tone music long ago grasped—necessarily grasped. As the semblance of the artwork dies off, a process whose measure is the struggle against ornament, the situation of the artwork becomes altogether untenable. Anything that has no function in the artwork—and thus everything that exceeds the law of its mere existence—is debarred. The artwork's function, however, is precisely to exceed mere existence. Thus *summum ius* becomes *summa iniuria:*[44] The consummate, functional

artwork becomes a work consummately deprived of function. Since the artwork, indeed, cannot be reality, the elimination of its characteristic elements of semblance only throws all the more glaringly into relief the semblance character of its existence. The process is inevitable. The annulment of the artwork's characteristic elements of semblance is demanded by its own consistency. But the process of annulment, which the meaning of the whole demands, makes the whole meaningless. The integral artwork is the absolutely absurd artwork. Schoenberg and Stravinsky are commonly thought of as strictly opposed to each other. And in fact, Stravinsky's masks and Schoenberg's constructions have little in common. But one may well imagine that someday Stravinsky's alienated, mechanically assembled tonal chords and the sequence of twelve-tone sounds—whose concatenated strands have likewise been severed at the behest of the system—will in no way sound so different as they do today. On the contrary, they designate various levels of rigor in the same matter. They have in common, by virtue of their disposal over the atomized material, a claim to bindingness and necessity. In both, the aporia of a powerless subjectivity is apparent, and it bears the gestalt of an unratified yet imperious norm. In both, though certainly on entirely different levels of form and with unequal powers of realization, objectivity is subjectively established. In both, music threatens to congeal as space. In both, every musical detail is predetermined by the whole, and there is no longer any authentic reciprocation of the whole and the part. Their commanding disposition over the whole exorcises the spontaneity of the elements.

Twelve-Tone *Melos*[45] and Rhythm. The failure of the technical artwork can be confirmed in all dimensions of its composition. By virtue of setting music free to undertake limitless domination over the natural material, the enslavement of music has become universal. This is confirmed in the first place by the definition of the basic row through the twelve tones of the chromatic scale. It is not clear why each such row must contain all twelve tones, exempting none, and why it must contain only these twelve without any one of them reappearing. In fact, as Schoenberg was developing the row technique in *Serenade,* he worked with rows of fewer than twelve tones. There is a reason why later he employed twelve tones without exception. The limitation of the entire

piece to the intervals of the basic row makes it expedient to dispose the row itself so comprehensively that the tonal space is constrained as little as possible, that the greatest possible number of combinations is feasible. Yet the fact that the row utilizes no more than twelve tones may well be attributable to the concern that none of the tones, through frequent repetition, be given a preponderance that could make it a "fundamental tone" and could conjure up tonal relations. Still, even if the tendency is toward the number twelve, its obligatoriness cannot be stringently derived. The hypostatization of the number is complicit in the difficulties in which twelve-tone technique bogs down. To be sure, the melody is indebted to this hypostatization for its extrication from the preponderance of the single tone and as well from the false natural constraint of the effect of the leading tone, the formulaic cadence. In the hegemony of the minor second and the intervals derived from it—the major seventh and the minor ninth—free atonality maintained the chromatic element and in it, implicitly, the element of dissonance. Henceforth, these intervals have no preeminence over the others, unless the composer wants to establish this preeminence retrospectively through the construction of the row. The melodic form itself acquires a legitimacy that it hardly possessed in traditional music and that it had to borrow through circumscription of harmony. Now the melody—presupposing that, as in most of Schoenberg's themes, it coincides with the row—crystallizes all the more perfectly the more it approaches the end of the row. With each new tone, the selection of the remaining tones becomes smaller, and when the last tone is reached, there is no longer any choice left. The constraint in this is unmistakable. It is exerted not only by calculation. The ear participates spontaneously in it. But the constraint is also crippling. The unity of the melody narrows it too tightly. Every twelve-tone theme, to hyperbolize, has something of the quality of a theme in a rondo, of a refrain. It is significant that in his twelve-tone compositions, Schoenberg so fondly cites, literally or in spirit, the ancient, nondynamic rondo form and utilizes an essentially related, intentionally harmless alla breve character. The melody is too complete; and although the inherently concluding power of the twelfth tone can be overcome through the verve of the rhythm, this is hardly possible through the gravitation of the intervals themselves. The commemoration of the traditional rondo functions as a stopgap to the immanent flux that has been severed. Schoenberg pointed out that the traditional theory of composition

basically treats only beginnings and conclusions and never the logic of the continuation. Twelve-tone melody has the same shortcoming. Each of its continuations evinces an aspect of arbitrariness. To recognize the privation in which continuation finds itself, it is only necessary to compare—at the beginning of Schoenberg's Fourth String Quartet—the continuation of the principal theme by means of its reversal (in measure 6, second violin) and its retrograde (in measure 10, first violin) with the exceedingly sharply delineated entrance of the first theme. The passage gives the impression that once completed, the twelve-tone row has—in its own terms—no impulse to continue and is driven forward only by manipulations external to it. The privation of the continuation is indeed all the greater as it is itself referred back to the initial row, which is itself as such exhausted and for the most part actually coincides with the theme built out of it only in its first appearance. As mere derivation, the continuation disavows the inescapable claim of twelve-tone music: that in all its elements it is equidistant from its midpoint. In the majority of existing twelve-tone compositions, the continuation is as inferior to the thesis of the basic row as, in late romantic music, the consequence is inferior to the thematic idea.[46] Meanwhile, the constraint of serialism perpetrates a far worse misfortune. Mechanical patterns afflict the *melos*.[47] The true quality of a melody is always to be measured by whether or not it succeeds in transcribing the effectively spatial relations of the intervals into time. Twelve-tone technique fundamentally destroys this relation. Time and interval diverge. All the intervallic relations are once and for all fixed by the basic row and its derivatives. There is nothing new in the progression of the intervals, and the omnipresence of the rows makes the row itself unfit for the production of temporal coherence. For this coherence is constituted only through what is differentiated and not through mere identity. Consequently, the melodic coherence becomes dependent on extramelodic means: a rhythmics that has acquired a life of its own. The row is unspecific by its own omnipresence. Thus, melodic specification accrues to abiding and characteristic rhythmical shapes. Distinct, consistently recurring rhythmical configurations take on the role of themes.[48] Since, however, the melodic space of these rhythmical themes is defined in each case by the row and since these rhythmical themes must at all costs make do with the available tones, they themselves necessarily adopt an obstinate rigidity. *Melos* finally falls victim to the thematic rhythm. The thematic and motivic rhythms return ceaselessly,

with indifference to the actual content of the rows. Thus, in the rondos, it is Schoenberg's practice, at each rondo entrance, to introduce in the thematic rhythm another melodic form of the row and thus produce effects akin to those of a variation. The result, however, is rhythm, and that only, regardless of whether the emphatic and overly conspicuous rhythm subsumes this or that interval. All that can, in any case, be perceived is that here the intervals have a different relation to the thematic rhythm than they had in their first appearance; but it is no longer possible to overhear any meaning in the melodic modification. Hence, what is specifically melodic is voided by the rhythm. In traditional music, even a minimal intervallic modulation could be decisive not only for the expression of a phrase but also for the meaningfulness of the form of an entire composition. In twelve-tone music, by contrast, utter coarsening and impoverishment have intervened. Formerly, the intervals were the unequivocal site of musical meaning: of the not yet, the now, and the after; of the promised, the fulfilled, and the neglected; of moderation and dissipation; of abiding in the form and transcendence of musical subjectivity. Now the intervals have become mere building blocks, and all the experiences accumulated in their differences appear lost. Certainly, ways have been found to escape step progression with seconds and in the symmetry of musical consonances; and, certainly, equal rights have been granted the tritone, the major seventh, and in fact all the intervals that extend beyond the octave, but at the cost of their being leveled to the conventional intervals. In traditional music it was difficult for the tonally restricted ear to integrate extreme intervals. Today, these difficulties are gone, but the newly conquered now shares in the monotony of the accustomed intervals. The melodic detail sinks powerlessly to a mere consequence of the total construction, powerless over it in any regard. It becomes an image of that kind of technical progress that pervades the world. And even that which still somehow thrives melodically—ever and again Schoenberg's power makes possible the impossible—is destroyed by the violence that is inflicted on the past melody when, the next time its rhythm occurs, other intervals are relentlessly substituted for those of the initial melody, intervals that frequently lack not only a relation to the original intervals but even to the rhythm itself. What is most alarming here is a certain sort of melodic half-reckoning: Although it guards the contours of the old melody, that is, although it, for instance, makes a large or small intervallic leap occur at a rhythmical

spot analogous to the location of a similar leap in the first instance, it does so only with regard to categories such as large and small; it does not matter in the slightest whether the characteristic leap is a major ninth or a tenth. In Schoenberg's middle period such issues would have been as good as meaningless because at that stage all repetition was excluded. The restoration of repetition, however, is of a piece with disregard to what is repeated. Even here, however, twelve-tone technique is not the rationalistic origin of disaster but, on the contrary, the executor of a tendency that stems from romanticism. The manner in which Wagner treats motifs whose aspect inherently contradicts the procedure of variation casts the die of Schoenberg's procedure. It leads to the definitive technical antagonism of post-Beethovian music: that between a predetermined tonality—ever awaiting its reconfirmation—and the substantiality of the detail. Whereas Beethoven developed the musical entity out of nothingness in order to be able to determine it entirely as what becomes, the late Schoenberg demolishes it as what already became.

Differentiation and Coarsening. If musical nominalism, the annulment of all recurring formulae, is thought through to the end, differentiation tumbles. In traditional music the here and now of the composition in all its elements ceaselessly confronts the tonal schema. Limits to the specification of the composition were set by convention, that is, by what was largely heterogeneous to the individual work. As a result of the dissolution of convention, the specific was unshackled: Right up to the restorative Stravinskian putsch, musical progress meant progressive differentiation. Deviations from the preexisting schemata of traditional music carried decisive, meaningful weight. The more binding the schema, the more subtle the possibility of modification. But what once turned the balance could often enough no longer be perceived at all in emancipated music. This is why traditional music admitted much more subtle nuance than is possible when each musical event stands for itself alone. Refinement is ultimately paid back with coarsening. This can be observed most evidently in the phenomenon of harmonic perception. When in tonal music, for example, the Neapolitan sixth chord in C major, with D-flat in the soprano, is followed by the dominant seventh chord with B in the soprano, then, by the force of the harmonic schema, the step from D-flat to B—which is termed the "diminished"

third yet which, measured abstractly, is a major second—is perceived as a third, that is to say, as adverting to the equidistant yet omitted C. Outside the tonal system that immediate perception of an "objective" second as the interval of a third is not possible: The perception presupposes a system of coordinates and is defined by its difference from it. But what holds good as if it were interior to the material acoustic phenomenon itself is even more binding in the higher phenomenon, the organization of the music. In the secondary theme of the overture of Carl Maria von Weber's *Der Freischütz*—taken from Agatha's aria—the interval leading to the climactic G in the third measure is a third. In the coda to the whole composition, this interval is expanded, first to a fifth and finally to a sixth, and in relation to the initial note of the theme—to which musical understanding listens back—this sixth is a ninth. By reaching beyond the octave, it gains the expression of exuberant jubilation. This is possible only through the interpretation of the interval of the octave as the given—a tonally given—unit of measure: If it is exceeded, the interval's significance is heightened in the extreme, the equilibrium of the system suspended. This organizing force, however, which inhered in the octave because of its identity with the root of the triad, is surrendered by twelve-tone music. The difference between those intervals that are larger or smaller than the octave is only quantitative, not qualitative. This is why effects of melodic variation, like those taken from Weber—as in innumerable other cases, especially in Beethoven and Brahms—are no longer possible, and expression itself, which made this process necessary, is menaced; it is hardly imaginable after the abolition of all embedded relations, the entire hierarchy of intervals, of sounds, and of components of form. What once received its meaning from its difference relative to the schema in many dimensions of composition—not only in melody and harmony—is devalued and leveled out. Form above all had, in the traditional schema of modulation, a normative system in which it could develop the most minimal transformations—in Mozart sometimes on the basis of a single accidental. If larger forms are to be articulated today, it is necessary to employ much rougher means, drastic contrasts of register, of dynamics, of scoring, of timbre; ultimately, the invention of themes depends on ever-more-striking qualities. The fatuous objection laymen make to the monotony of new music has an element of truth that escapes the wisdom of the specialist: Whenever the

