

SCHOENBERG AND THE OCCULT: *Some Reflections on the Musical Idea*

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I

In 1911, the same year that saw publication of Schoenberg's *Harmonielehre*, the Russian artist Wassily Kandinsky published *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*. At one point in his book, Kandinsky writes the following:

Shades of colour [*die Töne der Farben*], like those of sound, are of a much finer texture and awake in the soul emotions too fine to be expressed in words. Certainly each tone [*jeder Ton*] will find some probable expression in words, but it will always be incomplete, and that part which the word fails to express will not be unimportant but rather the very kernal of its existence [*das Wesentliche in demselben*].²

As Jelena Hahl-Koch has documented, Schoenberg agreed with much of what Kandinsky writes. With regard to Kandinsky's discussion of music, Schoenberg writes to him on 14 December 1911 that

I have still not read all of your book, only two thirds of it. Nevertheless, I must already write to you that I like it extraordinarily, particularly what you say about color in comparison to musical timbre. That is in accord with my own perceptions.³

The importance of the Kandinsky-Schoenberg relationship for the interpretation of Schoenberg's thought is further explored later in this study. For present purposes one may note Schoenberg seems in this instance to agree—or at least he does not specifically object—with Kandinsky's position that what is most fundamental to the musical experience, to "the very kernal of its existence," will always escape precise verbal description. That this ultimate musical essence seems to be beyond verbal characterization is not viewed as problematical but rather as crucial to the nature of music.⁴

Turning now to Schoenberg's own writing, one can easily assert that if any component has at once occupied a central place in Schoenberg's thought while also eluding every attempt at precise verbal characterization, it is the *musikalische Gedanke*. The problem of understanding Schoenberg's meaning arises first because he sometimes used different terms for what appears to be a single concept, and second because he sometimes reused a single term for different concepts.⁵ It is clear that Schoenberg himself despaired at his lack of success in defining the *musikalische Gedanke*. At one point in the *Gedanke* manuscript, Schoenberg gives up an attempt to define the *Gedanke* and comments:

I thought that I'd be able to state this clearly today. I had it so clearly in mind but I must still wait. Perhaps though I shall come to it yet.⁶

Considering Schoenberg's own failure to bring this notion to precise formulation, it may come as no surprise that this elusive component has given rise to various interpretations in the Schoenberg secondary literature; Charlotte Cross, Rudolf Stephan, Patricia Carpenter, Alexander Goehr, Severine Neff, and Claire Boge, for example, have each offered different readings.⁷

This study will suggest that while the *musikalische Gedanke* must be understood as the ultimate point of arrival in Schoenberg's musical thought, it is by its very nature beyond any complete or precise verbal description. That does not mean that it is beyond our understanding, only that any verbal characterization will necessarily be incomplete. This interpretation argues that Schoenberg's thinking was influenced in part by philosophical perspectives that would today be labeled occult. I believe that understanding such occult ideas sheds considerable light on the nature of the *musikalische Gedanke*. It is true that Schoenberg's *musikalische Gedanke* can be understood partly in the context of Schopenhauer's "aesthetics of absolute music."⁸ But an understanding of both Emanuel Swedenborg's ideas, as they are represented in the "philosophical" novels by Honoré de Balzac, and Rudolf Steiner's interpretation of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's scientific writing leads to a fuller recovery of Schoenberg's meaning. Interpreted in this intellectual context, it should become clear why the *Gedanke* eludes, and even should be expected to elude, precise verbal characterization. In order to establish a foundation for this interpretation of Schoenberg's thought, we need to look first into the mystical worlds of Emanuel Swedenborg and Rudolf Steiner.

II

Emanuel Swedenborg was born in Stockholm on 29 January 1688.⁹ Before age fifty-seven, there is nothing in Swedenborg's life that indicates a tendency toward mysticism. He was educated at Uppsala University where he majored in philosophy, graduating in 1709.¹⁰ He went on to hold a government office as a member of the Swedish Board of Mines. Swedenborg was an active scientist and philosopher, and in the period between 1720 and 1745 when he wrote twenty volumes of books and essays, many of which saw publication during this time. In 1745, however, things changed drastically for Swedenborg. After having had a number of strange visions and dreams, he had an experience in which he believed that he had been visited by a spirit. According to

Swedenborg this spirit told him that God needed a human to serve as a means of further revealing himself to mankind and Swedenborg was the one “called” to this mission. In the period between his vision of 1745 and his death in 1772, Swedenborg wrote a virtual library of theological books, including the *Arcana Coelestia* in twelve volumes, and the *Apocalypse Explained* in six.

Swedenborg’s theological writings drew the attention of a number of figures in late-eighteenth and nineteenth-century Europe. His writings, for example, drew criticism from the young Immanuel Kant and praise from Goethe.¹¹ His theory of correspondences especially exerted a strong influence on a number of nineteenth-century writers. Swedenborg taught that every object in the material world corresponds with an object in the spiritual world:

The whole natural world corresponds to the spiritual world—not just the natural world in general, but actually in details. So anything in the natural world that occurs from the spiritual world is called a correspondent. It is vital to understand that the natural world emerges and endures from the spiritual world, just like an effect from the cause that produces it.¹²

For Swedenborg, the Bible must be interpreted according to this system of correspondences between particular physical images and spiritual correspondents. According to literary critic Anna Balakian, this doctrine of correspondences was picked up, and in a certain sense transformed, by the nineteenth-century symbolist writers beginning with Baudelaire.¹³

