

*Race, Nation, and Jewish Identity in
the Thought of Heinrich Schenker*

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It would be better to present the Teutons with my monotheistic music teaching as the Old Testament was presented to the whole world: after 2,000 years the successors to the Teutons may disavow Schenker as they disavow Rabbi Jesus,¹ but meanwhile the teaching has made its effect and spread throughout the world, and ultimately the defiance of the Teutons will only be ridiculous.
Heinrich Schenker (SDO December 21, 1933, letter to Jonas)

When the Nazis took power in Germany in 1933, Heinrich Schenker's world disintegrated. He reacted with a characteristic combination of despair and defiance. Schenker depicted himself as the prophet of a musical religion analogous to his own Jewish beliefs, condemned the German people, and predicted the inevitable triumph of his ideas: a triumph that would parallel the worldwide spread of the Christianity that the Nazis had disavowed. Schenker simultaneously portrayed Jesus Christ as a Jew—"Rabbi Jesus"—employing the discourse of German-Jewish scholars who had reclaimed Jesus's Jewish identity in order to defend Judaism (Heschel 1998; Erlewine 2014). Schenker's words clearly demonstrate that his Jewish identity was deeply entangled with his musical theories. Yet, in recent decades, many scholars have focused instead on Schenker's vociferous support for German nationalism and concomitant vilification of Germany's political rivals, comparing his views to Nazi ideology (Mann 1949; Schachter 2001; Deisinger 2010; Hust 2010; Ewell 2020a). The debate about

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1 Schenker refers to the German Christian movement, which sought to de Judaize the Protestant Church in Nazi Germany. See Heschel (2008) and Steigmann-Gall (2003).

Schenker's political views has now been renewed within a new context: the quest to create an "anti-racist" music theory. At this turning point in the history of the discipline, a thorough review of the subject of Schenker's politics is timely.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Germans employed both their cultural achievements and the discourse of race as weapons to justify national unification and state building. At the same time, they disparaged Jews, both physically and spiritually, as defective racial "others" who threatened the German nation. In the multiethnic Dual Monarchy, just as in Germany, antisemitism became an increasingly serious problem during the final decades of the nineteenth century. In response, Heinrich Schenker—a Jew from provincial Galicia who settled in Vienna as a teenager—embraced German nationalism and German culture. Like many Jews, Schenker attempted to justify his participation in German cultural life by asserting a commonality between German and Jewish identities.

In Schenker's lifetime, the language of race was ubiquitous. Because it was common parlance, it was employed by all thinkers along a Left-Right spectrum, not only those who were explicit proponents of racist ideas and politics in our present-day understanding of these terms. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Europeans often used the ideology of race in a manner not easily transferable to the present-day American context, synthesizing biological, cultural, and political concepts. Elazar Barkan has noted the sweeping nature of the concept of race in Europe at that time: "The term 'race' had a far wider meaning than at present, being used to refer to any geographical, religious, class-based or color-based grouping. Although sanctioned by science, its scientific usage was multiple, ambiguous and at times self-contradictory" (Barkan 1992, 2). "The driving force behind racial differentiation was nationalism. . . . The increasing number of racial categories around this time reflected an eagerness to use primordial affinities as modes of justification for nationalism sanctioned by the growing repute of biology and evolution theory" (Barkan 1992, 17).

When the pseudo-science of race developed in the nineteenth century, Jews became stigmatized in ways that augmented their degraded status in Christian theology. Jewish writers quickly responded to their now "scientifically" determined denigration. In his novel *Coningsby* (1845), Benjamin Disraeli, the son of an English convert to Christianity, was one of the first to counter the doctrine of the supremacy of the Germanic peoples² and the inferiority of the Jews: "At this moment, in spite of centuries, of tens of centuries, of degradation, the Jewish mind exercises a vast influence on the

2 "The discourse of Anglo-Saxonism was widely diffused in the first half of the nineteenth century. The author of *The English and Their Origins*, writing in 1866, noted that there were few educated Englishmen who had not been taught as children that 'the English nation is a nation of almost pure Teutonic blood,' that its constitution, customs, wealth, and empire were the necessary result of 'the arrival, in three vessels, of certain German warriors' centuries earlier" (Endelman 1996, 30).

affairs of Europe. I speak not of their laws, which you still obey; of their literature, with which your minds are saturated; but of the living Hebrew intellect" (Disraeli 1845, 200–201). A generation later, anthropologist Joseph Jacobs (1854–1916) became a central figure in the effort to shape a Jewish scientific discourse that challenged theories of Jewish racial degeneracy (Efron 1994, 59). While Jacobs was crafting his response to scientific antisemitism, W. E. B. Du Bois performed a similar service for black Americans as a sociologist, historian, and polemicist. David Levering Lewis reminds us that "the vocabulary of Du Bois's generation resounded with the racialisms of de Gobineau or Drumont, Galton, Carlyle, or Bishop Stubbs" (Lewis 2009, 108). In his 1897 speech, "The Conservation of Races," Du Bois asserted that "the history of the world is the history, not of individuals, but of groups, not of nations, but of races, and he who ignores or seeks to override the race idea in human history ignores and overrides the central thought of all history" (Du Bois 1986, 817; Lewis 2009, 121–23).

Du Bois was born four months before Heinrich Schenker. Under the circumstances, we might expect that Schenker would have used the language of scientific racism to validate his Jewish identity, in a manner comparable to the strategy employed by Du Bois. Instead, Schenker created a narrative designed to articulate his place as a Jew in German culture. After the Nazi accession to power in Germany, in despair as his world was destroyed, Schenker proclaimed the spiritual and intellectual superiority of the Jews to the degenerate Germans, and asserted that the world of culture was a meritocracy open to all, regardless of race, religion, or national origin.³

Schenker, Race, and Culture

In the early decades of the twentieth century, Jean Sibelius and Ernest Bloch both benefited from the manner in which they were pigeonholed by use of the ubiquitous terminology of race. For example, the American critic Paul Rosenfeld wrote, "For all his personal accomplishment, his cultural position, [Sibelius] is still the Finnish peasant, preserving intact within himself the racial inheritance" (Rosenfeld 1920, 247). As Sibelius's fame grew, his supposedly quintessential musical expression of the "Nordic spirit" was, paradoxically, often linked with the work of Jewish composer Ernest Bloch (1880–1959). In 1917, an unsigned *New York Times* article maintained, "[I]n his music Mr. Bloch avows that he wishes to give expression to the Jewish racial spirit, as well as to his own individuality" (*NYT*, 1917). Sibelius's great champion Olin Downes employed similar language. In 1931, he described Bartók's String Quartet No. 4 as "a distillation from racial sources. It is strong, passionate, stark in its strength, stripped to the bone" (Downes 1931). Despite his use of racialized language, however, Downes

3 "Music is accessible to all races and creeds alike" (Schenker 1979, xxiii).

proved himself to be an ideological liberal. He vigorously and repeatedly denounced the cultural policies of the Nazis after they took power in Germany in March 1933 (Downes 1933).

By employing the language of race, Schenker adhered to the conventions of his day. Yet this did not reflect a belief in the strict doctrines of biological racism, as employed by racial theorists in Europe and America during the first third of the twentieth century. Schenker firmly rejected the concept of inherent biological differences among human population groups—a concept that would have been threatening to him as a Viennese Jew, continuously forced to negotiate the challenges posed by racial anti-semitism both personally and professionally—and rarely used the rhetoric of racial science. In Schenker Documents Online, a search for Schenker’s use of the term “race” yields fifty hits, three of which have an entirely different meaning: “race course” (SDO November [17?] 1911), “in a race” (SDO July 10, 1931), “ideas race ahead” (SDO August 30, 1914). Sixteen hits are for the “human race,” while on six occasions, Schenker refers to his own group, the Jews, once as an “alien race.” There are four references to the “Slavic race,” three to the “German race,” one to the “depraved [English] race,” and one to the “Anglo-Saxon race.”

Schenker rarely used the terms “black” and “white” as modifiers for races. In SDO, a search for “black” yields one hundred forty hits, but many of these are descriptions by the editors. There are many instances in the editorial descriptions and Schenker’s writings of such terms as “black ink,” “black-edged [writing paper],” “black material,” and “black market.” A search for “black coffee” yields sixty-two hits, more than one third of the total. There are no references to the “black race,” and only one reference to the “white race” in thousands of pages of documents (SDO August 20, 1914). In the “literature” supplement to his edition of Beethoven’s Piano Sonata, Op. 111 (1916), Schenker acknowledged the biological definition of race, only to turn it against the so-called “superior races,” castigating the “white Frenchman” and “white Englishman” (Schenker 2015, 21). Schenker’s specification that he derived his terminology from the German General Staff clearly indicates his intention to stigmatize “whites” in his damnation of both nations, not the people of color who served in the British and French armies.

Leon Botstein has suggested that Schenker responded to antisemitism by “question[ing] the idea of race as a category of explanation” (Botstein 2002, 244). Schenker generally employed the term “race,” not as a biological category, but as a synonym for “nation.” In addition, he connected the concept of “nation” to language and culture, rather than ethnicity or religion. Schenker’s ideology recalls the theories of *Völkerpsychologie* developed in the second half of the nineteenth century by assimilated German-Jewish scholars Heymann Steinthal (1823–99) and Moritz Lazarus (1824–1903) (Bunzl 2003; Benes 2008; Berek 2020). Steinthal and Lazarus

emphasized the centrality of language in the definition of the national, and stressed the importance of *Geist* and *Bildung* (the German concept of self-cultivation) as the basis for participation in German culture (Bunzl 2003, 76). According to Shulamit Volkov, Lazarus “first formulated what later became the principles of Jewish existence in Germany” (Volkov 2006, 257). Matti Bunzl similarly suggests that *Völkerpsychologie* reflected the struggle for German-Jewish emancipation (Bunzl 2003, 51; Kalmar 2002). While Steinthal and Lazarus separated the biological and cultural in their scientific paradigm, they measured the languages and cultures of other peoples by parochially German standards.⁴ They left the door open for cultural improvement through *Bildung*, however (Bunzl 2003, 85). The ideas of Steinthal and Lazarus were eventually rejected by German academics in favor of a *völkisch* ideology (Bunzl 2003, 80; Weingart 1989) but strongly influenced Franz Boas, a German Jew who settled in the United States and had a major influence on the development of a politically progressive American anthropology in the first half of the twentieth century (Bunzl 2003, 81–85; Kalmar 1987; Blackhawk and Wilner 2018).

Schenker described German as “the one true language,” the “most exalted of all languages” (Schenker 2004b, 11). Carl Schorske identified the doctrine of German cultural superiority to which Schenker adhered as characteristic of Austrian liberalism (see Judson 1996), the fruit of a progressive ideology to create political cohesion among the many nationalities within the Habsburg Empire: “Those of German nationality would serve as tutor and teacher to bring up the subject peoples, rather than keep them ignorant bondsmen as the feudals had done. Thus nationality itself would ultimately serve as a principle of popular cohesion in a multinational state” (Schorske 1980, 117; see also Brodbeck 2014, 154–55). Schenker’s cultural politics had a specifically Jewish resonance within the Viennese context. The Jews of the Empire perceived German language and culture as a portal to modern society, while fearing the hostility of the Empire’s other nationalities. As a people without a territory of their own, they depended on the imperial government to safeguard their civil and political rights.

In “The Mission of German Genius,” Schenker defined his praise of the Germans as contingent on their appreciation for their language and culture, rather than on their supposed biological superiority:

It is time that Germans freed themselves from the illusion that all men and all nations are equal. . . . Let Germans be alive to the superior quality of their human propagating soil [*Menschenhumus*]; let them appreciate that if they were all to

4 “To be sure, *Völkerpsychologie* was committed to pluralism; but it was hardly relativistic. . . . While each *Volk* needed to be understood on its own terms, some people were simply more accomplished than others. Lazarus and Steinthal, of course, were particularly interested in those *Volksgeister* that had accomplished the most, since other peoples would be able to learn from them” (Bunzl 2003, 84).

become self-betrayers, traitors . . . *if all German literature were extinguished and replaced by foreign, and all Germans succumbed to total loss of self-respect, and altogether forsook their language* . . . on the day that these things came to pass, Germany as the nation of Luther, Leibniz, Goethe, Schiller, Kant, of Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, would set like the sun, would sink like a spiritual Himalayan mountain range into eternity, irretrievable and unattainable by the other nations! (Schenker 2004b, 17) (italics added)

Schenker presented a similar argument in *The Masterwork in Music* 3: “Another German poet of our day wrote: ‘We ceased to be Germans, the moment we stopped experiencing our language as a life-force’—that goes for German music, too. May it be granted to the German nation . . . to protect its two languages, the language of words and the language of tones” (Schenker 2014, 9).

Recent critiques of Schenker have seized on his use of the term *Menschenbumus* to link him to Nazi racial ideology (Ewell 2020a, [4.4.5]; see also Cook 2007, 141), recalling Botstein’s complaint about German musicologists who make “no distinction . . . between Nazi racism and the extreme ‘Teutonic’ nationalism of Jewish ‘better Germans’” (Holtmeier 2004, 249; see also Botstein 2002). In fact, the word was employed by German writers with liberal as well as conservative views. For example, Jewish novelist Jakob Wassermann (1873–1934) used it to describe a prerequisite for liberalization of social attitudes and legal restrictions regarding marriage and sexuality (Leydecker 2006, 94). Austrian musicologist Martin Eybl has denied that Schenker’s use of the word was motivated by biological racism. Rather, Eybl has focused on Schenker’s belief in German cultural superiority, citing his inclusion of the Pole Chopin among the great German masters: “At no point does Schenker attempt to explain the superiority of Germanness [*Deutschtum*] genetically. The fact that the German people can be defined by language and culture forms the open and nebulous prerequisite for Schenker’s German nationalism, which allows, for example, ‘Friedrich’ Chopin to be included in the ‘series of great German masters.’”⁵ Schenker praised Chopin’s music for its Germanic qualities: “[E]ven though they [Chopin’s works] have not arisen directly from Germanness, they are certainly directly indebted to it” (Schenker 2004b, 20).⁶

In the second draft of a long 1931 letter to Furtwängler, Schenker discussed the concept of *Humus* in terms that show it to be, in his usage, a function of education, rather than the expression of a racist ideology:

- 5 “An keiner Stelle unternimmt Schenker den Versuch, die Vorzüge des Deutschtums genetisch zu erklären. Daß das deutsche Volk durch Sprache und Kultur definiert werden könne, bildet die offene wie nebulöse Voraussetzung für Schenkers Deutschnationalismus, die es etwa erlaubt, auch ‘Friedrich’ Chopin in die ‘Reihe der großen deutschen Meister’ aufzunehmen” (Eybl 1995, 25–26).
- 6 Schenker was not entirely wrong. Chopin’s teacher Elsner based his pedagogy on German models. See Goldberg (2008, 117–18).