composer for any length of time renounces brutal contrasts, such as those between high and low, loud and soft, a certain blandness results. For differentiation only has any power when it distinguishes itself from what is already established, whereas the most differentiated means in themselves, if they are merely juxtaposed, resemble and bleed into each other. It was one of the greatest achievements of Mozart and Beethoven that they were able to avoid simple contrasts and elicit diversity in the most tender transitions, often merely through modulation. This achievement was already compromised during the romantic period, whose themes—measured by the ideal of the integral form of Viennese classicism—were always too dispersed and threatened to dissolve the form into episodes. Today it is precisely in the most earnest and responsible music that the means for the most delicate contrast have been lost. Even Schoenberg is only able to salvage its illusion by once again conferring on the themes—as in the first movement of the Fourth String Quartet—the appearance of what Viennese classicism called the main theme, the transition, and the second theme, though without allowing these hovering characters in Beethoven and Mozart to be measured on the harmonic construction as a whole. Thus, these musical characters acquire an impotent, gratuitous quality; they become, in some sense, the death masks of the profiles of the instrumental music shaped by Viennese classicism. Today, if a composer forswears such salvaging efforts in obedience to the constraints of the material, he is reduced to the exaggerated contrasts available in raw material resonances. Nuance ends in an act of violence—symptomatic perhaps of the historical transformations that today compulsorily befall all categories of individuation. If, however, the effort were made to restore tonality or to replace it by another system of coordinates—as, for instance, the one Aleksandr Scriabin invented—and to use this support to recover the lost wealth of differentiation, then this maneuver would remain bound to the same split-off subjectivity that these maneuvers would like to master. Tonality would be what it is for Stravinsky, a game with tonality; and schemes like Scriabin's are so restricted to a kind of dominant harmony that their effect is genuinely gray on gray. Twelve-tone technique, as a mere preformation of material, wisely protects itself from becoming a system of coordinates, but by this restriction it excludes the concept of nuance. In so doing it executes on itself the judgment of an unleashed subjectivism.

Harmony. Objections are often stated to the arbitrariness of twelve-tone music: that in spite of all its rationality, it abandons harmony—indeed, that it abandons the individual chord as well as the sequence of sounds—to accident; that though it regulates the succession of sounds abstractly, it acknowledges no compelling and immediately graspable necessity of harmonic sounds at all. The objection is cheap. Nowhere more than in harmony does the order of twelve-tone technique proceed more rigorously from the historical tendencies of the material. And if the schemata of twelve-tone harmony were to be worked out, the "Prelude" to *Tristan* would probably be more easily displayed in them than in the functions of the work's own A minor. The law of the vertical dimension of twelve-tone music could be called the law of "complementary harmony." Preliminary forms of complementary harmony are to be found less in Schoenberg's middle period than in Claude Debussy and Stravinsky, in other words, where instead of a thoroughbass harmonic progression, there are planes of sound, in themselves static, that only permit a selection from the twelve half-tones and then suddenly shift into new planes that feature the remaining tones. In complementary harmony, each harmony is constructed in a complex fashion: Its individual tones are contained as independent and differentiated elements of the whole, without making their differences disappear as occurs in triadic harmony. The experimenting ear cannot avoid the experience that—in the twelve-tone space of the chroma—each of these complex sounds fundamentally demands for its completion, whether simultaneously or successively, those tones of the chromatic scale that are not contained in the complex. Tension and release in twelve-tone music are always to be understood with regard to the virtual sounding of the twelve tones. The individual complex chord becomes capable of incorporating into itself musical forces that earlier required whole melodic lines or harmonic structures. At the same time, "complementary" harmony is able to cause these chords, in a sudden reversal, to flash up so that all their latent power becomes manifest. Through the alternation from one defined harmonic level—defined by the chord—to the next complementary level, the effects of harmonic depth, a sort of perspective is produced such as was sometimes sought after by traditional music, as for instance in Anton Bruckner, though scarcely ever realized.[49] If the twelve-tone chord heard at Lulu's death is taken as the integral of complementary harmony, Berg's allegorical genius stands the test

in a historical perspective that is truly vertiginous: Just as Lulu in the world of gapless semblance longs only for the arrival of her murderer and finds him in that chord, so does all harmony of denied happiness—twelve-tone music is inseparable from dissonance—long for the fatal chord as a cipher of fulfillment. Fatal, because in this chord every dynamic is stilled without being resolved. The law of complementary harmony already implies the end of the musical experience of time, as this was registered in the dissociation of time into expressionist extremes. It enunciates more insistently than the other symptoms a condition of musical ahistoricity, although it remains undecided as to whether this ahistoricity is dictated by the harrowing rigidification of society in the contemporary forms of domination or whether it portends an end to antagonistic society, which has its existence in the mere reproduction of its antagonisms. Yet this law of complementary harmony is valid only in harmonic terms. It is paralyzed by the indifference of the horizontal and the vertical. The complementary tones are desiderata of voice leading within complexly structured chords, differentiating in their voices, just as even in tonal music all problems of harmony arise in the requirements of voice leading and, inversely, those of counterpoint arise in the demands of harmony. As a result the properly harmonic principle is fundamentally shaken. In twelve-tone polyphony the chords that are actually being composed rarely stand in a complementary relationship. Rather, they are "results" of voice leading. Under the influence of Ernst Kurth's volume on linear counterpoint,[50] it became common to assume that in new music, harmony was of no importance and that, regarding polyphony, the vertical dimension no longer counted. This supposition was dilettantish: The unification of the several musical dimensions does not mean that one of them simply disappears. But it begins to be apparent in twelve-tone technique that precisely this unification threatens to cancel each of the material dimensions and thus also the harmonic dimension. Passages conceived in terms of complementary harmony are necessarily the exception. For the principle of composition—the "collapsing" of the row into simultaneous sounds—requires that each and every tone justify itself horizontally as well as vertically. That makes the pure complementary relation between the vertical sounds a rare stroke of luck. The actual identity of the dimensions is not so much guaranteed by the twelve-tone schema as postulated by it. In each moment of the composition this identity remains a task, and the

arithmetical "exactitude" proves nothing at all about whether this identity has been achieved, if the "result" is also justified harmonically by the tendency of the sounds. The majority of all twelve-tone compositions merely feign their coincidence through numeric correctness. To a large extent the harmonies follow simply from what occurs in the voices and produce no specifically harmonic sense. It suffices to compare any chosen simultaneous sounds or even harmonic sequences in twelve-tone compositions, for instance, the glaring harmonic deadlock found in the slow movement of the Fourth String Quartet, measures 636–37, with an authentically well-conceived harmonic moment of free atonality, such as the passage in *Erwartung* beginning at measure 196, to be made aware of the accidentalness, of the arbitrary quality, of twelve-tone harmony. The "instinctual life of sounds" is suppressed. Not only are the tones numbered from the beginning, but the primacy of the horizontal lines also causes the harmonies to atrophy. It is hard to banish the suspicion that once put to the test, the principle of the indifference of melody and harmony is entirely an illusion. The origin of the rows in the themes, their melodic meaning, resists harmonic reinterpretation, and this succeeds only at the price of the specific harmonic relation. While complementary harmony in its pure form binds the successive chords closer than ever before, these chords also become alienated from each other through the totality of twelve-tone technique. Thus, in one of the most consummate twelve-tone compositions that he has to date achieved—the first movement of the Third String Quartet—Schoenberg employs the principle of ostinato that he had previously so carefully excluded. The ostinato is to provide a nexus that no longer exists between sounds, and scarcely even in the individual sound. The elimination of the leading tone, which continued to have an effect in atonality as a tonal residue, leads to an absence of relationship and a rigidity of the successive elements that not only penetrates the Wagnerian hothouse[51] of expressiveness with a corrective coldness but also, beyond that, contains the threat of specifically musical meaninglessness, the liquidation of any musical nexus at all. This meaninglessness is not to be confused with what is hard to understand of the genuinely unsubsumed. On the contrary, the meaninglessness should be ascribed to a new subsumption. Twelve-tone technique substitutes conscious construction for "mediation," the "transition," and the forward drive of all that is implied by the leading tone. But its heavy price is the atomization of sounds.

The free play of forces in traditional music—which produces a whole out of a movement from sound to sound without this whole being preconceived, so to speak, as a movement from sound to sound—is replaced by the juxtaposition of mutually alienated sounds. There is no longer any anarchic attraction between the sounds; instead, there is only their monadic lack of relationship and at every point administrative domination over the whole. It is this situation above all that produces contingency. If previously the totality was implemented behind the back of specific events, now the totality is conscious. But the specific events, the concrete nexuses, are sacrificed to it. Contingency afflicts even the sounds as such. On one hand, the sharpest dissonance, the minor second, which was used with the greatest prudence in free atonality, is now treated as if it meant nothing at all, and in choruses sometimes with manifest damage to the movement;[52] on the other hand, hollow-sounding fourths and fifths, which bear on their foreheads the stigmata of the distress of their fortuitous materialization, press increasingly into the foreground as tensionless, blunt chords, not at all different from those beloved by neoclassicists, particularly Hindemith. Neither the frictions nor the hollow sounds suffice for any compositional purpose: Both are sacrificial offerings of music to the tone row. Everywhere, independently of the composer's will, tonal intimations arise of the sort that, in atonality, the vigilant critic knew how to eliminate. They are understood not dodecaphonically but, on the contrary, tonally. It is not in the power of composition to allow the historical implications of the material to be forgotten. By imposing a taboo on triadic harmony, free atonality spread dissonance universally across music. There was only dissonance. The restorative aspect of twelve-tone technique is perhaps nowhere more powerfully confirmed than in the slackening of the prohibition on consonance. Indeed, it could be said that universal dissonance had transcended its concept: Only in tension with consonance is dissonance possible; it is transformed merely into a multitone complex as soon as it ceases to stand in opposition to consonance. This would, however, be to oversimplify the situation. For in simultaneously sounding tones dissonance is transcended only in Hegel's double sense of the word, that is, both canceled and preserved. The new sounds are not the harmless successors of the old consonance. They differ from it in that their unity is entirely articulated in itself, in that although each sound in the chord unites with the others in the chord, each all the same remains precisely,

individually distinguished from every other sound. Thus their "discordance" continues, though not in opposition to the eliminated consonances, but in themselves. It is in this fashion that they hold true to the historical image of dissonance. The dissonances arose as the expression of tension, contradiction, and pain. They were sedimented and became "material." They are no longer media of subjective expression. Still, they do not thus disavow their origin. They become characters of objective protest. It is the enigmatic happiness of these sounds that, precisely as a result of their transformation into material, dominates the suffering they once announced, and does so by holding it fast. Their negativity remains loyal to utopia: It contains in itself the concealed consonance—hence new music's passionate intolerance of everything reminiscent of consonance. Schoenberg's jest—that "Mondfleck" in *Pierrot Lunaire* is written according to the strict rules of counterpoint, prohibiting consonance except in passing and on unaccented beats—directly reports this fundamental experience. Twelve-tone technique, by contrast, shirks this experience. The dissonances become what Hindemith in his *Craft of Composition*[53] designated with the execrable expression "labor material":[54] mere quantity, without quality, undifferentiated and therefore adaptable everywhere according to the demands of the schema. Thus the material is reduced to mere nature, to the physical relations of tones, and it is above all this relapse that subjects twelve-tone music to the constraint of nature. Not just the allure but also the resistance is volatilized. The sounds tend as little toward each other as they do toward the whole, which represents the world. In their juxtaposition they disappear the depth of musical space that complementary harmony seemed at the very verge of disclosing. The sounds have become so indifferent to each other that they are no longer bothered by the proximity of consonance. The triads at the end of *Pierrot* once shockingly confronted the dissonances with their unreachable aim, and their hesitant absurdity resembled that green horizon dawning faintly in the east. In the theme of the slow movement of the Third String Quartet, consonances and dissonances stand indifferently adjacent to each other. They no longer even sound impure.