Most important to the study of Schoenberg’s thought is the fact that Honoré de Balzac came under the influence of Swedenborg’s writings. V. S. Pritchett reports that Balzac was probably exposed to the mystic author through his mother’s interest in Swedenborg.¹⁴ However Balzac came to Swedenborg’s thought, his ideas played a decisive role in Balzac’s “philosophical novels,” and especially in his *Séraphita*. Balzac seemed to be intrigued by Swedenborg’s idea that there exist a series of finer worlds than ours. These worlds exist, more or less, “between the atoms” of our coarse physical reality. These worlds, or heavens, are populated by disembodied souls, or angels. Swedenborg insisted that he was able to speak with these souls and that they were the source of his spiritual knowledge.¹⁵

In *Séraphita*, the main character is an androgynous being, Séraphita/Séraphitus, who appears to two young lovers, to the man (Wilfred) as a woman and to the woman (Minna) as a man. In the final chapter, “The Assumption,” Séraphita/Séraphitus ascends into heaven and the young couple are treated to a glimpse into this higher realm, an experience that almost overpowers them in its strength. Balzac’s fascination with the possibility of glimpsing into a higher spiritual realm is not limited to this novel however. In *Louis Lambert*, a story important to Balzac scholars because it is in part autobiographical, Lambert becomes so engrossed in viewing the higher spiritual realm that by the end of the story he is no longer able to communicate with the physical world; his living body is stuck in the physical realm while his mind (or spirit) is firmly fastened on the higher spiritual world.

Balzac’s philosophical stories were not without influence in the late nineteenth century. Art historian Dore Ashton describes how Balzac’s “The Unknown Masterpiece” played important roles in the lives of Cézanne, Rilke, and Picasso.¹⁶

Again in this story we meet Balzac's fascination with the ability to see into other worlds. The old, master-painter Frenhofer paints a portrait that he believes is his greatest achievement. When his friends, however, finally talk the old master into showing it to them, they find that it is only blotches of color, except that in one corner they can discern a marvelous rendering of a woman's foot. The old painter is furious at his friends' lack of comprehension and throws them out of the studio. Clearly the master is able to see something that the others cannot.

Balzac's story "Gambara" presents a similar situation, but in this tale the main character is a composer rather than a painter. An Italian living in Paris, Gambara is considered eccentric because he composes music no one is able to understand; his listeners find the music too dissonant and therefore incomprehensible. If Frenhofer anticipates the abstract painter, Gambara as well could be seen to prefigure the atonal composer.¹⁷ Gambara "hears" into a world that others are unaware of. At the end of the story Gambara states his case in such a manner that he could almost be mistaken for Schoenberg:

My music is good. But as soon as music transcends feeling and becomes an idea [*l'idée*], only persons of genius should be hearers, for they alone are capable of responding to it! It is my misfortune that I have heard the chorus of angels, and believed that men could understand those strains.¹⁸

We know that Schoenberg held both Balzac and Swedenborg in very high regard as early as 1911. In his essay on Franz Liszt he writes:

Great men's effect, if any, on life is infinitely slight. If one observes what Plato, Christ, Kant, Swedenborg, Schopenhauer, Balzac and others thought, and compares it with what people now believe then one doubts whether progress exists.¹⁹

Whether Schoenberg actually studied Swedenborg directly is difficult to determine. Schoenberg does list one volume of Swedenborg in his library but it is unannotated.²⁰ Balzac, however, refers to the Swedish mystic throughout *Séraphita*; the third chapter especially describes Swedenborg and his philosophy in some detail. It is therefore possible that Schoenberg took his basic knowledge of Swedenborg from Balzac's novel.²¹ It is certain that Schoenberg read and admired many of Balzac's novels and Stuckenschmidt describes how especially taken Schoenberg was with *Séraphita*.²² A letter from Berg (1987, 135-36) also suggests that Schoenberg was very fond of *Louis Lambert*.²³

Schoenberg considered setting the assumption chapter of *Séraphita* in the early stages of *Die Jakobsleiter* and even considered combining it with August Strindberg's "Jacob Wrestling" from *Legends*.²⁴ Strindberg's story was written very much under the influence of Swedenborg's philosophy and so the combination of these two texts is not as unlikely as it might seem at first.²⁵ As far as Schoenberg's feeling for Strindberg's writing is concerned, the composer felt such a strong artistic affinity with the Swedish writer that he may even have mused over the fact that the names Arnold Schoenberg and August Strindberg are very similar.²⁶

Karl Wörner was perhaps the first to note the strong influence of Swedenborg's thought on Schoenberg's final version of the *Jakobsleiter* text. Wörner also notes that Swedenborg's thought plays a crucial role in Schoenberg's notion of the "unity of

musical space.”²⁷ The influence of Swedenborg and Balzac is indeed acknowledged by Schoenberg in the famous “Composition with Twelve Tones” essay.²⁸ Though our post-World-War-II sensibilities may be embarrassed by such occult philosophy as that of Swedenborg, one is forced to note how unembarrassed Schoenberg was to acknowledge such an intellectual debt. And indeed, Schoenberg seems to have sustained his fascination with such ideas until the end of his life with hope of finishing *Die Jakobsleiter*.

III

This claim of alternative planes of existence also plays a major role in Rudolf Steiner’s interpretation of Goethe’s scientific writings. Steiner was born in Hungary in 1861.²⁹ In 1879 Steiner came to the Technische Hochschule in Vienna where he studied German literature with Karl Julius Schöer. Schöer recommended Steiner for the task of editing the scientific writings for the Kürschner edition of Goethe’s work, and in the period between 1884 and 1891 Steiner edited volumes thirty-three through thirty-six, providing extensive commentaries.³⁰ Thus already at the age of twenty-three Steiner was making a name for himself as a leading young scholar of Goethean science. Steiner then edited a portion of the scientific works for the prestigious Weimar edition of Goethe’s work, a project that had him working at the Goethe archive in Weimar in the 1890’s.