So, for example, nothing would be simpler than to begin as early as the lowest school classes with ear-training [*Hören-Lehren*] for third-, fourth-, and octave linear progressions in folksong, chorale melodies, in small exercises, in [Jan Ladislav] Dussek, [Muzio] Clementi, and others. This would be equivalent to the method whereby language is taught in schools on the basis of grammatical concepts and relationships. Thousands of children, who are otherwise lost to music, could be won over anew to it in this way and form the *artistic humus* [*Kunst-Humus*] that you seek. (SDO November 11–16, 1931, letter to Furtwängler) (italics added)

Schenker's arguments are comparable to those of art critic Albert Dresdner, who had suggested in 1919 that fundamental artistic skills be inculcated through the educational system (Steinweis 1993, 335; Attfield 2017, 30–31). Proposals of this kind, including Walter Gropius's program for the Bauhaus (Attfield 2017, 31), expressed a natural impulse to make plans for national renewal after World War I, not beholden to the political Left or Right.

On November 18, 1914, a few months after the outbreak of World War I, Schenker composed a diary entry in which he employed "race" and "nation" as synonyms, while defining national identity in purely linguistic terms. Although he belittled Germany's enemies, he simultaneously pleaded for the acknowledgement of universal human values that transcend any particularism:

The behavior of nations large and small in today's world demonstrates that what we call *nation, stock, or race* is classified more according to mothers and wet-nurses [in other words, those responsible for the transmission of language], and not according to the best fathers and sons. . . . What should mother tongue signify when real questions of humanity stand in the foreground? . . . Is not the inner character of a person more decisive than the mother tongue? When asking whether a person carries within him a significant meaning in his life, mustn't the question of his mother tongue be silenced? And yet, just the most external factor has become the banner of warring stocks, nations, and races. Thus, people arrive at the grotesque result that they are not waging war for important assets, but almost only to prove that one mother tongue is better and more beautiful than another. (SDO November 18, 1914) (italics added)⁷

Schenker the Jew

Given the obstacles to Jewish professional advancement in both Germany and the Dual Monarchy, most of Schenker's German and Austrian Jewish contemporaries in

7 For a discussion of music and language politics in late nineteenth-century Vienna, see Brodbeck (2014).

the music world converted to Christianity, including Mahler, Schoenberg,⁸ Klemperer, Bruno Walter, Guido Adler (Botstein 2009, 163), Ernst Kurth, Egon Wellesz, and Schenker's friend Otto Erich Deutsch.⁹ In sharp contrast, Schenker's Jewishness was the strongest component of his personal identity. He distinguished his ethnic and religious Jewish self-definition from his cultural and political allegiances as a German-speaking citizen of the Dual Monarchy, and, after its collapse, the Austrian Republic. Schenker obtained the rudiments of a Jewish education at the Brzeżany (Galicia, now Ukraine) *Gymnasium* before he came to Vienna to pursue his university studies (Rothfarb 2018, 28–32). As a Jewish resident of Vienna, he paid annual dues to the *Israelitische Kultusgemeinde, Wien*, the organization that governed the affairs of the Viennese Jewish community. Schenker noted his discharge of this duty in numerous diary entries between 1919 and 1934 (SDO *Israelitische Kultusgemeinde*).

At times, Schenker proudly asserted his Jewishness. In a 1918 diary entry, he argued for Judaism's superiority over Christianity: “[Hermann] Bahr in the *Neues Wiener Journal* has praised the spiritual direction the Jews have been going in; he is more right than he imagines: it is actually about the effect of the Holy Scriptures, which makes the entire [Jewish] race spiritually minded, as if it had remained even now Orthodox in its entirety; this effect is stronger than the entire ideology of Christianity—as reality shows” (SDO February 10, 1918). In 1925, Schenker wrote aggressively, “There are no grounds for someone to demean oneself for being a Jew, so long as the account between [the Jews and] the peoples of the West and East is not properly settled” (SDO November 1, 1925). In 1928, Schenker echoed Disraeli's defensive remarks about Jewish distinction, proclaiming, “[T]he Jews are an aristocratic race, head for head kings and queens” (SDO January 30, 1928).

Unlike German-Jewish assimilationists (Wistrich 1989, 82–83; Aschheim 1982), the Galician-born Schenker expressed a kinship with the Eastern European Jews from whom he stemmed. In 1932, he enthusiastically described Sholem Asch's *Von den Vätern*, a portrait of traditional Jewish shtetl life, as “documentary” evidence that could serve as a source for the battle against antisemitism (Reiter 2015, 291–94): “Sholem Asch's *Von den Vätern*—the first novella, ‘Der Herr Salomon,’ I read with enchantment; it is poetry and document at the same time. The Jews need the documentary evidence [to defend themselves] against the world; no other people does!” (SDO January 21, 1932).

Given his conservative politics, Schenker roundly criticized Jewish political liberals in both Germany and Austria after World War I. He accused many German-

8 In 1933, however, Schoenberg publicly affirmed his adherence to Judaism. See Neher (1990, 13–14).

9 Otto Erich Deutsch (1883–1967), Austrian musicologist of Jewish origin. See Silverman (2012, 123).

Jewish intellectuals of treacherously embracing a spurious internationalism and supporting the punitive conditions that the Allies imposed on Germany and Austria in the postwar peace treaties. In particular, during the early 1920s, Schenker complained repeatedly about the hostility of his publisher, Emil Hertzka of Universal Edition, to the harsh political polemics in *Der Tonwille*, due to Hertzka's "pacifist, cosmopolitan" convictions (SDO undated [June 17, 1922], postcard to Moriz Violin; SDO June 4, 1922; Schenker 2004a, v–viii). In 1923, Schenker summarized the contents of a letter from pianist Moriz Violin, a friend who shared his views: "From Floriz [Violin]: in light of the Jewish activities, he admits to being a Jewish enemy of the Jews; correctly notes: The Jews top the list as Germany's enemies" (SDO June 4, 1923; Ewell 2020b). In 1925, Schenker explicitly articulated this idea: "I repeat that, alongside the German people, the Jewish people—not, of course, *the urban intellectuals [die städtischen Intellektuellen]*, *who have no place here*—still remain outstanding in every respect" (SDO November 1, 1925) (italics added).¹⁰ Like his remarks about Sholem Asch, Schenker's comments about German Jews underline his simultaneous pride and defensiveness about his Jewishness.

Schenker's diary entries and correspondence document his anxieties about his stigmatization, both personal and legal, as a member of the "Jewish race." For example, in 1921, the Austrian government chose to define the terms of the Treaty of St. Germain, the peace treaty between Austria and the Allies, in such a way as to exclude Jews from Austrian citizenship, reclassifying the term "race" as a biological rather than cultural/national category. Following foreign pressure, an April 1922 court ruling negated this interpretation (Pauley 1992, 86–88). In March 1923, Schenker visited the district government office to deliver his census form. Afterwards, relieved, he wrote in his diary, "The female civil servant [*die Beamtin*] does not ask about race" (SDO March 9, 1923). In an August 1927 letter to Violin, Schenker responded to the Viennese riots on July 15¹¹ with a prescient warning that the Jews were doomed: "The events in Vienna have shocked me. Who knows how things will turn out as a result. In any event, they signify one step closer to the abyss. The Germans are sinking quickly, I refer to the Germans in general—in less than ten years one will be able to read the fate of the Jews on the brow of every German, just as on the brow of every Jew" (SDO August 5, 1927, letter to Violin).

When the Nazis took power in Germany, Schenker increasingly focused on his Jewish identity. For example, on June 30, 1933, he wrote to his student Felix Salzer, "God in his infinite wisdom has called upon a Jew to expound the art of music, who

10 On Jews and the fraught concept of cosmopolitanism in post-World War I Germany and Austria, see Gelbin and Gilman (2017).

11 In the July Revolt of 1927, the Palace of Justice in Vienna was set on fire. Eighty-nine protesters and five policemen were killed, and over a thousand people were injured. See Botz (2016).

will thus remain first and last the *true praeceptor Germanorum*" (SDO June 30, 1933, letter to Salzer). In addition, Schenker often conflated his Jewishness with his musical theories. For example, in his diary entry of May 21, 1933, he wrote, "[Oswald] Jonas . . . He is shocked by my profession of Judaism. Parallels: in the cosmos, the one origin in God—in music, the one origin in the *Ursatz*,—thus monotheistic thinking there and here. Everything else with respect to world and music a heathen adherence to the foreground" (SDO May 21, 1933). In a 1934 letter to Jonas, Schenker expanded on these ideas: "There was a time when the peoples learned from the Jews: to contemplate and write about God; why should the Jews not conversely learn music from the other peoples and propagate it through the ages, since the other peoples have probably repudiated it for good? The Jew would join to his religious monotheism the belief in one musical *Ur-sache!*" Schenker prefaced this comment with the thought, "Fundamentally our project is one of present-day Jewry as race and religious community" (SDO August 2, 1934, letter to Jonas; Cook, 237). In November 1933, Schenker noted in his diary that he had completed a letter to his brother-in-law Arnold Weil about "Schenker the Jew" (SDO November 10, 1933). This letter, evidently designed as a major statement about Schenker's identity and beliefs, has been lost.

In his diary entry of June 29, 1934, Schenker noted that he had read the biblical book of Esther, which recounts the survival of the Persian-Jewish community when it was marked for extermination: "I read the Book of Esther aloud: what a connection of motives! Mordecai is the founder of the festival of Purim; the religion has taken possession of this foundation, which continues to live in it for the good of the writing of history, of poetry, of the continuity of the Jews" (SDO June 29, 1934). Since Purim took place on February 28 in 1934, Schenker's interest reflected his concern about Jewish survival, rather than religious considerations.

Although Schenker was not a Zionist, he followed the development of the Zionist project with sympathy. In 1924, he wrote in his diary, "Lengthy conversation with the young [Fritz] Saphir; he tells about his [family] piano business in Palestine, about the musical and concert life there; he hopes for an upswing, but sees clearly how the English are inciting the Arabs and the Jews against one other in order to do business" (SDO October 3, 1924). In 1926, Schenker took a walk and remarked in his diary, "A vast throng of people, which would be sufficient for the settlement of Palestine!" (SDO May 2, 1926). In 1929, he wrote, ironically and inaccurately, "A piece by Ernest Bloch—apparently a Zionist who, however, writes bad music" (SDO March 17, 1929). During the late 1920s and early 1930s, Schenker noted in his diary the plans of friends and students to settle in Palestine (SDO April 30, 1928; SDO March 31, 1930; SDO December 11, 1933; SDO April 2, 1934). In 1930, he complained about the British betrayal of the Zionists after World War I:

An article by Churchill in the *Neue freie Presse* frankly admits the betrayal of the Zionists by the English: in the great hardship of 1917, they used the influence and the money of the Zionists and for this reason promised them their national homeland. He expressly emphasizes that in all the Allied countries, the Jews stood on their side, namely on the side of the English. . . . Who will compensate the poor Jews for their sacrifice in money and blood, which the villainous English made use of, their intentions apparently having been preconceived? (SDO November 15, 1930)

Schenker, World War I, and the Jews

Schenker's linkage of Jews and Germans, and his pro-German advocacy during World War I, parallel sentiments expressed by the eminent Viennese-Jewish writer Arthur Schnitzler (1862–1931). During the war, Schnitzler described himself as “a Jew, an Austrian, and a German.”¹² He defended the Dual Monarchy's German ally, writing of “the great Germany . . . of which I, of Jewish descent, an Austrian, have always felt a part, with equal rights and equal responsibility” (Beller 1989, 163). While Schnitzler paired Jews and Germans as kindred peoples, he simultaneously admitted to the Jews' rejection by the Germans (Beller 1989, 163). Schnitzler's formulation demonstrates the fundamental anxiety that underlay the Jewish desire to acculturate to German society, and inevitably colored Jewish responses to German culture such as Schenker's musical project. Schenker's attitudes also recall the writings of an older contemporary, the German-Jewish philosopher Hermann Cohen (1842–1918). Cohen began his career as a protégé of Heymann Steinthal (Myers 2001, 202). Like Schnitzler and Schenker, he energetically championed the German cause during World War I (Wiedebach 2012, 104), while expressing a belief in the “deep affinity between Germanism [*Deuschtum*] and Judaism [*Judentum*]” (Cohen 1915, 13; Beiser 2018, 302).