Instrumental Timbre. That the decay of harmony is to be attributed not to a lack of harmonic consciousness but rather to the gravitational pull of twelve-tone technique is evident from the dimension that

has always been kindred to the harmonic dimension and that today as much as in Wagner's time demonstrates the same symptoms as harmony: instrumental timbre. The total construction of music permits constructive instrumentation to an undreamt-of degree. Schoenberg's[55] and Webern's[56] arrangements of Bach, which translate the most minute motivic relationships of the compositions into those of timbre and thus realize them for the first time, would have been impossible without twelve-tone technique. Mahler's formulation of the postulate of instrumental clarity—that is to say, without doublings and without floating horn pedals—could only be fulfilled thanks to twelve-tone experiences. Just as the dissonant chord incorporates each sound that it contains and thereby maintains it in its differentiation, so the instrumental sound is now able to achieve both the equilibrium of all voices and the plasticity of each. Twelve-tone technique absorbs the entire wealth of the structure of the composition and translates it into the structure of the timbre. This structure, however, never places itself arbitrarily in the forefront of the composition, as in late romantic composition. It makes itself entirely its servant. But this ultimately constricts it so drastically that it itself contributes less and less to the composition, and timbre disappears as the productive dimension of the composition that the expressionist phase had made it. The site of *tone-color melody* is Schoenberg's middle period. The intention was that timbral variation would itself become the compositional event and determine the composition's course. Instrumental timbre appears as the still-chaste dimension that would nourish the compositional imagination. The third of the Five Pieces for Orchestra as well as the music that accompanies the "light-storm" in *Die Glückliche Hand* are examples of this tendency. Twelve-tone music accomplished nothing of the kind, and one can doubt that it would be capable of it. Indeed, this orchestral piece presupposes, with its "changing chord," a substantiality of harmonic events that is negated by twelve-tone technique. For the latter, the idea of a coloristic fantasy that would itself contribute to the composition is an outrage, and the dread of timbre doublings, which prohibits everything that does not purely present the composition, attests not only to the hatred for the bogus wealth of late-romantic coloration but also to the ascetic will to stifle everything that penetrates the space defined by twelve-tone composition. This absolutely prohibits the further occurrence of anything on the order of tone colors. The sound, however well differentiated, approximates what it

was before subjectivity seized it: a mere registration. Once again, the early period of twelve-tone technique is exemplary: Schoenberg's Woodwind Quintet is reminiscent of an organ score, and that it was written specifically for woodwinds may be related to the intention of the registration. The instrumentation is no longer specific, as it was in Schoenberg's earlier chamber music. The Third String Quartet likewise sacrifices all the timbres that Schoenberg had drawn from the strings in his first two quartets. The quartet's timbre becomes entirely a function of compositional scoring, admittedly intensified to the utmost, especially in the exploitation of a large intervallic compass. Later, after the Variations for Orchestra, Schoenberg began to revise his position and conceded to a broader range of coloration. In particular, he no longer asserted the priority of the clarinets, which had most demonstrated the tendency of the registration. But the timbre palette of the late works feels like a concession. It emanates less from the twelve-tone structure itself than from the scoring, namely, from the interest in clarity. This interest itself, however, is ambiguous. It excludes all the layers of music in which, given the demands proper to the composition, what is required is not clarity but rather its opposite. Without ado it makes the Neue Sachlichkeit postulate of "doing justice to the material" its own—for in its relation to the tone row, twelve-tone composition closely approaches that postulate's fetishism of the material. Whereas the timbres of Schoenberg's late orchestration illuminate the structure of the work as would an overly sharp camera lens its object, they are prohibited from "composing" themselves. The result is a glistening homogeneous sound with ceaselessly shifting lights and shadows, resembling a highly complex machine that in the vertiginous movement of its many parts remains at a standstill. The sound becomes as distinct, clean, and polished as positivist logic. It unveils the moderateness that the severe twelve-tone technique conceals. The chroma and equilibrium of the sonority anxiously deny the chaotic outburst in which it wrung itself free and converge with an image of order that all authentic impulses of new music militate against and that it is all the same constrained to prepare. The dream deposition is stilled to a protocol sentence.

Twelve-Tone Counterpoint. The true beneficiary of twelve-tone technique is unquestionably counterpoint. It attained the primacy in

composition. Contrapuntal thinking is superior to harmonic-homophonic thinking because throughout music history it has struggled to wrest the vertical dimension from the blind constraint of harmonic conventions. To be sure, it respected these conventions, but the meaning it assigned to all simultaneous musical events was derived from the uniqueness of the composition by determining the accompanying voices entirely through their relation to the melodic leading voice. By virtue of the universality of the serial relations, twelve-tone technique is contrapuntal in its origin—for all the simultaneous notes in it are equally independent, given that all are integral components of the row—and its preeminence in relation to traditional "free composition" is contrapuntal in character. Since the establishment of homophonic music in the thoroughbass period, the deepest experiences of the composer have registered the inadequacy of homophony for the binding constitution of concrete forms. The recourse in Bach to an older polyphony—it is precisely his constructively most advanced fugues, such as the C-sharp minor from the first volume of the *Well-Tempered Clavier,* the six-voice fugue from the *Musical Offering,* and the later ones from *The Art of the Fugue,* that approximate the ricercar—and the polyphonic sections of the late Beethoven are the greatest monuments of this experience. For the first time, however, since the end of the Middle Ages, and with incomparably greater rational control over the means, twelve-tone technique crystallized into a genuinely polyphonic style. It eliminated not only the external symbiosis of polyphonic schemata and harmonic thinking but also the impurity in the reciprocal competition of harmonic and polyphonic forces that was still tolerated by free atonality in their disparate juxtaposition. In their polyphonic advances, Bach and Beethoven sought with desperate energy to find an equilibrium between thoroughbass chorale and true polyphony and a balance between the subjective dynamic and binding objectivity. Schoenberg proved to be an exponent of music's most secret tendencies by deriving a polyphonic organization from the material itself, no longer imposing it on the material from the outside. This alone placed him among the greatest composers. Not only did he develop a purity of style—the coequal of the stylistic models that formerly unconsciously determined composition—but he also cast doubt on the legitimacy of style as an ideal. But a pure musical phrase once again exists. Twelve-tone technique taught how to conceive simultaneously of a multiplicity of independent voices and how to organize them as a

unity without the crutch of the chord. It put an end to the arbitrary and irresponsible contrapuntal writing of many composers of the era after World War I as well as to decorative neo-German counterpoint. The new polyphony is "real." In Bach, tonality answers the question of how polyphony is possible as harmonic polyphony. This is why Bach is truly what Goethe said he was: a "harmonist." In Schoenberg tonality lost the power of that answer. He investigates the ruins of polyphony to discover the polyphonic tendency of the chord. Thus, he is a contrapuntist. What remains insufficient in Schoenberg's twelve-tone music is harmony—the opposite of the problem in Bach, where the harmonic schema sets limits to the independence of the voices, limits that are transcended only in the speculation of *The Art of the Fugue.* But the harmonic aporia in twelve-tone music is also communicated to the counterpoint. For composers the mastery of contrapuntal difficulties—as occurs in the notorious "arts" of the Netherlands and their intermittent resumption later on—has always seemed meritorious. And rightly so: Contrapuntal legerdemain constantly announces the triumph of composition over the inertia of harmony. The most abstract canonic designs of crab and mirror are schemata in which music practices outfoxing what is formulaic in the harmony by making "universal" chords coincide with what is determined, through and through, by the movement of the voices. This achievement, however, is reduced if the harmonic stumbling block is omitted, if the formation of "correct" chords is no longer put to the contrapuntal test. The only criterion now is the row. It arranges for the closest interrelation of the voices, that of contrast. Twelve-tone technique achieves the desideratum of literally placing note against note. This desideratum was deprived of the heteronomy of the harmonic principle with regard to the horizontal dimension. Now that the external constraint of a predetermined harmony has been broken, the unity of the voices can be developed strictly out of their diversity, that is, without the copula of "affinity." This is why twelve-tone counterpoint defies all imitation and canonic treatment. Schoenberg's utilization of such means in his twelve-tone phase has the effect of redundancy, of tautology. They organize, redundantly, a nexus that is already organized by twelve-tone technique. In this technique itself the principle that in a rudimentary fashion underlay imitation and the canon developed to an extreme. This explains what is heterogeneous and inappropriate in what was taken over from traditional contrapuntal praxis.

Webern well knew why he sought in his late works to derive the canonic principle from the structure of the row itself, while Schoenberg's late sensitivity toward all such arts was clearly something renewed. The old polyphonic ligatures had their function exclusively in the harmonic space of tonality. They strove to concatenate the voices with each other and, by making one line reflect the other, to neutralize the power over the voices of the consciousness of harmonic degree, a consciousness that is foreign to them. The arts of imitation and canon presuppose just such a consciousness of degree, or at the least a tonal *modus* with which the twelve-tone row, operating behind the scenes, is not to be confused. For only the manifestly tonal or modal order, in whose hierarchy each degree once and for all has its place, permits repetition. This is only possible within an articulated frame of reference. The generality of the framework comprehensively determines the event beyond the unrepeatable and singular instance. The relationships established within this frame of reference—degrees and cadence—imply a movement forward, a certain dynamic. This is why, in these relationships, repetition does not mean coming to a halt. They effectively relieve the work of any responsibility for their progression. Twelve-tone technique is not suitable for this. In no regard is it an ersatz tonality. The row, valid for one work only, does not possess the comprehensive universality that would, on the basis of the schema, assign a function to the repeated event, which as a reiterated individual phenomenon it does not have. Neither does the row's succession of intervals pertain to the repetition in such a fashion that the succession would transform what is repeated in its actual repetition. If, especially in Schoenberg's older twelve-tone works and throughout Webern's work, twelve-tone counterpoint nevertheless draws extensively upon imitation and canon, this also contradicts the specific ideal of twelve-tone procedure. The resumption of archaic polyphonic means is assuredly not some kind of combinatorial high jinks. These intrinsically tonal methods were excavated precisely because twelve-tone technique as such failed to achieve what was expected of it and what, indeed, is least of all to be accomplished by direct recourse to the tonal tradition. The loss of the specifically harmonic as a form-building element becomes so alarmingly palpable that pure twelve-tone counterpoint fails as such to suffice as organizational compensation. Indeed, it does not even suffice contrapuntally. The principle of contrast collapses. One voice never joins another in a truly free fashion, but always simply as its

"derivation." And it is precisely by making space for the events of one voice in another voice, the insertion of one voice in gaps made in the other—their reciprocal negation—that they are brought into a mirror relationship in which inheres the latent tendency to abolish the mutual independence of the parts, and thus the counterpoint altogether, in the extreme: in the twelve-tone chord. It is possible that imitative art wants to thwart this. Its rigor would like to salvage the freedom that is imperiled by its own logic, that of pure contrast. The completely fitted-together voices are identical as products of the row, entirely foreign to each other and hostile in their juxtaposition. They have nothing to do with each other, and everything to do with some third thing. Powerlessly, imitation is conjured to reconcile the foreignness of the all-obedient voices.