For most of the 1880’s, though, Steiner was in Vienna. In 1888 he delivered a lecture to the Vienna Goethe Society entitled “Goethe as the Father of a New Science of Aesthetics.” By the turn of the century he had published, in addition to the Vienna lecture and his extensive commentaries for Kürschner, two more books on Goethe, *The Science of Knowing: Outline of an Epistemology Implicit in the Goethean World View* (1886), and *Goethe’s World View* (1897).³¹

Steiner’s interpretation of Goethe is distinctive in that Steiner insists that Goethe advocated a kind of supersensory seeing. When Goethe spoke of the *Urpflanze*, the *Urtier*, or the *Urphänomen*, Steiner insisted that Goethe meant that those things really exist as things that one can learn to see. In sharp contrast to Kantian epistemology, Goethe’s *Urpflanze*, for example, is not an image that one holds in the mind while viewing some plant. For Steiner it really exists “out there”:

Goethe’s basic conviction was that something can be seen in the plant and in the animal that is not accessible to mere sense observation. What the bodily eye can observe about the organism seems to Goethe to be only the result of the living whole of developmental laws working through one another and accessible to the spiritual eye alone. What he saw about the plant and the animal with his spiritual eye is what he described.³²

Steiner interprets Goethe as advocating that scientists need to cultivate the ability to see with the “geistige Auge.” In fact, Steiner seems to say, true empirical observation requires the subject to penetrate the obvious physical reality to see into the finer realm of true reality.

While it is true that Steiner, after 1900 or so, went on to become the leader first of German theosophists and then of his own Anthroposophic Society, in these early

years in Vienna and Weimar he was considered to be a kind of "rising young star" of Goethe scholarship. In fact, considering his fast rise and his residence in Vienna during most of the 1880's, it may not be too much to assume that in Vienna those who came to Goethe's scientific work, especially non-specialists, would have most likely come into contact with Steiner's interpretations.³³

In the late 1880's, Steiner was a friend of Friedrich Eckstein.³⁴ According to historian William McGrath,³⁵ Eckstein seems to have been involved in any number of interesting movements in Vienna from the 1870's to the 1930's. In the 1870's and 80's, Eckstein was a devout Wagnerian, at one point making a pilgrimage to Bayreuth on foot and in sandals. When Wagner made the turn to vegetarianism, Eckstein and those around him quickly followed suit. Eckstein also headed up a group of Pythagoreans that dressed in all-cotton gowns year round, sporting shoulder-length hair and long beards. Eckstein was active in the so-called Pernersdorfer circle, a group that followed the writings of Wagner and Nietzsche and included, among others, Viktor Adler, Gustav Mahler, and at one time, Hugo Wolf.

According to occult historian James Webb,³⁶ Steiner was a frequent visitor at the Café Griensteidl, where the Wagnerians, vegetarians, Pythagoreans, poets, and artists went to converse and often times, to argue. In fact, Steiner developed a reputation for constantly disagreeing with any position taken by Hermann Bahr. All this suggests that in the Vienna of the 1890's, where Schoenberg was a young developing intellectual, Rudolf Steiner was probably a name that arose often in connection with Goethe's scientific writings.

By the time Steiner became head of the German branch of the Theosophical Society in 1902, the Viennese occult community was already very developed.³⁷ Steiner developed a substantial occult following throughout the German speaking countries and in 1913 formed his own Anthroposophical Society. While Steiner's views before 1900 were still within the bounds of legitimate scholarship, his views after that time are unquestionably occult. Steiner argued, for example, that there exist an astral and a causal plane of existence that are finer than our coarse physical plane and that one can learn to see into these higher realms. With this marked occult turn of mind come the notions of the human aura, out-of-body experiences, telepathy, and ancient lost cultures that possessed the ultimate truths of existence.³⁸ Despite making this move away from established belief systems, Steiner continued to maintain that much of what he was now teaching was founded upon Goethe's science, and especially Goethe's *Farbenlehre*. Because he was well versed in German philosophy and literature, Steiner was able to argue that many of his ideas were merely extensions of the great German intellectual tradition.³⁹ This gave many of Steiner's ideas a kind of seriousness and level of intellectual discourse that is exceptional in occult writings.⁴⁰

It seems, then, that Steiner's influence in the German occult community can hardly be underestimated. This helps account for the sudden interest in Goethe's scientific writing among German artists around the turn of the century and after. Karlheinz Essl⁴¹ has suggested that Webern was exposed to Goethe's *Farbenlehre* by the followers of Rudolph Steiner. The present author has argued that many of the key ideas in Josef Matthias Hauer's theories bear a striking resemblance to Steiner's interpretations of Goethe.⁴² The German occultists had a good part of their world view invested in Steiner's brand of Goethean science. It seems likely that these people would have pro-

moted Steiner's views such that artists coming into contact with Goethe's writings could have gotten the Steinerian slant on Goethe simply in café conversation; and this is especially likely in Vienna, where Steiner had a personal history going back to the 1880's.

Most important to our study is the case of Wassily Kandinsky. Through examining documentary evidence in the Kandinsky estate, art historian Sixten Ringbom⁴³ has been able to demonstrate that, during the period surrounding the writing of *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, Kandinsky studied the writings of Rudolf Steiner very closely, especially Steiner's Goethe writings.⁴⁴ Ringbom asserts that Kandinsky's abstract painting developed in an attempt to portray the higher spiritual realm in painting. Perhaps like the painter Frenhofer in Balzac's novel, Kandinsky was attempting to portray a higher reality than the physical one. That Kandinsky's period of involvement with Steiner's writings and the beginnings of his friendship with Schoenberg overlap is suggestive. For, as mentioned above, Schoenberg did find much in Kandinsky's book with which to agree.⁴⁵ Considering Schoenberg's involvement both with the *Blaue Reiter* group in general as well as with Kandinsky in particular, one wonders whether discussions ever arose of Steiner's Goethe writings.