Schenker's vociferous support for the Central Powers throughout World War I was normative for the Jews of Austria-Hungary (Rozenblit 2001, 4; Pauley 1992, 61–62). During the war, over three hundred thousand Jews served in the Austro-Hungarian army (Pauley 1992, 63; Rozenblit 2001, 82). Jewish loyalty to the multinational state was based on the perception that it was the guarantor of Jewish rights against anti-semitic attacks from national movements throughout the Dual Monarchy (Rozenblit 2001, 119–21; Gellner 1998, 11, quoted in Brodbeck 2014, 1). Schenker's hatred of Russia was also a typical sentiment among Habsburg Jews, galvanized both by state-sponsored persecution of Jews in the Russian Empire and Russian mistreatment of Jews in occupied areas during World War I (Rozenblit 2001, 45–54). During the war,

12 Arthur Schnitzler, letter to Elizabeth Steinrück, December 22, 1914, quoted in Loentz (2003, 102).

hundreds of thousands of Jews fled from the Russian invaders (Rozenblit 2001, 66; McCagg Jr. 1989, 203; Sanborn 2005, 307). In response, Jewish newspapers in the Dual Monarchy employed vitriolic language to attack Russia, for example, “the barbarism of our truly cannibalistic enemy” (Rozenblit 2001, 48). In 1913, Schenker had mentioned the Beilis ritual murder trial (see Levin 2014) with horror in his diary, noting that the Russian government supported the slanderous accusations, which had the potential to generate large-scale pogroms: “In Kiev a ritual murder trial is taking place in which the law is, from the outset, quite obviously supporting the ritual murder [charge]! The mere fact of the matter . . . is an indictment of the Russian nation and at the same time a guilty verdict against it!” (SDO October 9, 1913). In 1914, Schenker contemptuously recalled an antisemitic remark by Konstantin Pobedonostsev (1827–1907), the eminent Russian jurist and statesman associated with the May Laws of 1882 (Klier 2011), which led to the emigration of millions of Jews from the Russian Empire: “The forms that envy can take between individuals and nations is shown by the possibility that . . . merely the presence of the superior gives occasion for the inferior to get rid of the former by any means, even by criminal means. In this connection I am reminded of a remark by Pobedonostsev, who said that the Russian peasant has a right to feel aggrieved by the Russian Jew because he himself drinks hard liquor, whereas the Jew does not! In this very point lies the tragedy of humanity: that it needs people who do not drink hard liquor and yet, against its own interests, it would prefer to attack those whom it needs. In its fury and blindness, it does not see that equalization toward its own level can only bring harm, which however it does not itself want” (SDO August 21, 1914).¹³ In the “literature” supplement to his edition of Beethoven’s Piano Sonata, Op. 111, Schenker scornfully singled out pogroms as Russia’s contribution to culture (Schenker 2015, 21).

In September 1915, Schenker portrayed the suffering of Jews in the Eastern European war zone with great sympathy in his diary: “Galician Jews . . . Anyone who lives, like them, from hand to mouth, under the most difficult conditions—hated, despised, and ostracized, persecuted, burdened usually with a large family, and underestimated in what they do best (as, for example, in their education)—will find no disposition to assimilate in their shattered being. They are like soldiers on the battlefield: weighed down with cares for their life, and in a constant state of warfare” (SDO September 29, 1915). A year later, in 1916, Schenker’s student Hans Weisse, now a soldier in the Austro-Hungarian Army, was stationed in Brzeżany, the town in which Schenker had attended *Gymnasium* during the early 1880s. He sent Schenker “The Old Jew,” a poem

13 In his diary entry of July 26, 1914, on the eve of World War I, Schenker wrote, “No doubt, the schnapps boutique Russia lies behind this” (SDO July 26, 1914). Schenker’s bitter remark in August 1914 about Pobedonostsev’s antisemitism sheds light on his comment in July, only a month earlier.

of his own composition that illustrates the suffering of the Jewish population in the war. Weisse emphasizes the pervasive terror in which the Jews lived:

You saw more, Jew, than your eyes
 Could absorb from the little window;
 There you sit, pensive, leaning back
 That hoary head. . . .
 Sometimes your eye now leaves the book,
 Meets a stranger's glance with uncommon trust, –
 Yet it cannot hold out; no matter who it is,
 The glance is lowered, as if shrinking away,
You're afraid of strangers.

(SDO July 3, 1916, letter from Weisse to Schenker) (italics added)

Despite his anger, Schenker abruptly discarded his prejudices against Russia when he confronted the reality of war. In a diary entry of September 6, 1914, he bemoaned the inhumanity of man, condemned the concept of war, and showed intense sympathy for the Russians whom he reviled in the abstract:

In the courtyard one could also see Russian captives (including also wounded ones). . . . The sudden and unexpected transformation in the condition of a young, healthy soldier into one of physical helplessness—which, however, was brought about not by a methodically progressive illness, so to speak, but rather by a sudden humanly hostile act—this contradiction made our sympathy resonate all the more intensely. . . . Since humanity has been conscious of itself, it has stared at the puzzle of this *shameful and degrading fratricide*. . . . *Millions fight against millions, without knowing why or for what purpose!* . . . Out of this irrationality in the conduct of political affairs, in the execution of the war mandate by the army, etc., a certain something shines along neural pathways that we now ignore, and it seems to tell us: . . . *No human being should be the cause of the death of another, if things are as they ought to be!*

(SDO September 6, 1914) (italics added)

Probably eighty percent of Schenker's rants against Germany's enemies consist of vitriolic denunciations of the English and French. In the preface to their translation of *Der Tonwille*, Ian Bent and William Drabkin point out that Schenker's attacks on the French have a long history in German culture (Schenker 2004a, x). Schenker's anti-French attitudes may also have been motivated by his long-simmering anger about the Dreyfus Affair. In 1899, he wrote, "At the end of the 19th century, good Catholic Frenchmen are burning the Jew Dreyfus at the stake of perjuries!" (SDO January 15, 1899). In 1912, Schenker again mentioned the Dreyfus Affair in his diary: "Thus, for example, in the Dreyfus Affair, [Émile] Zola did not merely speak the truth in

[Ferdinand Walsin] Esterházy's face; rather, a large part of humanity spoke through him [Zola] the blunt truth about his [Esterházy's] crime" (SDO September 28, 1912). Shortly after World War I began, Schenker returned to the Dreyfus Affair as proof for the French predisposition to deception and treachery: "This involuntary desire for the truth, *after the fact*, is reminiscent of the Dreyfus Affair; even in those days the French nation made a great fuss over their love for the truth, but of course only after they had defiled themselves with the most dishonorable orgy of perjury" (SDO August 26, 1914) (*italics added*). Near the end of the war, Schenker once again raised the specter of the Dreyfus Affair to condemn the credibility of the French: "The Emperor protests against Clémenceau[']s nasty slander; two letters seem to have been forged. Which Esterházy is in on the game this time? If the Emperor were in Paris, France would surely subject him to the fate of Dreyfus" (SDO April 11, 1918; Deisinger 2010, 26–27). Like Schenker's attacks on Russia, his repeated denunciations of French hypocrisy and his condemnation of the dishonesty of the Allies echoed the language of the Viennese-Jewish press. In the *Jüdische Korrespondenz* of January 6, 1916, the unsigned lead article, "Humanity, Law and Culture," proclaimed,

The motives that prompted the initiators of the world war to begin it so nefariously are pretty clear. The prehistory of the tremendous struggle has probably not yet been established in detail, but so much is certain, that England's greed, France's chauvinism, Russia's thirst for conquest, Serbia's megalomania, and Italy's perfidious betrayal were responsible for the terrible bloodshed. Nevertheless, the buzzwords "humanity, law, and culture" have never been used so much as during this war, and it is precisely the authors of the war who have the effrontery to want to cover their damnable actions with these highest attributes of morality.¹⁴

The most inflammatory of Schenker's writings is his rant against the English and the French in "The Mission of German Genius," prompted by his rage about the Allies' demands on Germany and Austria in the post-war peace treaties of Versailles and St. Germain. Schenker condemned the English and the French as worse than savages and cannibals, using language reminiscent of Brahms's attacks on the French as the "whore

14 "Die Beweggründe, welche die Urheber des Weltkrieges zu ihrem ruchlosen Beginnen veranlaßt haben, sind so ziemlich klar. Die Vorgeschichte des gewaltigen Ringens ist wohl noch nicht in allen Einzelheiten festgestellt, aber so viel ist gewiß, daß Englands Habsucht, Frankreichs Chauvinismus, Rußlands Eroberungsgelüste, Serbiens Größenwahn und Italiens perfider Verrat das schreckliche Blutvergießen verschuldet haben. Nichtsdestoweniger wurde noch nie mit den Schlagworten 'Menschlichkeit, Recht und Kultur' so viel herumoperiert, wie während dieses Krieges, und gerade die Urheber desselben besitzen die eiserne Stirne, ihr verdammenswertes Vorgehen mit diesen höchsten Attributen der Moral bemänteln zu wollen." *Jüdische Korrespondenz* (1916). For a discussion of German-Jewish enthusiasm for the German war effort in World War I, see Grady (2017).

of Babylon" (Rev. 19:2) in the manuscript of the *Triumphlied* (Beller-McKenna 2004, 102–3). He also accused the British of physical repulsiveness and uncleanness. At the conclusion of the passage, Schenker briefly alluded to the occupation of the Rhineland by French colonial troops:

(Even *savages and cannibals* in their wild state are purer and more virtuous than the *savages and cannibal hordes* of Versailles [the participants in the Paris Peace Conference], who dress themselves as Christians in order to flaunt their Christian principles.) . . . Not only warring governments, kings, presidents, and other spokesmen, but even the peoples themselves have been shamed, disgraced, and, in the words of the Old Testament, "been made to stink." The Earth reeks with the *foetor britannicus*, and needs to be freshened—Europe, even more so after the Franco-Senegalese era [*Franko-Senegalentum*], Europe needs purifying, in body and spirit! (Schenker 2004b, 7) (italics added)

Later in the essay, Schenker reviled the Western powers for redrawing the map of Europe at German and Austrian expense. He expressed the fear that the French would repopulate the Saarland as a prelude to annexing the region from Germany (Hannum 1996, 389ff):

And the League of Nations? The same old thief's motto—wait till the booty is in the bag, then let order commence. . . . But is it only a matter of theft? Is it not the League of Nations that also, for example, placed the filthy French in such oafish control of Germany's Saarland, and permitted in the regions occupied by them the ignominy of their black troops—the advance party of their genitalitis, of the flesh of their flesh, of the *cannibal spirit* of their spirit—and similarly allowed all the impudent incursions by Czechs, Poles, Yugoslavs, etc.¹⁵ Then, prudently, after fifteen years, by which time of course Italian and French banditry will have eradicated all trace of German character from the stolen territory, the League will step onto the world stage full of moral righteousness and cynically offer those regions the right to self-determination. (Schenker 2004b, 15–16) (italics added)

Is Schenker's subject the black colonial troops, or the League of Nations and the French? Is his reference to the "cannibal spirit" ("the cannibal spirit of their spirit") a reference to Africans? In the first passage under consideration, Schenker employs the term "cannibal" to refer unambiguously to the participants in the Paris Peace Confer-

15 Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and Yugoslavia all became independent states after World War I, consisting in whole or in part of territories that had previously belonged to the Dual Monarchy. Romania and Italy were also awarded territories that had previously belonged to the Dual Monarchy. In addition, the post-war peace treaties ordered plebiscites in several formerly German and Austrian border regions to determine their status.

ence. In another passage in “The Mission of German Genius,” Schenker clearly uses the term “cannibal” to describe the French:

Bismarck, genius that he was, knew the “peace-loving” and “chivalrous” French better than did the mediocre ranks of German democrats, social democrats, and other harborers of French ideas. So for him it was a foregone conclusion that the French . . . would try to steal back the German city of Strasbourg, stolen by Louis XIV, for the umpteenth time. . . . The simple-minded French would just love . . . to do away with the Germans once and for all—yes, one actually hears such *cannibalistic* assertions! (Schenker 2004b, 14) (*italics added*)

All three passages have the same subject: the thievery of the Allies and the “cannibalistic” desire of the French to steal territory from Germany.

In his tirade, Schenker specifies the target of his vivid images of “degradation” and “defile[ment]” as the “Western democratic model,” describing it as the source of a crisis so great that “no ocean of water can wash away the filth” [*kein Ozean an Wasser den Schmutz abspült*] (Schenker 2004b, 8; Schenker 1921, 7). He includes a reference to Germany’s enemies that fuses his own German and Jewish concerns: the neologism *foetor britannicus*, which he employs in place of the antisemitic slander *foetor judaicus*. Schenker’s use of this term demonstrates how he negotiated his identity as both German and Jew. His diary entry of December 1, 1914 shows that his choice of language in “The Mission of German Genius” was not random, but reflected his defense of his Jewish identity. Schenker proudly alludes to the ritual purity regulations codified in Jewish law and practiced universally by the Eastern European Jewish masses from whence he came:

In this respect, it occurs to me further: how much more confused are the notions concerning hygiene among the Jews. To be sure, the Jews had many defenders and proponents, and in times of adversity there arose many champions of their cause; and yet, as far as I am aware, none of them found words in defense of the cleanliness of the Jews. . . . The wealthy Jew lives just as hygienically and cleanly as the wealthy Englishman; but what deserves to be emphasized in defense of the Jews is the fact that even the poorest Jews are cleaner than the poorest peasants of German, Polish, or Russian origin. (SDO December 1, 1914)

After the War: The Politics of Nostalgia

Schenker’s political fulminations against Germany’s enemies, and his nostalgia for the fallen monarchies of Central Europe after the end of World War I, must be placed in the context of the political and economic chaos that followed the war. It was a crisis

to which there seemed no solution except tragedy. Eybl argues, provocatively, that Schenker's polemics were not really directed at the Western allies, but were designed to define his Jewish identity, positioning him as a loyal German against other Jews with cosmopolitan and/or pacifist views (Eybl 2018, [4]).

Kevin Korsyn has connected Schenker's monarchist leanings during the 1920s to his nostalgia for the Habsburgs. While Korsyn attributes a "romantic vision" of monarchy to Schenker (Korsyn 2009, 158), the latter's motives were entirely practical. In 1913, Schenker had recorded his skepticism about the concept of monarchy, criticizing it within the context of his judgment of Christianity's inferiority to Judaism: "For the king and for the fatherland,' according to the popular slogan. That the kings come first in the phrase is based on the old inclination of humanity for graven images, which not even Judaism could completely eradicate. . . . Thus also the 'king' appeals to the human eye and takes precedence in the phrase over 'fatherland' which, like the concept of God, unfortunately remains all too abstract and invisible!" (SDO October 13, 1913). At the beginning of World War I, Schenker expressed doubt about the viability of the Habsburg state: "There isn't really a state here, but rather a society; there isn't a people, but an audience with newspapers—or newspapers with an audience; there is no government, only the highest level of society. In short, Austria is a single, huge coffee-house with an adjoining salon—or a salon with an adjoining coffee-house" (SDO September 11, 1914). After the dissolution of the Dual Monarchy at the war's end, Schenker described his political allegiances as a strategic choice: "In the absence of such [a national home], the Jew, in order to be able to have an intellectual impact, must adopt a home and function in a culture of his choosing" (SDO November 1, 1925). Schenker's pragmatic approach to politics contradicts the very meaning of such terms as *Vaterland* and *Heimat*, tied by definition to personal sentiment and family history.