Function of Counterpoint. Here something dubious becomes apparent in the most recent polyphonic triumphs. The unity of the twelve-tone voice, implicit in the rows, probably contradicts the deepest impulse of contemporary counterpoint. What the schools call good counterpoint—namely, lines that are smooth and autonomously meaningful but do not intrusively overshadow the main voice, or harmonically flawless movement and adroit concatenation of heterogeneous lines by the prudent addition of a well-fitted part—gives only the thinnest decoction of the idea of counterpoint by misusing it as a recipe. The aim of counterpoint was not the felicitous and complementary addition of voices but rather the organization of music in such a fashion that it has by necessity need for each voice contained in it and that each voice, each note, precisely fulfills its function in the texture. This texture must be so conceived that the relationship among the voices dictates the course of the entire piece, and ultimately the form. It is this—and not the fact that he wrote such good counterpoint in the traditional sense—that constitutes the true superiority of Bach's work over all later polyphonic music; not the linearity of the counterpoint as such but rather its integration within the whole, the harmony and form. In this *The Art of the Fugue* has no equal. Schoenberg's emancipation of counterpoint once again takes up this task. The question is, however, whether twelve-tone technique—by making the contrapuntal idea of integration absolute—does not abrogate the principle of counterpoint through its own totality.

In twelve-tone technique nothing remains that is differentiated from the texture of the voices, neither specific harmonic weight nor predetermined cantus firmus. Counterpoint itself could be understood as an expression of the difference between dimensions in Western music. It endeavors to surmount this difference by forming it. In the case of completely integral organization, counterpoint in the narrow sense—as the meeting of one independent voice with another—would necessarily disappear. It has its legitimate existence only in vanquishing what does not simply disappear into it, what is refractory to it, what it is set against. If there is no longer any such precedence of a musical entity in itself on which counterpoint can test itself, it becomes a barren labor and founders in an undifferentiated continuum. It effectively shares the fate of a rhythmical structure, entirely made of contrasts, that introduces diverse, supplementary voices in every measure and thus devolves into rhythmical monotony. Webern's most recent works are rigorous not least because the liquidation of counterpoint looms in them. Contrasting tones combine in monody.

Form. The inadequacy of all repetition in the structure of twelve-tone music, as becomes evident in the intimacy of the imitative details, defines the central difficulty of twelve-tone form—form in the specific sense of a musical theory of form, not in the general aesthetic sense. The wish somehow to reconstruct[57] the major forms beyond the expressionist critique of aesthetic totality is as dubious as the "integration" of a society in which the economic basis of alienation continues to exist unchanged while antagonisms are suppressed and thus deprived of the right to appear. There is something of this in integral twelve-tone technique. But in it—as perhaps in all cultural phenomena that acquire an entirely new seriousness in an age in which the superstructure is entirely planned—antagonisms cannot be so conclusively dismissed as they are in a society that is not merely represented by modern art but also understood, recognized, penetrated, and thus criticized. The reconstruction of the major forms by means of twelve-tone technique is dubious not only as an ideal—its achievement is also dubious. It is often observed, and especially by the musically backward, that the forms of twelve-tone composition eclectically draw upon the "precritical" major forms of instrumental music. Sonata, rondo, and variation crop up, literally, or in the

spirit of the composition, and in many cases—as in the finale of the Third String Quartet—with an innocuousness and desperate naïveté that not only forgets the historical implications of the meaning of this music but, on top of it all, contrasts sharply, by the simplicity of the large organization, with the complexity in the detail of the rhythmical and contrapuntal facture. The inconsistency is evident, and Schoenberg's last instrumental works are supreme efforts to master it.[58] But it has not been seen with equal clarity how this inconsistency derives necessarily from the constitution of twelve-tone music itself. That it has in no way achieved major forms unique to itself is the immanent but hardly accidental revenge of the forgotten critical phase. The construction of truly free forms delineating the uniquely occurring constitution of the work is denied by the unfreedom that is imposed by the serial technique through the ever-recurring appearance of the same. Thus, the pressure to make the rhythms thematic and to fill them respectively with serial configurations may bring with it the necessity of symmetry. Whenever those rhythmical formulae make an appearance, they herald correspondingly formed components, and it is these correspondences that raise the specter of precritical forms—but certainly, only the specters. For the symmetries of the twelve-tone row are insubstantial and without depth. The result is that they occur compulsively but to no account. The traditional symmetries refer always to harmonically symmetrical relationships that they are to express or produce. The meaning of the classical sonata's reprise is inseparable from the modulatory schema of the exposition and from the passing harmonic modulations of the development: The reprise serves to confirm that the principal key, which was only "asserted" in the exposition, is the result of just the process inaugurated by the exposition. It can in any case be imagined that in free atonality, after the abolishment of the modulatory basis of the correspondence, the schema of the sonata would maintain something of this meaning, when, for instance, the natural affinities of the sounds develop such powerful tendencies and countertendencies that the idea of a "goal" asserts itself, and the symmetrical introduction of the recapitulation does justice to its idea. This is totally out of the question in twelve-tone technique. On the other hand, however, with its incessant permutations, neither can the technique justify architecturally static symmetries bearing a preclassical stamp. Clearly the demand for symmetry in twelve-tone technique is raised just as it is inexorably denied. The problem of

symmetry was best solved in compositions such as the first movement of the Third String Quartet. These compositions renounce the semblance of the form-dynamic as well as any orientation to forms whose symmetry refers to harmonic relations; instead, they operate with completely rigid, pure, and in a sense geometrical symmetries. These symmetries do not presuppose any binding formal frame of reference or obey any indication of a goal; rather, they form a unique balance. It is compositions of this kind that most closely approach the objective possibility of twelve-tone technique. This movement of the Third String Quartet, with its obstinate eighth-note figure, holds at an absolute distance any thought of development, and in the opposition of symmetrical yet displaced planes, it also achieves a musical cubism of a sort merely simulated by the complexes of sound strung together by Stravinsky. Yet Schoenberg did not stop here. If his complete oeuvre can be understood from reversal to reversal and from extreme to extreme as a dialectical process between the elements of expression and construction,[59] then this process did not come to rest in Neue Sachlichkeit. Just as for him the real experiences of his age necessarily convulsed the ideal of the objective artwork, even in its positivistically disenchanted form, the gaping emptiness of integral composition could not escape his musical genius. The most recent works pose the question of how construction can become expression without pitifully yielding to a lamenting subjectivity. The slow movement of the Fourth String Quartet—a twice-repeated sequence of dissolving recitative and the songlike formality of an *Abgesang* that in disposition resembles "Entrückung,"[60] Schoenberg's first composition outside of any key signature and the one that inaugurated his expressionist phase—is, along with the *march finale* of the Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, almost exaggeratedly explicit expression. No one eludes its force. It outstrips the private subject and leaves it behind. But even this force is not able to close the breach—and how should it be? These works are magnificent failures. However, it is not the composer but history that fails in the work. Schoenberg's most recent works are dynamic. Yet twelve-tone technique contradicts dynamics. Just as it severs the impulse between sounds, it refuses to abide the impulse of the whole. Just as it invalidates the concepts of *melos* and theme, it excludes the properly dynamic categories of form: motivic expansion, transition, and development. If the young Schoenberg recognized that from the main theme of the First Chamber Symphony no

"consequences" in the traditional sense could be drawn, the interdiction contained in that recognition remains in force for twelve-tone technique altogether. If one serial tone is as good as any other, how is it possible to "form a transition" without tearing the dynamic categories of form away from the compositional substance? Every row is as much "the" row as the previous one was, no more, no less; it is even accidental which one counts as the "basic" row. What, then, does "development" mean? Each tone is thematically worked out in terms of its relation to the row and none is "free"; the various parts can produce a greater or fewer number of combinations, but none can bind itself more closely to the material than can the first statement of the row. The totality of the thematic labor in the preliminary forming of the material makes a tautology of the visible thematic labor in the composition itself. This is why "development," ultimately, in the sense of strict construction, becomes illusory; and Berg well knew why he omitted development from the introductory allegretto of the *Lyric Suite,* his first twelve-tone composition.[61] These problems of form first come to a head in Schoenberg's most recent works, whose superficial disposition is much more distant from traditional forms than that of the earlier twelve-tone compositions. Certainly, the Woodwind Quintet is a sonata, but one that has been utterly constructed;[62] its form has in a sense been petrified in twelve-tone technique in which the "dynamic" components of the form stand like monuments to the past. In the early period of twelve-tone technique—most candidly in those works that bear the name "suite" but also, for instance, in the rondo of the Third String Quartet—Schoenberg played profoundly with the traditional forms. The discretion of their manifestation balanced their claim against that of the material in the most artistic suspension. In his more recent works, the seriousness of expression no longer permits solutions of this kind. For this reason, traditional forms are no longer conjured up literally, and in exchange, the dynamic claim of traditional forms is acknowledged in all its seriousness. The sonata form is no longer utterly constructed; on the contrary, it is truly reconstructed while renouncing its schematic husk. This is motivated not by merely stylistic considerations but rather by the gravest compositional exigencies. To date, official music theory has made no effort to clarify precisely the concept of "continuation" as a category of form, even though without the contrast between "event" and continuation, the major forms of traditional music—including Schoenberg's—

cannot be understood. There is a quality to the depth, proportion, and penetration of the characters of the continuation that is decisive for the value of the compositions and even for the value of the type of form altogether. It is in the course of the music that what is great in it becomes apparent, when a piece truly becomes a composition, when it begins to move under its own momentum and to transcend the simple factuality of what is thematically given. If the mere rhythmical movement in traditional music took over this task and, admittedly, also the happiness of that moment, if the idea of this moment is the source of energy from which every measure of Beethoven is drawn, it is in romanticism that the question of this instant is fully posed and, just for this reason, becomes at the same time unanswerable. It is the true superiority of the "great forms" that only they are able to engender this moment in which music comes together as a composition. This moment is in principle foreign to song, and for this reason, according to the most demanding standard, songs are a subordinate form. They remain immanent to their inspiration, whereas great music is constituted in its liquidation. This liquidation, however, is achieved retrospectively through the verve of the continuation. The capacity for this is Schoenberg's great strength. Accordingly, secondary themes, such as that which begins at measure 25 of the Fourth String Quartet, and transitions, such as the melody of the second violin that begins at measure 42, do not peer out heterogeneously through masks of conventional form. They actually want to continue and constitute a development. In fact, twelve-tone technique itself, which prohibits dynamic form, seduces to it. It reveals the impossibility of achieving a formal articulation that truly remains at every instant equally near a midpoint. Although it argues against the categories of theme, continuation, and mediation, it attracts them. The lapsing of all twelve-tone music after the incisive exposition of the row tears it into principal and secondary events, as in traditional forms. Its organization comes to resemble a structure of theme and "elaboration." And thus, conflict becomes inevitable. For it is obvious that the specific "characters" of the resuscitated themes—which are so strongly distinguished from the intentionally general, almost indifferent style of the thematic material of earlier twelve-tone music—do not emerge autonomously from twelve-tone technique; on the contrary, they are imposed by the ruthless will of the composer. Their relation is necessarily external, and this is inseparably bound up with the totality of the technique