The 1924 Schoenberg fiftieth-birthday *Festschrift* includes an article by Walter Klein entitled "The Theosophical Element in Schoenberg's World-View."⁴⁶ While it is not clear why this brief article was included in the collection, it is perhaps more significant that it was not *excluded*; or if Schoenberg or members of his circle found Klein's arguments misguided, why does such a statement not appear in one of the letters? Karl Wörner⁴⁷ has suggested that Schoenberg's *Die Jakobsleiter* text resembles in many ways Rudolf Steiner's *Mystery Dramas*, works that were performed in Vienna in the years before war broke out in 1914. In any event, it is certainly possible that Schoenberg got the essence of Steiner's views from his life-long friend Oskar Adler, no stranger to occult ideas.⁴⁸

IV

It is certain that Schoenberg knew and admired Swedenborg's writings, even if he got much of it through Balzac's novels. Further, Schoenberg's knowledge of Goethe's scientific writings probably came to him through occult channels. In this regard it is important to note, as Severine Neff has demonstrated, that Goethean science was central to Schoenberg's own music-theoretical formulations.⁴⁹ While attempts to interpret Schoenberg within the context of the *fin-de-siècle* Viennese intellectual discourse have tended to stress the influence of figures like Schopenhauer, Karl Kraus, and Adolf Loos, I believe that this context must be opened up to include figures like Steiner, Swedenborg, and the occult community generally.⁵⁰

Though it is possible that Schoenberg could have read and admired any number of occult books while continuing to compose music relatively unaffected by all this, it seems clear that some of Schoenberg's texts do show the influence of occult ideas. Foremost among these texts are especially *Die Jakobsleiter* and *Die glückliche Hand* (one might even add *Moses und Aron*).⁵¹ But how could occult ideas have influenced Schoenberg's musical thought?

To address this question, let us return to the proposition that the *musikalische Gedanke* is impossible to capture in words. In a 1946 essay, "New Music, Outmoded Music, Style and Idea," Schoenberg writes:

I myself consider the totality of the a piece as the idea [*Gedanke*]: the idea which its creator wanted to present. But because of the lack of better terms I am forced to define the term idea in the following manner:...⁵²

Here one notes the words "lack of better terms." Earlier in the essay Schoenberg writes:

I would like to proceed now to my self-appointed task of discussing what seems to me to be most important in a work of art—the Idea.⁵³

From these two statements, one might interpret Schoenberg as asserting that while the idea is the most important facet of a work of art, it cannot be accurately characterized in language.

If this is true, then how does one come to be aware of the idea in the first place? In 1922 Schoenberg writes the following in the *Gedanke* manuscript:

Science is concerned to present its ideas conclusively and in such a way that no question remains unanswered. Art on the other hand is satisfied with what is many sided, and the Idea rises up unambiguously from this, without having to be directly defined. A window remains open through which intuition may enter.⁵⁴

There is an implicit point-of-view in this statement that ties it to occult thought generally. Science concerns the world of physical things and the accurate verbal descriptions of those things: science is rational. Art is the world of spiritual things where accurate verbal descriptions are impossible: art is perceived super-rationally, or *intuitively*.⁵⁵ Going back to his essay "The Relationship to the Text," which it should be remembered appeared in the Kandinsky's *Der Blaue Reiter*, Schoenberg can be found extolling intuition as the ultimate mode of musical perception.⁵⁶ For Schoenberg, the composer, through intuition, first sees the work whole, and all the rest is just a painstaking working out of details.

But if the idea is perceived intuitively, where exactly does it reside? Schoenberg gives us a very good clue in his 1941 essay, "Composition with Twelve Tones." In discussing inverted and retrograde motives in Beethoven's Op. 135, he tells us that:

Whether or not this device was used consciously by Beethoven does not matter at all. From my own experience I know that it can also be a subconsciously received gift from the Supreme Commander.⁵⁷

Schoenberg then goes on to discuss the hidden connections between the two principal themes of his First Chamber Symphony. He immediately follows that with the well-known reference to Swedenborg:⁵⁸

But the validity of this form of thinking is also demonstrated by the previously stated law of the unity of musical space, best formulated as follows: the unity of musical space depends upon an absolute and unitary perception. In this space, as in Swedenborg's heaven (described in Balzac's *Séraphita*) there is no absolute down, no right or left, forward or backward.⁵⁹

When one begins to put together the notions of intuitive perception, Swedenborg's heaven, subconscious gifts from the Supreme Commander, and, as he writes at the beginning of the "Twelve-Tone" essay, references to divine creation, it seems that if the all-important *Gedanke* resides anywhere, it must reside in some other, or even higher realm than the physical one. In fact, it is quite possible that Schoenberg thought of the *musikalische Gedanke* as residing in a spiritual realm above the physical one, a higher realm closed off to rational-verbal thought and accessible only to intuitive perception. Through intuition, the composer is able to glimpse into this higher realm where time and space are radically transformed. A work of art as it ends up being composed out in the physical realm amounts to a kind of laying out in material time and space of something that is essentially non-physical. But the listener, in the act of hearing the piece, in effect retraces the steps of the composing genius and can be transported to a state of higher consciousness; one is transported to a state in which one can perceive the *musikalische Gedanke*.