At the beginning of the war, Schenker articulated his understanding that the concepts of nation and state were historically contingent ideas, not eternal verities, within the context of his hostility to the union of German Austria with Germany. Schenker rejected the association of the concepts of nationality and statehood, which would put his own status as a Jewish citizen of the Dual Monarchy in jeopardy:

One must certainly not forget that the national principle was created and promoted around the middle of the previous century as dogma, and moreover as a dogma of state formation. . . . In fact, precisely today one proclaims *the higher value of that idea of statehood that at least does not refer exclusively to national unity*. (SDO September 3, 1914) (italics added)

Despite his doubts about the Dual Monarchy's viability, Schenker, like most Habsburg Jews, mourned its demise and feared the new postwar order. In the war's immediate aftermath, approximately 100,000 Jews were killed in pogroms in Poland and Ukraine

(Veidlinger 2021). Schenker linked anti-Jewish and anti-German pogroms in Poland to the Monarchy's collapse, mocking the newly independent Polish nation with the exclamation, "The fruits of self-determination!" (SDO December 31, 1918). He also noted the "plundering of Jewish property in Bohemia" (SDO December 18, 1918). Schenker continued to oppose political union between Germany and German Austria, ridiculing the Austrian Social Democratic Party's program of *Anschluß*, union with Germany (Gould 1950). On December 31, 1918, he wrote, "The Opponents of the Annexation"—probably the most shameless thing that this organ [*Arbeiter-Zeitung*] has yet produced. . . . And a thousand times more contemptible the sentence: 'The annexation to Germany seems to be the great idea that would rescue German Austria [*Deutsch-Österreich*] from the horrible collapse by which it lost its position as a great power, the creative idea from which a new chapter in the development of the German-Austrian people can proceed'" (SDO December 31, 1918).¹⁶

In the 1920s and '30s, Schenker objected to the mass politics of Hitler on the one hand and the communists on the other. Nevertheless, in 1922, a despairing Schenker praised Mussolini and declared himself a fascist, while continuing to yearn for the fallen Habsburg monarchy:

Our poor Dr. Opper (Kiel) must yet play for movies for countless hours!! And a thousand such examples. . . . Consequently, I praise the fascists exclusively! Get rid of "class" from the flesh of the nation—no sooner thought than done. And the swindling [Italian] leaders have already fled like cowards . . . and the communist federations have already disbanded, and already the workers have become enthusiastic fascists! . . . *The most god-forsaken Habsburger has more cultural value than the entire wage-raising machinery*, as the leader himself of the Austrian social democrats called the party. (SDO November 2, 1922, letter to Halm) (italics added)

Five years later, however, Schenker displayed hostility to Italian fascism when he critiqued the radio broadcast of a concert by the Vienna Symphony: "There follows [Ottorino] Respighi's *Pines of Rome*—the most successful thing was the imitation of the birds, everything else had even less musical substance [*alles übrige war noch weniger Musik*]. Italian hands have provided an immense claque of supporters, but no fascism

16 Deisinger presents Schenker as a supporter of the Social Democrats' advocacy of the merger of German Austria into Germany after World War I: "Only the criticism of the Austrian government in the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* in the face of the bread shortage and the proposed annexation of German-Austria to Germany, demanded by many social-democratic politicians, found Schenker's support." In support of his thesis, Deisinger cites a clearly sarcastic January 1919 comment by Schenker: "*Arbeiter Zeitung*: 'Where are we going?' ([Friedrich] Austerlitz): for annexation to Germany; ludicrous [translated by Deisinger as 'droll'] polemic against those who cannot so quickly make the leap from 'international' to 'national,' etc." See Deisinger (2010, 21–22, 32).

will be of any help here [*aber da wird kein Fascismus helfen*]: Respighi is no musician at all. . . . [Umberto] Urbano sang old [seventeenth- and eighteenth-century] Italian songs [by Giulio Caccini, Pergolesi, and Tommaso Giordani]—and here just about everything was, of course, at the very highest level, and the songs and the singer alike were deservedly accorded bursts of applause, also from the fascist claque” (SDO November 10, 1927; Hewlett 2014, 172; VSO 1927). In 1929, Schenker had a nightmare about the Italian fascists:

I dreamed of Mussolini: Without an overcoat, I left a party and headed for the railway and went to Rome! [Arriving] there I go straight to Mussolini. . . . He now asks: “What do you think of the Eternal City?” . . . “I have heard that you place much greater value on the New Rome than the Old, admittedly without being disrespectful.” He: “It must indeed be this way.” I: “As an artist, I know the greater value of the Old.” At this point, Mussolini dismisses me. I want to get to my train, [but] Fascists refuse to give me the [necessary] information—and I have only 50 shillings travel money! Even the [ticket] clerk refuses to give me any information! I wake up!! (SDO May 6, 1929)

During the early 1930s, Schenker supported the Austrian clerical party, the Christian Socials, which opposed both the Austrian communists and the Nazis (Kitchen 1980). Schenker’s political stance was akin to that of most Austrian Jews, who perceived Christian Social Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuß as a defender of the Jewish community (Pauley 1992, 260–63). Given the limited political options in Austria, even Karl Kraus accepted Dollfuß as a “lifesaver” [*Lebensretter*] (Iggers 1967, 10). After Dollfuß was murdered in 1934, Schenker wrote in his diary, “Radio: appreciation of the statesman Dollfuß. . . . Dollfuß towers like a giant above all other statesmen, he brings to mind Moses’s leading of the Jews out of Egypt. An Austrian heroic age!” (SDO September 29, 1934). Because Dollfuß had opposed the Nazis, Arturo Toscanini, Europe’s leading musical antifascist, conducted the Verdi Requiem in his memory at the Vienna State Opera on November 1, 1934.

Schenker’s Postwar Political Philosophy

In a general way, Schenker’s sentiments during World War I and the following decade can be connected to what has been dubbed the “conservative revolution” in German culture.¹⁷ His viewpoint has both similarities and differences with those of Thomas Mann and Hans Pfitzner, both of whom expressed themselves forcefully during the postwar years against liberal values and in favor of German cultural tradition. Like

17 On the conservative revolution in music, see Attfield (2017).

the ideologues of the “conservative revolution,” Schenker vociferously attacked the British and the French, with the specifically Jewish twist that he connected French duplicity in World War I and after to the Dreyfus Affair. These ideas would seem to place Schenker securely within the ranks of the conservative revolution in Germany. His cultural values and political convictions nevertheless diverge significantly from those of the post-World War I German or Austrian Right. While conservative cultural critics connected German traditions to German ethnic nationalism as expressions of the spirit of the people [*Volksgeist*], Schenker denied the validity of the very idea of the “people,” which he associated with mass politics of both the Left and Right: “The people, of which no one knows who it is, where it begins, where it ends [*Das Volk, von dem niemand weiß, wer es ist, wo es beginnt, wo es aufhört*] . . . This very people, sphinx though it be, is vaunted as the embodiment of the very idea of the state” (Schenker 2004b, 8; Schenker 1921, 7).

Unlike the conservatives, Schenker posited that those with exceptional gifts separate themselves from their origins by their creative power, rather than expressing the spirit of the people:¹⁸ “I distinguish between Beethoven, who emerged from the folk . . . and the folk that remained folk. . . . The delusion that all of the folk is, like Beethoven, capable of the same characteristics in intellectual and moral regard damages humanity” (Bent et al. 2014, 263, letter to Halm, January 17, 1918).¹⁹ He also dismissed the *völkisch* strain in German musical nationalism (Williamson 2004), ridiculing Wagner’s use of ancient Germanic sagas in his operas:

With his instinctive, ingenious cleverness, he [Wagner] seized upon the old sagas, which were supposed to remind the German nation of its glorious days of yore. He hoped and counted on making the fluids of old circulate once again, and so kept continuously in a state of renewal. . . . Should not the German nation thus have replaced the fluids of its youth long, long ago? And what significance should Wotan and his circle have for a highly developed nation? Had not the gods been long forgotten before Wagner’s time? What meaning can the truth of such an artificially freshened-up saga hold for us in our times, apart from a purely aesthetic one? (Schenker 2005a, 98–99)

18 For example, in 1893, the Viennese German racial-nationalist [*deutschnational*] music critic August Püringer wrote: “The artist is rooted in the life of the people and receives his artistic power from it” (Brodbeck 2014, 246).

19 See also Schenker’s diary entry for November 10, 1906: “It has to be admitted that all the geniuses of art were men from among the ‘people’ [*das Volk*], but that the artistic understanding of the genius lifted them up ultimately clear out of the ‘people.’ . . . But the mere fact that anyone belongs to the ‘people’ bestows no credit whatsoever upon art” (SDO November 10, 1906).

In “The Mission of German Genius,” Schenker explicitly linked his condemnation of the concept of the “people” to his support for monarchical government:

Rather, Germans must realize that there is only one betrayal of nation, namely not knowing what “nation” itself means. They must strive to stamp out the pitiable lie of the “people” [*die erbärmliche Lüge vom Volk*] completely if they are not to bring about a Dark Ages of even greater suffering (an era characterized precisely by the lie of the “people”) and with it a betrayal of culture. . . . Let them [the Germans] make of their nation a model for all, let them prepare it for the first time ever for monarchy in its pure form. . . . A true monarchy will at long last exist when everyone has, through his king, himself become king. (Schenker 2004b,18; Schenker 1921, 19)

In *Der Tonwille* 5 (1923), Schenker expressed a deeply pessimistic view of human nature and of history, employing the same violent language (“cannibals” and “animals”) that he used when discussing Germany’s enemies: “I know that for a long time to come people will be cooking and eating one another like cannibals, only each time the feast will be given a different name, more gruesome in peace than in war. . . . Human beings today are still no more than monkeys or tigers, and . . . nations are still as animalistic as they were in the Bronze Age (Schenker 2004a, 224–25). For Schenker, the fatal flaws of human nature led to the inevitable failure of all forms of government: “Every government disappoints, tyrant, oligarch, emperor, president, every government must surely also betray, just as [does] the individual person, it is in the nature of things!” (SDO September 25, 1922, letter to Halm). Schenker’s words echo those of Schopenhauer, one of his intellectual heroes. In November 1918, Schenker had seized on a passage from Schopenhauer’s *Parerga und Paralipomena* to “prove” the necessity of monarchical government (Deisinger 2010, 22–23). Like Schenker, Schopenhauer denigrates humankind in general: “A state constitution that embodied abstract right would be an excellent thing for natures other than human. But since the great majority are extremely egoistic, unjust, inconsiderate, deceitful, and sometimes even wicked; and since, in addition, they are endowed with very meager intelligence, there arises from this the necessity of a power which is concentrated in one man [and] is itself above all law and right . . . a power to which all submit and which is regarded as something of a higher order, a ruler by the grace of God” (Schopenhauer 1974, 252–53). Schenker’s pessimistic political philosophy served as the context for his condemnation of the mass politics and demagogic leaders of the period after World War I: “We live in an era of absolutism—political, military, or social—an era in which democracy has become profoundly weak, making room for the cult of the individual, of the mercenary soldier, of the successful terrorist, and of the ruthless politician” (Schenker 2004a, 225).

The preface to Schenker's 1912 monograph *Beethoven's Ninth Symphony* sheds light on the relationship of his political views to his musical values. Schenker accuses both Wagner—the iconically German composer—and the German nation as a whole of cultural perfidy, attacking Wagner for having “dealt musical art its deathblow” by debasing the language of music in order to appeal to the mass public in his music dramas (Schenker 1992, 18–19).²⁰ Schenker gives his criticism of Wagner a specifically political character by comparing Wagnerism to democracy, “the general suffrage.” He then connects the musical crisis to a political one, suggesting that the only salvation—musical or political—lies in “the genius” (Schenker 1992, 19). For Schenker, genius is not a spontaneous and irrational manifestation, as Wagner had asserted (Karnes 2008, 110), but combines intuition and intellection (Karnes 2008, 117)²¹ along with—crucially—moral accountability. With regard to the genius's intellectual exertions, Schenker wrote in *Der Tonwille* 4 (1923), “Genius, in its state of grace and full maturity, requires a whole lifetime of the most unremitting labor for its work” (Schenker 2004a, 161). In his diary, he recorded the maxim, “1 percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration—that is what genius amounts to” (SDO August 16, 1913). In 1913, Schenker defined the moral aspect of genius when he commented in his diary about the hundredth anniversary of Wagner's birth. He denied Wagner the quality of genius as much for his moral failings as for his musical shortcomings, writing of Wagner's “seriously compromised humanity” (SDO May 23, 1913).²² Schenker continued, “For the sake of a Wagner, the world is prepared to conceive a type of genius that lies even beyond the realm of goodness; it would surely not concede the same for a true genius—who of course would need no such thing.”

In his Beethoven monograph, Schenker clarifies his polemical point about the genius at the end of the preface, referring to Emperor Maximilian I (1459–1519), considered to be the key figure in the creation of the Habsburg Empire: “We live in a hard time of intellectual robber-baronry; and no Maximilian has yet come into view who would be able to promise peace in the affairs of the intellect” (Schenker 1992, 26).²³

20 “It was the theatrical blood in Wagner that determined him to understand all clarity only in terms of the hearing habits of a crowd of a thousand, of whom a more refined ear-culture is not to be expected” (Schenker 1992, 66; cited in Cook 2007, 130). See also Botstein (1985, 883, 1013–14).

21 Karnes asserts that Schenker eventually repudiated the concept of the reflective artist and returned to that of the intuitive genius. I suggest instead that Schenker's notion of the exceptional artist, the “genius,” did not preclude the idea of a creative synthesis of intuition and reflection.

22 “Wagner's antisemitism was not an overt cause for the skepticism of Schenker” (Botstein 2009, 174). Schenker, however, freely expressed views about Jews and Judaism in his diary that he would never have considered it possible to discuss in the public sphere.