itself. The inexorably closed unity of technique establishes narrow boundaries. Everything that transcends it, everything constitutively new—the object of Schoenberg's fierce endeavor in his most recent work—is prohibited in the calculated multiplicity of technique. Twelve-tone technique arose out of the genuinely dialectical principle of variation. This principle postulated that insistence on what is ever the same and its sustained analysis in composition—for all motivic labor is analysis insofar as it divides the given into the most minimal elements—results in what is ceaselessly new. Through variation, the musically posited—strictly speaking, the theme—transcends itself. However, by elevating the principle of variation to totality, as an absolute, twelve-tone technique abrogated it in a final movement of the concept. Once variation becomes total, the possibility of musical transcendence vanishes; once everything is equally absorbed in variation, a "theme" no longer remains, and every musical phenomenon is indifferently determined as a permutation of the row; nothing at all is transformed in the universality of transformation. Everything remains as it was, and twelve-tone technique converges with the aimless transcribing of the pre-Beethovian form of variation, the paraphrase. The tendency inherent in the whole history of European music since Franz Joseph Haydn, so tightly entwined with its contemporaneous German philosophy, is thus brought to a standstill. Indeed, composition as such is suspended. The concept of a theme is itself absorbed by the row and is scarcely salvageable from its domination. It is objectively the program of twelve-tone composition to construct the new—every contour internal to the form—as a stratum secondary to the serial preformation of the material. It is precisely this that miscarries: The new always enters twelve-tone construction accidentally, arbitrarily, and at decisive moments antagonistically. Twelve-tone technique leaves no choice. Either it persists in pure immanence of form, or the new is haphazardly inserted into it. Thus, the dynamic characters of recent works are themselves not new. They stem from the repertoire. They are drawn by abstractions from pre-twelve-tone music, and indeed—in the majority of cases—from music that is anterior to free atonality: In the first movement of the Fourth String Quartet these characters are reminiscent of Schoenberg's First Symphony. From the "themes" of Schoenberg's last tonal compositions—also the last that admitted the concept of a theme—the gestures have been taken in charge but detached from their material premises. Each gesture, designated by its

dynamic marking as "spirited" (*schwungvoll*), "energetic" (*energetico*), "impetuous" (*impetuoso*), or "lovable" (*amabile*), is allegorically burdened with what it is prohibited from realizing in the sonorous structure: urge toward the end, the image of escape. The paradoxes of this technique are that for it the image of the new covertly acquires the quality of being an old effect achieved by new means, and that the steely apparatus of twelve-tone technique sets its sights on what once emerged more freely, with greater necessity, out of the collapse of tonality.[63] The new will to expression finds itself remunerated by the expression of the old. The characters have the ring of quotations, and even in their dynamic markings a certain secret pride can be overheard to say, "this is again possible," whereas the question indeed remains as to whether it really *is* possible. The struggle between alienated objectivity and limited subjectivity is unresolved, and its irreconcilability is its truth. But it is conceivable that the inadequacy of expression, that the breach between it and the construction, can be determined as a deficiency of the construction, an irrationality of the rational technique. For the sake of its blind, self-posited law it deprives itself of expression and transposes it into a memory-image of the past while the expression itself intends a dream image of the future. In the face of the gravity of this dream, the constructivism of twelve-tone technique proves to be insufficiently constructive. It commands only the order of the elements without unlocking them to each other. The new, which this constructivism prohibits, is nothing other than the reconciliation of the elements, and here it fails.

The Composers. Not only the spontaneity of the composition but also the spontaneity of avant-garde composers is lamed. They find themselves facing as insoluble a task as would a writer who, for each sentence, was obliged to provide his own vocabulary and syntax.[64] The triumph of subjectivity over a heteronomous tradition, the freedom of allowing every musical moment to be itself, without subsumption, comes at a heavy price. The difficulties of the language that must be created are prohibitive. Not only is the composer burdened with a task that, previously, the intersubjective language of music largely took on itself, but if his ears are sharp enough, the composer must also become aware of the traits of the external and the mechanical in his self-made language in which the musical domination of nature terminates. In the act of composing,

he must objectively acknowledge the gratuitousness and brittleness of this language. The perpetual creation of language and the ineluctable absurdity inherent in a language of absolute alienation is not enough. Beyond this, the composer must indefatigably perform acrobatics to mitigate the pretentiousness of a self-made language, a pretentiousness that is only augmented the better he speaks it. He must hold in equilibrium the irreconcilable postulates of the process. What these efforts do not take on themselves is lost. Lunatic systems and their hollow rattle await, ready to engulf anyone who would guilelessly allege that his self-made language was confirmed. These difficulties are all the more pernicious as the subject fails to mature with them. The atomization of the musical details presupposed by the self-made language resembles the situation of the composing subject. The subject is fractured by the total domination that is evident in the aesthetic image of its own powerlessness. "That is what appears so new and outrageous in Schoenberg's music: this marvelously sure sense of direction in a chaos of new sounds."[65] This rhapsodic analogy shows the marks of an anxiety that is stated literally in the title of one of Maurice Ravel's tradition-bound piano works, *Une barque sur l'ocean.*[66] The open possibilities are frightening to a person who would not be their match even if the official musical life's communication industry permitted him materially to seize the moment and did not drown it out in advance with the familiar roar of what is ever the same. No artist is able on his own to transcend the contradiction between unchained art and enchained society: All that he is able to do, and perhaps on the verge of despair, is contradict the enchained society through unchained art. Given all the intentionless materials and levels that the movement of new music has laid bare—as though waiting unclaimed, there for the asking—it would be inexplicable that they had not lured even the slightly curious, not to mention kindred spirits, who might have surrendered themselves to the happiness of the yet unexplored, if the majority of them were not already so utterly bound up that they must forbid themselves this happiness and for this reason resent its mere possibility. They prohibit themselves not because they would not understand the new but because they do understand it. This reveals not only the fraudulence of their culture but an incapacity for truth that is in no way merely an individual incapacity. They are too weak to engage the forbidden. The waves of untamed sounds would crash meaninglessly over their heads if they sought to follow their allure.

The folkloristic, neoclassical, and collectivist schools share only a single aspiration: to remain in the harbor and disburse the used and the prefabricated as if they were the new. Their taboos target the musical eruption and their modernity is nothing but an attempt to domesticate its forces and resettle them where possible in an era prior to individualism, a stylistic costume that suits the present so well. Proud of the discovery that the interesting has begun to be boring, these schools of music want to convince themselves and others that the boring is therefore interesting. They do not even get so far as to notice the repressive tendencies inherent in the musical emancipation itself. It is precisely that they do not want to be emancipated in the first place that makes them so timely and applicable. But even the inaugurators of new music who bear the consequences are afflicted with this type of powerlessness and show symptoms of the same collective disease that they undoubtedly perceive in the hostile reaction they receive. The number of compositions that get so far as serious consideration has shrunken, and what is still being written bears the traces not only of unspeakable effort but also, often enough, of actual aversion. The diminishing quantity has obvious social reasons. There is no more demand. But even the expressionist Schoenberg was tempestuously productive and radically opposed the market. The exhaustion is due to the difficulties inherent in composition itself, difficulties that stand in a preestablished relation with external difficulties. In the five years prior to World War I, Schoenberg traversed the full compass of the musical material from through-constructed tonality to the beginnings of the row technique by way of free atonality. These five years are hardly matched by his twenty years practicing twelve-tone technique. They were more involved with control over the material than with the works whose totality the new technique was to have reconstructed, although there was no lack of great works. Just as twelve-tone technique seems to instruct composers, there is a didactic element peculiar to twelve-tone works. Many of them, such as the Woodwind Quintet and the Variations for Orchestra, resemble models. The preponderance of the didactic attests egregiously to the way the developmental tendency of the technique has outstripped the traditional concept of the "work." By the withdrawal of productive interest from the individual composition and its turn largely toward the typical possibilities of composition, which receive no more than their respective exemplification in the models, composition itself is transformed into a mere means for the manufacture

of a pure language of music. The concrete works themselves must pay the penalty. Keen-eared composers—not merely the practical ones—can no longer exactly trust their autonomy: It loses its footing. This is especially evident even in pieces such as Berg's aria "Der Wein" and his Violin Concerto. In the simplicity of the Violin Concerto, for instance, Berg's style can hardly be said to have mellowed. The simplicity of the composition originates in the urgency of the making and the need to be understood. The transparency is too comfortable, and the simple substance is arbitrarily complicated by a twelve-tone procedure that is external to the work. The use of dissonance as a sign of calamity and of consonance as a sign of reconciliation are relics of the New German school.[67] The composition suffers from the absence of a counterpart sufficient to close the stylistic fissure between the quoted Bach chorale and the rest of the composition. Only Berg's extramusical force was able to bring it off over and above this fissure. As only in the work of Mahler before him, the utterance rises over the fractured work, whose inadequacy Berg transforms into the expression of boundless melancholy. In *Lulu,* however, the whole of Berg's mastery converges as that of a composer for the stage. The music is as rich as it is sparing; in lyrical tone, above all in the part of Alwa and in the finale, it surpasses all else that Berg has written; it is the Robert Schumann of the *Der Dichter Spricht*[68] that becomes the lavish gesture of the entire opera. The orchestra is so seductive and colorful that any kind of impressionism, any kind of neoromanticism, pales by comparison; the dramatic effect would be indescribable if the instrumentation of the third act were ever completed. The work avails itself of twelve-tone technique. But what is even more true of it than of any of Berg's works since the *Lyric Suite* is that the entire effort aims at making the twelve-tone technique unnoticeable. It is precisely the happiest sections of *Lulu* that are plainly thought out in terms of dominant functions and chromatic steps. The essential severity of twelve-tone construction is unrecognizably mollified. Serial technique is itself scarcely recognizable except at those moments when Berg's insatiability finds that it does not dispose over the infinite store of notes it would need. The rigidity of the system now makes itself felt only in such restrictions and has otherwise been entirely surmounted—but surmounted more through the adaptation of twelve-tone technique to traditional music than through the actual transcendence of its antagonistic elements. The twelve-tone technique of *Lulu* and the musical means

of altogether different provenance—such as the leitmotif and the summoning up of large instrumental forms—help secure the consistency of the composition. Serialism is more employed as a security device than carried through according to its own demands. It would be possible to imagine the whole of *Lulu* renouncing the virtuoso twelve-tone manipulations without anything decisive changing. The triumph of the composer lies in his ability to do everything else, and twelve-tone composition as well; he fails to recognize that, in truth, the critical impulse of twelve-tone technique excludes all the others. Berg's weakness is his inability to renounce anything, whereas the power of all new music lies precisely in renunciation. What is unreconciled in the late Schoenberg—what refers beyond intransigence to the antagonisms in the music itself—is as superior to Berg's reconciliation as is inhuman coldness to bighearted warmth. The innermost beauty, however, of Berg's late works is due less to the unified surface of their success than to their profound impossibility, to the hopeless self-exertion announced by that surface, the desperately sad sacrifice of the future to the past. For this reason his works are opera, and only to be understood through opera's law of form. Webern is situated at the opposite extreme. Berg wanted to break the spell of twelve-tone technique by invoking it; Webern wanted to compel it to speak. All Webern's last works seek to draw the secret from the alienated, rigidified material of the rows that the alienated subject can no longer instill in them. His first twelve-tone compositions, most of all the String Trio, are to date the most successful efforts to resolve the externality of serial prescriptions into concrete musical structure without translating it in a traditional fashion or substituting anachronisms. Webern would not settle for this. Schoenberg in fact considered twelve-tone technique, in compositional praxis, merely the preparation of the material. He "composes" with twelve-tone rows; he disposes sovereignly over them, indeed, as if nothing had transpired. The result is ceaseless conflicts between the constitution of the material and the procedure imposed on it. Webern's late music demonstrates a critical consciousness of these conflicts. It is his goal to make the demands of the rows coincide with those of the work. He sought to fill in the gaps between material organized according to rules and freely autonomous composition. This, however, meant the most radical renunciation: The act of composing puts the existence of the composition in question. Schoenberg assaults the row. He composes twelve-tone music as if twelve-tone technique did not exist. Webern