That Schoenberg could have believed that music has such a power is further attributable to Schopenhauer's "metaphysics of music."⁶⁰ For Schopenhauer, only music is able to provide an unmediated perception of the "thing-in-itself," the Will. For Schopenhauer, music constitutes a kind of alternate world to the physical one, and could, he suggests, even exist in the absence of the phenomenal universe.⁶¹ It is well known that Schoenberg admired Schopenhauer's writing, and Pamela White⁶² has established that Schoenberg studied Schopenhauer's work closely. Thus, again, it seems not so unlikely that Schoenberg would have attributed a very high level of significance to the ability of music to transcend physical reality and rational thought.

Of course, there is no way to determine conclusively whether this interpretation of the *musikalische Gedanke* is entirely accurate. Schoenberg's remarks are scattered across many essays and fragments, some of which are still unpublished, and these writings span almost forty years. Each remark must be read in its own context and it seems that no possible fitting together of the puzzle pieces that make up Schoenberg's literary legacy will ever create a systematic whole. This situation is not likely to change little even if new puzzle pieces were to turn up. For all these reasons, it is most useful to view Schoenberg's remarks as *commentaries* on issues within the discourse of the *fin-de-siècle* Viennese intellectual and artistic environment in which Schoenberg lived and thought. By determining those issues that Schoenberg addresses in each instance and noting the intellectual position he assumes, it is possible to let this interaction inform and thereby enrich our interpretations.

The occult component is certainly only one source of influence on Schoenberg's thought, though this study asserts that it is an important one. Ultimately, one might compare and inform this interpretation with the interpretive writings of, for example, Alexander Ringer and Carl Dahlhaus.⁶³ Still, considering Schoenberg's enthusiasm for Balzac's novels, one cannot help thinking of him as a kind of latter-day Louis Lambert, with his body stuck in the physical and mind firmly fastened on the spiritual.

NOTES

1. An earlier version of the present study was presented at the Music Theory Society of New York State/Arnold Schoenberg Institute Conference at Columbia University, October 5, 1991.
2. Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, trans. M. T. H. Sadler (New York: Dover Publications, 1977), 41.
3. Jelena Hahl-Koch, *Arnold Schoenberg-Wassily Kandinsky: Letters, Pictures, and Documents*, trans. John Crawford (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), 38.
4. While one cannot be entirely certain that Schoenberg was referring to the specific remarks of Kandinsky quoted here—though his thoughts do occur between two-thirds and three-quarters of the way through Kandinsky's book (page 74 out of 104 in the 1912 edition)—one need only look to Schoenberg's essay "Das Verhältnis zum Text" of 1912 to find Schoenberg discussing the essence of music in much the same terms as Kandinsky. In this essay, written for inclusion in *Der Blaue Reiter Almanac* [Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc, eds., *The Blaue Reiter Almanac*, ed. Klaus Lankheit (New York: Da Capo Press, 1974)], Schoenberg cites Arthur Schopenhauer's assertion that "the composer reveals the inmost essence of the world and utters the most profound wisdom in a language that his reason does not understand" [Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, ed. Leonard Stein (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975), 142]. Schoenberg remarks that while the philosopher understands the composer's vision, Schopenhauer nevertheless "loses himself later when he tries to translate details of this language which the reason does not understand into our terms. It must be clear to him that in this translation into the terms of human language, which is abstraction, reduction to the recognizable, the essential, the language of the world, which ought perhaps to remain incomprehensible and only perceptible, is lost." (Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, 142). For a slightly different translation see Kandinsky and Marc, 91-92; for the original version in German see Arnold Schoenberg, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Ivan Vojtech, (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1976), 3-6.
5. This point is made by Carl Dahlhaus, *Schoenberg and the New Music*, trans. Derrick Puffett and Alfred Clayton (Cambridge University Press, 1987), 128-9, and examined by the present author in John R. Covach, "Dahlhaus, Schoenberg, and the New Music," *In Theory Only* 12/1-2 (1991):19-42. For a thorough discussion of Schoenberg's terminology, see Severine Neff, "Goethe and Schoenberg: Organicism and Analysis," in *Music Theory and The Exploration of the Past*, eds. Christopher Hatch and David W. Bernstein (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 409-433, and Charlotte M. Cross, "Three Levels of Idea in Schoenberg's Thought and Writings," *Current Musicology* 30 (1980): 24-36.
6. Alexander Goehr, "Schoenberg's *Gedanke* Manuscript," *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 2 (1977): 5. This note is dated 7 April 1929.
7. Claire Boge, "Idea and Analysis: Aspects of Unification in Musical Explanation," *College Music Symposium* 30/1: 115-30; Patricia Carpenter, "Grundgestalt as Tonal Function," *Music Theory Spectrum* 5 (1983): 15-38; Cross, "Three Levels"; Alexander Goehr, "Schoenberg and Karl Kraus: The Idea Behind the Music," *Music Analysis* 4/1-2 (1983): 59-71; Severine Neff, "Zusammenhang, Kontrapunkt, Instrumentation, Formenlehre: The Seed of Schoenberg's Theoretical Work," paper presented at the AMS/SEM/SMT conference in Oakland, CA, 1990; and Rudolf Stephan, "Der musikalische Gedanke bei Schönberg," *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift* 37/10 (1982): 530-40.