23 Karnes notes that Guido Adler mentioned Emperor Maximilian in the inaugural preface for *Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Österreich* (1894): “Since the time of Kaiser Maximilian I, the royal Court Chapel in Vienna, which looked after music of all kinds—for chamber and opera—along with the churchly service, has been a sparkling mirror of Western art of the most distinguished

Almost twenty years later, in 1930, Schenker elaborated on his ideas about political and moral leadership, praising great German artists and scientists for their intervention in the public realm: “Now poets and intellectuals, [Albert] Einstein, [Thomas] Mann, East Prussian writers are practicing politics today, out of necessity!! . . . A people needs leaders who can anticipate things, not those who lag behind—lagging behind is something that the people themselves do” (SDO October 27, 1930).

Schenker, the Genius, and the Germans

Schenker’s conception of genius drew on a long tradition in German thought. In his study of Schenker and Schoenberg, Matthew Arndt focused on the treatment of this term by Kant, Goethe, and Schopenhauer, describing the product of genius in terms of “self-realization” (Arndt 2013; Arndt 2018, 24ff.; Korsyn 2009, 171–72). Schenker’s cultural, not genetic, explanation for the creation of genius has now been criticized for precisely the ideas that he denounced (Ewell 2020a, [4.5.3]). In “Contextualizing Musical Genius: Perspectives from Queer Theory,” Vivian Luong and Taylor Myers argue, “For Schenker, the idea of genius was aligned with the idea of supremacy, especially the supremacy of the German genius composer in opposition to the lesser French, Russian, and English composers. As well, Schenker believed the genius was on a separate level genetically than an ordinary man” (Luong and Myers 2020). Luong and Myers allude to Schenker’s letter draft to Wilhelm Furtwängler of November 1931, in which he suggested, rather, that genius is a product of the sophistication of a national culture, and can be nurtured by intensive education: “I dare to assert that all the industries in the world do not compare with the German industry of genius. Once that is recognized, then this industry, too, must again be recapitalized, just as banks and all monetary values are being recapitalized today!” (SDO November 11–16, 1931, letter to Furtwängler). Schenker made these comments within the context of his belief that German culture could be adopted throughout the world, to the benefit of all: “If the Bohemians have come as far as we find today, they have the Germans to thank, whose example they have followed” (SDO November 5, 1912; see also Brodbeck 2014, 325).

In the 1931 letter draft to Furtwängler, Schenker made remarks about the “god-like” element of genius when he discussed a famous non-Aryan, Jesus Christ. He simultaneously suggested in despair that the Germans may not produce another genius because they have renounced their culture:

sorts,’ he [Adler] wrote. ‘Artists of all lands and kingdoms, often the best of their age, converged upon it seeking fame and glory’ (Karnes 2008, 179–80).

Is it possible for Jesus to be surpassed? Does he not remain the goal of all men, even into the remotest future? Is it possible for Plato to be surpassed? However much successive ages may take of these geniuses' substrate, there remains in their work a godlike element that disdains each age! . . . I am in no doubt whatsoever that there will be nothing left for Germans in future centuries to do other than to cherish their musical geniuses with exactly that godlike honor with which the Jews wander through the ages with the Old Testament. (SDO November 11–16, 1931, letter to Furtwängler; see also Schenker 2014b, 70)

In *Der Tonwille* 3 (1922), Schenker denied that he dwelled on the importance of German geniuses in order to denigrate those from other nations:

But it is not my intention—despite what certain people might think—to deprive Germans of the joy of discovering greatness in foreigners. Since I revere true genius . . . how could I reconcile it with my conscience, with my mission, if I were to belittle a genius, even if it be a foreign one? . . . One really cannot begin to understand a Michelangelo or Rembrandt, a Shakespeare or Dostoevsky, etc., if one has no more than the conventional knowledge of the Germans Bach, Beethoven, and Goethe. (Schenker 2004a, 137)²⁴

As a musicologist and theorist, Schenker's scholarly interests inevitably reflected the German musicology of his time. He began his career at the tail end of the first great "discovery/documentation period" of German musicology and built on the work of his predecessors. To demonstrate his musicological competence, Schenker inserted a roll call of forgotten contemporaries of Haydn and Mozart in *Der Tonwille* 2 (Schenker 2004a, 64). In his own musicological work, Schenker researched and/or edited the music of Beethoven, C. P. E. Bach, and Haydn; his students carried on his work on the two latter figures.

During the nineteenth century, German musicologists created a usable past. In their studies of the history of music, they prioritized the works of German composers such as Bach, Handel, Buxtehude, Johannes Eccard (Berger 2005, 19), and Schütz (Karnes 2008, 173; Kelly 2004, 576–77). Within the context of this German nationalist artistic ideology, Schenker's roll call of great composers can hardly be defined as a nationalist or racist manifesto. It was, rather, the expression of the scholarly enthusiasms of a specialist, not designed to have a wider resonance. Schenker included C. P. E. Bach among his great figures while excluding Wagner. Like his advocacy of C. P. E. Bach, Schenker's promotion of Haydn represented, not a defense of the canon

24 Schachter writes, "One wonders how he [Schenker] accounted for Thomas Aquinas, Dante, Shakespeare, Michelangelo, Montaigne, Newton, Descartes, Rembrandt, Darwin, Tolstoy, to name a few" (Schachter 2001, 5).

as currently constituted, but an effort to bring an underappreciated composer to the attention of musicians and scholars (Proksch 2011; Proksch 2015, 115–16); in Schenker's estimation, Haydn's music was "poorly performed or distributed in corrupt texts, or . . . drooled over in the idle chit-chat of loathsome, presumptuous ignorance" (Schenker 2004a, 113). Brahms's scholarly engagements with Baroque music served as a guide for Schenker's own work in that area. Schenker praised Domenico Scarlatti while noting the interest that Brahms had taken in his music (Bent 1986, 141). Likewise, in May 1933, Schenker noted in his diary the arrival of a new edition of François Couperin's music, prepared by his former pupil Otto Vrieslander (SDO May 15, 1933b); Brahms had lent his name to an edition of Couperin's keyboard music (Kelly 2004).

One of the most important developments in early twentieth-century musicology was the revival of seventeenth-century music, marked by the first modern performances of Monteverdi's operas. Given his close attention to musicological matters, it is not surprising that Schenker repeatedly expressed his admiration for seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century French and Italian music. In 1925, he described a radio broadcast of music by "old Italians," and opined, "The two arias by Pergolesi stand out" (SDO November 23, 1925). In 1928, he praised "a sonata by [Pietro] Locatelli" and "a thoroughly beautiful *Pastorale* by Couperin" (SDO January 30, 1928). In 1930, Schenker described as "very beautiful" a radio broadcast that included vocal works by Alessandro Scarlatti, Giulio Caccini, and Giacomo Carissimi (SDO April 23, 1930). In 1931, he wrote to Furtwängler, "What the earliest Italian composers wrote still benefited even our masters" (SDO November 11–16, 1931, letter to Furtwängler).

Schenker's musical values reflected the non-racialist but hegemonically German ideology of Austrian liberalism, as expressed by Viennese music critics in the 1880s and 90s, the years in which he completed his studies and began his career. These critics conceived the Germans as a *Kultur*nation, rather than insisting on racial criteria for musical participation in the *Volks*nation, as did the nationalist Wagnerians (Brodbeck 2014, 302, 317). As a Jew, Schenker constructed his Germanically oriented "imaginary museum of musical works" (Goehr 1992) in such a way as to create a space for his own participation in German musical culture. In so doing, he followed a common strategy employed by Jews in nineteenth-century Central Europe, selectively interpreting Christian and German culture within a universalist paradigm.²⁵ Schenker valorized the German idea of absolute music (Dahlhaus 1989; Goehr 1992), while deemphasizing German culture's religious core. He published relatively few analyses of J. S. Bach's religious works. For Schenker, Bach was the master of diminution (Schenker 2014a, 2–19), not the great musical evangelist. Likewise, each of the other compos-

25 "Schenker redefines the German in music: he wrenches it away from the Wagnerians and relocates it back in time to the Viennese classics, back to a legacy that is common to Jew and gentile" (Cook 2007, 88). See also Eybl (2018, [4]) and Beller (1989, 148).

ers discussed by Schenker was significant in his eyes because of specifically musical virtues. C. P. E. Bach preserved the understanding of the delicate balance between counterpoint and harmony, destroyed by Rameau's concepts of the fundamental bass and chord inversions (Schenker 2014b, 1–9). Beethoven was the great master of large-scale structural connections. Brahms was the last of the masters who was “in a position to receive the magnificent [symphonic] technique of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven” (Schenker 2005a, 43; Schenker 2005b, 142). In contrast, Schenker dismissed Wagner's music as inferior because of his *failure*, in Schenker's view, to create large-scale structural connections (Schenker 2004b, 23–24; Botstein 2009, 172–73). Schenker developed these ideas while German music, and particularly Beethoven reception, was dominated by nationalist polemics (Dennis 1996; Brodbeck 2014). Schenker expressed his universalist vision of the meaning of art most eloquently in *Der Tonwille* 5: “Art unites and makes brothers of all humanity. Never has war been waged on account of art, as it has so often in the name of religion” (Schenker 2004a, 212).

Schenker and Nazism

Suggestions have recently been made that Schenker was an admirer of Hitler (Ewell 2020a, [4.3.5]), replaying an ugly post-World War I controversy in which he was attacked for his conservative political and musical views. Schenker's detractors accused him of hiding his Jewish identity and supporting the Nazis. In response, Schenker forcefully rejected the Nazis and noted that he had refused to convert to Christianity, unlike many of his Jewish critics. He linked their rejection of their Jewish origins to his contention that they had repudiated German culture: “All *baptized* Jews everywhere, who adopt *foreign names, foreign religion, foreign language*, have appointed me, tax-free, to the position of ‘*swastika wielder*’—though I am the only one among them who has no business in these matters” (letter to Vrieslander, May 6, 1923, quoted in Reiter 2015, 283) (italics added). Schenker later underlined his refusal to undergo baptism: “I have not been baptized and, when asked, confessed my Jewish faith with pride and love, indeed with the utmost conviction that no writer of history can share with me, not even the most enlightened Jew” (SDO October 29, 1930). In August 1923, Schenker confronted composer Karl Weigl (1881–1949) about the defamatory claims that had recently been disseminated: “Weigl and his wife [Valerie Weigl] knock; right at the beginning of the conversation I mention the swastika accusation, completely unabashedly (Lie-Liechen [Jeanette Schenker] believes that it [the accusation] stemmed directly from Weigl)” (SDO August 20, 1923).

In 1925, Schenker was satirized in *Abbruch* [Demolition], a parody issue of the contemporary music journal *Musikblätter des Anbruch*, as a rabid German nationalist and antisemite:

I . . . have proven that new music is not music at all and that there is nothing after Beethoven and Schumann (hallowed be the name) and perhaps Brahms, and that all this only became clear after I discovered it and that I will proclaim this to all mankind because we Germans will not be trifled with and the good Lord still dwells among us and the Jews will come to see their world empire defeated in the name of German Art, in the name of Beethoven, in the name of Bach, in the name of Schumann, in the name of Brahms, and in the name of Heinrich Schenker from Pódwoloczyska. God grant it. (Hailey 2006, 64; Burgstaller 2018, 32–35)

This attempt to associate Schenker with the *völkisch* attitudes of the German political Right was singularly inept in its contradictions. While suggesting that Schenker was a German antisemite (“we Germans will not be trifled with and the good Lord still dwells among us and the Jews will come to see their world empire defeated in the name of German Art”), it inaccurately named his place of birth as the Galician town of Pódwoloczyska, rather than the village of Wiśniowczyk. The error correctly implied, however, that Schenker was a Galician Jew who had settled in Vienna, for both areas had a predominantly Jewish population. In response to the *Abbruch* article, Schenker returned to the slanders about his political views in a diary entry about his friend, artist Victor Hammer (1882–1967): “It is also strange that someone who is so clever, in spite of all ignorance, does not hit on the idea that all of the people who accuse me of Nazi allegiances, or of insincerity, such as by hiding my Jewishness, would not rather resort to factual refutations instead of all the arguments.”²⁶

As proof of his purported Nazi allegiances, Schenker’s present-day critics cite a letter that he wrote to his pupil Felix-Eberhard von Cube on May 14, 1933 (Ewell 2020a, [4.3.5]). Jackson (followed by Nicholas Cook [Cook 2007, 150]) has pointed out, however, that Schenker condemned Hitler soon after: “On July 13, 1933, Schenker noted in his diary that he had received a letter from [Reinhard] Oppel which was ‘evidence of [his] disenchantment with the new regime,’ and, ten days later, on July 23, he reported: ‘Letter to Oppel dictated: I confirm him in his skepticism’” (Jackson 2019, 159). Jackson, however, does not discuss Schenker’s many earlier denunciations of the Nazis.

After Hitler was named chancellor of Germany on January 30, 1933, Schenker’s letters and diaries indicate that he was aware of the unfolding political crisis, but withheld judgment at first about the situation’s severity. On February 21, 1933, he wrote in his diary, “Lie-Liechen [Schenker’s wife Jeanette] telephones Mozio [Schen-

26 “Sonderbar auch, daß ein bei aller Unwissenheit so gescheiter Mensch nicht auf den Gedanken kommt, daß alle diejenigen, die mir ein Hakenkreuzlertum andichten, oder Unaufrichtigkeit, wie etwa das Verbergen des Judentums, statt aller Einwände nicht lieber zu sachlichen Widerlegungen greifen” (SDO September 30, 1925; Jackson [2019, 158–59]).

ker's brother Moritz]; he will come at 4:30—and he appears, bringing the installment that is due. Declares the notice harmless—do not sell anything!—*a war is imminent!!*” (SDO February 21, 1933) (italics added). On February 27, the Reichstag was set on fire. At Hitler's behest, President Hindenburg suspended individual and civil liberties in Germany on the following day. On March 20, 1933, Oswald Jonas wrote from Germany, “The project of presenting introductory lectures to the Furtwängler concerts on the radio must for now, *because of the altered circumstances*, unfortunately be postponed” (SDO March 20, 1933, letter from Jonas to Schenker) (italics added). On March 24, 1933, President Hindenburg signed the Enabling Act, which gave Hitler dictatorial powers. On April 2, Schenker wrote in his diary about his meeting with a distraught Otto Erich Deutsch, a Jewish convert to Protestantism, “Deutsch is physically suffering from his perception of his loss of Germanness! In my case, too, he says that anti-Semitism is playing a role—which is surely not correct” (SDO April 2, 1933). Despite the warnings of his friends, Schenker, like most German and Austrian Jews, was not yet ready to panic at the very beginning of April 1933 (Friedländer 1997, 15–17, 60–62). All that changed a week later.