brings twelve-tone technique into reality and no longer composes: Silence is the residuum of his mastery. In the opposition of the two composers, the irreconcilability of the contradictions becomes music in which twelve-tone technique is inevitably ensnarled. The late Webern proscribes the manufacture of musical forms. They are already sensed to be external to the pure nature of the row. His last works are the schemata of rows translated into notes. He wants to abolish the difference between the series and the composition and to do this by especially ingenious selection of rows. The rows are structured as if they were already the composition; so that, for example, one set of twelve is divided into three groups of four tones that in turn stand in a relation of basic row, inversion, retrograde, and inversion of the retrograde. An incomparable density of relationship is thus guaranteed. As if on their own, all the fruits of the richest canonic imitation accrue to such composition without it needing to trouble itself further. Early on, Berg criticized this technique for jeopardizing the programmatically stipulated possibility of large forms. Through the subdivision of the rows all relations are transposed into such narrow frameworks that the possibilities of development are immediately exhausted. The majority of Webern's twelve-tone compositions are restricted to the circumference of expressionist miniatures, and it might well be asked why such excessive organization is required when there is scarcely anything to organize. The function of twelve-tone music in Webern is scarcely less problematical than in Berg. The thematic labor ranges across such minimal entities that it virtually cancels itself. The mere interval, which functions as a motivic unit, is so characterless that it no longer accomplishes the synthesis expected of it, and the threat of disintegration into disparate tones looms even though this threat as such does not consistently gain a voice for itself. With a peculiarly infantile musical animism, the material itself is vested with the capacity to posit musical meaning. It is precisely here, however, that the astrological mischief comes through: The relations of intervals according to which the twelve tones are ordered are opaquely revered as cosmic formulae. The self-proclaimed law of the row is truly fetishized in the moment when the composer puts his trust in the supposition that this law has meaning in itself. In Webern's Piano Variations and in his String Quartet the fetishism of the row is blatant. They feature nothing more than monotonously symmetrical presentations of serial marvels that, in pieces such as the first movement of the Piano Variations, come

close to a parody of a Brahms intermezzo. The mysteries of the row are incapable of providing consolation for the simplification of music: Splendid intentions, such as the fusing of genuine polyphony and genuine sonata, remain powerless, even if the construction is realized, as long as this construction is limited to mathematical relations of the material and is not carried out in the musical form itself. It passes judgment on this music that, for its performance to give the monotonous tone groups even the shadow of meaning, it must distance itself infinitely far from the rigid notation, especially of its rhythm, whose aridity is for its part dictated by the serial animism and thus is an aspect of the matter itself. The fetishism of the row in Webern, however, does not bespeak mere sectarianism. A dialectical constraint is still at work in it. The most rigorous critical experience compelled the important composer toward the cult of pure proportions. He became aware of the derived, lapsed, extraneous nature of everything subjective that music would be able to accomplish: He recognized, in other words, the insufficiency of the subject. That twelve-tone music, by virtue of its mere exactitude, shuts out subjective expression characterizes only one side of the matter. The other is that the right of the subject to expression is itself forfeited, and a condition is conjured up that no longer exists. The subject is now apparently so immobilized that all it would be able to say has already been said. It is so spellbound by horror that it can no longer say what would be worth saying. It is so powerless in the face of reality that the claim to expression verges on vanity, although no other claim is left to Webern. The subject has become so lonely that it can no longer seriously hope of finding another who would understand it. In Webern the musical subject, falling silent, abdicates; Webern abandons himself to the material, which assures him indeed of nothing more than the echo of muteness. His melancholic foundering, even in its purest expression, shrinks back mistrustfully from the trace of the commodity without indeed gaining mastery of the expressionless as his own truth. What would be possible is not possible.

Avant-Garde and Doctrine. The possibility of music itself has become uncertain. Not that it is endangered because it is decadent, individualistic, and asocial, as the reactionary reproach claims. It is all too little that. The determinate freedom in which music attempted to

reconceive its anarchic situation reversed before its very eyes into an image of the world against which it rebels. It flees forward into orderliness, though this does not work out for it. By complying blindly, unhesitatingly, with the historical tendency of its own material and effectively committing itself to the world spirit—which is not universal reason—its innocence accelerates the catastrophe that history is preparing for all art. Music concedes the legitimacy of history and therefore history would like to quash it. This, however, once again legitimates moribund music and bestows on it the paradoxical opportunity to survive. The destruction of art is wrong in a world that is wrong. Art's truth is the negation of a compliancy toward which its central principle—flawless exactitude—has driven it. So long as an art that is constituted in the categories of mass production contributes to ideology and so long as its technique is one of repression, that other art, itself functionless, has its function. It alone, in its most recent, most rigorous products, delineates the image of total repression rather than its ideology. As the unreconciled image of reality, that art becomes incommensurable with reality. Thus, it protests against the injustice of the just verdict. The technical procedures, which make it into an objective image of repressive society, are more progressive than the procedures of mass reproduction; abreast of the times, it outstrips new music in order deliberately to serve repressive society. Mass reproduction and the production tailored to it are modern in the appropriation of industrial schemata, that of distribution most of all. But this modernity in no way comes in contact with the products. They manipulate their listeners with the most recent methods of psychology and propaganda and are themselves constructed propagandistically, and precisely for this reason they are bound to the eversameness of a rigid, brittle tradition. The helpless toil of serial composers knows nothing of the sleek statistical procedures of the hit-tune industry. In return, however, in their old-fashioned struggle, the rationality of their structures is all the more advanced. The contradiction between forces of production and relations of production also becomes manifest as one between relations of production and the products themselves. These contradictions are so heightened that progress and reaction have lost their univocal meaning. To still paint a picture or write a quartet may lag behind the division of labor and the experimental setup in film production, but the objective technical form of the painting and the quartet safeguards the potential of film that today is thwarted by

the mode of its production. The "rationality" of the painting and the quartet, however chimerically sealed in on itself and problematic in its uncommunicativeness, stands higher than the rationalization of film production. Film production manipulates predetermined objects that are from the beginning retrospectively conceived, and in resignation it abandons them to their externality without intervening in the object itself other than intermittently. However, from the many angles of reflection that photography powerlessly lets fall on the objects it reproduces, Pablo Picasso constructs objects that defy them. The situation is no different with twelve-tone composition. In its labyrinth overwinters what may escape the tightening grip of the ice age. Forty years ago, then an expressionist, Schoenberg wrote, "The artwork is a labyrinth in which at every point the expert knows the entrance and exit without the need of any red filament to follow. The more narrow, the more tangled the alleyways, the more confidently he steps toward the goal. Meanders—if there are such in artworks—set him on his course, and every remotest divagation leads him to the heart of the matter."[69] But for the labyrinth to be livable—Schoenberg continues—it is necessary anew to remove that red filament on which the enemy has a hold, while the "expert" observes "that the labyrinth is marked" and exposes "the clarity provided by guideposts as the makeshift of peasant cleverness." "This huckster's arithmetic has nothing in common with the artwork except the formulae. . . . The expert turns tranquilly away and sees the revenge of a higher justice reveal itself: a mathematical error."[70] If mathematical errors are not foreign to twelve-tone composition, most of it falls to the mercy of a higher justice precisely where they are most correct. In other words, if it is to hope to make it through the winter, music must emancipate itself as well from twelve-tone technique. This emancipation, however, is not to be accomplished by a return to the irrationality that preceded it and that is now thwarted at every turn by the postulates of exact composition that twelve-tone technique itself cultivated; rather, it is to be accomplished through the absorption of twelve-tone technique by free composition and of its rules by the critical ear. Only from twelve-tone technique can music learn to remain master of itself, but only if it does not become its slave. The didactic, paradigmatic character of Schoenberg's late works was itself created out of the character of the technique. What appears as the realm of its norms is simply the narrow passage of discipline through which all music must pass that does not want to fall

prey to the curse of contingency, long since anything but the promised land of its objectivity. Ernst Krenek was correct to compare twelve-tone technique with the rules of counterpoint abstracted from Giovanni Palestrina, to date the best school of composition. In such a comparison, resistance to a normative claim is implicit. What distinguishes didactic rules from aesthetic norms is the impossibility of consistently meeting the requirements of the former. This impossibility becomes the motor of the effort to learn. This effort must fail, and the rules themselves must again be forgotten if they are to bear fruit. In fact, the pedagogical system of rigorous counterpoint stands in exact analogy to the antinomies of twelve-tone composition. Its tasks, especially those of the so-called third species, are in principle unsolvable for the modern ear, except by tricks. For the rules of this school originated in a polyphonic thinking of a sort that did not know progressions by means of harmonic degrees and is able to be satisfied with the comprehension of a harmonic space that is defined by the constant repetition of a very few chords. It is not possible to ignore 350 years of specifically harmonic experience. The student who today devotes himself to the tasks of rigorous counterpoint necessarily brings to it, at the same time, harmonic desiderata such as, for instance, that of a meaningful chordal progression. The two together are incompatible, and satisfying solutions are apparently only to be found where the harmonic contraband has been successfully smuggled in through loopholes in the prohibitions. Just as Bach forgot those prohibitions and instead compelled polyphony to justify itself in relation to thoroughbass, the real indifference of the vertical and the horizontal will only be accomplished if the composition in every instant vigilantly, critically, produces the unity of the two dimensions. Prospects for this depend foremost on composition that no longer allows rows and rules to impose in any way and unperturbedly reserves to itself freedom of action. It is precisely to this end that music has been schooled by twelve-tone technique, though indeed not so much by what it has learned to permit as by what it has learned to forbid. The didactic legitimacy of twelve-tone technique, its brutal rigor as an instrument of freedom, stands out in bold relief against all other contemporary music that ignores such stringency. Twelve-tone technique is polemical no less than didactic. It is a long time since the questions posed have been those that animated new music in opposition to post-Wagnerian music, such as whether music should be authentic or inauthentic, lofty or realist,

programmatic or "absolute." The question now, rather, is the transmission of technical criteria in the face of mounting barbarism. If twelve-tone technique has successfully erected a dam against that barbarism, even if it has not itself entered the realm of freedom, it has done enough. At the least, it has at its disposal directives for resistance even if—given the prearranged unity of all—its directives could still be used for purposes of conformism. But with a steady grip, a merciless Samaritan, it opposes the collapse of musical experience.