8. See Carl Dahlhaus, *Aesthetics of Music*, trans. William Austin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 42-46, for an outline of Schopenhauer's "aesthetics of absolute music;" see Carl Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, trans. Roger Lustig (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) for a tracing of the "idea of absolute music;" and Carl Dahlhaus, *Schoenberg and The New Music* for an interpretation of the place of Schoenberg's thought within that tradition.
9. The biographical information presented here and in the remainder of this paragraph is drawn from Sig Synnestvedt, *The Essential Swedenborg* (New York: The Swedenborg Foundation, 1984), 15-35, and is corroborated by John Howard Spalding, *Introduction to Swedenborg's Religious Thought* (New York: Swedenborg Publishing Association, 1956), 15-19.
10. It is perhaps interesting that Swedenborg's father, Jesper, was professor of theology at Uppsala University and later became Bishop of Skara (Synnestvedt, 16; Spalding, 15).
11. According to Max Morris, "Swedenborg im Faust," *Euphorion* (1899): 491-510, Goethe's enthusiasm for Swedenborg's writings can be found in his review of a book by J. C. Lavater (Johann Wolfgang von Goethe "Review of Lavater's *Aussichten in die Ewigkeit, Briefen an Zimmerman*, [1772], *Schriften zu Literatur und Theatre*, ed. Walther Rehm, vol. 15 in *Gesamtausgabe der Werke und Schriften in Zweiundzwanzig Bänden* [(Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1953), in which he recommends Swedenborg to Lavater as the "worthiest seer of our age" ("gewürdigsten Seher unserer Zeiten"); and in a letter to Lavater dated 14 November 1781 [Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Letter no. 286 to Lavater, *Goethes Briefe: Hamburger Ausgabe in vier Bänden*, ed. Karl Robert Mandelkow and Bodo Morawe, vol. 1, (Hamburg: Christian Wagner Verlag, 1962), 371-74] in which Goethe voices his admiration for Swedenborg. For an interpretation of Swedenborg's influence on Goethe's *Faust*, see Morris, "Swedenborg" and Gerhard Gollwitzer, *Die Geisterwelt ist nicht geschlossen: Swedenborgs Schau in Goethes Faust* (Stuttgart: Faust-Verlag, 1968).
 Kant's criticism of Swedenborg is the main focus of his *Träume eines Geistersehers, erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik* of 1766. For a discussion of the Kant-Swedenborg relationship, see John Manolesco's commentary and appendices in Immanuel Kant, *Dreams of a Spirit Seer*, trans. and commentary by John Manolesco (New York: Vantage Press, 1969). For early twentieth-century reactions to the claims of Swedenborg followers, see Paul Carus's 1902 discussion in Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics that Can Qualify as a Science*, trans. Paul Carus (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1902), 188-195; and Ernst Cassirer, *Kant's Life and Thought* [1918] (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 77-92. For a discussion of Swedenborg's influence on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century German thought, see Ernst Benz, "Swedenborg and Lavater," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, (1938): 153-216.
12. Emanuel Swedenborg, *Heaven and Hell* [1758], trans. George F. Dole (New York: Swedenborg Foundation, 1979), 81.
13. While citing Swedenborg's influence on Baudelaire, Anna Balakian [*The Symbolist Movement: A Critical Approach* (New York: Random House, 1967), 29-53] does not consider Baudelaire himself to have been a symbolist.
14. See V. S. Pritchett, *Balzac* (New York: Harmony Books, 1973), 41. Herbert J. Hunt [*Balzac's Comédie Humaine* (London: Athlone Press, 1959)] states that Balzac had

only read Swedenborg "at second hand" (52). Dore Ashton [*A Fable of Modern Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 25] cites André Maurois's claim that Balzac knew Swedenborg only from a French outline of his writings; but Ashton then cites the contradictory claim of Théophile Gautier that "Balzac's phenomenal reading capacity allowed him to absorb his mother's entire set of the voluminous works of Swedenborg in a few days" (25).

15. In discussing a sceptical attitude toward the possibility of knowing what heaven is like, Swedenborg remarks as follows:

To prevent so negative an attitude (which is particularly prevalent among people with much worldly wisdom) from infecting and corrupting people of simple heart and simple faith, it has been made possible for me to be right with angels and to talk with them person to person. I have also been allowed to see what heaven is like and then what hell is like....(Swedenborg, 27)

16. Ashton, 25.

17. In his chapter, "The Incommunicable Vision," F. W. J. Hemmings [*Balzac: An Interpretation of La Comédie Humaine* (New York: Random House, 1967), 3-18] considers these two stories together with a third, "Massimilla Doni." Hemmings considers these stories to be closely related to Louis Lambert, and points out that Balzac himself referred to Gambara as "that Louis Lambert of music" (13).

Jacques Barzun [*Berlioz and the Romantic Century* (London: Victor Gollancz, Ltd., 1951, 262; cited in Hunt, 143] believes that certain passages in "Gambara" were influenced in part by Hector Berlioz's music reviews. Barzun even speculates that Berlioz could have conspired with Balzac in some of the details of Gambara's fictitious opera. For a discussion of the influence of Jacques Strunz and J. Fr. Fétis on Balzac's musical descriptions, see Hunt, 142-146.

18. Honoré de Balzac, "Gambara" [1837], in *The Works of Honoré de Balzac*, vol. 2, trans. Clara Bell and James Waring (Philadelphia: Avil Publishing Company, 1902), 391.
19. Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, 446.
20. Clara Steuermann, "From the Archives: Schoenberg's Library Catalog," *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 3/2 (1979): 218.
21. There are three passages in *Séraphita* that explicitly state the nature of time and space in heaven:

...In fact, to the spirit, time and space are not. Distance and duration are proportions proper to matter; and spirit and matter have nothing in common. (Honoré de Balzac, *Séraphita* [1835], trans. Clara Bell, ed. David Blow (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1989), 143).