During the Nazi period, Schenker's friend and student Wilhelm Furtwängler compromised himself by his public activities, while privately expressing hostility to the Hitler regime. Furtwängler, however, made repeated efforts to assist Jewish musicians who were endangered by Nazi policies.²⁷ On April 7, 1933, the Nazis enacted the first of a series of discriminatory laws against the Jews of Germany (Dawidowicz 1975, 58–60). On April 6, Furtwängler wrote a letter to Joseph Goebbels in which he criticized the persecution of Jewish artists (Furtwängler 1954, 70–71). The letter was published on April 11. Schenker noted in his diary, “Furtwängler to the minister: takes a stand against theoretical condemnation of the Jews—where art is concerned, the only criterion is whether it is good or bad” (SDO April 11, 1933). For Schenker and his friends, Goebbels's dismissal of Furtwängler's arguments, in a statement also published on April 11 (Wulf 1963, 86–89; Levi 1994, 45–46), served as the breaking point. On April 29, Schenker wrote in his diary, “From Vrieslander . . . He is sharply critical of Germany, but rightly so!” (SDO April 29, 1933). Four days later, on May 3, Schenker registered his dismay in a letter to Anthony van Hoboken. In March, Hoboken had written to Schenker (SDO March 20, 1933),²⁸ enclosing an article about music from the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, of which Schenker now wrote, “This language! Is it a language at all? . . . The Viennese folk-tongue calls anything similarly incomprehensible ‘Spanish’; or is that already ‘Hebrew,’ which in Germany today is ‘mandatory?’” (SDO May 3, 1933, letter to Hoboken). Schenker was alluding to the Nazis' declara-

27 On Furtwängler's complicated relationship with the Nazis, see Shirakawa (1992); Allen (2018); Prieberg (1991).

28 Hoboken's letter has not survived.

tion that German texts by Jewish writers should heretofore be considered translations from Hebrew (Friedländer 1997, 57; Iggers 1967, 9). He continued,

Now I am including out of gratitude my essay from the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* of April 28. Neither have I been baptized for its sake—which, incidentally, would have been of no use—nor have I written the original in Hebrew. . . . I sent it off in mid-February (still before Hitler). That in the circle of the many “musicians,” “critics,” who follow the journal, my “alien race” would not already have been ascertained, I don’t believe. It is something else: that to these very gentlemen my essay must necessarily remain incomprehensible, just “Hebrew.”

Writing to Cube on May 6, 1933, Schenker denounced the politicization of art in Nazi Germany, the subject of the public debate between Furtwängler and Goebbels: “In a world that has not yet understood the smallest of tones, yet dares to politicize it [music], there is no longer any place for musicians who contest [*absprechen*] music’s calling in the realm of politics. And yet, as all previous experiments have been an embarrassment, so too will the most recent experiment prove to be an embarrassment: in spite of all the political murmurings, the unique art of music [*die Musik in ihrer Sonderart*] will ultimately survive” (SDO May 6, 1933, letter to Cube).

On May 11, 1933, Cube wrote to Schenker to persuade him that the Nazi regime was a positive development, pressing the point despite the recent flight from Germany of his colleague Moriz Violin, one of Schenker’s closest friends. Although Cube was having professional difficulties due to his association with Schenker, he continued to support the Nazis: “The events in Germany are in essence what you have so often extolled. Do not let the revolutionary neighbor-noises deceive you about the genius-conceived *Uralinie* here! Germany is conceiving the world anew! . . . Violin’s flight to Vienna is something I count among the errors that are committed so often out of the conflict between spirit and flesh. . . . I shall remain true to the cause, as I have until now.” Cube praised the Nazis’ admiration for Wagner, a composer who Schenker abhorred: “Since the professional musicians have not yet made their way to the spheres of Beethoven or Bach, we cannot demand this, or even less, from politics. Wagner seems to me progress beyond Stravinsky and Hindemith. The path is pointing toward Bach and Beethoven” (SDO May 11, 1933, letter from Cube to Schenker).

In his carefully phrased response to Cube of May 14, 1933, Schenker praised Hitler for defeating the hated communists.²⁹ He simultaneously displayed concern about the worsening situation of the Jews in Germany under Nazi rule, however, disputing

29 “Schenker had long considered the Communists to be enemies of Germany and cared even less for the Nazis (except insofar as he hoped they would dispense with the Communists)” (Proksch 2011, 340).

Cube's criticism of Violin: "I have been informed of Violin's situation from time to time by his sister [Fanny Violin], without his knowing it; she recounted terrifying things!" (SDO May 14, 1933, letter to Cube). Schenker ignored Cube's praise for the Nazis' musical policies. He insisted that the cure for musical modernism could only have an artistic source, granted that from hindsight it is difficult to interpret his remarks about musical "brownshirts" [*Musik-"Braunhemden"*]³⁰ in any other than the most unpleasant terms. In connection with this comment, Schenker expressed a low opinion of the musical tastes of the German masses: "I have prepared the weapons, but the music—the true German music of the greats—finds no understanding among the masses who should bear the weapons." Schenker also indicated that he was aware that all cultural activities connected to Jews were threatened: "Professor Oppel in Leipzig . . . leads a national socialist 'cell,' in which he continues to teach Schenker, now as before, *insofar as this is possible*" (italics added).

On May 16, 1933, Furtwängler delivered the keynote address at the Brahms Festival in Vienna. Schenker attended the event at Furtwängler's invitation (SDO May 16, 1933; SDO May 15, 1933a). Furtwängler discussed "Brahms the Nordic," "Brahms the German," and the basis of Brahms's music in German folksong (Loges 2012), at a time when the Nazis were emphasizing these ideas (Beller-McKenna 2001a, 195–99). While not an explicit expression of Nazi ideology, Furtwängler's speech, with its heavy emphasis on Brahms's Germanness, reflected the *völkisch* narrative about the composer popular during the 1920s and 30s.³¹ It may also have been a response to rumors of Brahms's possible Jewish origins that were circulating at the time (Beller-McKenna 2001a, 195; Beller-McKenna 2001b), echoing attacks on his music during the 1890s by German nationalist critics in Vienna (Notley 1993, 122–23; Notley 2007, 33–34; Brodbeck 2014, 243, 262–63).

Schenker was indignant that Furtwängler had used some of his purely musical ideas about Brahms in the lecture without crediting him. In addition, he was unhappy with Furtwängler's use of the term *Volksverbundenes*, connected to the people, rather than Schenker's preferred term, *Naturgegebenes*, derived from nature, i.e., natural laws (SDO July 28, 1933; Hust 2010, 13). While Schenker believed that he was articulating fundamental musical concepts derived from natural phenomena, Furtwängler instead described Brahms antithetically as inspired by the German racial spirit. In 1929, Schenker had mocked the musical expression of the "spirit of the *Volk*" in his diary: "One need only think of the Russian barbarisms of Tchaikovsky, or the Spanish ones, which most recently came into circulation—always and everywhere the same:

30 "And where would one now find the number of musical 'brownshirts' that would be needed to hunt down the musical Marxists?" (SDO May 14, 1933, letter from Schenker to Cube).

31 For a suggestive rationalization of Furtwängler's rhetoric in the speech, see Prieberg (1991, 64–66).

the musical giftedness of the people does not extend beyond a handful of notes, which are repeated endlessly with almost animalistic tenacity" (SDO December 14, 1929).

On May 17, 1933, a day after Furtwängler's Brahms lecture, Schenker recorded in his diary, "Jonas speaks of dreadful things in Germany with regard to the Jews" (SDO May 17, 1933). On May 20, 1933, Furtwängler visited Schenker and discussed the disastrous political situation in Germany. Schenker first complained about Furtwängler's use of the term *volksverbunden*, noting that such ideas were "'themes' that could easily be exploited by our opponents." "Then 'Germany and the Jews'—Furtwängler is ashamed and asks if he would not do better by moving to Vienna!" (SDO May 20, 1933).

On June 1, 1933, Schenker discussed Furtwängler's Brahms lecture in his diary. His comment about the Nazi concept of *Gleichschaltung* [enforced conformity] is clearly sarcastic: "To Furtwängler (letter): concerning his published lecture . . . I consider the high level he has attained in his life: the foremost conductor, their [i.e., the orchestra's] baton and thinking head [i.e., director]. A pity that he is unable to achieve a resurrection of the craft through 'enforced conformity'—etc." (SDO June 1, 1933). Schenker returned to the concept of *Gleichschaltung* in his letter of June 30 to Salzer. He used the French word *ensemble*, then commented, "why should a Jew never use foreign words when the most regimented *Teutons* [*gleichgeschalteten Germanen*] use them so persistently?" (SDO June 30, 1933, letter to Salzer). Schenker's use of the concept of *Gleichschaltung* was tantamount to accusing Furtwängler of serving as a mouthpiece for Hitler. On August 4, 1933, Schenker wrote in his diary, "To Hans Weisse (letter): . . . I describe the situation in Germany, regret Furtwängler's step backwards" (SDO August 4, 1933).

On July 2, 1933, Schenker bluntly expressed his contempt for the Nazis in his diary: "At midday, a new guest, Hasslreiter, arrives from Vienna—a Hitlerian out of stupidity" (SDO July 2, 1933). On July 5, 1933—a week before the letter to Oppel cited by Jackson—Schenker wrote optimistically in his diary, "From Mozio [Schenker's brother Moritz]: he . . . reports on . . . the beginning of the decline [*beginnenden Zerfall*] of the National-Socialist Party in Germany" (SDO July 5, 1933). In a November 1933 diary entry, Schenker wrote, "In the letter [from Oppel], a good analysis of the musical situation [in Germany]. The juxtaposition of the names Hitler, Goeb[b]els, and Schenker has a very amusing effect" (SDO November 28, 1933). In December 1933, Schenker condemned not only Hitler but the German people as a whole, writing of "the product of the German music-geniuses . . . *misunderstood, betrayed, defiled by the Germans*, but long since having become a boon for mankind" (SDO December 21, 1933, letter to Jonas) (italics added). On June 12, 1934, Schenker wrote to Hoboken, suggesting—as his brother had a year before—that Hitler's demise was near: "Hitler will certainly fly over Austria to Mussolini, but from Austria he was thrown out long ago [Schenker refers to Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuß's banning of the Austrian Nazi

party, the DNSAP, in June 1933]. Could his weeks be numbered even in Germany?" (SDO June 12, 1934, letter to Hoboken). Schenker was too optimistic; Dollfuß was assassinated by Austrian Nazis only six weeks later, on July 25.

Negotiating a Path Through a Hostile World

Given the radical disjunction between Schenker's carefully delimited praise for the Nazis in the letter to Cube of May 14, 1933 and the anti-Nazi sentiments that he consistently expressed elsewhere, both before and after, it is possible that he was equivocating in his response to Cube. Schenker's opening paragraph provides evidence for this suggestion. He responded to Cube's defense of Hitler (SDO May 11, 1933, letter from Cube to Schenker)³² by prefacing his criticism of the latter's musical analyses with effusive praise of his character that is both irrelevant and seemingly evasive: "Everything in your letter—your arguments, your declaration—shows an extraordinary measure of capability and character, which very few people today share with you. . . . Let me also reiterate the following: anyone who, like yourself, has demonstrated such a degree of 'attention' and presentation has, so to speak, the right to make an occasional mistake: a mistake made on the basis of the truth is always more valuable than a mistake made on a basis that is itself a mistake" (SDO May 14, 1933, letter from Schenker to Cube).

Schenker's correspondence with Furtwängler shows a similar evasiveness. Schenker repeatedly ridiculed the music and ideas of Richard Wagner in his published writings, as well as in his correspondence with friends and colleagues. He condemned Wagner as "the hangman of German music," accusing him of "shattering the *Urlinie* and destroying musical truth" (Schenker 2004b, 24). Schenker also castigated Wagner for the dramatic basis of his musical syntax: "His [Wagner's] music follows the logic of thoughts and events [in his operas] far more than the laws that reside in music itself. . . . He does not put together ideas from various elements, he builds no groups, he takes no care of the succession of keys, since he never has in mind a higher unity that is equivalent to any form" (Schenker 2005a, 99). Schenker was, however, diplomatic in broaching the topic of his distaste for Wagner with Furtwängler, his most powerful disciple. In his November 1931 letter draft to Furtwängler, Schenker wrote, "Your call to Wagner is really in keeping with the times. Certainly it ought to and must be stated in criticism of this giant spirit from the loftier vantage-point of the yet greater masters of instrumental music in all seriousness that 'Leit motive' = 'motive.' . . . The disadvantages of a motive-based technique . . . recur also in his Leit motive technique, they

32 On Cube's admiration for the Nazis, see Drabkin (1984–85). For discussion of another Schenker disciple with right-wing views, see Koslovsky (2017).

work counter to any synthesis, even the synthesis of a ‘music drama!’” (SDO November 11–16, 1931, letter to Furtwängler; Hust 2010, 11).

Schenker’s careful attempts to veil his Jewish identity in order to facilitate the dissemination of his musical theories in Germany³³ fall into the same category as his delicate handling of the political and musical views of his students and admirers. Early in his career, Schenker vacillated on this point. He originally entitled one of his works *Tänze der Chassidim*, but then retitled the work *Syrische Tänze* so as not to call attention to his Jewish identity (Federhofer 1985, 82–83; Cook 2007, 225; Reiter 2015, 282). Schenker’s discomfort in this episode undoubtedly led to increased caution later in his career. In 1925, he wrote about his fear that general awareness of his Jewish identity would impede the reception of his theories: “It is my duty to complete my work, but not first to risk innately superfluous publicity, perhaps jeopardizing the work” (SDO September 30, 1925).