Break from the Material. But this does not consume the whole of the importance of twelve-tone technique. It reduces the sonorous material, prior to being structured by the rows, to an amorphous substratum, in itself entirely indeterminate, on which the arbitrary compositional subject then imposes its system of rules and laws. The abstractness of these rules as well as their substratum derives from the incapacity of the subject to come into an adequate relation with the historical element of the material except in the circumference of the most general determinations. As a result, all qualities of the material are eliminated that in any way transcend this region. Only on the basis of the material's numerical determination by means of the series can the ever-increasing demand in the material of the chromatic scale for continual permutation—that is, the growing intolerance for the repetition of tones—be made to agree with the desire for the total musical domination of nature as the complete organization of the material. It is this abstract reconciliation that finally sets the self-posited system of rules in the subordinated material in opposition to the subject as an alienated, hostile, and dominating power. This power degrades the subject to a slave of the "material," understood as the empty quintessence of rules; and this transpires precisely in the moment in which the subject utterly subordinates the material to itself, that is, to its mathematical reason. Here again, however, in the static condition that music has reached, the contradiction is once more reproduced. The subject is unwilling to humble itself in subservience to its abstract identity in the material. For in twelve-tone technique, reason—as the objective reason of the material musical events—asserts itself blindly over the will of the subjects and thus ultimately prevails as irrationality. In other words, at the level of the sensual phenomenon of the music, which is the only way the phenomenon presents itself to concrete

experience, it is not possible to reconstruct the objective reason of the system. The exactitude of twelve-tone music cannot immediately be "heard," and this is the simplest way of naming what is futile in it. All that can actually be heard is that the constraint of the system prevails. But it is neither transparent in the concrete logic of the musical particular, nor does it permit the particular to develop out of itself where it wants to go. This moves the subject once again to break from its material, and this break constitutes the innermost tendency of Schoenberg's late style. Certainly, the growing indifference of the material—to which serial calculation does violence—involves an abstractness that the musical subject experiences as self-alienation. But it is at the same time by virtue of this neutralization that the subject breaks out of its ensnarlment in the natural material—which is inclusive of the domination of nature—in which to date the history of music has consisted. In its complete alienation through twelve-tone technique, and contrary to the will of the subject, the aesthetic totality was shattered for the subject—a totality against which the subject had struggled in vain in the expressionist period but only in order to reconstruct it, again in vain, through twelve-tone technique. The musical language is dissociated into fragments. In those fragments, however, the subject is able, obliquely, to step forward "meaningfully"—in Goethe's sense—where formerly the restrictions of the material totality had held it spellbound. Shuddering before the alienated language of music, a language no longer its own, the subject wins back its own self-determination, though not as an organic language but as one of inserted meanings. Music becomes conscious of itself as that knowledge that great music has always been. Schoenberg once spoke against animalistic warmth and pitifulness in music. Only the most recent phase of music—in which the isolated subject communicates as if from across an abyss of silence precisely through the complete alienation of its language—justifies a coldness that, as a self-contained mechanical functioning, is good only for producing disaster. This phase at the same time vindicates Schoenberg's imperious disposal over the series by comparison with Webern's careful manner of immersing himself in the series for the sake of the unity of the composition. Schoenberg distances himself from such proximity to the material. His coldness is that of having escaped, as he apotheosizes it, from the heights of the Second Quartet as the "air of another planet." The indifferent[71] material of twelve-tone music now becomes indifferent for

the composer himself. Thus, he evades the spell of the material dialectic. The sovereignty with which he handles the material does not only show traces of administrative impassivity. It is also marked by the rejection of aesthetic necessity, of a totality that establishes itself in complete externality with twelve-tone technique. Indeed, its externality itself becomes a means of refusal. Precisely because, for Schoenberg, the material that has become external no longer speaks, he compels it to mean what he wants it to mean, and the fissures, especially the striking contradiction between twelve-tone mechanics and expression, become ciphers of such meaning. Still, even so, he stands in a tradition that assimilates the late works of great music to each other. "The caesuras . . . the sudden interruptions that more than anything else characterize late Beethoven, are those moments of breaking free; the work is silent at the instant when it is left behind, and turns its emptiness outward. Not until then does the next fragment attach itself, transfixed by the spell of subjectivity breaking free and conjoined for better or for worse with what preceded it; for the mystery is between these fragments, and it cannot be invoked otherwise than in the figure they create together. This sheds light on the paradox that late Beethoven is called both subjective and objective. Objective is the fractured landscape, subjective: the only light in which it glows. He does not bring about their harmonious synthesis. As the power of dissociation, he tears them apart in time, in order, perhaps, to preserve them for the eternal. In the history of art, late works are the catastrophes."[72] What Goethe attributed to age, the gradual retreat from appearance, has its correlative in aesthetics as the increasing neutralization of the material. In the late Beethoven, the barren conventions through which the compositional stream quiveringly flows play precisely the role assumed in Schoenberg's last works by the twelve-tone system. But as a tendency to dissociation, the growing neutralization of the material has been palpable since the beginning of twelve-tone technique. As long as there has been twelve-tone technique, there has been a long series of "secondary works"—arrangements, pieces that forgo twelve-tone technique, or those that make it serve other aims and effectively make it fungible. The counterpart to the heavily armored twelve-tone compositions, from the Woodwind Quintet to the Violin Concerto, are the parerga, which indeed through their number gain an importance of their own. Schoenberg produced orchestral transcriptions of works from Bach and Brahms and extensively reworked George

Frideric Handel's B-flat Major Concerto.[73] Apart from several choral pieces, the Suite for String Orchestra, the *Kol Nidre,* opus 39, and the Second Chamber Symphony, opus 38, are all tonal. The *Accompaniment to a Cinematographic Scene* serves a set function, a tendency apparent in the opera *Von heute auf morgen* and many choral works. There is reason to suppose that all his life Schoenberg enjoyed committing heresies against the "style" whose own inexorability he established. The chronology of his production is rich in stylistic overlappings. The tonal *Gurrelieder* were not completed until 1911, the time of *Die Glückliche Hand.* It was the grandly conceived compositions, the *Jakobsleiter* and *Moses und Aron,* that occupied him over several decades: The need to finish works was unknown to him.[74] This is a rhythm of production more familiar in literature than in music, except perhaps in the later periods of Beethoven and Wagner. As is well known, the young Schoenberg was compelled to earn a living by orchestrating operettas. It would be worth the trouble of tracking down those forgotten scores, not only because it can be supposed that as a composer he did not allow himself to be completely suppressed in them, but above all because they might give evidence of that countertendency that obtrudes ever more distinctly, with an achieved mastery, in the "secondary works" of the late period. It is hardly by accident that one thing is common to all the late secondary works: a more conciliatory approach to the public. Schoenberg's inexorability and his style of conciliation stand in the deepest relation to each other. The inexorable music represents the truth of society in opposition to society. The conciliatory music recognizes the right to music that society, as a false society, still has in spite of it all, just as society reproduces itself as a false society and thus, by surviving, objectively provides elements of its own truth. As the representative of the most advanced aesthetic consciousness, Schoenberg touches at the limits of that consciousness in the sense that the legitimacy of its truth refutes the legitimacy that inheres even in a false need. This consciousness constitutes the substance of the secondary works. The increasing neutralization of the material permits, intermittently, the convergence of both claims. Even tonality adapts to total construction, and for the late Schoenberg what he composes with is no longer utterly decisive. A composer for whom the procedure means all and the material nothing is able to make use of what is obsolete and is thus, as such, available to the enchained consciousness of the consumer. Admittedly, however, this enchained consciousness is

quick enough of hearing to seal itself off as soon as this worn-out material is truly snatched up in the compositional grip. The appetite of the consumer is interested not in the material as such but only in the trace that the market has left behind in it, and this trace is precisely what is destroyed by Schoenberg, even in his secondary works, by the reduction of the material to bare vehicles of the meaning that he confers on it. What enables him to do this, the source of his "sovereignty," is his power for forgetting. Perhaps nothing distinguishes Schoenberg so fundamentally from all other composers as his capacity, ever and again, with every reversal in his compositional practice, to discard and disavow what he previously possessed. The rebellion against experience as possession must be among the deepest impulses of his expressionism. The First Chamber Symphony, with its preponderance of woodwinds, the overstrained string soloists, the compression of superimposed parts, sounds as if Schoenberg never surpassed the luminous plenitude of the Wagnerian orchestra that still fills the Six Orchestral Songs. The compositions that open a new phase—the Three Pieces for Piano, opus 11, emissaries of atonality, and later the waltz of opus 23, the model of twelve-tone composition—demonstrate the greatest clumsiness. The pieces take up an aggressive tact toward routine and that ominous good musicianship to which responsible German composers since Felix Mendelssohn have repeatedly fallen victim. The spontaneity of musical intuition represses everything predetermined, rejects whatever had been learned, and acknowledges exclusively the power of the imagination. Only this power of forgetting, akin to that element of a barbaric enmity toward art, which through the immediacy of reaction in every moment puts in question the mediations of musical culture, counterbalances the magisterial disposal over technique and salvages tradition for it. For tradition is the presence of the forgotten, and Schoenberg's vigilance is so great that it itself exercises a technique of forgetting. This technique now enables Schoenberg to employ the iterative twelve-tone series in powerfully progressive compositions or to utilize tonality for constructions modeled on serial technique. It is only necessary to compare types so related to each other as are Schoenberg's Six Little Piano Pieces, opus 19, and Webern's Five Movements for String Quartet, opus 5, to become aware of Schoenberg's sovereignty. Where Webern links the expressionist miniatures through the most subtle motivic workings, Schoenberg—who developed all possible motivic devices—lets them go unimpeded and,

eyes shut, allows himself to be guided where tone after tone takes him. In forgetfulness, subjectivity finally reaches incommensurably beyond the rigor and exactitude of the composition that consists in its own omnipresent self-recollection. The power of forgetting has been retained by Schoenberg in his late works. He annuls his fidelity to the absolute domination of the material that he himself established. He breaks with the unmediated, present, and clear intuitability of the composition that classical aesthetics called "symbolic" and to which not a measure of his work ever corresponded. As an artist, he wins back freedom for mankind. The dialectical composer brings the dialectic to a halt.

Music as Knowledge. Through antipathy toward art, the artwork converges with knowledge. From the beginning, it has been the focal point around which Schoenberg's music has turned. More have been put off by this than by the dissonance; it is the source of the hue and cry over intellectualism. The closed artwork was not an act of knowledge; rather, it made knowledge disappear into itself. It made itself an object of direct "intuition" and enshrouded every fissure through which thinking could escape the immediate givenness of the aesthetic object. Thus the traditional artwork renounced thinking, the binding relation to what it itself is not. As aconceptual intuition, the artwork was "blind," as Kant would say. That it is to be directly intuitable simulates the overcoming of the chasm between subject and object, whereas it is in the articulation of this chasm that knowledge consists: The intuitability, the immediate clarity of art, is itself art's semblance. Only the disrupted work relinquishes—along with its unity—its intuitability and with this, its semblance. It is affirmed as an object of thought and itself participates in thinking: It becomes a means of the subject, whose intentions it bears and maintains, whereas in the closed artwork, the subject is by its own intention submersed. The closed artwork adopts the perspective of the identity of subject and object. In its collapse, its disaggregation, this identity proves to be a spurious semblance, and the legitimacy of knowledge, which contrasts subject and object, proves to be the greater and the more moral artwork. In this relation it is honed to knowledge. New music absorbs its antagonism to reality into its own consciousness and into its own configuration. Traditional art itself knows all the more, the more deeply it forms the contradictions of its own