But the spirit was in the infinite, and they did not know that in the infinite time and space are not, that they were divided from him by gulfs, though apparently so near. (148)

...In short, everything was at once sonorous, diaphanous, and mobile; so that, everything existing in everything else, extension knew no limits, and the angels could traverse it everywhere to the utmost depths of the infinite. (151)

In Swedenborg's conception of heaven, time does not exist as an external, physical measure (the movement of the Earth); and space is not a measure of physical dis-

tances. There are measures of time and distance however, and these depend upon "spiritual states." Thus, while the natures of time and space in heaven are vastly different, succession in time (events) and arrangement in space (location) are maintained. See Swedenborg, 129-32 and 145-148.

22. H. H. Stuckenschmidt, *Arnold Schoenberg: His Life and Work* (London: John Calder, Ltd., 1977), 234-5.
23. There are two other philosophical novels in which certain details correspond to details in Berg's work and suggest that Berg may have known them. *The Wild Ass's Skin* [1831] describes a scene after a drunken orgy: the main character, Raphael, is telling his life's story to a friend while the remainder of the party has fallen into a drunken slumber. As the two men fall asleep Balzac describes the snore-filled room as follows:

Soon the two friends added their snores to the music that echoed through the various rooms. A concert without an audience!

One is reminded of Act II, scene 5 of *Wozzeck* where the soldiers' snores constitute a concert with an audience.

In *The Quest for the Absolute* [1834], a chemist named Balthazar Claes ruins his family fortune by his single-minded pursuit to discover the common substance from which all chemical elements are derived. As Hemmings (20) points out, Claes's fanatical pursuit and the debt he builds up are clearly autobiographical. This facet of the work is thus revealed by identification of the embedded name, BALthaZAr Claes. Besides the character of the theory-driven scientist—a character type that plays a major role in both the Büchner- and Wedekind-based opera libretti—one is reminded of the three musical figures in the Chamber Concerto that spell out ARNOLD SCHoENBERG, ANTON WEbERn, and ALBAN BERG [see Douglas Jarman, *The Music of Alban Berg* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 74].

With regard to Berg's awareness of matters occult, see Douglas Jarman's "'Man hat auch Fleisch und Blut': Towards a Berg Biography" in *Alban Berg: Historical and Analytical Perspectives*, eds. David Gabel and Robert Morgan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), for a brief discussion of occult currents in the Schoenberg circle. Jarman prefaces an earlier discussion of numerology in Berg's Violin Concerto ("Douglas Jarman, Alban Berg, Wilhelm Fliess, and the Secret Programme of the Violin Concerto," *International Alban Berg Society Newsletter*, vol. 12 (1982): 5-6) with an examination of the influence of Wilhelm Fliess's theories within the context of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna. Also focusing on turn-of-the-century occultism and music, a recent study by David Paul Goldman ["Esotericism as a Determinant of Debussy's Harmonic Language," *Musical Quarterly* 75/2 (1991): 130-47] reviews the issues surrounding possible occult influences in the music of Claude Debussy.

24. Stuckenschmidt, 235.
25. For a thorough discussion of the impact of both Balzac's *Séraphita* and Swedenborg's writings on Strindberg (especially with regard to "Jacob Wrestles"), see Gunnar Brandell, *Strindberg in Inferno*, trans. Barry Jacobs (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974), 98-159.
26. Schoenberg ["Attempt at a Diary" (1912), trans. Jerry McBride and Anita Luginbühl, *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 9/1(1986), 243] once made the following entry in one of his diaries:

On the 28th, in the *Berliner Tageblatt*: Strindberg's thank-you for birthday wishes. Could have been [written] by me. Exactly my sentiments and experiences....

27. Karl Wörner, "Schönbergs Oratorium *Die Jakobsleiter*: Musik zwischen Theologie und Weltanschauung," *Schweizerische Musikzeitung* 105 (1965): 250-57 and 333-40.
28. Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, 223.
29. Robert A. McDermott [*The Essential Steiner* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984)] provides Steiner's 1907 "Autobiographical Sketch" (13-23) and a Steiner chronology (25-33). Most of the biographical information that follows is drawn from these pages. See also Johannes Hemleben, *Rudolf Steiner: A Documentary Biography*, trans. Leo Twyman (East Grinstead, Sussex: Henry Gouliden, Ltd., 1963) and Rudolf Steiner, *The Course of My Life* [1925], (New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1951).
30. Steiner's commentary from the Kürschner edition are collected and translated in Rudolf Steiner, *Goethean Science*, trans. William Lindeman (Spring Valley, New York: Mercury Press, 1988).
31. Rudolf Steiner, *The Science of Knowing: Outline of an Epistemology Implicit in the Goethean World View*, trans. W. Lindeman, (Spring Valley, New York: Mercury Press, 1988); *Goethe's World View*, trans. William Lindeman (Spring Valley, New York: Mercury Press) and *Goethe as the Founder of a New Science of Aesthetics*, trans. G. Metaxa (London: Rudolph Steiner Publishing Co., 1922).
32. *Ibid.*, 77.
33. For more detailed support of this claim, see John R. Covach, "The Music and Theories of Josef Matthias Hauer," Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1990, 83-103.
34. James Webb, *The Occult Establishment* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1985), 62.
35. William J. McGrath, *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 93-99.
36. Webb, *Occult Establishment*, 44-45, 62
37. Perhaps not surprising that the first president of the Vienna Theosophical Society was Eckstein (Webb, *Occult Establishment*, 75).
38. Webb (*Occult Establishment*, 62-66) offers an interesting account of Steiner's turn from the world of mainstream scholarship to the "occult underground."
39. Steiner discusses his philosophical studies in his "Autobiographical Sketch" (McDermott, 13-23). In the preface to his 1904 occult study, *Theosophy: An Introduction to the Supersensible Knowledge of the World and Destination of Man* [trans. Henry Monges and Gilbert Church (Hudson, New York: Anthropomorphic Press, 1971)], Steiner opens with a discussion of Fichte's philosophy (xvii), and the first chapter takes up a discussion of Goethe (1). This is typical of Steiner's practice of setting out his own philosophical ideas against a background of "legitimate philosophy."
40. Geoffrey Ahern [*Sun at Midnight: The Rudolf Steiner Movement and the Western Esoteric Tradition* (Wellingsborough, Northamptonshire: Aquarian Press, 1984),