Schenker and his friends were all the more aware of this problem after the Nazis took power. Although he felt slighted when Furtwängler omitted his name in the May 1933 Brahms speech, he indicated to Salzer that the matter was a delicate one: “I shall, as usual, give an explanation in our first lesson, one that I am sure will surprise you; to put this down on paper isn’t possible” (SDO June 30, 1933, letter to Salzer). Given the heavily political cast of Furtwängler’s speech and the contemporary controversy about Brahms’s possible racial “taint,” Furtwängler undoubtedly omitted any mention of Schenker due to the latter’s Jewishness.³⁴ On August 5, 1933, Hoboken wrote to Schenker, “It must be amazing even to you that you are now cited and celebrated there [Germany] as the trail-blazer of the ‘now self-aware Germany.’ Does Goos know of which infamous race you are a member?” (SDO August 5, 1933, letter from Hoboken to Schenker). In his letter to Jonas of December 21, 1933, Schenker wrote, “On the other hand we must bear in mind that an assiduous display of commitment to the matter [his Jewish identity] could be in some sense detrimental. . . . Above all, the ‘Mission’! If this musical revelation will come about better and more easily, provided we desist from offending the musical heathens, let us avoid anything that is unnecessary. . . . Keep the enclosed essay and show it to the like-minded, but always with discretion: two Jews at once would be too much for antipathetic minds” (SDO December 21, 1933, letter to Jonas).

33 See the discussion of “denominational incognito” in Eybl (2018, [2]).

34 On September 26, 1934, Furtwängler wrote to Schenker, “I am coming to Vienna in December for the first time (three times in all), where I hope to see you. I will then be able to recount and explain all sorts of things to you in person, which I cannot do now. Among other things, why I have not thus far carried through my intention to express myself publicly about you and your work. The general (i.e., political) conditions of life for someone who serves art as much as I do persist in being very uncertain and unclear” (SDO September 26, 1934, letter from Furtwängler to Schenker).

Schenker and Racism

In recent years, Schenker's perspectives on non-Western peoples and cultures have come under increased scrutiny, particularly his attitudes, both musical and political, toward Africans and black Americans. In several instances, Schenker made blanket ideological pronouncements belittling the musical products of non-Western cultures. When given the opportunity to hear non-European music, he often expressed pleasure, however. For example, in 1906, Schenker wrote in his diary, "In the Apollo Theatre with Dr. and Mrs. Robert Brünauer. The Negro dances almost thrilling. The Japanese achieve wonderful things in terms of imagination and energy" (SDO December 13, 1906). In 1927, Anthony van Hoboken played a recording of spirituals for Schenker, who responded enthusiastically, "The musician who assembled the Negro choruses that you played for us on your phonograph should be considered a true musical genius; it would be worthwhile to know who that is: he deserves a first place among musicians, certainly ahead of Strauss and Pfitzner" (SDO August 12, 1927, letter to Hoboken). While we cannot pinpoint the recording that Schenker heard, many choral recordings of spirituals were made in the 1910s and '20s, some by the renowned Fisk Jubilee Singers, which toured Europe in 1924 and 1925 (Brooks 2000). On a second occasion, Schenker criticized a broadcast of spirituals at the same time as he criticized American popular music, and for the same reason—neither music satisfied his parochial requirements for great art: "Radio: Negro spirituals—completely falsified, dishonest expropriation of European music, similar to the American music expropriated from foreigners under the label 'national music!'" (SDO January 16, 1931).³⁵ On a third occasion, Schenker complained that a *performance* of spirituals—not the music itself—was "too saccharine," but praised it as "excellent": "Radio: Westminster Choir! In the program there is no music by Brahms, Schumann, Mendelssohn, or Schubert—only songs and Negro spirituals; the performance of these pieces is at any rate excellent, but too saccharine, which may easily explain why those masters have been omitted" (SDO May 2, 1929). Whatever Schenker's motivation for criticism in the last two cases, his lavish praise in the first instance precludes the possibility that he condemned black artists because of racism.

In *The Masterwork in Music* 3 (1930), Schenker criticized jazz because he considered it to be rhythmically impoverished: "German composers have still understood

35 Ewell's quotation from this diary entry (Ewell 2020, [4.2.3]) relies on an inaccurate translation in SDO: "Negro spirituals—completely falsified, dishonest expropriation of European music, similar to the American music expropriated by foreigners [von Ausländern = *from* foreigners] under the label 'national music!'" Schenker was saying that both spirituals and American "national" music were expropriated from European music, not that the music of black Americans was inferior because of their race.

nothing of the realm of musical rhythm, by which I mean the artistically appropriate rhythm that has evolved over centuries, if they could still find rhythm in jazz, when jazz possesses as little genuine rhythm as a metronome or a train wheel" (Schenker 2014b, 7). Nevertheless, Schenker compared jazz favorably to Nazi art in a July 1933 letter to Hoboken: "The recently repudiated [by the Nazis] dynamic of jazz was almost more fun than that of today's nationalistic art" [*lustiger als die der völkischen Kunst*] (SDO July 25, 1933, letter from Schenker to Hoboken). Schenker's letter demonstrates both that he considered Nazi culture to be beneath contempt, and that he judged the art of black Americans by purely artistic criteria. Even though Schenker admired jazz no more than other manifestations of popular culture, he preferred it to the artistic products of the "master race."

To compare Schenker's comments about music-making by Africans and black Americans to the discourse of his American contemporaries, I offer an excerpt from the 1915 book *The Art of Music: Music in America*. The book includes an introduction by noted composer Arthur Farwell, and was published in a series of music appreciation volumes under the general editorship of Daniel Gregory Mason, professor of music at Columbia University from 1910 to 1942. Its infantilization of black Americans and their music is worlds apart from Schenker's remarks:

The negro in his uncivilized way was endowed with the ingenuousness of a child, and the susceptibility to impressions that goes with the untutored mind. He had a childlike, poetic nature, a natural gift of song, an emotionalism and a sentimentality that responded unflinchingly to all the pangs of an unjust and cruel existence. . . . Add to this the intense religious excitement to which the negro is subject—an emotion which seems to have translated itself with all its elemental power from savage idolatry to Christian worship—and you have a combination which could not but produce a striking result. (Farwell and Darby 1915, 285)³⁶

Schenker's dismissal of non-Western music based on modal scales has been cited as proof of his racist attitudes. His discussion of this topic, like his remarks about American music, reveals both his freedom from biological racism and his cultural parochialism. Schenker writes of the "captivating charm" of Arabic, Japanese, and Turkish songs (Schenker 1987, 28). Nevertheless, he rejects all music not based on the European major-minor system, including Gregorian chant (Schenker 1987, 30), medieval and Renaissance European music (Schenker 1987, 22),³⁷ European folk song (Schenker 1987, 29–30), and the music of his own people, the Jews (Schenker 1987,

36 On Mason's anti-black racism and antisemitism, see Noble (2002, 191–92).

37 Schenker's dismissive attitude toward medieval European music mirrors the attitudes of German musicologists of the pre-World War I period. See Koslovsky (2009, 28).

21): “It was none other than our masters who triumphantly elevated us long ago—even centuries ago—beyond the Chinese, Japanese, and Arabic stages, as well as that of the church modes, because they recognized the need for a compromise between horizontal and vertical harmony and thus were the first to create *diatony* out of the primeval chaos” (Schenker 1987, 22). Schenker suggests, however, that non-Western cultures could recapitulate the history of Western music and arrive at the same principles: “An attempt at polyphony—in itself perfectly conceivable—by the Japanese of today, for example, could perhaps lead to the same discovery of the harmonic principle as that made by the Westerner of centuries ago” (Schenker 1987, 21).

Schenker’s comment about “tension spans” in music has also been offered as proof of his racism; he wrote that “tension spans” in Beethoven’s music are better than a “blood test” as a proof of German origins (Schachter 2001, 17; Cook 2007, 147–48; Ewell 2020a, [4.3.4]). Challenging this view, Karen Painter has described Schenker’s words as evidence of his cultural, rather than racial, definition of German identity (Painter 2007, 196). Schenker’s remarks about Beethoven do not support the doctrine of scientific racism, but controvert it, in a characteristically irritating German way. The nineteenth-century historian Wilhelm Riehl (1823–97) similarly asserted that the Frenchman George Onslow (1784–1853) was “really German” because Onslow’s music was of high quality, due to the use of “German” compositional techniques.³⁸ In discussing Schenker’s politics, Nicholas Cook describes this reasoning as a circular argument, with the premise that great music from any source should be defined as German, and the conclusion that German music is great. As Cook notes, Schenker employed this rationale when he discussed the music of Chopin, Smetana, and Dvořák (Cook 2007, 238–41). Cook points out, however, that Schenker’s discussion of Smetana represented a liberal political position at a time when protests against Czech culture took place in Vienna:³⁹ “Schenker’s demonstration of the German basis of the Bohemian composer’s music would have served to promulgate a more generous conception of the German than the narrowly nationalistic or racial one, and to underline the indispensable contribution of the outsider to German culture” (Cook 2007, 241). Schenker’s attitude to Smetana’s music represented the consensus view among liberal critics in Vienna during the 1890s. For example, Albert Kauders judged Smetana’s music, “in its innermost basic character,” to be “German,” and added, “I count among

38 “His works belong, fundamentally, much more to the history of German music, and Germany has the especial duty to cherish the memory of this foreign master, who is a naturalized artist among us” (Riehl 1886, 294) (my translation).

39 For a discussion of the enthusiastic reception of Smetana’s music in Vienna in 1892–93, see Brodbeck (2014, 265–89).

German art everything that confesses the Gospel of Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven and emulates their sublime teaching in deed and work.⁴⁰

Like Schenker, Riehl, and Kauders, English musicologist William Henry Hadow (1859–1937) categorized the nationality of composers in cultural, rather than racial, terms. He applauded the German practice of appropriating the accomplishments of non-German composers, demonstrating that this approach was the common currency of the period:

That Mozart was an Italian composer seems now to be taken as an accredited jest; but it is more serious when we show our gratitude for the splendid work that Germany has done by *scoring to her account all that has been accomplished by her neighbors*. Schumann claims Chopin as a fellow-countryman; we are so far from protesting that we add Liszt, for whom “the great German master” was long a newspaper synonym, and even hesitate about Smetana and Dvořák. (Hadow 1897, 14–15) (italics added)

Schenker has been criticized for condemning racial mixing. Music theorist Philip Ewell cites Schenker’s comment “‘race’ is good, ‘inbreeding’ [*Inzucht*] of race, however, is dismal [*trüb*]” in a 1934 letter to Hoboken (Ewell 2020, [4.2.4]; SDO January 13, 1934, letter to Hoboken),⁴¹ without realizing that this is an attack on the concept of racial purity rather than an endorsement. For that, Schenker would have had to use the word “interbreeding.” By use of selective quotation, Ewell conceals the fact that Schenker portrayed *himself* as a racial alien living among Germans. In the sentence under consideration, Schenker continues: “Art has nothing to do with this [*die Kunst steht ganz wo anders*], so it is perfectly appropriate in the world that in Vienna *racial aliens* still represent interesting flecks of color (*Jews, Hungarians, Slavs, Italians, etc., etc.*)” (SDO January 13, 1934, letter to Hoboken) (italics added).⁴² In the prior sentence, Schenker observes that in Vienna, Jews like himself—now criminalized racially in Germany—were still permitted to participate in the arts: “Today, Vienna seems to

40 Albert Kauders, “Die böhmische Oper in Wien,” *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, June 3, 1892, quoted in Brodbeck (2014, 271–72).

41 Ewell employs the translation of this letter in SDO: “‘Race’ is good, ‘inbreeding’ of race, however, is murky [*trüb*].” I suggest, however, that the term ‘murky’ is not an appropriate translation of “*trüb*” within this context, given that Schenker employs the word to pass moral judgment.

42 In *Die österreichisch-ungarische Monarchie in Wort und Bild* (1886–1902), Eduard Hanslick employed similar language: “Vienna is not merely the musical Imperial Capital of Austria but a powerful empire in itself. Its musical supremacy extends across the borders of the monarchy. Gentle echoes of Slavic, Magyar, and Italian tunes, enlivening and embellishing rather like racial mixing — [*Racenmischung*] gently resound, without distracting from the eminently German character of Viennese music.” Hanslick, “Die Musik in Wien,” quoted in Brodbeck (2014, 3). For a discussion of Stefan Zweig’s remarks about Vienna’s cosmopolitan character in the *World of Yesterday*, see Gelbin and Gilman (2017, 173).

me the most plausible place for you to be,⁴³ if only because here—do not laugh—the Jews can make their mark in music and display many varieties (annoyance, entertainment).” The letter closes with a postscript about Furtwängler’s threat to leave Germany, presumably over Nazi artistic policies: “Furtwängler is said to have threatened to leave Germany; have you heard anything about that?” In his diary entry of May 20, 1933, Schenker had noted his conversation with Furtwängler about this very possibility (SDO May 20, 1933).

Schenker’s reference to “blacks marrying into the *gloire* and *esprit* business” [*die Einheirat der Schwarzen in das Gloire- und Espritgeschäft*] in “The Mission of German Genius” (Schenker 2004b, 18; Schenker 1921, 18; Eybl 1995, 20) has been adduced as an example of his loathing for racial mixing, yet a fuller quotation shows this passage to be a swipe at the French and their pretensions to military glory, not at blacks: “No Anglo-Saxon, French, or Italian mother could ever carry in her womb a Moses, Christ, Luther, a Buddha, Confucius, Lâo-Tzse, also no Bach, Mozart, Goethe, Kant (the French not even after blacks married into the *gloire* and *esprit* business!).” Earlier in “The Mission of German Genius,” Schenker ridicules the French in the same way: “The French really do not know any noble pastimes other than vaunting their lust after *gloire*, which is engendered not by bravery, but only by banal vanity” (Schenker 2004b, 14; see also Schenker 2004b, 5).