material, and thus bears witness to the contradictions of the world in which it stands. Its depth is that of a judgment on the bad. But that through which it—as knowing—judges is aesthetic form. Only by measuring the contradiction against the possibility of its resolution is the contradiction not merely registered but known. In the act of knowing that art carries out, its form criticizes the contradiction by indicating the possibility of its reconciliation and thus of what is contingent, surmountable, and dependent in the contradiction. For this reason, the form also becomes the element in which the act of knowledge comes to a halt. As the concretion of the possible, art has always repudiated the reality of the contradiction on which it is based. As knowledge, however, it becomes radical in that moment in which it is no longer content with itself as such. This is the threshold of new art. It so deeply grasps its own contradictions that they no longer permit a solution. It heightens the idea of form to such a pitch that the aesthetically achieved must declare itself bankrupt when faced with it. New art leaves the contradiction standing and exposes the barren bedrock of its categories of judgment, the form. It casts away the dignity of the judge and abdicates, stepping down to take the side of the plaintiff who can be reconciled only by reality. Only in the fragmentary work, renouncing itself, is the critical content liberated[75]—liberated, that is, exclusively in the collapse of the closed artwork and not in the undifferentiated superimposition of doctrine and image, as is the case in archaic works. For only in the sphere of necessity, which closed artworks represent monadologically, is art able to appropriate the power of objectivity that ultimately makes it capable of knowledge. The basis of this objectivity is that the discipline, which is imposed on the subject by the closed artwork, mediates the objective exigency of the entire society, of which the latter knows as little as does the subject. It is raised critically to the level of evidence in the same moment in which the subject breaks this discipline. This act is one of truth only when it encompasses the social exigency, which it negates. Concessively, the subject abandons the work's hollow center to the socially possible. The liquidation of art—of the closed artwork—becomes an aesthetic problem, and the increasing neutralization of the material brings with it the renunciation of the identity of content and appearance in which these traditional ideas of art came to term. The role that the choir plays in late Schoenberg is the visible sign of this abdication in favor of knowledge. The subject sacrifices the intuitability of the

work, compels it to become doctrine and epigram, and comprehends itself as the representative of a nonexistent community. The canons of the late Beethoven are analogous and shed light on Schoenberg's own praxis of canon writing. The choral texts are brusquely deliberative throughout. This tendency, a quality of the music itself, is illuminated most in eccentricities, such as the use of antipoetic foreign words or in the literary quotations of the *Jakobsleiter.* The atrophy of meaning in the composition corresponds to this. For what constitutes the "meaning" of music, even of free atonality, is nothing other than its nexus. Schoenberg went so far as to define the theory of composition directly as the theory of the musical nexus. Everything that in music can rightly be called meaningful has a claim on the nexus insofar as every detail goes beyond itself and refers to the whole, just as, inversely, the whole contains in itself the determinate demand for this detail. This quality of aesthetic elements of being directed beyond themselves while they at the same time remain wholly within the space of the artwork is perceived as the meaning of the artwork—as aesthetic meaning: as being more than appearance, and at the same time as being no more than appearance; in other words: as a totality of appearance. If technical analysis demonstrates the emerging element of meaninglessness as constitutive of twelve-tone technique, this analysis comprehends not merely the critique of twelve-tone technique that the total, fully constructed—that is, fully integrated—artwork comes into conflict with its own idea. Rather, this analysis also indicates that by virtue of a dawning meaninglessness the immanent unity of the work is terminated. This unity consists precisely in the nexus that constitutes meaning. After its elimination, music transforms itself into protest. What becomes inexorably evident in the technological constellations was announced with an explosive force, akin to Dadaism, in the era of free atonality in the truly incommensurable early work of Krenek, especially in his Second Symphony. It is the rebellion of music against its own meaning. The nexus of these works is the negation of the nexus, and their triumph resides in the fact that music itself proves to be the opponent of the language of words in that it is able to speak meaninglessly, whereas all closed musical artworks stand together under the sign of pseudomorphosis, as the language of words. All organic music emerged from the *stile recitativo.* From the beginning it was modeled on speech. The emancipation of music today is synonymous with its emancipation from the language of words, and this is the lightning

that flashes up in the destruction of "meaning." But it concerns expression first of all. The theoreticians of Neue Sachlichkeit most wanted to restore "absolute" music and purify it of its expressive element. What in truth occurs is the dissociation of meaning and expression. Just as the absence of meaning in those pieces by Krenek accords them the most powerful expression, that of objective catastrophe, the inserted expressive elements in the most recent twelve-tone compositions indicate the loosening of expression from the consistency of the language. Subjectivity, the bearer of expression in traditional music, is not its ultimate substratum any more than the "subject"—to date the substratum of all art—is already man. As at its end, so the origin of music reaches beyond the sphere of intentions, that of meaning and subjectivity. It is a gestural art, closely akin to crying. It is the gesture of dissolving. The tension of the facial muscles yields—the tension that, while the face directs itself pragmatically toward the world, separates it from this world. Music and crying open the lips and bring delivery from restraint. The sentimentality of inferior music caricatures what superior music is truly capable of shaping at the boundary of frenzy: reconciliation. The man who surrenders to tears in music that no longer resembles him at the same time allows the stream of what he himself is not—what was dammed up back of the world of things—to flow back into him. In tears and in singing, the alienated world is entered. "Tears pour, the earth has taken me back"[76]—this is the gesture of music. Thus, the earth reclaims Eurydice. The gesture of returning, not the feeling of waiting, describes the expression of all music, even in a world worthy of death.

Stance toward Society. The potential of the most recent phase of music registers a shift in its social position. Music is no longer a testimony to and a copy of the inward but is now a relation to reality that cognizes it rather than, as it did formerly, conciliating it in the image. In the most extreme isolation, its social character is transformed. Traditional music became "autonomous" as its tasks and techniques separated from their basis in society. That music's autonomous development reflected social development was never to be extracted as simply and clearly as was possible in the case of the novel. Not only does music lack clear-cut social content, but the more purely its laws of form are elaborated and music is entrusted to them, the more does music—at first—

seal itself up against the manifest representation of the society in which it has its enclaves. It is precisely to this sealing in of music that it owes its social popularity and respect. Music is ideology insofar as it asserts itself as an ontological being-in-itself, beyond society's tensions. Even Beethoven's music, bourgeois music at its height, reverberates with the roar and ideals of the heroic years of its class just as dreams in the early-morning hours resound with the noise of the day; and the social content of great music is grasped not by sensual listening but only the conceptually mediated knowledge of its elements and their configuration. The crude attribution of music to classes and groups is pure assertion and reverses all too easily into foolish pranks and agitation against "formalism," branding as bourgeois decadence everything that refuses to engage in the games of existing society and crowning the remnants of bourgeois composition, late-romantic sentimental plush, with the dignity of a people's democracy. To date, music has only existed as a product of the bourgeois class; a product that in its fractures and concrete configuration at once embodies the whole of society and registers it aesthetically. In this, traditional and emancipated music are of a piece. Feudalism scarcely produced its "own" music; rather, it always had it delivered by the urban bourgeoisie. And the proletariat, as a mere object of the domination of the whole society, was prohibited from constituting itself as a musical subject by the repression that shaped its nature as well as by its position in the system. Only in the realization of freedom, freed of all manipulative management, would the proletariat achieve that subjectivity. In the given order of things, the existence of other than bourgeois music is dubious. In contrast to this social order, the class origin of individual composers or indeed their classification as *petit-* or *grand-bourgeois* is just as arbitrary as wanting to read the essence of new music out of a social reception that hardly distinguishes among composers as divergent as Schoenberg, Stravinsky, and Hindemith. Moreover, the private political attitudes of authors stand largely in the most accidental and insignificant relationship to the content of their works. The shift of social content in radical new music, which is expressed in its reception only negatively, as witnessed by the empty concert halls, is not to be sought in some kind of musical partisanship. Rather, as the undeviating microcosm of the antagonistic constitution of man today, it breaks through those walls from within that aesthetic autonomy so carefully built up around itself. It was implicit in the sense of class in traditional music to proclaim,

through its seamless immanence of form as well as through the agreeableness of its facade, that classes basically do not exist. New music, which is unable to intervene willfully in the social struggle without damaging its own consistency, involuntarily takes up a social stance—as its enemies well know—in that it abandons the deception of harmony that has become unsustainable in the face of the catastrophe toward which reality is veering. The isolation of radical modern music is due not to its asocial content but to its social content, in that by virtue of its quality alone—and all the more emphatically the more it allows this pure quality to emerge—it touches on the social disaster rather than volatilizing it in the deceitful claim to humanity as if it already existed. It is no longer ideology. In this, in its remoteness, music converges with a fundamental social transformation. In the present phase, in which the apparatuses of production and domination are fused together, the question of the mediation of superstructure and infrastructure—like all social mediations—begins to become altogether obsolete. As are all sedimentations of objective spirit, artworks are the thing itself. They are the hidden essence of society, summoned into appearance. One can well ask whether art was ever that mediated copy of reality that it sought to present to the powers of the world and by which it sought to legitimate itself, and whether it has not in fact always been a way of responding to this world that has sought to resist its power. That would help explain why the dialectic of art, however autonomous, is not a dialectic closed in on itself; why its history is not a simple sequence of questions and answers. There is reason to suppose that the innermost wish of artworks is the desire to extract themselves from the dialectic that they obey. Artworks react to the suffering in the dialectical constraint. For them, this constraint is the incurable illness that necessity imposes on art. The lawfulness of the artwork's form, which originates in the material dialectic, at the same time also severs this dialectic. The dialectic is interrupted—interrupted, but by nothing other than the reality to which the dialectic stands in relation; that is to say, it is interrupted by society. Though artworks have scarcely ever imitated society, and their authors need know nothing whatever about it, the gestures of artworks are objective answers to objective social constellations, sometimes adapted to the need of those who consume them, more consistently in contradiction to them, but never conclusively circumscribed by this need. Every interruption in the continuity of artistic procedure, all forgetting, every new

beginning, indicates a way of reacting to society. The more exactly, however, the artwork responds to the heteronomy of society, the more the work is lost to the world. It is not in answering its question nor necessarily in choosing a particular question that the artwork reflects on society. Rather, art stands tensed in opposition to the horror of history. Sometimes it insists, sometimes it forgets. It cedes and it hardens itself. It persists or it renounces itself in order to outwit fate. The objectivity of the artwork is the fixation of such moments. Artworks resemble grimaces made by children, set forever by the sounding of the hour. The integral technique of composition originated neither in thoughts of the integral state nor in thoughts of its transcendence. Rather, it is an attempt to withstand reality and absorb the panic anxiety that corresponds to the integral state. For the sake of the human, the inhumanity of art must overtop that of the world. Artworks test their skill against the enigmas that the world devises for devouring men. The world is the Sphinx and the artist is the blinded Oedipus, and the artworks resemble his wise answer, which topples the Sphinx into the abyss. Thus, all art stands opposed to mythology. Its natural "material" contains the "answer," the one possible and correct answer, always already contained, though indistinctly. To give this response, to give voice to what is already there and fulfill the commandment of the ambiguous by the "one," itself ever contained in that commandment, is at the same time the new that goes beyond the old by fulfilling it. In this, in making schemata of the known for what has never been, lies the utter seriousness of artistic technique. This seriousness is all the greater because today the alienation inherent in the consistency of artistic technique itself forms the content of the artwork. The shocks of the incomprehensible—which artistic technique in the age of its meaninglessness dispenses—reverse. They illuminate the meaningless world. New music sacrifices itself to this. It has taken all the darkness and guilt of the world on itself. All its happiness is in the knowledge of unhappiness; all its beauty is in denial of the semblance of the beautiful. No one, neither individuals nor groups, wants to have anything to do with it. It dies away unheard, without an echo. Around music as it is heard, time springs together in a radiant crystal, while unheard it tumbles perniciously through empty time. Toward this latter experience, which mechanical music undergoes hour by hour, new music is spontaneously aimed: toward absolute oblivion. It is the true message in the bottle.