- 31-49] provides an interesting survey and profile of the Anthroposophical Society membership in North America and Europe.
41. Karlheinz Essl, *Das Synthese-Denken bei Anton Webern: Studien zur Musikauffassung des späten Webern unter besonderer Berücksichtigung seiner eigenen Analysen zu Op. 28 und 30*, Wiener Veröffentlichungen zur Musikwissenschaft, Bd. 24 (Tutzing: Schneider, 1991), 16.
 42. Covach, "The Music and Theories," 83-103.
 43. Sixten Ringbom, "Sounding Cosmos: A Study in the Spiritualism of Kandinsky and the Genesis of Abstract Painting," *Acta Academiae Aboensis*, series A, vol. 38/2 (Abo: Academi, 1970), 43
 44. For a survey of occult ideas in twentieth-century European painting in general, see Sixten Ringbom, "Art in the 'Epoch of the Great Spiritual:' Occult Elements in the Early Theory of Abstract Painting," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 29 (1966): 386-418; and Roger Lipsey, *An Art of Our Own: The Spiritual in Twentieth-Century Art* (Boston: Shambala, 1988).
 45. Schoenberg states in "The Relationship to the Text:"

With great joy I read Kandinsky's *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, in which the road for painting is pointed out. (Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, 46)
 46. Walter Klein, "Das Theosophische Element in Schönbergs Weltanschauung," in *Arnold Schoenberg zum fünfzigsten Geburtstag, 13 Sept. 1924* (Vienna: Sonderheft der Musikblätter des Anbruch, 1924): 273-74.
 47. Wörner, 253-7.
 48. See Alexander Ringer, *Arnold Schoenberg: The Composer as Jew* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1990), 188-89, for a discussion of Adler's possible influence on Schoenberg with regard to number mysticism.
 49. Severine Neff, "Goethe and Schoenberg," 409-433.
 50. Two standard studies of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna are Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973) and Carl Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1980).
 51. For a discussion of the possible occult sources in *Die Jakobsleiter*, see Wörner, Jean Christensen, "Arnold Schoenberg's Oratorio, *Die Jakobsleiter*," two vol., Ph.D. diss., University of California at Los Angeles, 1979, and Alan Lessem, *Music and Text in the Works of Arnold Schoenberg: The Critical Years, 1908-1922*, Studies in Musicology no. 8 (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1979); for a discussion of *Die glückliche Hand*, see Hahl-Koch; and for a discussion of *Moses und Aron*, see Pamela White, *Schoenberg and the God-Idea* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985).
 52. Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, 123.
 53. *Ibid*, 121.
 54. Goehr, "Schoenberg and Karl Kraus," 61.
 55. The history of the role that science (materialism) plays in the occult literature of nineteenth-century Europe is a topic too broad to be traced here. James Webb [*The Occult Underground* (LaSalle, Illinois: Opencourt, 1988), 5-13] offers the view that occultism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries amounts to what he terms a

"flight from reason." Colin Wilson, [*The Occult: A History* (New York: Random House, 1971), 121-41], also explores the occult-science dialectic.

56. In discussing his path to abstract painting, Kandinsky "Reminiscences" [1913], [*Modern Artists on Art*, ed. Robert Herbert (New York: Prentice Hall, 1964)] describes the shattering of his faith in science as follows:

A scientific event cleared my way of one of the greatest impediments. This was the further division of the atom. The crumbling of the atom was to my soul like the crumbling of the whole world. Suddenly the heaviest walls toppled. Suddenly everything became uncertain, tottering and weak. I would not have been surprised if a stone had dissolved in the air in front of me and become invisible.

57. Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, 222.

58. In a diary entry dated 28 November 1923, Schoenberg describes having heard his deceased wife's voice call out to him three or four times. He characterizes the first cries as "indeliberately fast" ("ohne Berechtung schnell," though "Berechtung" is illegible in the manuscript). This he explains is obviously the result of the fact that those from the "realm of the dead" find it difficult to adapt to our way of doing things one after another. Presumably the dead live outside of time as we know it in the physical realm. Here one notes Swedenborg's conception of heavenly time exerting a definite influence on Schoenberg's thinking (Schoenberg, "Diary," 79).

59. Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, 223.

60. In addition to Dahlhaus, *Aesthetics* (cited above, fn. 8), see Bryan Magee, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 177-88, for a discussion of Schopenhauer's musical aesthetics. Magee's discussion of the influence of Schopenhauer's philosophy on Richard Wagner (326-78) is very informative.

61. Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 1, trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1969, I: 257) states it as follows:

...music, since it passes over the Ideas, is also quite independent of the phenomenal world, positively ignores it, and, to a certain extent, could still exist even if there were no world at all, which cannot be said of the other arts.

62. White, 67-68.

63. I have elsewhere (John R. Covach, "The Sources of Schoenberg's Aesthetic Theology," paper delivered at the AMS conference in Chicago, 1991) offered an interpretation of Schoenberg's thought that places the occult component within a context that also takes aspects of Dahlhaus's interpretation into account.