Schenker’s reference to “Senegalese marriage relationships” [*Senegalenschwägerschaft*] (Schenker 2004b, 5; Schenker 1921, 5)⁴⁴ is but one item in a long list of crimes committed by the British and the French. It is juxtaposed in Schenker’s text with “Congolese atrocities,” i.e., the murder of millions of Africans by European colonial troops. A neologism, *Senegalenschwägerschaft* may refer to West African marriage practices that deviated from European customs, including relationships classified under the colonialist designation *mariage à la mode du pays* (Zimmerman 2011; Zimmerman 2020; Jones 2005). *Mariage à la mode du pays* was a term originally employed to describe unions between European men and colonial women that fell short of the European definition of marriage, but was later applied as well to African soldiers conscripted into the French army, known as *tirailleurs sénégalais*.⁴⁵

43 In Hoboken’s previous letter to Schenker, he had announced that he was building a house in Vienna. (SDO January 5, 1934, letter from Hoboken to Schenker).

44 Literally, “Senegalese family relationship by marriage.”

45 “Within the [French] military’s usage at the end of the nineteenth century, *mariage à la mode du pays* no longer uniquely referred to conjugal relationships between European men and African women. Officials came to refer to *tirailleurs sénégalais*’ conjugal and sexual relationships with female prisoners of war and former female slaves as *mariage à la mode du pays*, which simultaneously and ambivalently portrayed these heteronormative relationships as marriage and not marriage. This questionable legitimacy remained a dominant feature of *tirailleurs sénégalais*’ marital traditions into the interwar years” (Zimmerman 2020, 44).

Schenker mentioned Africans solely within the context of his anti-French polemics after World War I. France's use of colonial troops during the war and after led to fears that it would attempt to permanently upset the European balance of power by adding the demographic weight of its colonies to its military resources in order to gain mastery over Germany. For example, in *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man*, Thomas Mann wrote of "the victory of the pacifistic-bourgeois 'militarism with a cause' (with Negro armies) over the 'military way of thinking'" (Mann 1987, 19). When the French occupied the Rhineland immediately after the war, they posted some African troops in that region. Many leftist, feminist, anti-imperialist, and pacifist activists in Europe, the United States, and Canada joined with the German political Right in raising the specter of widespread abuse of German women by savage Africans (Wigger 2017; Collar 2012; Reinders 1968; Campbell 2014). The campaign was led by British politician E.D. Morel, a human-rights advocate who had publicized Belgium's Congolese atrocities fifteen years earlier. Morel's prior anti-imperialist activities provided credibility for the racist accusations in his pamphlet *The Horror on the Rhine*, including lurid details of the management of brothels (Mitchell 2014, 165). Morel coupled condemnation of the black troops for their alleged degenerate behavior with a denunciation of both French imperialism against the Germans and the Paris Peace Conference. In America, W. E. B. Du Bois republished a long excerpt from one of Morel's articles in *The Crisis*, implicitly agreeing with his class analysis of the situation while repudiating his racial arguments.⁴⁶ Although Du Bois later expressed disappointment with Morel's race-baiting in *The Crisis* ([Du Bois] 1921, 24), he simultaneously lauded him in the pages of *The Nation* (Du Bois 1921).

Schenker read and admired three essays by Francesco Saverio Nitti, former Italian prime minister and a supporter of Morel's campaign. The liberal Nitti also employed racist rhetoric in his impassioned arguments condemning the Treaty of Versailles and advocating pan-European cooperation (Wigger 2017, 61–71; Reinders 1968, 25). For Schenker, Nitti was all the more believable because he was "not a Germaniac, not a pan-German, not *völkisch*" [*kein "Germaniak," kein "Alldentscher," "Völkischer" ist*] (SDO September 25, 1922, letter to Halm). Nitti's writings reinforced Schenker's outrage at a report in the *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung* about French brothels in the occupied Rhineland, which he characterized as "immoral and shameless" (*WAZ* 1919;

46 "The French militarists whose schemes in Europe are a menace to the world, inform us that they intend to have a standing army of 200,000 colored troops in France, of whom 100,000 will be primitive Africans. They will be used by the French militarists all over Europe in pursuance of their avowed purposes. . . . Negroes, Malagasies, Berbers, Arabs, flung into Europe by the hundred thousand in the interests of a capitalist and militarist order. That is the prospect—nay, that is the actuality—which the forces of organized European labor have got to face, and face squarely" (E. D. Morel, quoted in [Du Bois] 1920, 142). See also Campbell (2014, 478).

SDO February 13, 1919). Sadly, in *Der Tonwille* 5, Schenker echoed the defamatory claims presented by both Morel and Nitti, accusing the French of “dragging our girls and women off to your Negro brothels” (Schenker 2004a, 223). In retrospect, the Rhineland scandal and Schenker’s response illustrate, not the ascendancy of fascism, but the ideological deficiencies of the European Left—its willingness, as an organized movement, to entertain clearly racist notions—during the early 1920s, and the highly circumscribed notions of internationalism current in Europe at that time.

Schenker in America

Many scholars have described Schenker’s theory of levels as hierarchical (Morgan 2014; Schachter 2001, 13; Cook 2007, 153, 265). Ewell has extended this line of reasoning, employing analogical thinking to contend that Schenker’s musical hierarchies reflect a belief in *racial* hierarchies (Ewell 2020a, [4.5.4]). The association of Schenker’s theories with hierarchical thinking reflects a key element in the American reception of Schenker, in which his theories were recast—in some ways deliberately misunderstood—in order to conform to the shibboleths of the American academic world. Many of Schenker’s American disciples replaced his dynamic biological metaphors, images of growth, with static architectural terms such as Salzer’s “fundamental structure,” in what Robert Snarrenberg characterized as nothing less than a betrayal (Snarrenberg 1994).

Schenker himself denounced the idea that his theory posited a series of hierarchies. In a 1924 diary entry, he objected to what he considered Furtwängler’s exaggerated emphasis on the background at the expense of the foreground in a performance of Haydn’s *The Creation*: “He . . . does not know that the rights of the foreground must be upheld, for which the [*Ur*]Linie is working in the background” (SDO December 16, 1924; Hust 2010, 8). In his 1931 letter draft to Furtwängler, Schenker made clear that he considered the foreground and background to be linked like the roots and the leaves of a plant. He also asserted that they parallel similar structures in verbal languages:

The image of the *Ursatz* and its layers that I offer has its logic only in the connection to a content, *whereby it is completely immaterial whether one views it as moving from the simplest thing in the background to the most colorful thing in the foreground, or conversely from the most colorful in the foreground to the simplest in the background. That indicates at the same time that the background is present always and everywhere in the foreground, i.e., the background proceeds always in tandem with the foreground. . . .* [A]t the very moment a growth process gets underway, what is burgeoning submits itself to that selfsame “logic” that adheres to my image. . . . Artists who work with language can also confirm this process from their own creative activity. They, too, operate with a certain

something that causes the foreground to grow with the simplest foundation [*das den Vordergrund mit einfachster Grundlegung wachsen läßt*]. (SDO November 11–16, 1931, letter to Furtwängler) (italics added)

In *Der freie Satz*, Schenker reiterated his insistence that his theory was not hierarchical: “The concept of the fundamental structure [*Ursatz*] . . . presents only the *strictly logical precision in the relationship* between simple tone-successions and more complex ones. Indeed, it shows this precision of relationship not only from the simple to the more complex, but also in reverse, from the complex to the simple” (Schenker 1979, 18). Music theorist and philosopher Viktor Zuckerkandl, a student of Schenker, employed his biological metaphors in lectures about his theories at the Eranos conferences in 1960 and 1963 (Tan 2020).

Perhaps the most egregious of all accusations against the Schenkerians are the assertions that Schenker’s disciples were white German racists who disseminated his musical theories in America by deceptively hiding their racist character and origins. In this retelling, the pedagogical work of the American Schenkerians during the 1930s paralleled the activities of the pro-Nazi German-American Bund (Ewell 2020a, [4.3.6], note 17). Fritz Kuhn, leader of the Bund, spoke at the conclusion of its February 1939 rally at Madison Square Garden: “You all have heard of me through the Jewish-controlled press as a creature with horns, a cloven hoof, and a long tail. We . . . demand that our government shall be returned to the American people who founded it. If you ask what we are actively fighting for under our charter, first a socially just, white Gentile-ruled United States” (Curry 2017).

Is it plausible to associate Schenker’s refugee students, all of whom were Jews or of Jewish descent, with the American Nazis? Not surprisingly, the actual situation was the reverse. When they came to America, Schenker’s students discovered, not surprisingly, that they were “othered,” just as they had been in Europe. Most major American universities refused to hire Jews, due to entrenched antisemitic attitudes among faculty and administrators (Norwood 2009; Leff 2019). Weisse arrived in 1931, Jonas in 1934, Oster in 1938, Salzer in 1939 (Koslovsky 2009, 45), and Zuckerkandl in 1940. When Weisse joined the music faculty at Columbia University during the 1930s, he was hired only as an adjunct lecturer, despite a doctorate from the University of Vienna, and was not permitted to teach Schenker’s theories.⁴⁷ In 1939, when the Columbia music department urgently needed to augment its musicology faculty, Paul Henry Lang wrote a letter to Dean of Graduate Faculties George B. Pegram, complaining that he would have to hire another Jewish scholar: “In the present emergency, I am

47 In a letter to Schenker, Weisse stated that he “smuggles” Schenker’s theory into his Columbia lectures (SDO March 15, 1934, letter from Weisse to Schenker). See Berry (2003, 114–15); Jackson (2010, 130–32).

unable to find anyone competent enough to fill the position . . . and must fall back to the solution resorted to by Harvard, Yale and New York University, namely to engage one of the German Jewish refugee scholars” (Lang 1939).⁴⁸ During the prewar years, Nicholas Murray Butler, the president of Columbia University, showed great courtesy to representatives of Nazi Germany (Norwood 2009, 76–78).

During the 1930s, the political orientation of the organized community of Jewish musicians in New York could not have been further from the attitudes of the Columbia faculty and administration. In April 1934, *Mailamm*, the Jewish musicians’ organization, arranged a reception in New York to celebrate Arnold Schoenberg’s recent arrival in the United States. At the reception, Schoenberg spoke about “The Jewish Situation” (Schoenberg [1934] 2003), and the Hall Johnson Singers performed spirituals. Mischa Elman, Ossip Gabrilowitsch, and Louis Gruenberg were present, while messages from Ernest Bloch, George Gershwin, and Rubin Goldmark were read to the gathering (Heskes 1997, 307). In 1934, to invite a black American group to perform at such an event was the exception, not the rule.

Some Concluding Thoughts

In this essay, I have attempted to demonstrate that Heinrich Schenker’s Jewish identity was central to his understanding of the concepts of race and nation. As a stigmatized Jew, he wished to gain acceptance for his musical theories as a part of the German tradition, which he conceived in linguistic and cultural terms, while rejecting ethnic and religious criteria. Schenker embraced the doctrines of German cultural nationalism developed by German-Jewish scholars of the previous generation as the basis for his admittance to the world of European high culture.

After World War I, Schenker espoused an authoritarian politics because he judged that there was no other viable alternative in continental Europe. His harsh view of the French Republic was founded, at least in part, on the eruption of French illiberalism generated by the Dreyfus case, to which he returned again and again in his diary. Likewise, his animus toward Russia was a response to its government’s brutal, systematic persecution of Jews over many decades. Schenker, like most Central European Jews, vainly put his trust in the willingness of the German and Austrian governments to protect Jewish civil and political rights.

Schenker was not an “anti-racist,” nor should anyone expect him to have been. He was, inevitably, a product of his place and time. Given those strictures, Schenker was more enlightened in his attitudes toward the concepts of race and nation than many of his contemporaries, despite his endless fulminations against Germany’s enemies, real

48 Lang hired the Jewish Erich Hertzmann.

and imagined, and his hegemonic German cultural philosophy. Returned to its context, his violent language is revealed as a journalistic commonplace of his day, rather than the exception that seemingly demonstrates his bigotry. Nevertheless, Schenker's students rejected his politics—a product of the Central European cauldron in which he lived—not due to duplicity, but because they thoroughly disliked them.⁴⁹ Fifty years ago, as a teenager, I studied with a student of Hans Weisse, who volunteered his own embarrassment about Schenker's vociferous advocacy of German nationalism. My teacher had undoubtedly received his information directly from Weisse himself.

Schenker was not a self-hating Jew (see Neely 2020, at 33:35) nor an admirer of Hitler, as has recently been alleged. His letters and diaries copiously document his pride in his Jewish identity, his rejection of *völkisch* politics, and his firmly anti-Nazi attitudes. If Schenker had really been an American-style racist, it is hard to imagine how that might have complicated the reception of his musical theories in American academia during the 1930s, when major universities eagerly reached out to their German counterparts and anti-Nazi student demonstrators were expelled (Norwood 2009). In the past quarter-century, far from endeavoring to hide evidence of Schenker's ideological failings, Schenker scholars have engaged in an unprecedented documentation and examination of his life, seemingly prioritizing that project in preference to his theoretical work, which remains poorly understood.

The recent American controversy over Schenker is fundamentally based on a denial of Jewish history and identity. As Barbara Whittle has pointed out, “To present Schenker's career as more or less normal, and his behavior as merely irascible and overbearing, is to treat as irrelevant the vast social trauma in which he found himself caught up at a particularly sensitive moment. This was the point at which the confrontation between the medieval world of quietist Judaism and post-Enlightenment, secular, technological civilization was beginning to show its potential for catastrophe” (Whittle 1994, 17). Schenker devised a musico-historical narrative, rooted, not in a belief in Germanic racial superiority that he could not possibly claim, but rather in his anxiety about the future of German culture, as well as his uncertain status as a Jew within the multi-national Dual Monarchy, and later, the Austrian state.

Tragically, Schenker and his students, stigmatized as Jews both in Germany and the United States, have retrospectively been relabeled as “white Germans”—a historical impossibility—as a prelude to accusations that they created musical theories designed to reinforce the toxic, ultimately genocidal politics of their persecutors. Only by rejecting a spurious presentism and grasping the foreignness of the past will we be able to grasp the significance of Schenker's strange story, so remote from the contem-

49 Oswald Jonas later recalled, “And the Schenker circle doesn't roar with laughter at such ignorance, obstinacy, and gross distortions? Insane blindness turns Schenker as well into a victim of the war [World War I]” (Rothgeb 2006, 116; Rothfarb 2018, 41).

porary American experience: his futile attempt, as a Jew, to save German culture from the depredations of modern German racist nationalism.

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